

**Sol T. Plaatje's Ink: Exploring the nascent Setswana public sphere through
the form of Plaatje's newspapers (1901–1915)**

**Enke ya ga Sol T. Plaatje: Patlisiso ya kokoanyo ya sebaka se sesha sa dipuisano tsa
setshaba sa phatlalatsa tsa Setswana ka go lebelela sebopego sa makwalodikgang a ga
Plaatje (1901–1915)**



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by

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ABSTRACT

At the dawn of the 20th century, Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje emerged as a pioneering figure in South African journalism, launching and editing the influential newspapers *Koranta ea Becoana*, *Tsala ea Becoana*, and *Tsala ea Batho* between 1901 and 1915. This thesis interrogates the form and function of Plaatje's journalism within the early black press, examining how his newspapers conceptualised and constituted the Setswana and broader African public sphere during a period of intensifying colonial oppression and racial segregation. Drawing on Jürgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere, postcolonial theory, and Afrocentricity, the study explores how Plaatje's multilingual newspapers that blended Setswana, English, and isiXhosa, articulated the political, social, and cultural concerns of black South Africans, challenged colonial narratives, and fostered a participatory platform for black voices. Through a qualitative analysis of editorials, articles, letters, and advertisements, the research reveals how Plaatje's editorial strategies engendered a black counterpublic, pioneered new journalistic genres, and contributed to the formation of collective identity and African consciousness. The findings underscore the newspapers' dual role as both a mirror of black sociability and a catalyst for political mobilisation, highlighting the complex interplay between media, language, and politics in early 20th-century South Africa. Ultimately, this thesis restores Plaatje's journalism to its rightful place in the discipline, offering new insights into the history of African media and the dynamics of the nascent Setswana public sphere.

Keywords: advertising, Afrocentricity, Barolong, early black press, form, journalism, Kimberley, *Koranta ea Becoana*, language, Mafikeng, public sphere, Setswana, Sol Plaatje, Thaba Nchu, *Tsala ea Batho*, *Tsala ea Becoana*

KHUTSOFATSO

Kwa tshimologong ya ngwagakgolo wa bomasome a mabedi, Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje o ne a tlhaga e le mongwe wa baetapele mo bobegakgang ba pele mo Aforikaborwa, a simolola le go rulaganya makwalodikgang a a nang le serodumo ebong *Koranta ea Becoana*, *Tsala ea Becoana*, le *Tsala ea Batho* magareng ga 1901 le 1915. Lokwalopatlisiso leno le batlisisa sebopego le maikarabelo a ga Plaatje mo bobegakgang jwa batsogapele ba bantsho, e sekaseka kafa makwalodikgang a gagwe a neng a tlhamela le go kokoanya sebaka sa dipuisano tsa batlhalefi ba Setswana le baAforika mo nakong ya kgatelelo e kgolo ya bokoloniale le kgaoganyo ya merafe. E dirisa thuto ya ga Jürgen Habermas ya lefelo la phatlalatsa, thuto ya go sekaseka bokoloniale le tshekamelo ya boAforika, thuto e e sekaseka kafa makwalodikgang a ga Plaatje a a dirisang dipuo di le dintsi, go akaretsa Setswana, Seesemane, le isiXhosa, a neng a supa dintlha tsa dipolotiki, tsa loago le tsa setso tsa Batswana le BaAforikaborwa ba bantsho, tsa itlhaganeletsa le go lwantsha ditlhaloso tsa bokoloniale, le go tlhoma setlhopha se se akaretsang maikutlo a batho ba bantsho. Ka go sekaseka dikatlhoho, ditlhopha tsa dikgang, makwalo le dipapatso, patlisiso e senola kafa maano a ga Plaatje a go rulaganya makwalodikgang a neng a tlhoma setlhopha se se emelang batho ba bantsho, a simolola mefuta e mesha ya bobegakgang, le go tsenya letsogo mo tlhagisong ya sebopego sa boikgopolelo le temogo ya SeAforika. Diphetho di gatelela maikarabelo a mabedi a dikoranta tsa gagwe jaaka seipone sa botsalano jwa batho ba bantsho le jaaka motswedi wa go tsosa kgatlhego ya dipolotiki, di supa kamano e e motsopodia fa gare ga bobegakgang, puo le dipolotiki mo tshimologong ya ngwagakgolo wa bomasome a mabedi mo Aforikaborwa. Kwa bofelong, thutapego e busetsa bobegakgang jwa ga Plaatje mo lefelong la jone le le tshwanetseng mo dithutong, e fa temogo e ntšha ka hisitori ya mekgwa ya bobegakgang jwa Batswana le diphetho tsa Setswana jaaka lefelo la phatlalatsa la pele.

Mafoko a botlhokwa: papatso, tshekamelo ya boAforika, Barolong, bobegakgang jwa batsogapele ba bantsho, sebopego, bobegakgang, Teemaneng, Koranta ea Becoana, puo, Mafikeng, kokoano ya batlhalefi ya dipuisano, Setswana, Sol Plaatje, Thaba Nchu, Tsala ea Batho, Tsala ea Becoana

STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, **Lesley Lehlohonolo Mofokeng** (Person Number 0618425P) hereby declare that this thesis is my original work.

The thesis was submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the field of Journalism and Media Studies.

It has never been previously submitted to meet the requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is provided.

I hereby declare the following:

I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.

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I have included as an appendix a report from "Turnitin" software indicating the level of plagiarism in my research document.

Signature:  Date: 9 July 2025

DEDICATION

To the undying memory of Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, 1876–1932. Ikhutse Morolong:
Modiredi wa Afrika.

To the loving memory of my grandfather, The Man Who Shook Mountains ... Mongangane
Wilfred Mofokeng, 1914–2009.

To the loving memory of my dearest grandmother, Mahadi Maria Mofokeng, 1919–2005.

To the loving memory of my father, Moses Teboho Mofokeng, 1949–2018.

To the loving memory of my friend, Siduduziwe ‘Sdu’ Gerasch, 1980–2025 who kept me
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received my outcomes.

And to those who ran this race before us, the unsung, unknown, forgotten, and unrecognised
heroes of our struggle to be African, from the pages of *Koranta ea Becoana* (1901–1909),
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I dedicate this thesis to my passionate and skilful Setswana teachers who inculcated an
enduring love for the language, ma’am Mpho Rapoo and the late ma’am Freda Mthimkhulu;
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I did this PhD because I felt like an underachiever with unfulfilled potential. Coming from a family of church and education, I carried the guilt that in my generation, we did not have a doctoral graduate. Now that we are here, I am overwhelmed with a sense of accomplishment and gratitude.

This PhD does not mean that I have all the answers. It is uncharted waters and an area of vulnerability that I embrace. I continue to grow and explore further as a lifelong student of Plaatje and an Afrocentrist. This research chose me and directed me. I was not a determinant; I submitted to it as an observer and facilitator and watched the dynamics change all the time.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
APO	African People's Organisation
CMT	Critical Media Theory
DFA	Diamond Fields Advertiser
LMS	London Missionary Society
OFS	Orange Free State
PEMS	Paris Evangelical Missionary Society
SANNC	South African Native National Congress
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
WMMS	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society

A NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

The reader's attention is drawn to the fact that this project, although it falls within the journalism discipline, leans heavily on history due to its reliance on archival materials. As such, some words and names are used as they appear in the newspaper or literature and must be read in that context.

The town now known as **Mahikeng** in North West province of South Africa is written as **Mafeking** or **Mafikeng** interchangeably to denote the colonial white or the traditional black part, respectively.

The town of **Thaba Nchu** in today's Free State province is elsewhere referred to as **Thaba Ncho** as it appeared in the newspapers.

Setswana is written as **Sechuana**, **Secwana** or **Secoana**.

Batswana is written as **Bechuana**, **Becwana** or **Becoana**.

Montshiwa is written as **Montsioa** or **Montshioa**, depending on the author cited.

SECTION I

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the 20th century, Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, a 23-year-old court interpreter based in the outpost town of Mafeking, carved a name for himself in the black press when he launched and edited a newspaper titled *Koranta ea Becoana*. He had previously arrived in Mafeking from Kimberley as a civil servant just months before the Mafeking Siege of 1899 to 1900, an episode of the Boer War (1899–1902). His *Mafeking Diary* documented the black experience of what was termed ‘a White man’s war’. Then, in 1901, Plaatje embarked on a journalism career that would make him the voice of the people as the editor of *Koranta ea Becoana*. In 1910, he left Mafeking for Kimberley and started *Tsala ea Becoana*, a newspaper that became *Tsala ea Batho* in 1912. This collection of newspapers might be the largest record in existence of this transformative era and on the region: thousands of articles and advertisements, along with a few images, provide intimate details of life, protest, humour, success, loss, and lifestyle in many textures and nuances. Even after his newspapers ceased to print by 1915, he remained an influential journalist and writer contributing to newspapers such as the *Pretoria News*, *Diamond Fields Advertiser (DFA)*, *The Star*, and *Umteteli wa Bantu*, as well as some syndication services.

This study interrogates Plaatje’s position and role in the history of journalism in South Africa. I seek to explore how and why he was one of the pioneers of the black press and examine the role he played in conceptualising Setswana publics through the newspapers he edited, namely, *Koranta ea Becoana*, *Tsala ea Becoana*, and *Tsala ea Batho*, published between 1901 and 1915. *Koranta* would be the first native newspaper to be under complete black control in South Africa, without white backers or funders. Plaatje’s newspapers have remained a historical curiosity, ignored in discussions in modern journalism, yet they are part of the bedrock on which South African journalism was founded. The paucity of studies into Plaatje’s newspapers from journalistic approaches and using journalism theories has been a motivation for this project. This study is an act of restoration of Plaatje’s journalism to a discipline it belongs to through the application of theories of a) publics, public sphere, and imagined communities as advocated by the likes of Jürgen Habermas, Michael Warner, Karin Barber, and Benedict Anderson, b) journalistic form, relying mostly on the work of Kevin Barnhurst and John

Nerone, and c) the scholarship of the early black press that deals with black sociability, consumption, and African political thought.

The study employed primarily the deep reading of the texts of the newspapers in their historical context. The study relied on archival research, specifically the editions of newspapers in the Africa's Historical Newspapers section of World Newspaper Archive of the Readex project, a division of NewsBank, which contains some 283 editions of the three titles. The news articles and editorials were dissected and classified under different themes. Advertising was also analysed as a commercial vehicle of the press. The analysis tracks the ways in which, through the newspapers, Plaatje facilitated a search for a new identity in a fast-moving colonial dispensation and how language was used as a tool of identity. It maps the evolution of the Setswana language and its use. The study also sought insights into the role of the editor in the business of running the early black press, the genres of journalism Plaatje employed, and how he provided a black perspective as an alternative to recorded history.

To borrow the words of Hlonipha Mokoena when she wrote about Magera Fuze, Plaatje's newspapers make sense when understood as the beginning stage in a 'continuum of writerly interventions and expositions' that engaged Plaatje for most of his adult life (Mokoena, 2016, p. 381). When she summarised Plaatje's journalistic interventions in the national debates of history and historiography, Jane Starfield calls it 'the angry, even polemical, tone' that indicated 'a mounting rage over the marginalisation of black people from both history and historical debate' (Starfield, 2008, p. 3).

1.1 Structure overview

This study is organised into four sections, which are further subdivided into chapters.

Section I serves as the introduction to the topic, laying the foundation with the background and context of Plaatje's newspapers. It also sets out the aims and objectives, research questions, rationale, and significance of the study. To orientate the reader, the universe of Plaatje's newspapers details the locales of Mafikeng, Kimberley, and Thaba Nchu, in which the newspapers operated and were mostly read. The literature review provides an overview of four themes pertinent to the understanding of Plaatje's journalism, and these are Plaatje's biographical canon; the black press; publics, imagined communities, and the public sphere; and form of news. The research approach or methodology explores the theoretical orientation and

framework that has been useful in thinking through matters pertinent to the study, as well as the research methods employed.

Section II shifts the focus to the newspapers themselves, using a lens of the model to better understand how the practice of journalism manifested. Furthermore, the commercial side of the newspapers is looked into as the study tracks the roots of black consumerism through advertisements. The last chapter presents the metadata about the newspapers through graphs that show the size of each edition over the years, the frequency of publication, as well as the evolution of the front pages and general layout and design.

Section III is dedicated to a deeper analysis of identity and the convening of a Setswana public, first through language and later through the themes from the newspapers that point to a change in values, customs, and practices. It concludes with a discussion on the African political thought that permeated the black press.

Section IV details the findings and conclusions, as well as a reflection on the limitations of the study and future research. This will be followed by the bibliography and appendices.

1.2 Background of Plaatje

Plaatje in his early years was the essential court interpreter. He was fluent in eight languages, including Dutch and German. The diary he kept during the Mafeking siege of 1899 to 1900 – a bloody episode of the South African War – opened a window and rerecorded history to reflect black involvement and losses during what had been recorded as a White man's war (Willan, 2022, p. 1).

It is well recorded that Plaatje went on to become a prolific political writer and author of the seminal *Native Life in South Africa*, which catapulted him to national and international prominence as the leading advocate and campaigner against the 1913 Natives Land Act and the black struggle in colonial South Africa. Plaatje is known as one of the founding fathers of the African National Congress (ANC), which was originally named the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), where he served as its first general secretary. He is also celebrated as the author of *Mhudi*, the first full length English novel by a black South African. It was written in 1920 but published in 1930 and has enjoyed immense scholarly attention in recent years, to the point that it has become iconic. He also published *Sechuana Proverbs and Their European Equivalents* in 1916.

Plaatje translated into Setswana no less than six plays by William Shakespeare, including *Julius Caesar* (*Dintshontsho tsa bo-Juliuse Kesara*, 1917), *The Comedy of Errors* (*Diphosho-phosho*, 1920), *The Merchant of Venice* (*Mashoabi-shoabi*, 1920), *Much Ado About Nothing* (*Matsapa-tsapa a Lefela*): they are recognised as the first formal translation of Shakespeare in a South African language. This came many decades before Bennet Mdledle's isiXhosa version of *uJulius Caesar* (1956) or *uMacbeth* (1959), or Randall Peteni's novel *Kwazidenge* (1980) based on *Romeo and Juliet*. Plaatje predates Afrikaans translations by Eitemal, real name Willem Jacobus du Plooy Erlank, of *Macbeth* (1965), *Hamlet: Prins van Denemarke* (1973), *Midsomernagdroom* (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1975), and *Die Wintersprokie* (*The Winter's Tale*, 1975). This sets him apart as a pioneer and scholar of African languages (Willan, 2022, p. 1).

Plaatje was further invited to contribute to the *Book of Homage to Shakespeare* (1916) edited by Israel Gollancz, in which under the title 'A South African's Homage', Plaatje wrote in Setswana, with English translation, about the impact 'Tsikinya-Chaka' (literally meaning 'shake the sword' – his naturalisation of Shakespeare's surname to Setswana) had in his life since he first saw *Hamlet* at Kimberley Theatre in 1896. Plaatje discussed how Shakespeare was the language of love in his courtship with his wife, Elizabeth, and how Shakespeare influenced his writing when he began journalism in 1901 at *Koranta ea Becoana* (Plaatje, 1916, pp. 336–337). All these works emanate from the strides Plaatje made in journalism for almost 15 years as the genesis of an illustrious literary career.

It is significant to note that in 1902, after the Mafeking siege, Plaatje formally left the Cape civil service to embark on a newspaper career as a journalist and editor of *Koranta ea Becoana*. He had been involved in the paper since 1901, when it was founded. Seetsele Modiri Molema, in his biography of Plaatje, titled *Lover of His People*, explains that from boyhood, Plaatje had been a keen observer of details, and as a post office messenger in Kimberley, he took great interest in journalists, intrigued by how they disseminated ideas and knowledge through their newspapers, changing the perceptions of people through writing. His interest intensified when he worked with war correspondents during the Siege of Mafeking, who asked him to tell the war news from the perspective of the Barolong. He concludes that 'all these things kindled and nurtured the desire to become a journalist and a writer' (Molema, 2012, p. 38).

Plaatje's biographer, Brian Willan, says it was under the persuasion of war correspondent Vere Stent that Plaatje considered a career in journalism. He also notes that Cronwright Schreiner,

husband of well-known writer Olive Schreiner, also influenced him ‘to leave the Cape Civil Service and try journalism’ (Willan, 1979, p. 72).

It is worth noting, taking a leaf from Khwezi Mkhize’s appraisal of John Tengo Jabavu’s *Imvo Zabantsundu*, that Plaatje, like Jabavu as a Cape liberal, probably viewed journalism as a career that would fulfil him. Mkhize writes that Jabavu joined journalism as a quintessential Cape liberal, and that the Cape liberalism traditions would fulfil his personal ambitions and that of his people (Mkhize, 2018, p. 416). The same may be said of Plaatje. This career change would be his pathway to the world. He went on to achieve many more career highs and reinventions mentioned above following a successful yet tumultuous journalism career.

Plaatje is revered as a cultural hero and spokesman of the Barolong and Batswana in general (Willan & Mokae, 2020, p. ix). His work was not immediately widely celebrated in the aftermath of his death, but it gained scholarly attention in the 1970s. Noted Willan in 1979: ‘For some thirty years or so after his death few references to him could be found in the secondary literature’ and ‘It is only within the last ten years or so – thanks mainly to the work of Tim Couzens – that Plaatje’s literary reputation has been established’ (Willan, 1979, p. 5). However, his contributions to orthography and the language potentially inspired generations of Setswana novelists, poets, and literary figures from the 1940s, such as Leetile Raditladi and D.P. Moloto; later Joseph Ntsime, a recipient of the Sol Plaatje Literature Award in the 1980s; and Barolong Seboni, who further contributed to the literary canon.

Fast forward to the first quarter of the 21st century, and Plaatje’s history has been restored with an abundance of monuments, studies, films, and plays, as mentioned by Maureen Rall (2003, p. 295). Still, a lacuna in this historical figure’s historiography and praxis remains – his role and influence in South African journalism. As such, this study aims to investigate and interrogate Plaatje’s position and contribution to the history of journalism in South Africa.

While the studies of his journalism are few, scholars agree that Plaatje has a place in the history of journalism, describing him in glowing terms. When he described him, Les Switzer said Plaatje ‘was the leading promoter of African nationalist opinion, perhaps the most prominent linguist, translator, literary figure and pioneer investigative journalist of his generation’ (Switzer, 1997, p. 27). Switzer added that Plaatje ‘was the quintessential watchdog journalist who monitored the actions of officials concerned with African affairs and kept his readers informed of what they were doing’ (Switzer, 1997, p. 76).

Peter Midgley argued that Plaatje's journalism, particularly in *Tsala ea Becoana*, served as a 'voice for the voiceless', offering a platform to address the political and social challenges facing black South Africans in the early 20th century (Midgley, 1997, p. 22). Peter Limb noted that Plaatje's 'archive of letters, press articles and books provides scholars with more insights than did most other journalists of the day and reveal him as a canny investigative reporter and editor' (Limb, 2016, p. 37). Njabulo Ndebele wrote in his foreword to the book *Sol Plaatje's Native Life in South Africa: Past and Present* that Plaatje 'set a high standard for rigorous investigative journalism and data-driven activism' (Ndebele, 2016, xiii). Brian Willan held that Plaatje 'was perhaps the most widely read black journalist of his day' (Willan, 2018, p. 255).

To use Switzer's expression, Plaatje was 'at the crest of a wave' as a public figure and a leader of African public opinion among whites and blacks in the prime of his life (Switzer, 1997, p. 76), yet the impact of his endeavours on South African journalism through his newspapers, has remained largely neglected by scholars. This study not only examines Plaatje's top billing as a journalism pioneer, but it also serves as an inquiry that brings journalistic theories to bear. Conducted by a first-language Setswana-speaking scholar, it is bound to yield new insights from content that has not been analysed in the past.

1.3 A brief background to newspapers in South Africa (1800 to 1930)

It took Europeans settled in the Cape almost 150 years to inaugurate their own newspaper, *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser*, in 1800 to give the continent its first paper (Barton, 1979, p. 5). The second paper, the *South African Commercial Advertiser*, was launched on 7 January 1824 with Thomas Pringle – one of the 1820 settlers – and James Fairbairn – who was invited to the Cape from England by Pringle, as editors. It was owned by George Greig, an English printer (Barton, 1979, p. 189; Potter, 1975, p. 32). The paper was banned twice following disparaging articles about a local colonial official which were taken from the *London Times*. Greig sailed back to London to petition the authorities and returned with the Press Ordinance of 1828, which gave birth to the principle of press freedom in South Africa, and it became known as the Freedom Charter of the Press of South Africa (Barton, 1979, p. 189; Potter, 1975, p. 33).

More titles sprang up inspired by Greig's victory of press freedom. *The Herald* was launched in the eastern Cape on 7 May 1845 and *The Natal Witness* in Pietermaritzburg, Natal in 1846. Grahamstown emerged as the hub for newspapers in the eastern Cape when the *Journal* was

printed there, as was *The Friend of the Sovereignty* in 1850, *The Great Eastern* in 1865, and *Grocott's Mail* in 1870 (Barton, 1979, p. 190; Potter, 1975, p. 35). Durban had its first daily newspaper in 1854, with the *Natal Mercury and Commercial Shipping Gazette* owned by the Robinson family (Barton, 1979, pp. 190–191).

The newspaper landscape experienced the start of an empire with the launch of the *Cape Argus* in 1857 and the *Cape Times* in 1876, under the ownership of Bryan Henry Darnell, who then sold it to Saul Solomon, its printer. The *Cape Times* was sold to Francis Dormer, who brought in financial backers such as Cecil John Rhodes (Barton, 1979, pp. 190–191). The Argus Printing and Publishing Company was formed in 1866, marking – according to Potter – the end of independent ownership and the start of managerial newspapers, that were owned by commercial public companies (Potter, 1975, p. 38).

Express and Orange Free State Advertiser was founded in 1876. The *Argus* opened an office in Johannesburg in October 1887, following the discovery of gold, and three years later, it acquired the *Eastern Star* newspaper (Barton, 1979, p. 191). It changed its name to *The Star* in 1889 and became a daily publication, having previously been a twice-weekly paper. The newspaper was at the forefront of innovation when it was produced on a rotary press with a Linotype setting in 1893 (Barton, 1979, p. 192; Potter, 1975, p. 39). The expansion of the Argus Group intensified in earnest with John Martin as the general manager of the Argus company after the First World War when it bought the *Natal Advertiser* in Durban, *The Friend* in Bloemfontein, and the *DFA* in Kimberley in 1922, as well as the *Pretoria News* in 1930, becoming the biggest newspaper publishing company on the African continent (Barton, 1979, p. 193).

At the end of the South African War in 1902, the *Rand Daily Mail* appeared in Johannesburg, and it gave birth to the *Sunday Times* in 1906. This marked the beginning of a phase of popular journalism in South Africa (Barton, 1979, pp. 192–193; Potter, 1975, p. 42).

Dutch/Afrikaans newspapers began publishing with *De Zuid Afrikaan* in 1830, launched by the Dutch in the eastern Cape and used to keep the Dutch language alive among the rural Boers (Barton, 1979, p. 190). Potter adds that in the 1870s, the paper joined forces with *Volksvriend* and bought into the ethos of *taal* and *volk*. J.H Hofmeyr, a prominent Dutch figure, started *Het Volksblad* in 1849 with a clear segregationist agenda (Potter, 1975, p. 33). *Die Afrikaanse Patriot* was historic in 1876 in that it was the first time Afrikaans was used in print as an

independent language from Dutch and served as a vehicle to promote ‘die taal’ (Barton, 1979, p. 190). Transvaal had its first newspaper *De Oude Emmigrant*, 20 years after the Great Trek. It was short-lived, and *Die Volkstem*, a Dutch-language newspaper in Pretoria, was started in 1874 to drive the Boer agenda (Potter, 1975, p. 36).

1.4 A concise history of black press in South Africa

Having established the origins of the (White) press in South Africa during the historical period in question, I now turn to the black press in South Africa, which will assist in locating Plaatje among his contemporaries. Peter Limb explains the importance of black press by stating that the nascent black intelligentsia had few publication outlets, and thus, newspapers, as well as magazines and literary or historical journals filled the vacuum as news carriers, (Limb, 2016, p. 39).

Les Switzer calls the black press the ‘alternative press’ and argues that it played an unrecognised role in the making of modern South Africa. He says it constituted a unique political, social and literary archive, the oldest, most extensive and varied collection of indigenous serial publications of their kind in sub-Saharan Africa (Switzer, 1997, p. 1). Rosalyn Ainslie calls it the non-white press that was ‘unread’ by whites, not distributed by the Central News Agency and did not benefit from the news and technical services being developed by the big dailies. They ‘had low circulation numbers but [were] rich in political excitement’ (Ainslie, 1966, p. 47).

Switzer whose work mapped the landscape of newspapers in South Africa frames the four phases of the history of the black press as follows: African Mission Press (1830s to 1880s); Independent Protest Press (1880s to 1930s); Early Resistance Press (1930s to 1960s); and the Later Resistance Press (1970s to 1980s) (Switzer, 1997, p. 3). Switzer and Switzer identify the South African press as a sectional press throughout its history and based on race and not language, religion, or culture – they say it possessed ‘a unique status among the world’s mass media of communication’ (Switzer & Switzer, 1979, p. vii). What they mean is that nowhere in the world was the development of the press segregated along racial lines in the way it was experienced in South Africa. It mattered less what language one spoke, one’s religion, and culture; what mattered was the race to which one belonged for them to stand a good chance of growth and support.

After the religious tracts, *Morisa oa Molemo* (Shepherd the Good), authored by missionary Robert Moffat in Setswana in the early 1820s in Kuruman, the first authenticated serial publications were produced by Methodist and Presbyterian missionaries working among the Xhosa in the eastern Cape. *Umshumayeli Wendaba* was published between July 1837 and April 1841 and stands out as the ‘first serial publication’ targeting black readers in southern Africa, published by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in Grahamstown and Peddie, eastern Cape. Missionaries in the region further published about four journals between 1837 and 1850 when the frontier wars derailed their work (Switzer & Switzer, 1979, p. 1).

It would take 12 years before another serial publication was launched at Lovedale, also in the eastern Cape. Titled *Indaba*, it set itself apart by publishing in English and isiXhosa which would become one of the distinguishing features of most of the black press newspapers (Switzer & Switzer, 1979, p. 1).

The missionary orientation was central to this development, and its impact was profound in black life. Papers such as *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, founded in November 1863, and *Kafir Express* founded in October 1870, later known as *Christian Express* then *South African Outlook*, were among the oldest newspapers that stayed in business and were read in South Africa and Lesotho documenting African life under the ownership and editorship of missionaries (Switzer & Switzer, 1979, p. 1).

Lovedale was an innovator of the black press. It published *Outlook*, *Lovedale News* (founded in May 1876), and *Healdtown Messenger* (founded in October 1876). *Isigidimi samaXosa* (founded in January 1876) was the first African newspaper edited by Africans in southern Africa: Elijah Makiwane and John Tengo Jabavu. Jabavu resigned from *Isigidimi* in 1884 to launch his own newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu* (Switzer & Switzer, 1979, p. 2).

The Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) first began producing religious tracts in Sesotho at Beersheba in the eastern Free State between 1841 and 1856. The original press, which was moved to Bethesda and Masitise, was finally stationed in Morija, Lesotho, where Swiss missionary Adolphe Mabile, who worked with the PEMS, operated a functioning press as early as 1861. The presses were amalgamated and gave rise to Morija Printing Works in 1874 (Switzer & Switzer, 1979, p. 2).

Lovedale and Morija were accomplished publishing establishments, book depots and distribution agencies offering several services such as commercial printing and bookbinding. Lovedale printed mainly in English and isiXhosa. Morija, on the other hand, printed in upwards

of 45 African languages for countries on the continent and also printed *Leselinyana la Lesotho* newspaper. Morija played a critical role in expanding the Sesotho language and its literature (Switzer & Switzer, 1979, p. 3).

The second phase of the black press, which is the subject of interest of this study, is what Switzer calls the Independent Protest Press, which, he says, primarily represented the black middle class. These African nationalist newspapers dominated organs of news and opinion. With the mission press losing credibility, independent African publications communicated more effectively the grievances and aspirations of the black reader as pioneered by *Isigidimi* and *Imvo Zabantsundu* (Switzer, 1997, p. 3).

Rabe notes that this phase was initiated by John Tengo Jabavu, who, at 25, established *Imvo Zabantsundu* in King William's Town on 3 November 1884. He was funded by two investors from King William's Town – Richard Rose-Innes and James Weir – since he did not have money to start the paper. It was published in both isiXhosa and English. *Imvo* made it possible for Africans to share their political views and served as a source of literature (Rabe, 2020, pp. 103-104), with Jabavu's clear, concise, and urbane style helping to attract many readers (Ainslie, 1966, p. 47). It was four pages long and sold for threepence. It would be the first independent black newspaper and 'the second oldest newspaper published by anyone of the South African native languages' (Plaatje, 1982, p. 192).

Izwi Labantu of Walter Rubusana was launched in November 1897 (Switzer & Switzer, 1979, p. 4). It was considered far more radical than *Imvo*, with a socialist approach and an 'imperial sentiment' which was 'too pronounced against the traditional policy of the Dutch' urged its black readers 'to improve their lot' (Plaatje, 1982, p. 192; Rabe, 2020, p. 104). On the latter, *Imvo* did just the same. *Ipepa lo Hlanga* of Mark Radebe was founded probably in 1894 (Switzer & Switzer, 1979, p. 4).

The newly conquered British colony of the Transvaal had its first independent African newspaper titled *Leihlo la Babatsho* launched in 1903, and it lasted until 1908. Edited by Levi Khomo, a former court interpreter from Polokwane, it was published in English and Sepedi (Switzer & Switzer, 1979, p. 4). In Natal, John Langelibalele Dube started *Ilanga lase Natal* in April 1903, published weekly in English and isiZulu. Also, in Natal, Mahatma Gandhi's *Indian Opinion* was founded in June 1903 (Rabe, 2020; Willan, 2018).

Motsoalle (Friend) was launched in 1910 in Johannesburg by Daniel Letanka, a court interpreter and an African nationalist politician. The paper was renamed *Morumioa* in 1911 and circulated among Setswana and Sepedi speakers in the northern Transvaal. Also founded in 1910 was *Umlomo wa Bantu*, an isiXhosa weekly by Saul Msane, who served as ANC general secretary during Sefako Makgatho's presidency. The two titles were merged shortly after the SANNC was formed in 1912 (Switzer, 1997, p. 30).

Abantu-Batho of Pixley ka Isaka Seme was founded in 1912 as the official organ of the SANNC (Peterson, 2000, p. 17). Seme was a qualified lawyer who studied in the United States (US) and England for 12 years. As a legal adviser to the Queen Regent of Swaziland, he managed to solicit £3 000 to purchase a printing press. Published in English, isiZulu, isiXhosa, and Sesotho/Setswana for about two decades, it alternated between weekly and monthly, or every two months, depending on its finances. After its demise in 1931, it was succeeded by *African Leader*, which served as a mouthpiece for the ANC. It was edited by Mweliso Skota, and it lasted 16 months (Switzer, 1997, p. 30).

The *Native Advocate* was also founded in 1912 in Pretoria by Alfred Mangena and Sefako Makgatho. Mangena was the second qualified African lawyer to be allowed to practise law in South Africa, and Makgatho was a founder of the Transvaal African Teachers Association, who would later become the president of the ANC between 1917 and 1924. It became *The Advocate* and was edited by Alan Kirkland Soga, who moved to the Transvaal after the demise of *Izwi Labantu* in the eastern Cape (Switzer, 1997, p. 30).

Switzer and Switzer (1979, p. 6) explain that African journalists and editors, such as Plaatje, were 'deprived of opportunities to accumulate capital legally' and had limited access to printing equipment, paper, buildings, skilled tradesmen, and distribution networks. They were deprived of conventional news about politics and public affairs but relied on the daily press for news information about developments. This included news generated by white political parties, city councils, provincial legislatures, and the national Parliament, as well as government departments and the prime minister's office. The economic and social institutions of white South Africa were off limits to scrutiny by African journalists, and they were frustrated even in the attempts to cover African community news (Switzer & Switzer, 1979, p. 7). By the 1930s, there was less tolerance than before of an African protest press, and the economic depression and political repression of the time made the conditions even more hostile. White entrepreneurs purchased these publications as the urban African population grew. New publications aimed at

the African reader also sprang up. The traditional African protest press was unable to compete with white-owned African commercial newspapers and ultimately collapsed (Switzer, 1997, p. 32).

1.5 *The state of Setswana in print*

When Plaatje ventured into journalism with *Koranta ea Becoana* and became a pioneer as co-owner, journalist, and editor of the first independent African-owned Setswana/English newspaper, he was building on a Setswana writing tradition that was started by missionaries. Setswana was growing alongside Sesotho and isiXhosa in its development and orthography. Part Mgadla and Stephen Volz note that Biblical excerpts, catechisms, and other materials were produced in Setswana as early as the 1820s and 1830s, with the first complete African-language Bible in Setswana published in 1857 in South Africa by the London Missionary Society's (LMS) Robert Moffat in Kuruman, northern Cape (Mgadla & Volz, 2006, p. xix).

Tim Couzens recounts Plaatje's forerunners in Setswana writing, noting that the first religious tracts written in the language were *Morisa oa Molemo*, spearheaded by Moffat (Couzens, 1990, p. 13). They focused on devotional and evangelical matters of interest to Christian converts living in the vicinity of the mission station (Switzer & Switzer, 1979, p. 1). Two Setswana newspapers, *Mokaeri oa Becuana* (Instructor of the Becuana), published at Kuruman and *Molekoli oa Bechuana* (The Bechuana Visitor) in Thaba Nchu, emerged between 1856 and 1857. Plaatje wrote that the latter was 'the first newspaper published in the Sechuana language', adding that he kept a file of these issues, which was 'one of the author's most valued treasures' (Couzens, 1990, p. 13).

What followed was *Mahoko a Becwana* (Words of Batswana), published between 1883 and 1896. It offered a 'monthly review of current news and religious comments' from the Mission Press at the Kuruman Moffat Institute. Edited by reverends and various other agents of the LMS, it 'increased in size and popularity until it became a fair-sized periodical with a smart cover,' notes Couzens (1990, p. 13). 'During the first week of each month, the native peasants of Bechuanaland and elsewhere used to look forward to its arrival as eagerly as the white up-country farmers now await the arrival of the daily papers' (Couzens, 1990, p. 14).

Moshupa-tsela (The Guide) was started by the German Lutheran missionaries in 1893, continuing a legacy of Setswana writing (Mgadla & Volz, 2006, p. xix). The publications before *Koranta* reflected the missionary zeitgeist as part of a larger project to make the Bible and other

Christian teachings more widely available to potential converts, and that was not the direction *Koranta* would take (Mgadla & Volz, 2006, p. xix).

Plaatje's *Koranta ea Becoana* heralded a new era of African independence. It was in the proud tradition of Setswana writing; however, it represented a big shift in ownership and focus as it was free of missionary control (Mgadla & Volz, 2006, p. xix).

2. Aims and objectives

This study aims to:

- a) investigate and identify the position of Sol Plaatje in the black press and the contributions he made to the practice, form, and history of journalism in South Africa;
- b) recognise critical factors that influenced how Plaatje constituted the African and Setswana publics in the public sphere; and
- c) propose a new approach and framing model in Plaatje's historiography using journalism and media studies theories, such as public sphere and forms of news.

3. Research questions

The following are the research questions of this study:

- a) What does the study of Sol Plaatje's newspapers reveal about his position in and contribution to the early black press in South Africa from 1901 to 1915?
- b) What forms and models of journalism did the early black press take? What shaped the commercial operations of the early black press?
- c) How does the early black press convene its publics, and what role does language play in the creation of African publics?

4. Rationale/Significance of the study

As a key figure in South African journalism, Sol Plaatje played a significant role in shaping African media during a crucial period of colonialism. As the editor of three newspapers, a study of his work provides valuable and rare insights into the inner workings of the early black press, an area of study that has been largely neglected by scholars of journalism. Through this study, connections can be made and early journalism can be located in the debates about the public sphere, forms of journalism, language, and the socio-political environment of early 20th-century South Africa. To emphasise, some aspects of the content of Plaatje's newspapers have been examined before such as his role as an investigative journalist in the face of 1913 Land Act, as well as attitude to labour, gender and class by the likes of Limb (2000); Limb (2003); Limb (2016) and Willan (2018). This project takes the work further by, among others, studying the use of language. As a first-language Setswana speaker, my analysis aims to make an original contribution to scholarship.

This project leans on the scholarship of the early black press that deals with black sociability, consumption, and African political thought, an approach that has not been applied to the journalism of Plaatje before. Therefore, the study presented an opportunity to apply Afrocentricity theories as advanced by the likes of Molefi Kete Asante, Kehbama Langmia, Maulana Karenga, Ama Mazama, and Kimani Nehusi. These are useful in explaining uniquely African qualities that Eurocentric theory fails to address sufficiently.

The aforementioned stems from a concern by Langmia that many scholars interested in black communication find themselves at a crossroads, either using a Western-driven theory to explain a black communication dynamic or employing a hypothetical rule to achieve their objectives, as they cannot find compelling black communication theories. He notes that this creates confusion in the communication field (Langmia, 2018, p. 3).

When explaining how the Africana Studies theory applies the African-centred methodology, Molefi Asante identifies five characteristics: 1. The researcher prioritises locating African people within the context of the phenomena to be studied. 2. The researcher is committed to finding the place of the African as a subject. 3. The researcher heartily defends African culture. 4. The researcher is committed to using appropriate language, and 5. The researcher is committed to creating a new African narrative that critiques the Eurocentric view of Africa and its people (Hopkinson & Myers, 2018, p. 221).

The Africana Studies theory is centred around a critique of Eurocentric hegemony, a deference for the agency of Africana people, and a call for action for social justice. Furthermore, the African-centred methodology, as espoused by Asante, provides a sturdy theoretical foundation for quantitative, qualitative, and critical research within several fields. Afrocentric methodologies are designed to investigate pertinent research questions in a legitimate and effective manner, particularly those that incorporate embedded assumptions about race and culture (Hopkinson & Myers, 2018, p. 221).

Since language is inextricably linked to communication and the practice of journalism, the utilisation of the Afro-Cultural Mulatto Communication Theory, advanced by Langmia is beneficial in thinking about how language is experienced in Plaatje's newspapers. This theory posits that 'natives' of a given Western-driven city in Africa sacrifice their native mother tongue to accommodate the materially powerful expatriate by using oral Creole/Pidgin. Secondly, the 'natives' are communicatively handicapped to interculturally communicate with expatriates in English/French or other Western language. Thirdly, expatriates can sometimes feel compelled to learn Creole or Pidgin for interpersonal communication in the African hinterlands. Fourthly, Western-educated African city dwellers born and raised in Africa effectively communicate with expatriates both verbally and in written texts.

The level of contextual code-switching for African city dwellers, as depicted above, is socio-psychologically burdensome and painful due to the objective they wish to attain, which is surviving in a hegemonic, Western-driven society in Africa (Langmia, 2018, p. 100). The melange or hybridity generates a new communicative process in a given geo-cultural setting in Africa, manifesting at both the level of language and communication systems. The interactants of the new language that emerges (migrant youth, visitors, expatriates, native and educated elites) subscribe to it and identify meaning exchange. The vocabulary or lexical creation of the verbal communicative strands evolves daily, depending on the communicative contexts and the interactants involved (Langmia, 2018, p. 100). The co-creation that emerges from the interlocutors in the interpersonal and group communication setting gains a life of its own and penetrates the dialects and languages of the socio-cultural environments.

The study also opens new pathways to rethink the relationship between writers and readers, who, according to Karin Barber, 'did not necessarily know each other, and even if they did (as inevitably happened in a small new elite educated in the same schools) this fact did not constitute the sole basis of their interaction' (Barber, 2007, p. 159). They met as 'fellow

participants in the interchanges conducted through public media, a space that was new and fragile'. Barber called it 'the face of a new, dislocated, uprooted and ideologically fissured class' (Barber, 2007, p. 159).

This study seeks to examine the form and practice of journalism and the constitution of publics in an African colonial setting. It does so in a novel way by integrating different theoretical approaches and borrowing from other disciplines, such as history and linguistics, to generate new insights about the crucial post-South African War period that led to the establishment of the Union of South Africa and the devastating impact of the Natives Land Act of 1913 on the segregated African population.

This work is significant for its potential to advance a new framework for thinking about Plaatje as a key figure in journalism history, examined through the lens of media theory and journalism history. As Willan and Mokae have noted, in recent years, literary scholars have devoted more attention to Plaatje than historians (Willan & Mokae, 2020, xiv). Furthermore, the study will examine the workings of how the early black press in South Africa operated as both a commercial enterprise and a tool for convening publics. The practical implications of the study may lead to a coherent interdisciplinary knowledge pool with the possibility of impacting areas of black history, African studies, communications, linguistics and social studies.

5. The universe of Plaatje's newspapers

Plaatje worked as an interpreter/clerk for the magistrate in Mafeking in the years 1898 to 1902. He was close to the chiefly Molema family of the Barolong booRatshidi, with whom he lived during the South African War in a house named Maratiwa in the Stadt – an area for black residents of Mafeking. He was invited by Silas T. Molema to write and edit his newly acquired *Koranta ea Becoana* newspaper, which Molema had spent £2 500 to set up in its office in Mafeking's Main Street. His vision was for *Koranta* to do for Batswana what *Imvo Zabantsundu*, edited by John Tengo Jabavu, did for the Xhosa and Mfengu people and *Leselinyana la Lesotho* for the Basotho. Plaatje edited the paper and ran the office because of his known prowess as a writer. Although he started clandestinely in 1901, it was not until 1902 that he formally resigned from the civil service to take over the responsibilities. He would visit Molema in the evening to read him white newspapers, and Silas would agree or disagree with their content (Molema, 2022, p. 54).

The *Koranta* office appears to have been a hub of activity, with staff, readers, and advertisers all contributing to the foot traffic. Adverts in *Koranta* suggest that readers could walk in to

renew their subscription, buy copies of the newspaper, and purchase some goods that appeared on the pages of the paper. Plaatje often referred to his team in *Koranta*, although never by names, who ran the machines and ensured that the paper was printed and packaged for distribution. In addition, Plaatje had much ground to cover and had the services of correspondents, some of whom acted as agents, mailing him via the post. Coverage was provided from the main towns of Kimberley, Thaba Ncho, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, and the towns in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, such as Kanye and Molepolole. The agents also sent money from selling the newspaper to the *Koranta* office via post.

Plaatje had set up exchange programmes with other newspapers for a smooth and symbiotic syndication of content. These included such titles as *Imvo*, *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, *South African Spectator*, *Izwi La Bantu*, *Ilanga lase Natal* and international titles from the United Kingdom (UK) and especially from the US, taking writing on the African-American experience, such as that of John Edward Bruce from Washington, DC (Willan, 2018, p. 172).

While there is limited information available on how the newsroom functioned, one can glean some insights into the social history of the operation from Willan. He writes that Plaatje was assisted by a staff of four or five people who were all Africans, ‘an achievement in which Plaatje took much pride, given the scepticism expressed by many local whites that the paper could function without their help’ (Willan, 2018, p. 167). Some of the names Willan mentions are James (Ramokoto) Plaatje, his younger brother; Isaiah Makgothi, a compositor who was a Lovedale graduate from Thaba Ncho; James Mpinda, who worked at *Mafeking Mail* and the earlier *Koranta* newssheet; Henry Mtotoba, who served as a labourer; and a man called Salatiele, who was fired after two weeks for forging Silas Molema’s signature on a cheque he tried to cash. Willan reiterates that Molema did not get involved in the day-to-day running of the paper because of his many other engagements, leaving Plaatje to make editorial decisions and update him (Molema) where necessary (Willan, 2018, pp. 167–168). Figure 2 shows Sol Plaatje and the team behind *Koranta ea Becoana* in Mafikeng.



Figure 1: Sol Plaatje (circled) and the team behind *Koranta ea Becoana* in Mafikeng

Notes. To the right is his wife, Elizabeth and next to her is the proprietor, Silas T. Molema. The others have not been identified.

Source: Courtesy of Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand

In this section, I set out to bring context and understanding of the nexus Plaatje formed as a basis for the reader to understand the content of the newspapers. This will be achieved through the profiles and makeup of the towns that were the nerve centre of coverage, target audiences, and advertisers.

It is important to bear in mind just how far apart and diverse these towns of ‘the Kimberley-Thaba Nchu circle’, as Ntongela Masilela calls it, were. Masilela identified the intellectuals from this group as Plaatje, Isaiah Bud-M’belle, Silas Modiri Molema, Mina Soga, and Griffiths Motsieloa. For the purposes of this study, I call it the ‘Setswana/Rolong Triangle’.

In the current map of South Africa, the three towns of Mafikeng, Thaba Ncho, and Kimberley are situated in the three different provinces of North West, Free State, and Northern Cape, each with its own official languages, identities, cultures, and economic challenges. One can imagine how different they were at the turn of the century. Mafikeng is located near the border of Botswana, and the distance to Thaba Ncho, which is in the Free State, near the Lesotho border, is approximately 504 km. The distance from Mafikeng to Kimberley in the Northern Cape is approximately 364 km, while the distance between Thaba Ncho and Kimberley is about 226 km. The areas are spread out, and managing such a vast, fractured, and complex audience would be a challenge for Plaatje.



Figure 2: The Setswana/Rolong Triangle

Note: Mafikeng is in North West province near the border with Botswana (formerly Bechuanaland Protectorate). The town of Thaba Ncho in the eastern Free State province between Bloemfontein in the west and Lesotho in the east. Kimberley is situated in the Northern Cape province in the far west of Thaba Ncho.

Source: Courtesy of Pinterest

The content in the three newspapers is from the three main centres: Mafikeng (including the Bechuanaland Protectorate), Thaba Ncho (including Bloemfontein and Basutoland), and Kimberley, a commercial centre built on the discovery of diamonds some three decades earlier. Other places such as Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, and Cape Town, as main centres of politics and economy, received a prominent position in *Koranta* as well as the smaller towns of Potchefstroom, Klerksdorp and Rustenburg, Port Elizabeth, East London, King William's Town, and Pietermaritzburg. The following section provides a brief context for the political and historical background of the three main centres, setting the scene for the protagonist's stage, so to speak.

5.1 *Kimberley*

The land where **Kimberley** stands was long occupied by Setswana speakers and Khoisan groups of the Griqua and Koranna peoples. Andre Odendaal writes about the traffic of goods and ideas, trade and communication routes with Europeans opening up a ‘missionary road’, as mission stations were set up in Philippolis, Griquatown, Kuruman, and Mafikeng (Odendaal, 2012, p. 176). The discovery of diamonds near Hopetown in 1867 would accelerate the population explosion in the diamond-bearing territory that Britain annexed and called Griqualand West. Kimberley ‘became a centre with a polyglot of cultures and people’. Odendaal quotes Rev. Gwayi Tyamzashe, who compared the bustling, crowded streets of Kimberley with what he read of London, but also that ‘this place was only good for those who were resolved to sell their souls for silver, gold and precious stones... or the pleasures of a time’ (Odendaal, 2012, p. 178). Kimberley had the trappings of a city as it laid out a permanent water supply from the Vaal River in 1881. The railway line from Cape Town was completed in 1885, and the compound system for the mines was introduced in 1887 (Odendaal, 2012, p. 178). Kimberley attracted labourers and mission-educated blacks, who were employed in the best-paid jobs for Africans – interpreters, clerks, teachers, ministers, and entrepreneurs. As the post office expanded, graduates from Lovedale were recruited to work there in ‘prestigious postings denoting progress at a time of revolution in communications’ (Odendaal, 2012, p. 179). Several churches, clubs, choirs, and societies sprang up, and a 19-year-old Sol Plaatje became the joint secretary of Eccentrics Cricket Club in 1895.

Odendaal makes an interesting point that Kimberley was focused on innovation rather than tradition, as people ‘readily crossed boundaries and embraced change’, where matters of colour, nationality, language, or religion were not considered (Odendaal, 2012, p. 180). A case in point is how the New Africans transcended divides – for example, Plaatje, a Motswana, married a Xhosa-speaking Mfengu bride, Elizabeth M’belle, sister of Isaiah Bud-M’belle who shared a house with Plaatje in the Malay Camp. This happened despite heated protests from both the groom and bride’s families.

The concept of the ‘New African’ comes from the work of Ntongela Masilela who argues that this new class of Africans was led by South African intellectuals who, while educated in European missionary schools, sought to shape a uniquely African modernity in opposition to colonialism and Eurocentrism. Drawing inspiration from African-American thinkers, these

intellectuals aimed to regenerate African society by integrating modern ideas with traditional values (Masilela, 2013, p. 1).

These New Africans who were literate and Christian emerged on the back of the evangelical and educational work of the missionaries so that ‘by the 1880s there were several thousand Batswana attending schools and churches affiliated to various mission organisations in the interior of southern Africa’. The literates and chiefs contributed to newspapers run by missionaries such as *Mahoko a Becwana*, whereby they located themselves in a changing cultural environment and laid bare the intersection between tradition and mission-educated intellectual ‘as the networks of literacy and the new ways spread steadily throughout southern Africa’ (Odendaal, 2012, p. 177).

The slogan of Cecil John Rhodes, ‘equal rights for all civilised men south of the Zambesi’, became the mantra for the new age African politicians who held up Cape liberal values (Odendaal, 2012, p. 182). Although he had rather different ideas to Rhodes about what this meant in practice, Plaatje so strongly believed in these values.

5.2 *Mafikeng*

Facing north-east of Kimberley is the town of **Mafikeng**, which was founded by Isaac Molema in the mid-19th century and became a centre of Methodism and literacy. Isaac Molema was the father of Silas Molema, the man who would later fund Plaatje’s *Koranta ea Becwana* (Moguerane, 2024, p. 4). Situated on the banks of Molopo River, Chief Isaac Molema was later joined by his brother, Chief Montsioa, who made Methodism the ‘state religion’ in the 1880s (Odendaal, 2012, p. 177). As Moguerane puts it: ‘Montsioa publicly declared “spiritual freedom” in an effort to draw WMMS [Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society] missionaries to Mafikeng as allies in the war [first Boer War]. He declared Methodism the official religion in his kingdom’ (Moguerane, 2024, p. 52).

Silas, the Healdtown graduate, set up a school in Mafikeng in 1879. Moguerane describes him as the wealthy preacher, schoolmaster, and trusted administrator to the chief as a hardworking young man who ‘graduated with a third-class certificate in 1877’. When Isaac died in 1882, Silas ‘took over the congregation’ and grew it from 270 members to 1 200 in eight years (Moguerane, 2024, p. 56). The Molema household displayed the trappings of a well-to-do noble family, as Moguerane writes:

His [Silas Molema] line of business was transport. He owned probably the largest fleet of wagons and carts in Bechuanaland. The British administrative centre in colonial Bechuanaland was Mafeking, a town of mainly European settlement that adjoined the western border of the Molopo Reserve. The Molemas did some of their shopping here, but there were many other centres of trade across the border in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. The invoices of the Molemas' household purchases from the late 1880s have coffee, tea and chicory as staple purchases. Poor families rarely enjoyed these beverages. The Molemas' list of purchases was long but they never included alcohol. (Moguerane, 2024, p. 58)

Mafeking became a strategic colonial settlement, serving as a gateway northward to the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Rhodesia, as well as to the Transvaal to the east (Odendaal, 2012, p. 177). Cecil John Rhodes called it the 'Suez Canal' of the trade to the north (Molema, 1966, p. 159).

Following the Warren Expedition in 1884¹, the new Crown Colony of British Bechuanaland was declared in 1885 and included Mafikeng and the southern Tswana areas west of the Boer republics. The Bechuanaland Protectorate was declared in 1895 after representations of the three *dikgosi* (chiefs) Khama, Sechele, and Bathoen in London opposed Rhodes and prevented his British South Africa Company from annexing Bechuanaland (Odendaal, 2012, pp. 184, 244). Moguerane says the reserves of the British Bechuanaland, especially the Barolong territories, remained in the control of the indigenous people and were not Crown lands, and so were exempted from the Native Locations Act of 1884; as such, they did not pay hut tax – the British recognised the chiefs and interfered 'as little as possible' in their administration. In summary, 'the Barolong territories were autonomous and chiefly jurisdictions within the British Empire' (Moguerane, 2024, p. 54). The lands of the Barolong, as early as the 1880s until the South African War, stretched from the Molopo Reserve, the independent Barolong Farms, and the freehold farms beyond the reserves. These lands were ceded to the Cape Colony by the British a decade after they were annexed (Moguerane, 2024, p. 55). However, after a protest from Chief Montsioa, it was agreed that the British South African Company led by Rhodes would not have jurisdiction in the Barolong territories. There were also gains to be

¹ The Warren Expedition refers to a mission undertaken by Sir Charles Warren on the appointment by Earl Derby as Special Commissioner of Bechuanaland on 15 October 1884 'to remove the filibusters from Bechuanaland, to restore order in the territory, to re-instate the native chiefs on their lands, to take such measures as may be necessary to prevent further depredations, and finally to hold the country until its further destination is known' (Molema, 1966, p. 155).

celebrated because the Cape Colony annexation brought to ‘the literate and propertied chiefs’ the Cape’s liberal franchise, which meant that ‘they were straddling two forms of government seamlessly as rulers of relatively autonomous chiefly jurisdictions... and as a constituency with representation in the Cape’s House of Assembly’ (Moguerane, 2024, p. 58).

As mentioned earlier, Plaatje moved from Kimberley in 1898 to become a clerk and interpreter to the civil magistrate in Mafikeng. He lived with Silas Molema and enjoyed his support in the position he was appointed for (Odendaal, 2012, p. 177). Silas welcomed Plaatje to play some critical roles only a son could play, making him part of the family (Moguerane, 2024, p. 5). Moguerane further explores this relationship and says:

the Molemas believed that they had divine revelation of what was required to be in the ‘sacred’ realm of personhood, and not in the ‘profane’, inconsequential order of mere things – trees, dreams, animals. To their followers, like Solomon Plaatje, the Molemas could be ‘saviours’, figures of conscience, able to lead the moral struggle to preserve personhood in times when they felt the *morafe* was diminishing. The Molemas could be ‘fathers’, assembling the *morafe* into a house of vigour, nourishment and pride (2024, p. 24).

Moguerane further says Molema and Plaatje ‘embraced the British Empire as the political home for the *morafe* of the “Bechuana”’ (Moguerane, 2024, p. 26).

Moguerane’s concept of ‘*morafe*’ is translated as ‘nation’, ‘tribe’, or ‘people’ and encapsulates ‘an ethical boundary outside of which an individual has no capacity for personhood’ (Moguerane, 2024, p. 2). In other words, this is a commonwealth for the greater good of nationhood. Moguerane speculates that educated frontier families such as the Plaatjes and Molemas ‘would have loathed the labels such as “black Victorians” or “black Englishmen” that historians would later attach to them in light of their everyday tastes and lifestyles’. Instead, she says, they assembled ‘a new social infrastructure of personhood’ (Moguerane, 2024, p. 17).

Mafeking emerged from the siege of 1899 to 1900, a historic and newsworthy event, as a centre of excellence and the administrative capital of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, as well as the stronghold of the Barolong and the centre of their progress and seat of power. Just like many civilisations around the world that were rooted in a river, Mafikeng also had the Molopo River, which was ‘a streamlet that flowed between December and April... and ceased to flow in May’, but the town relied on it as a source of water for crops and to keep it rejuvenated and invigorated (Koranta, 16 December 1903, p. 6). It is a town at the crossroads, a meeting point for those in

transit going up north, down south, eastwards, or westwards (*Koranta*, 17 January 1903, p. 7). When writing about the town, Hon. P.M. Laurence noted: 'Mafeking is one of the best and most peaceable towns to live in this colony. Whites and blacks live together absolutely without any friction' (*Koranta*, 14 March 1903, p. 4).

The town, while it did not have a dedicated column for the social life in *Koranta*, it documented the Wesleyan church services well. It also seemed to attract and revel in visitations from international and local guests. The visit of Joseph Chamberlain, the British Secretary of Colonies, in January 1903 brought much merriment as Batswana leaders such as Bathoeng, Lentsue and Sebele descended on the town to meet the guest (*Koranta*, 31 January 1903, p.3). When the African-American Bishop Levi J. Coppin of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church came to Mafikeng with his wife Mrs Fannie Jackson-Coppin and were hosted at the Masonic Hall, there was much fanfare and excitement with Plaatje acting as translator (*Koranta*, 23 May 1903, pp. 4–5). A cheeky description of the arrival by 'train from the south' of Mrs Alexander Ngwabeni of Molimola also known as Madam Cilia accompanied by her mother-in-law who was not named, drew 'a concourse of chiefs' to welcome her. She was then transported in a carriage while her mother-in-law was in a wagon. Ngwabeni is said to have been 'too lofty to greet her former friends and benefactors.' The author concludes the story with the words 'Fly higher, Madam Cilia. We wish you a safe passage on the clouds and trust your pinions will not give way' (*Koranta*, 1 August 1903, p. 5). This passage reveals a bit more about the characters that populated and passed through Mafikeng and how they were received.

5.3 *Thaba Ncho*

Thaba Ncho was an area of importance for the nascent African nationalist movement. Three notable aspects define Thaba Ncho: It was a Setswana-speaking (Serolong dialect) settlement situated between Bloemfontein and Basutoland (now Lesotho) in a region where Afrikaans was the language of authority and Sesotho was the predominant mother tongue. It was unique in the OFS for being the sole district where Africans owned land through freehold rights. It was home to two out of the three small African reserves found in the colony (Murray, 1992, p. 5). It is here, in 1834, that Wesleyan Methodist missionaries helped settle the Setswana-speaking Barolong booSeleka under Chief Moroka, who migrated from Motlhanapitse (elsewhere reported as Plaatberg), approximately six miles east of Warrenton in present-day Northern Cape (Molema, 1966, pp. 24–26). In the 1870s Thaba Ncho had over '1,200 square miles of valuable arable and pasture land (Murray, 1992, p. 12). It became a citadel of education and Christianity.

The Wesleyans had over 1 000 members by the end of the 1870s. Thaba Ncho was annexed by the Boer Free State Republic on 12 July 1884, after the death of Chief Moroka, and the land was alienated and privatised. Afrikaners acquired a sizeable portion, and some chiefs sold their farms to whites and moved away. Odendaal records that by 1900, there were 54 farms owned by Barolong, two native locations at Seleka and Thaba Ncho, and a number of white and government-owned farms (Odendaal, 2012, p. 283). The main staple was sorghum porridge, but people also grew crops such as maize, wheat, beans, pumpkins, melons, and sugar cane. They imported grain from Basutoland and sold sheep's wool. Some individuals found work in the Diamond Fields, while others accepted annual or seasonal labour contracts on white-owned farms in neighbouring districts of the OFS (Murray, 1992, p. 12). Important political leaders in the 20th century, such as Joel Goronyane, who owned three farms and whose father was the headman of the Thaba Ncho native reserve (Odendaal, 2012, p. 283); Chief W.Z. Fenyang (full names Walton Zacharias); Moses Masisi; and John Mokitlane Nyokong, emerged from Thaba Ncho and found editorial expression and ownership in the newspapers that Plaatje edited as members of the Thaba Ncho syndicate. Nyokong was a wealthy landowner whose properties included a farm called Maseru. Jeremiah Makgothi was the brother-in-law of Moses Masisi. Makgothi was a Lovedale graduate and a headmaster of the first boarding school in Thaba Ncho for African boys, and he helped translate the New Testament to Setswana. His granddaughter was ANC struggle icon Ellen Kuzwayo (Odendaal, 2012, pp. 171–172).

In *Koranta*, Thaba Ncho is described as a booming town since the 'recent introduction of a railway line', which resulted in *Koranta* reaching readers quickly, with most people reading it by Tuesday. It was published on Saturdays. 'There are many white traders and the town is being developed. Thaba Ncho Hotel is always filled with guests... the streets of the town are being repaired and fences going up', the writer noted (*Koranta*, 25 April 1903, p. 7). To complete a picture of prosperity, the river that runs through Thaba Ncho is reported to be flowing just as it did when Barolong reached this land from Motlhanapitse.

The social life included concerts at the Wesleyan church with an entrance fee of one shilling for adults and sixpence for children; the proceeds went towards the renovation of the church. Entertainment included Mr W.Z. Fenyang on the organ. Fenyang is described by Murray as 'the pillar of the political establishment at Thaba Ncho' and who accommodated Plaatje when Plaatje's 'financial resources for the journey were exhausted' when he documented the effects of 1913 Land Act across the OFS (1992, pp. 107, 87). Among the vocalists would be Rev. J. Motshumi, Mr I.M. Goronyane, Miss Dorcas Kale, Miss Lydia Mekoa, Edith Mothupi, and Mr

Hosea P. Tlhakung as Basso profundo. The Wesleyan church hosted their quarterly conventions. The money collected in the quarter amounted to £179 5s 10d, and after deducting the expenses, the church was left with £54 16s 4d (*Koranta*, 25 April 1903, p. 7). One can deduce that Thaba Ncho was a thriving community at the turn of the century, with Barolong owning land and progressing towards prosperity. *Koranta* found itself an audience that would support it and stay loyal for a long time. The column of Maronopo a Thaba Ncho (The pickings of Thaba Ncho) remained a feature in the newspaper, providing further rich glimpses into this hive of activity despite the challenges.

The bustle of Bloemfontein is also captured from the disease outbreaks, natural disasters, court cases, sermons, conferences hosted and visitations. *Koranta* received a lot of correspondence from the readers and agents in the city.

Reports from Lesotho included the politics and administration of government, progress of students at Morija College, and visitations.

In conclusion, Sol Plaatje's newspapers were in a unique situation, serving a diverse range of audiences spread over a large geographical area and with significant influence. Kimberley, as a cosmopolitan urban centre of commerce governed by a municipality, had dynamics vastly different from the traditional settings of Mafikeng Stadt and the villages of the Bechuanaland Protectorate under chiefly and imperial rule. On the other hand, Thaba Ncho was a semi-urban settlement with a vibrant social life. These different districts and locales experienced varying positions in the new society; some were moved from one administration to another in quick succession, for example, from imperial to colonial and then to Union. This had a bearing on news gathering, distribution, and circulation. Additionally, the different districts and readers brought together under one publication posed a rare challenge in constructing a cohesive public sphere that shared a common language of Setswana, fractured by dialects and totemic allegiances.

6. Literature review

6.1 Introduction

This study aims to reimagine the autodidactic Solomon Plaatje and examine his contributions to South African journalism. Through the newspapers he edited, *Koranta ea Becoana*, *Tsala ea Becoana*, and *Tsala ea Batho*, Plaatje was a pioneer in South African journalism. It is worth noting the significance of *Koranta*, which Plaatje embarked on as a joint venture with Silas Molema. He brought the editorial skill and know-how, while Molema was the financial muscle. It would be the first commercial newspaper to be completely under black control in South Africa.

As argued above, there are few studies into Plaatje's newspapers from a historical or social sciences perspective. This study, however, seeks to employ theories of journalism using publics and public sphere as well as forms and models of journalism as lenses from which to read Plaatje's newspapers over a nine-year period.

The researcher also set out to map the literature on several facets of Plaatje as a towering literary figure, a political icon and an African nationalist. A great deal has been written about Plaatje, and his biographical canon – led by his biographer, Brian Willan – is rich with material. The same can be said of works that analyse and critique his literary output, as well as scholarship on his position as a political figure – the first secretary-general of the South African Native National Congress, the forerunner of the ANC.

The second historical aspect to be examined is how the black press functioned and Plaatje's role in it as a pioneering black newspaperman, specifically focusing on the editor's role in the black press tradition. This chapter also examines what has been written about form by other researchers in the realm of the black press to provide context and insights into how such newspapers were presented to the readers and what the interface was like.

6.2 Theoretical framework

This theoretical framework uses interdisciplinary approaches to analyse Plaatje's journalistic work. The study examined his editorial contributions through four main perspectives: the Public Sphere, Postcolonial Theory, African Journalism Studies and Afrocentricity. These frameworks shed light on Plaatje's efforts to promote African awareness, support political activism, and criticise colonialism in the media during his era. By utilising the theories, this

study aims to provide a thorough analysis of Sol Plaatje's impact on South African journalism, exploring his editorial work as both a historical artefact and a strategic and politically involved practice that influenced African journalism, resistance to colonialism, and the development of African identity in early 20th-century South Africa. This theoretical approach enables a profound examination of Plaatje's journalistic legacy and its ongoing significance in current media dialogues in South Africa.

6.2.1 *The Public Sphere*

Jürgen Habermas is a German philosopher and sociologist who espoused the concept of the public sphere. In his seminal work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), which was translated from German to English in 1989, Habermas argues that the public sphere is a space where individuals come together as equals to discuss and deliberate on matters of common interest, forming public opinion through rational-critical debate. This engagement happens independently from state control. Habermas located this bourgeois public space in the coffeehouses, salons, and publications of 18th-century Europe. Individuals discussed politics, literature, and issues affecting society, thereby yielding a public that was critical. For this to thrive, the spaces had to be free from undue political, state, or corporate influence. They had to be accessible and inclusive, treating all participants as equals, and the discussions had to be rational and not coerced. These conditions were crucial for a legitimate democracy, where the citizens could make informed decisions and hold the officials accountable.

Habermas noted that the public sphere began its decline in the 19th century and continued into the 20th, as the media became commercialised and prioritised profit and entertainment over rational and critical debate. Additionally, the rise of corporate influence in the form of public relations also muddied the waters with propaganda and advertising. The result was a dearth of active participation in rational discourse and the emergence of a passive consumer. Habermas's theory has evoked debate, praise, and criticism in equal measure, as will be discussed in the forthcoming sections. Some of the censure centres around elitism, exclusion of women, and the marginalised racial minorities as well as lower classes. In response, critics such as Nancy Fraser have argued for 'counterpublic' spheres, which have evolved into terms such as 'subaltern' and others of a similar nature. A detailed discussion of the public sphere and its application to the black press is presented in Section 6.5.

6.2.2 *Postcolonial Theory*

The work of scholars such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Frantz Fanon provide important perspectives that are useful in understanding how Plaatje's journalism challenged and undermined colonial power. Said is considered the pioneer of this theory, although other influential figures, such as Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, also played a significant role. Said's book, *Orientalism*, published in 1978, brought his name to prominence and established the foundation for the theory of postcolonialism. This sparked considerable controversy that continued even after his passing (Hamadi, 2014).

According to Hamadi (2014), Said's theory of postcolonialism is based on the idea that the West had created a false image of the Orient or the East. This image was constructed by Western explorers, poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators since Napoleon's occupation of Egypt in 1798. According to Said, the Orient has always been portrayed as primitive and uncivilised in contrast to the advanced and civilised West. In this influential work, Said argues that Orientalism is a way of thinking that creates a distinction between the Orient and the Occident. This discourse has been used to justify military campaigns and colonialism against the Orient, as well as the atrocities that come with them.

Said believes that the effects of colonialism, such as chaos, corruption, civil wars, and bloodshed, continue to persist even after direct colonial rule ended. Said criticises the way colonialists imposed their language and culture on the Oriental peoples while ignoring and distorting their cultures, histories, values, and languages. He is frustrated by how Orientalists stereotype diverse cultures and erase their distinctions, portraying them all as the same 'Other' in contrast to the 'Us', the Occidental. Overall, Said's argument is that the legacy of colonialism continues to impact many countries today, perpetuating inequalities and injustices that originated from the colonial era (Hamadi, 2014). Postcolonial theory explores how media can be used to resist and undo colonialism.

Some postcolonial theorists believe that colonialism frequently forced colonised people to adopt singular narratives because of the subjugating colonial identity and imposition (Fanon, 1963; Said, 1979; Spivak, 1988). However, media can also contain multiple narratives where the colonised speak for themselves on their own terms. The application of this theory to Plaatje's newspapers alerts me to the ways in which the newspaper narratives support, challenge, or reshape singular narratives.

The term 'Subaltern' was first introduced by Antonio Gramsci to describe groups that are under the control of dominant classes. Gramsci focused on the history of these non-elite or subordinate social groups, arguing that their history was just as intricate as that of the ruling classes. Subaltern studies had already taken root in India by 1982 spearheaded by Ranajit Guha. The 1985 work *Can the Subaltern Speak?* by Gayatri Spivak further developed this concept and gained her attention. The idea of the subaltern and subaltern studies became prominent in postcolonial studies through the research of the subaltern studies group, a team of South Asian historians who examined the political roles of ordinary people rather than elites in South Asian history.

Marxist historians have also explored colonial history from the perspective of the working class, emphasising economic relations in defining social classes. Spivak's ideas have been expanded upon in *Geographies of Post-Colonialism* (2008), suggesting that Western intellectuals often dismiss non-Western forms of knowledge as myth or folklore, relegating them to the sidelines of intellectual discussions. To be recognised, subaltern groups may feel the need to adopt Western ways of thinking, reasoning, and language. Gayatri Spivak's idea of the subaltern is used to investigate whether, and in what ways, Plaatje's newspapers served as a way to give a voice to those who were marginalised by colonial systems.

6.2.3 African Journalism Studies

African Journalism Studies offer a framework to examine the growth of journalism in Africa, specifically looking at the roles of African journalists in nation-building and their resistance to colonial rule. Plaatje's newspapers played a crucial role in shaping African journalism and promoting social change. His early form of journalism aimed to tackle important social, political, and cultural issues affecting the African population in South Africa. By examining his work, a better understanding can be gained of the significance of African journalism in efforts to imagine a black nation. This framework examines how Plaatje influenced future generations of African journalists and editors. His contributions to journalism and the fight for African rights are crucial. This study analyses how his editorial methods influenced African journalistic practices, especially in investigative reporting, advocacy journalism, and media ethics.

Ntongela Masilela identifies Plaatje's journalism as a platform for political advocacy, particularly in relation to the 1913 Natives Land Act. Masilela holds that the articles in *Tsala*

ea Batho were not only descriptive but polemical, as they mobilised resistance against injustice. This was also evident in the 1916 book *Native Life in South Africa*, which was aimed to rally international support against the Act. Masilela regards the book as an extension of Plaatje's journalistic forms (Masilela, 2013).

African journalism is closely connected to the interaction between language, audience, and cultural representation. Plaatje used Setswana, English, and isiXhosa in his newspapers to reach a diverse range of African audiences and challenge the dominance of colonial languages. This aspect of his work can be examined in the context of African-language journalism and its ability to empower African communities through easily understandable media.

6.2.4 *Afrocentricity*

The seminal work of Molefi Asante, theorist and founder of Afrocentricity, has led to a philosophical and paradigmatic shift in African studies, infiltrating communication, history, and literature. Emerging in the 1970s, Asante's main arguments in his book *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (1980) are the centrality of Africans in their culture, history, and perspective in narratives. While not anti-European, he counters the pervasive Eurocentric frameworks that minimise African agency and validity. This theory has been promoted as a response to how African agency was marginalised by enslavement, diktats of colonialism, and the European hegemony that was adopted as universal. It posits that Africans are 'subjects and not objects' of their history and narratives.

Afrocentricity establishes a link with the ancient African civilisation of Kemet (Egypt) as a base. Influenced by the work of Cheikh Anta Diop, who authored *The African Origin of Civilization*, it presented a convincing case that the scientific advances, including the construction of the pyramids as late as 2500 BCE, were hallmarks of a black African civilisation. This is so because ancient Egypt was peopled by black Africans long before the Arab, Greek, or Roman invasions of the AD era.

The African epistemological, cosmological, and axiological assertions and mores have been prioritised in an effort to reconnect the continent with its true identity. One of these is the polysemic ethical and moral thought of 'Maat', which teaches the ideals of truth, righteousness, reciprocity, balance, harmony, justice, and order. Its etymology suggests straightness, evenness, and correctness – an interrelated order of rightness of things (Karenga, 1994, pp. 7,11). Applying Maat in understanding the journalistic practices of Plaatje and the audience he served

is a useful tool as it is rooted in ancient African society. Maat has been equated to the Setswana concept of botho, also known as ubuntu in Nguni languages. Botho puts balance, harmony, justice, order and reciprocity at the centre of human relations, recognising that ‘I am, because we are.’ It promotes truth and righteousness as Maat advocates.

Afrocentricity challenges scholarship to acknowledge African contributions and perspectives, and it is a lens I apply as part of the rationale for this study and validates the work that I do. It is a prompt to continually focus on centring African agency rather than applied uncritically in all its components. Chapter 12 provides a detailed discussion of Afrocentricity.

The critics of Asante such as Tunde Adeleke and Kwame Appiah have to be acknowledged. They have pointed out that Afrocentricity presents a romanticised and idyllic view of Africa that overlooks the diversity and contradictions of its people and that its racist perspective undermines the intellectual capacity of individuals (Appiah, 1992; Adeleke, 1998). Abidemi Ogunyomi argues against how Afrocentricity glosses over language which bears an identity crisis in that a European language is used in communication instead of an African lingua franca and this further defeats the purpose of the issue of asserting African agency that they seek to address (2024, p. 8).

6.3 *Plaatje biographical studies*

‘Plaatje was a big person – bigger than the mission station, Pniel, where he was born, bigger than Mafikeng. Plaatje inspired wonder and curiosity and a desire to stretch one’s wings’ (Moguerane, 2024, p. 143).

Much has been written about Plaatje as an individual and a historical figure, most of which has been biographical. This has in turn generated what one may consider a biographical ‘canon’. This canon presents different portraits, interpretations, and framing of the personality of Plaatje as well as his accomplishments. Examining this canon is helpful in efforts to reimagine Plaatje and contributes to an understanding of the figure based on the depictions and imaginings of him that have been documented. It assists in framing the researcher’s approach to the question of Plaatje’s newspapers, his role as an editor, and how he negotiated his way in a colonial state. Furthermore, the canon holds some clues to the research questions already articulated.

Ciraj Rassool argues that the South African cultural landscape was given a ‘biographic character’ at the turn of the millennium with ‘the life of leaders a central focus’. Biography would serve as one of ‘the chief modes of negotiating the past in the public domain’ and became a ‘central feature of stories of resistance and reconciliation, recovered as the basis of nation-building in the new South Africa [...] in constituting a phalanx of public history projects at the apex of South Africa’s heritage landscape’ (Rassool, 2004, p. 272).

After the struggle against colonialism and apartheid, an act of restoration had to happen whereby the ‘hidden history’ and ‘submerged experiences of blacks, women, peasants, and workers’ had to be recovered and written into history (Rassool, 2004, p. 108). This meant a recuperation of the erased experiences, a recovery of what had, for many decades – if not centuries – been denied and distorted. The agency of Africans, especially their ‘inventive political responses’ and ‘innovative forms of action’ was explored, and they were not only portrayed as ‘passive victims of colonisation, oppression and segregation’ (Rassool, 2004, pp. 109-110). According to Rassool (2004, p. 110), ‘Black opposition, particularly before the 1950s, was seen as varied, fragmented, richer, more diverse and less predictable than African nationalist mythologies, in search of a consistent trajectory of responses, would allow’.

In the new democratic dispensation, what Rassool calls ‘post-struggle histories’ that were seen to be ‘appropriate’ for nation-building and new patriotism, became fashionable and were ‘bound up’ with reconciliation, achievement of liberation, and the end of the apartheid political order. These led to a ‘heroic’ narrative fuelled by a need to understand great events, ‘like the demise of apartheid, as produced by the efforts, the insights and the wisdom of great men’ (Rassool, 2004, p. 113).

Rassool asserts that biography ‘became a means to narrate lives as individual allegories of collective experience and social history’ (Rassool, 2004, p. 169). Plaatje has recently been revived and seen through this heroic lens. However, that is not the purpose of this exercise; instead, I set out to question the modalities of Plaatje’s representation in biography and whether the fullness of his life and contributions are appreciated. If this project is to succeed in reimagining the historical figure, it is important to appraise what other imaginations of him have been recorded in the biographical sphere.

Plaatje is not known to have written an autobiography, at least that scholars are aware of, but the genesis of his biography is rooted in 1899 when he wrote what became known as *The Mafeking Diary* during the South African War. The *Mafeking Diary* ‘constituted a forum for

biography and the narration' of Plaatje's life. Plaatje's writings, musings, reflections, and inner thoughts 'placed his own life into a biographical narrative' (Rassool, 2004, p. 276). It was an exercise in biography (Rassool, 2004, p. 277). He wrote about how he earned a living working with war correspondents, working in the court of summary jurisdiction, and his role in the war, facilitating runners and coordinating information flow.

The Diary carries important biographical insights. Written at the age of 23, his thoughts about his life, wife, son, and mortality open up a new path of thinking about Plaatje. Those reflections and memories that flash up so brilliantly in his prose tell of his own past life as a child at the Pniel Mission Station, where he was schooled by the Germans, and a young man working in Kimberley at the post office. Already, he frames his life experiences and personhood alongside the war he finds himself in. Indeed, when Willan wrote the definitive Plaatje biography, the Diary had a chapter dedicated to it (see Willan, 2018, pp. 109–132).

Plaatje's writing reveals a complex man, one who found himself at the confluence of two worlds: the traditional and the Western. The dilemmas of hybridity, dualism, and dichotomy add to his dynamic portrait – a further example of which is evident in his newspapers, as the analysis below will demonstrate. He stood up against what he called 'backward' traditional practices such as *bogwera* and *bojale* (traditional initiation of young men and women). Still, he promoted the use of Setswana as an identity and a means of creating a public consciousness of a people, and a language cannot be separated from the culture and the concomitant practices. Willan stated:

If his people were to be justified in their claim to 'equal rights for all civilised men', then they needed to measure up to the second part of this formula. He was never afraid, therefore, to criticise his people when he considered they fell short – whether this was their failure to support progressive causes, to refrain from alcohol, to treat women as equals of men, or to abandon customs which were not compatible with Christian practice. (Willan, 2018, p. 174)

Plaatje's works after *The Mafeking Diary* were less personal and more journalistic, political, and literary. It was only after his death in 1932 that an attempt was made to memorialise him, with Seetsele Modiri Molema writing *Morata Baabo*, a biography that was not published at the time. Modiri Molema, the son of Silas Molema and grandson of Chief Isaac Molema, who founded the Barolong settlement at Mafikeng, was a respected medical doctor and historian. Modiri knew Plaatje well: they met when he was seven, and Plaatje was a new-in-town civil

servant in Mafikeng aged 22. Molema handed the manuscript to a publisher in Botswana in 1965 and died the same year. A few years later, Plaatje scholars Brian Willan and Tim Couzens retrieved the manuscript and deposited it in the Historical Papers at the University of the Witwatersrand. Journalist Gopolang Botlhokwane notes that Willan and Couzens were ‘largely responsible for re-introducing Plaatje to a public that had only known him as an obscure intellectual and politician from [a] different era’, yet his life story ‘remained stuck in a historical vault’ until Mokae ‘burst that vault wide open’ (Botlhokwane, 2023).

It would take about six more decades before Sabata-mpho Mokae worked on the original manuscript written in Setswana by Modiri Molema. It had been retrieved, translated into English, edited and titled *Lover of His People* (Molema, 2012) by Daniel Matjila and Karen Haire, while crediting the original author as Seetsele Modiri Molema.

In *Lover of His People*, extracts from Plaatje’s newspapers that are deemed ‘most important and well-known’ (2012, p. 91) reveal more of his perspective and politics. They include the editorial titled ‘Whiteman’s Country’ from *Koranta* of 25 October 1902; a report from the African Native Convention from *Koranta* dated November 1902; and a note titled ‘Congratulations to Dr Booker T Washington’ from *Koranta* dated May 1903; and lastly an editorial titled ‘Native Law and Custom’ taken from *Our Heritage*, a Temperance movement newsletter Plaatje edited in the early 1930s (2012, pp. 91–107).

In an act of restoration, in 2022, Mokae reworked and ‘modernised’ the script’s orthography to reissue it in its originally intended language with the title *Morata Baabo* and the original author as Ngaka Modiri Molema. Molema shared invaluable insights of Plaatje, from his physical appearance to mannerisms, character, and outlook. Like *The Mafeking Diary*, published some 40 years after his death, *Morata Baabo* saw the light of day over 45 years after it was written. These two books detail what made Plaatje a distinguished character (his pursuit for self-development through reading and books, his moral convictions, and his sense of importance) and ‘what made him like the rest of us’ (his imperfections) (Rassool, 2004, p. 264).

The difference between *Morata Baabo* and *Morata Wabo* is slight but significant. ‘Baabo’ refers to plurality of people while ‘Wabo’ indicates singularity.

Morata Baabo is built on the premise that one must see Plaatje beyond his accomplishments and honours to fully understand the lasting significance and appeal of his beliefs (Botlhokwane, 2023). Molema who was exposed to the contradictions of colonialism and the disruption it caused is better positioned to tell the stories of his people. He authored *Montshiwa, 1815–1896*:

Barolong Chief and Patriot, and *Chief Moroka: His Life, His Times, His Country, and His People*, and ‘understood that Plaatje did not stand alone and that in a world that denied it, the act of capturing his humanity was inherently political’ (Botlhokwane, 2023).

‘Apart from his spouse and children, no other person could claim to have known Plaatje better than Modiri Molema. He observed his life from 1898 until he accompanied his body when (Plaatje) was going to be buried in Kimberly in June 1932,’ Mokae told Botlhokwane in the 2023 interview. In his review, Botlhokwane summarises the significance of the book as follows:

Morata Baabo can be read as the first time Molema deals with what the colonial state could not take away from natives or black people—the fugitive state of blackness. Plaatje’s brilliance was one of those things that was beyond the state’s grasp; he was not an anomaly, but an example of the possibilities of blackness in the absence of the albatross of whiteness via colonialism. Both Molema and Plaatje were not oblivious to their class positionality; that because of their education they formed part of a black colonial elite. In fact, it was consciousness of this very fact that made them appreciate the social implications of their privilege. But it was hardly class suicide, in the Cabral sense. (Botlhokwane, 2023)

Molema shares intimate moments, such as when his father, Silas Molema, spent £2 500 to establish *Koranta ea Becoana* and buying a printing press, equipment, and constructing the building to house the operation. He states:

In those days, Plaatje came by the house many an evening with a pile of newspapers. He would read to my father Silas Molema at a speed which thrilled me, extracting the main news items and then proceeding to agree or disagree with them. (Molema, 2012, p. 39)

The burgeoning Plaatje biographical studies has attracted scholarship and has developed over the years to include his selected writings, his life in letters, and many other different interpretations of his works, the latest being *Revisiting Sol Plaatje’s Mafeking Diary* (Mokae & Willan, 2023). One of the chapters seeks to establish the link between Plaatje’s writings and literary journalism, arguing that the Diary was a progenitor of South African literary journalism (Mofokeng, 2023 pp. 159–173). A key text in the biographical studies is Brian Willan’s 2018 definitive biography, a blockbuster of over 500 pages that chronicles in great and meticulous detail the life of Plaatje from birth to death and beyond. It is undisputed and microscopic in detail. In his writing, Willan details the businesses of Plaatje’s newspapers (*Koranta, Tsala ea*

Becoana, and *Tsala ea Batho*). The first operated from Mafikeng, while the last two were published out of Kimberley.

Willan had earlier produced a book, just with different titles from UK and South African publishers namely *Sol Plaatje, South African Nationalist 1876–1932* (1984) and *Sol Plaatje: A Biography* (1984), an academic treatise based on Willan's seminal doctoral thesis titled *The Role of Sol T Plaatje (1876–1932) in South African Society* (1979) at University of London (Rall, 2003). This work thrust Plaatje under the lens of scholarship, and, for Willan, laid the foundation for an academic career devoted to Plaatje scholarship. From Willan's work, insights can be drawn about Plaatje's world and contribute to a better understanding and framing of the challenges and successes he faced over time in the forum of early black press operations.

Sabata-mpho Mokae published *The Story of Sol T Plaatje* (2010) on a less comprehensive scale, aimed at a general interest reader, using 'easy' and accessible English, short sentences, and more than 30 images. The blurb further points out that the book has been stripped of some details that would make it uneasy for the broader readership to consume (Bookslive, 2011). This places the book in the realm of memorialisation, in the mode Rassool identifies.

Maureen Rall's *Peaceable Warrior: The Life and Times of Sol T. Plaatje* (2003) is dedicated to Plaatje's wife, Elizabeth Lilith Plaatje, who is described as 'a strong and faithful woman' by the author. *Peaceable Warrior* has its strong moments where it provides more details on Plaatje in a different hue and approach. Rall was the librarian of the Sol Plaatje Museum in Kimberley, and she is focused on Plaatje's appellations as 'renaissance man' and 'black intellectual'. In its introduction, the author explains that the book is sourced from newspapers, journal articles, unpublished material, and publications from the likes of Plaatje's biographer, Brian Willan. The book details the personal struggles of Plaatje to keep his newspapers afloat (Rall, 2003, p. viii). She described Plaatje as 'one of the outstanding pioneers in the field of African journalism in South Africa' (Rall, 2003, p. xi) and 'the doyen of the African political journalists of his time' (Rall, 2003, p. 93). The newspapers he edited are identified as 'important platforms on which he could campaign for the rights of his people' (Rall, 2003, p. xii). Plaatje's position in the African intellectual circuit is best summarised by this paragraph from *Peaceable Warrior*.

With the editors of *Izwi la Bantu*, the *South African Spectator* and *Imvo* (A K Soga, F Z S Peregrino and John Tengu [sic] Jabavu), Plaatje shared the ambition of being the spokesman of the African community and soon made it clear that *Koranta ea Becoana*

was dedicated to the “amelioration of the Native”, and committed to “Labour, Sobriety, Thrift and Education” (Rall, 2003, p. 95).

In telling Plaatje’s life story, one is bound to tell the Molema life story; the two are inextricably linked by ties that date back at least a generation and business ventures. The work of Khumisho Moguerane in *Morafe* about the Molemas is indispensable, as she brings out the granular details of the prominent family and how it made its money in the transport business. So much was made of even the complexion of Plaatje. Further, to show how smitten Modiri Molema was with Plaatje, Moguerane highlights that he ‘ marvelled at the lightness of Plaatje’s complexion’ being ‘even whiter than the light-skinned Molemas of Mafikeng’ as well as the ‘polyglot genius’ who read quickly and extensively to the point that he was referred to as a ‘walking library’ (Moguerane, 2024, pp. 58-59). What emerges from Moguerane’s work is that Plaatje was not an ‘individual genius’ but part of an educated and elite group, of which the Molemas were a leading family. It is evidence of how Plaatje comes out of this community and is supported by it, as well as contributing to it. It can be seen how the Plaatje biography travels and takes on a different hue as scholars engage with it from different angles and influences, as the meaning of Plaatje in today’s society is confronted.

It is Willan’s use of the archive and memory that lends *Sol Plaatje: A life* ‘a newness’, as Haire puts it. She says Willan’s details in terms of the ‘social, political and economic climate which shaped Plaatje as a man, pioneer black journalist, an advocate and voice for his people and a scholar’ elevates how the reader appreciates Plaatje’s compulsion to swim against the tide in a context that was ‘degrading, demoralising and debilitating’. She adds that Plaatje ‘breathed an atmosphere of obstructionism, insult, derision, control, hostility, high-handedness, salt-in-the-wound, attempted and outright sabotage that was the diet colonialism fed it black so-called subjects’ (Haire, 2020, p. 136).

Karen Haire draws parallels between *Sol Plaatje: A life* and *The Seed is Mine* by Charles van Onselen by making the point that Willan’s biography was framed to carry a message of hope ‘that it is possible to rise, achieve and accomplish in spite of an unjust “settled system”’ which is reminiscent of the story of Kas Maine in van Onselen’s biography about ‘a dedicated sharecropper... who struggled and survived with triumphant dignity in the very same South African context (albeit a few decades later), where whites were self-enriching while blacks were relegated to poverty’ (Haire, 2020, p. 137).

Haire’s largely positive review ends with a criticism that resonates with this study. She reveals:

I believe that until we have plumbed the depths of his large “treasure-trove” of Setswana journalism as Willan calls it, we risk overstating the case for his diplomacy and evenness. The scholarly excavation of his Setswana journalism may take time, [however] since priority has been given to collecting his English language journalism (Haire, 2020, p. 137).

This is an important inquiry to be raised into Plaatje’s Setswana journalism, an area of his biography and practice that has remained out of public consciousness for close to 110 years. It is through the deep plumbing of this journalism archive, ‘a treasure trove’, that makes it possible to formulate who Plaatje was as an editor, a journalist, and a political commentator as shown in the pages of his newspapers. Also, of interest is how his figure changes over time as his prominence surges.

What has emerged from the biographical scholarship is a portrait of Plaatje as one rooted in the collective. His ties to other Barolong and prominent families, as well as other African peoples, align with his lifelong ideals of commitment towards the black cause. He appears as an embodiment of the adage ‘*Motho ke motho ka batho*’ (I am, because you are). It also extends into the black press and highlights the necessary connections he needed to succeed. This interdependence of a status group facilitated a robust and vibrant community of newspapers, as further explored in the following section.

6.4 *Black press*

The last years of the 19th century and the early 20th century represent a pivotal period in the history of journalism in South Africa. After some 50 years of the existence of missionary press, Africans published independent newspapers as a response to a colonial government that was encroaching on their personal freedoms through segregationist policies and laws. It was a time when independent African newsmen produced newspapers that spoke the language of their people and became the voice of a generation of protest as they sought to interpret South Africa’s subordinated black communities to themselves and to the world (Switzer, 1997, p. 1). These journalists and editors became pioneers of innovation and champions of their respective communities, giving tempo to issues at a crucial time in the history of Africa and South Africa (Peterson et al., 2016, p. 1).

All of this remains understudied in the field of journalism and media studies, with the literature on the topic being sparse. A persistent question has emerged in scholarship as to what this press

should be called. Scholars are grappling with descriptors as varied as the ‘non-white press’ (Ainsley, 1966); ‘black press’ (Couzens, 1984); others label it the ‘alternative press’ (Switzer, 1997); and some say ‘protest press’ as an interpretive and contextual phrase. On the other hand, in other quarters, it is thought of as ‘African intellectual press’, indicating a progressive approach and acknowledging the intellectual discourse, critique, and articulation contained in the papers. This is demonstrable in the publication of books such as *African Intellectuals in 19th and Early 20th Century South Africa* (2008) and *Public Intellectuals in South Africa* (2021) which include early black press editors. It is important for scholars to find common ground, as the naming convention shapes how this section of the press is viewed, how debates around it as a mechanism are framed, and how it will legitimise or delegitimise what they stand for. Embedded in the definition will be cultural identity, political stance, tenor, and tone.

Les Switzer made a significant contribution towards studies in this period by publishing two volumes. *The Black Press in South Africa and Lesotho*, a book he published with Donna Switzer in 1979, proved to be a seminal work, as it meticulously recorded what he termed the ‘Black protest’ newspapers at the turn of the 20th century. Switzer returned in 1997 with *South Africa’s Alternative Press*, a deeper review of the newspapers in which he provided more context and historical significance. Couzens’ work in the papers *A Short History of “The World” (and Other Black South African Newspapers)* (1976), *History of the Black Press in South Africa 1836–1960* (1984), “The struggle to be independent”: a history of the black press in South Africa 1836–1960 (1990), and *The Black Press and Black Literature in South Africa 1900–1950* (2009) yielded some significant understanding of the black press period. Couzens recorded the tireless work of newspapermen who stood up against a hostile colonial establishment; however, as his work involved chronicling the slate of publications being produced, mapping the landscape, rather than analysing the specifics of individual newspapers, Switzer is not able to deal with content in a qualitative manner.

Switzer labels the black-readership publications of the time the alternative press. He says it constituted a unique political, social, and literary archive, the oldest, most extensive and varied collection of indigenous serial publications of their kind in sub-Saharan Africa (Switzer, 1997, p. 1). His volume *The Black Press in South Africa and Lesotho* with Donna Switzer meticulously recorded the black press at the turn of the 20th century. Couzens wrote that it is ‘a great advance in our overall knowledge of the Black Press in South Africa’ (Couzens, 1990, p. 1) as it, for the first time, gave a detailed catalogue of a section of the press that was

overlooked by scholars. This compilation was comprehensive and painted an image of a vibrant, competitive, and robust news enterprise.

Later, in 1997, Les Switzer edited the pioneering *South Africa's Alternative Press: Voices of Protest and Resistance 1880–1960* where he provided in-depth quantitative content analysis of the black publications *Imvo Zabantsundu*, the *Workers' Herald*, *Bantu World*, *Inkundla ya Bantu*, the *Guardian*, and *Inkululeko* 'in order to provide empirical evidence of a fundamental shift in political rhetoric in the alternative press between the 1920s and 1950s' (Switzer, 1997, p. 13).

In what I argue should be the manifesto or preamble and founding tenet of black press, Couzens quotes what Rev. Tiyo Soga wrote in the first issue of *Indaba* (The News) newspaper in August 1862. The article was titled 'A National Newspaper', and Couzens presents this writing as possibly the 'earliest extant pronouncement by a black South African about newspapers' (Couzens, 1990, p. 4). In it, Soga using the pseudonym Nonjiba Waseluhlanganeni ("an enthusiastic enquirer into cultural origins") (Nxasana, 2011, p. 64) challenges Africans to convene a new public and generate a new archive for the benefit of future generations. Here is a powerful call to action, originally written in isiXhosa and translated to English, presented verbatim, that emerges as a *raison d'être* of the early black press under the control of missionaries and, by extension, the independent press that followed:

A subscriber to the journal should preserve the copies of successive editions of *Indaba* and at the end of the year make a bound volume of them. These annual volumes in course of time will become a mine of information and wisdom which will be a precious inheritance for generations of growing children. All is well today. Our veterans of the Xhosa and Embo people must disgorge all they know. Everything must be imported to the nation as a whole. Fables must be retold; what was history or legend should be recounted. What has been preserved as tradition should be restyled. Whatever was seen heard or done under the requirements of custom should be brought to light and placed on the national table to be sifted for preservation. Were there not several tribes before? Where is the record of their history and customs good or bad? Made we no chiefs in days gone by? Where are the anecdotes of their periods? Were these things buried with them in their graves? Is there no one to unearth these things from the graves? Were there no national poets in the days of yore? Whose praises did they sing? Is there no one to emulate this eloquence? In the olden days did not some people bewitch others? What

were the names of the men of magic? Is it not rumoured that some were tortured severely and cruelly? Are there no people who have an idea of matters of this nature which happened under the cloak of custom? Are there no battles which were fought in those distant days? Where were these battles fought and who were the heroes? What feathers were worn by the royal regiments? Are there no anecdotes connected with the brave men who wore decorations. Were there no hunting expeditions in those far-off days and why were the breasts of the eland and the buffalo eaten only by those at the great place? We should revive and bring to the light all this great wealth of information. Let us bring to life our ancestors Ngconde, Togu, Tshiwo, Phalo, Rharhabe, Mlau, Ngqika and Ndlambe. Let us resurrect our ancestral fore-bears who bequeathed to us a rich heritage. All anecdotes connected with the life of the nation should be brought to this big corn-pit our national newspaper (*Indaba*, 1 August 1862, pp. 10-11) (translated in Couzens, 1990, pp. 4-5).

In his portrait of the founders and originators of the independent black press tradition, Couzens says they were educated and immersed in the new way of life but realised that their interests were not the same as those of the missionaries, especially not with the white colonists. They sought out their 'own outlets of expression', and thus 'a new era of independent newspapers began to develop' (Couzens, 1990, p. 7).

John Tengo Jabavu from King William's Town is considered the pioneer and father of the independent black press (Couzens, 1976, p. 2; Plaatje, 1982, p. 192). He rose from being a cattle herder to a diligent student at a day school until he reached Healdtown and Lovedale to become a teacher and a local preacher. He was then apprenticed at a newspaper called the *Somerset Budget* and *Courant* before editing *Isigidimi samaXosa*, the first independent black newspaper in southern Africa, in 1881. Three years later, Jabavu, backed by JT Irvine, a liberal trader and member of the legislative assembly from King William's Town, launched the weekly *Imvo Zabantsundu*, which was published in isiXhosa and English. He also received advertising from traders JW Weir and William Lord, as well as Richard Rose-Innes, an attorney (Couzens, 1990, p. 7; Mkhize, 2018, pp. 416, 425). At some point in the 1920s, when *Imvo* ran into financial difficulties and was overdrawn by over £1 000 due to a poor collection of subscriptions, the white funders arranged for a stand-in management while Tengo drew a salary until *Imvo* recovered and Tengo resumed his editorial duties (Couzens, 1990, p. 8).

Izwi la Bantu, founded by Dr Rubusana, sought capital from Cecil John Rhodes to supplement their funds, and Rhodes obliged, seeing that he could curry favour with the electorate among black voters (Remmington, 2024, p. 121). How *Imvo* and *Izwi* were founded and what financial muscle was behind them raise questions about what the concept of the black press then really entailed. If white money was behind the newspapers, then what independence did they enjoy when they had commercial or political backers to account to? Siyasanga Tyali points out that *Imvo* had been a means towards an end for the funders, arguing further that some research literature by the likes of Ndletyana (2008, p. 35) and Johnson (1991) suggests that ‘there was a meddling with the editorial position of the paper by these liberal funders’ and was used to canvass support for the South African liberal cause, and it ‘privileged the interest of its financiers, and they were not always the same as the Africans’ (Tyali, 2018, p. 307). As Barnhurst and Nerone note about American newspapers of the 19th century, political organisations subsidised and contributed to newspapers (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 16). This paragraph from Brian Willan on *Koranta ea Becoana* puts things into perspective:

Its fundamental problem, as with its African contemporaries, was that its circulation, and accordingly its revenue from subscriptions and advertising, was limited by poverty and low levels of literacy. Given the relatively small size of the Tswana population, and the sparse missionary activity among them, the problem was more acute for *Koranta* than it was for the two eastern Cape newspapers. Moreover, *Koranta*, unlike *Imvo* and *Izwi*, did not receive a subsidy from one of the colony’s main political parties, nor did it have wealthy white business backers such as sustained *Ilanga lase Natal*. Independence therefore came at a high cost (Willan, 2018, p. 196).

Couzens admits that the definition of the black press is blurry and offers a broad one: ‘by and large aimed at or catered for black audiences’. He put the number of black press newspapers at 712 between 1836 and 1976, as counted by Les Switzer and Switzer in the 1979 study (Couzens, 1990, p. 1). Peter Limb’s description of ‘black-owned and -edited press’ (Limb, 2012, p. 2) also raises the question of what should be considered the black press when such parameters are in place. In fact, Limb’s description, if adhered to strictly, would disqualify many newspapers, including *Imvo*, because most were backed by white money. Couzens admits that ‘despite numerous efforts of segregationists, both black and white, in South Africa, social activity has never been completely racially exclusive’ (Couzens, 1990, p. 1). For scholars in the 1960s and 1970s, the black press was not considered a player in the history of South African

media. Either the entire block of newspapers is not recorded in their historical studies of the press or their coverage is uneven, with glaring gaps and holes.

Works by Barton and Potter, for example, do not afford the black press the attention it deserved as a political force of that time. Frank Barton's book *The Press of Africa* gives the history of press in South Africa beginning in 1800 with the bilingual *Capetown Gazette and African Advertiser* in Dutch and English as 'the first newspaper on the continent' (Barton, 1979, p. 187). Perhaps the clue is in how the chapter is titled: 'The White South'. From 1800, Barton jumps to other papers such as *The Friend of the Sovereignty and Bloemfontein Gazette*, founded in Grahamstown in 1850 (from 1855 renamed *The Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette*); the *Cape Argus* in 1857; the *Cape Times* in 1876; *Di Patriot* in 1875; and *The Star* in 1887.

Barton allocates two paragraphs for the black press. When he published the book in 1979, he wrote, 'today there is no African newspaper in South Africa owned or controlled by Africans' (Barton, 1979, p. 196). This was correct, but he omitted to mention when Silas Molema and Sol Plaatje became the first Africans to own and run their own newspaper. Barton instead gives a scant analysis of *Imvo Zabantsundu*, founded in 1884 in King William's Town, and *Indian Opinion* of Mahatma Gandhi, launched in 1903 in Durban. Substantial space is dedicated to Jim Bailey and the *Drum* era. The missionary press receives no mention, although as early as 1863, *Leselinyana la Lesotho* was operated by the French missionaries in Morija, and even earlier than that, in the 1850s, *Moboleli oa Litaba* (The Bearer of the News) was edited by Samuel Rolland at the Beersheba mission station in today's eastern Free State (Mofokeng, 2023, p. 199).

Rosalynde Ainslie, on the other hand, says black papers were not distributed by the Central News Agency and did not benefit from the news and technical services being developed by the big dailies (Ainslie, 1966, p. 47). They were 'poor' and had low circulation numbers but were 'rich in political excitement'. Ainslie also asserts that "the non-white press" was 'unread' by whites. However, there are many instances where evidence is provided of whites or other races reading the black press. Tim Couzens quotes the Resident Commissioner in Basutoland, who wrote to the segregationist-liberal Howard Pim in 1908: 'The native press in South Africa is going to be always with us, and they are certain to criticise the white man as freely as he criticises them. It is not an unmixed evil – it is quite as well to know what they are thinking about' (Couzens, 1990, p. 23).

While Ainslie gives a historical account of how Jabavu started *Imvo* ‘campaigning for African political and educational advance’ (Ainslie, 1966, p. 47), she also omits *Koranta ea Becoana*, which was launched in 1901 but does mention *Indian Opinion* of 1906. She notes that by 1914, ‘there were five major African newspapers, namely *Imvo*; *Izwi la Bantu* of Dr Walter Rubusana; *Ilanga lase Natal* of Rev. John L. Dube; *Ikwezi le Afrika* of the Church of England; and *Abantu-Batho* first edited by Pixley ka Isaka Seme’ (Ainslie, 1966, p. 48). Again, Ainslie overlooked *Tsala ea Becoana*, Plaatje’s second newspaper, regarded as one of the three most influential black newspapers asserting African political rights of that period – the others being *Imvo* and *Ilanga* (Limb, 2012, p. 326). Elsewhere, Limb lists *Tsala ea Batho* as one of the six newspaper press organs of the SANNC (Limb, 2012, p. 51).

Switzer does not subject Plaatje’s newspapers to his 1997 comparative analysis, perhaps because they fall outside of the period of his study and do not answer his main research question of a reflection and representation of the African population between the 1920s and 1950s. However, Plaatje’s newspapers are instead reviewed under the subchapter African Politics and the Press in the Northern Cape (Switzer, 1997, pp. 71–78). Here, Switzer delivers a historical biography of Plaatje up to how he started editing the weekly independent black newspaper titled *Koranta ea Becoana* (*Bechuana Gazette*). Switzer explains that *Koranta* was ‘modelled’ on the pioneering *Imvo Zabantsundu* and shares its initial circulation figure of 500 and how it grew to two pages, with newsagents appointed, advertisements solicited, and exchange programmes established with the local and international press.

Imvo provided the blueprint for the independent black press and was an early influence on Plaatje up to the point when *Koranta* came into being (Willan, 2018, p. 148). It is important to reflect on what Khwezi Mkhize writes about the pioneering and influential newspaper. Mkhize says Jabavu and *Imvo* adopted ‘an identity of “principle and passion” from the margins of empire and opened a discursive scaffolding for the colonial intelligentsia to ruminate upon and contest’ (Mkhize, 2018, p. 429). At a time when encroaching white oppression was becoming evident, the newspaper became a site of discussion and protest. This is not surprising, given the values under which Jabavu operated. Mkhize states that he launched *Imvo* as a ‘quintessential “Cape liberal” of his generation’ (Mkhize, 2018, p. 416). Among the Cape liberal values was a belief in the vote for all ‘civilised’ men. It involved participatory democracy, if it was democracy at all, and opposed the stifling of opinion and its expression. There was no lack of newspapers and periodicals in the Cape at this time, as Mkhize remarks, ‘yet none... truly reflect(ed) a native opinion’. *Imvo* gave its readers ‘a necessary public voice’

as they wrote themselves into the public sphere (Mkhize, 2018, p. 414). The periodical became ‘the medium of communication between the vast masses of the aboriginal population... and the ruling power which hails from Britain’ (Mkhize, 2018, p. 421). Additionally, Mkhize notes that the paper secured a presence in the public sphere, allowing the emergent black intelligentsia to demonstrate ‘a mastery of the instruments of modernity that its members had acquired through their missionary education’ (Mkhize, 2018, p. 415). *Imvo* emerged as a ‘counterpoint’ of the racist state by putting the native opinion in the colonial public sphere, nestled ‘in the faultlines of the staging of the commensurability of blackness and belonging in the Cape Colony’ (Mkhize, 2018, p. 415).

Following the success of *Imvo*, *Izwi Labantu*, first edited by Nathaniel Mhala and then by A.K. Soga, son of Tiyo Soga, emerged. It was launched in November 1897 to oppose the politics of Jabavu whom it seems to have blamed for ‘scotching the idea of a permanent organisation of Africans to defend their political rights’. Couzens describes it as more radical than *Imvo*, as it contributed to the founding, at the end of the century, of the South African Native Congress, whose prominent members included Dr Walter Rubusana and who agitated for the establishment of an African university. Rubusana was its political correspondent, and S.E.K. Mqhayi contributed his poetry frequently under the pseudonym ‘Imbongi Yakwa Gompo’ (Couzens, 1990, pp. 10-11).

The *South African Spectator* was started in 1900 by the impresario Francis Zaccheus Santiago Peregrino, who was born in Ghana in 1851, partially educated in Britain and later moved to the US, where he started a black newspaper called *The Spectator* in Albany, New York. He sailed to South Africa in 1900 to join his eldest son, Francis Joseph Peregrino, who had settled in Cape Town. Couzens notes that ‘on the outbreak of the war in South Africa, he seemed to feel the country might become a land of opportunity’ (Couzens, 1990, p. 15). Couzens calls the *South African Spectator* ‘a curiosity, with some amusing advertisements and often written in a quaint style’ (Couzens, 1990, p. 15).

Couzens highlights that after the South African War, Africans seemed to push for crucial outlets for expression to have their political, economic and cultural interests maintained, and this is why Silas Molema decided to start *Koranta ea Becoana* and ‘call up’ Plaatje as editor in 1901 (Couzens, 1990, p. 14).

In Natal, H.J.E. Dumbrell notes that John L. Dube informed his people of the need to start a national newspaper to serve as their ‘mouthpiece’ (quoted in Couzens, 1990, p. 12). They

obliged, sold cattle, made donations, and a fund was accumulated. On 3 June 1903, *Ilanga lase Natal*, the newspaper that Dube wanted to act as ‘a guiding light among the Zulus’, was established. The content reflected African lives, and it made representations to authorities as it attempted to draw the attention of the convened public sphere, in Cowling and Hamilton terms, but never advocated for violence to resolve the problems they faced. The paper was distributed on donkey-back, and schoolboys sold it in Phoenix, Durban, and neighbouring towns (Couzens, 1990, p. 12). In the same year, V. Madanjith started a newspaper in Natal called *Indian Opinion*, which was taken over in 1904 by Mahatma Gandhi, then an attorney in Johannesburg, who relocated the entire enterprise to a farm at Phoenix in Natal (Couzens, 1990, p. 32).

The Chamber of Mines went on an onslaught against the influence of *Abantu-Batho* when it started *Umteteli wa Bantu* as a free paper at first and clearly meant to ‘undercut and undermine’ *Abantu-Batho* and the black trade union, the Industrial Commercial Workers Union, led by Clemens Kadalie, which had its own paper called *The Worker’s Herald*, edited by Henry Tyamzashe. The years 1917 to 1920 were marked by an increased militancy among black labourers, culminating in the black mineworkers’ strike of 1920 (Couzens, 1990, p. 23). The white capitalists had a plan to disrupt and distract their workers. Couzens notes:

The Twenties thus became a classic period for the establishment of ‘liberal’ institutions such as the Joint Councils (1921), the Bantu Men’s Social Centre (1924), and the Institute of Race Relations (1929) where the petit-bourgeoisie could be ‘bought off’ while workers in mine compounds and elsewhere were entertained by way of church, sport, and the new cinema world (Couzens, 1990, p. 23).

Couzens remarks that the year 1932 became a turning point in the history of the black press with the founding of the Bantu Press (Pty) Ltd and its national newspaper *The Bantu World*, which was first published on 9 April 1932. Independent black press titles *Imvo Zabantsundu*, *Ilanga lase Natal*, *Ikwezi le Afrika*, and *Mochochonono*, with a measure of reluctance from writers and owners, had been gobbled up by 1936 (Couzens, 1990, p. 25). It is stated that B.G. Paver who worked for an advertising company

conceived the idea of a central organisation to take over most of the existing black newspapers and to co-ordinate advertising in these newspapers. He saw that there was a huge potential market amongst the blacks for local manufacturers - the blacks he believed, were no longer satisfied with what was called ‘Kaffir truck’ - cheap goods specially made for ‘kaffirs’ - but many preferred to buy ‘European’ goods. He was to

see the black press as a magnificent medium for advertisers to tap this market (Couzens, 1990, p. 24).

With that tightened the grip of white hands on the commercial black press which began in 1920 with *Umteteli*, spelling the end of 50 glorious years of relative independence of black newspapermen. In his 1997 analysis, Switzer ends the section on Plaatje's newspapers with the words:

African protest newspapers that confronted the new settler state of South Africa after 1910 would remain marginal as commercial enterprises and circumscribed in terms of news coverage, distribution and number of readers... Those who wrote for and read the African protest press represented the beginnings of a new political culture, but it was a marginalised middle-class culture whose roots were still rooted firmly in the African mission-educated community (Switzer, 1997, p. 78).

While earlier studies from the 1960s and 1970s often treated the black press in an unbalanced manner, the conversation has since progressed considerably, with modern-day scholars recognising its broader significance, elevating it beyond 'protest press', and exploring how it convened an African public. As Hlonipha Mokoena notes, the historiography of the black press has 'matured through nuanced and detailed focus on individual newspapers, editors, writers and publishers' (Mokoena, 2016, p. 361).

The proliferation of studies on the black press in the last decade or so has intensified the interest of the news archive as a source of media and journalism studies, history, anthropology, and cultural studies. Scholars have put a few specific titles under focus, starting with the comprehensive *The People's Paper: A Centenary History & Anthology of Abantu-Batho* edited by Peter Limb and published in 2012; *Gandhi's Printing Press* on Mahatma Gandhi's *Indian Opinion* by Isabel Hofmeyr, published in 2013; Khwezi Mkhize on John Tengo Jabavu and the *Politics of the Black Periodical* in 2018; *Umteteli wa Bantu* and the constitution of social publics in the 1920s and 1930s by Natasha Erlank, published in 2019; and *Morafe* on *Koranta ea Becoana* and *Tsala ea Becoana* by Khumisho Moguerane in 2024. However, *Morafe* does not attempt to deliver a comprehensive study of the newspapers but rather uses parts of them to explore themes of *morafe* (nation) and *botho* (personhood) in early Setswana noble families in the Molopo Reserve of today's Mahikeng in North West province. *Ulibambe Lingashoni!* edited by Bongani Ngqulunga, published in 2025, presents diverse studies of *Ilanga* authored by scholars such as Athambile Masola, Hlonipha Mokoena, Peter Limb and Sibongiseni

Mkhize. Ngqulunga points out that the book is ‘an acknowledgement of the longevity of the *Ilanga* newspaper, the only publication that has outlived its contemporaries from over 120 years ago (2025, p. xxi).

The People’s Paper: A Centenary History & Anthology of Abantu-Batho newspaper deserves a discussion because of its volume and intensity. Limb provides valuable insights into how the black press functioned. *Abantu-Batho* was a relative newcomer to the field when one considers that it was first published in 1912 by the convener of the SANNC, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, with financial assistance from Labotsibeni, the Queen Regent of Swaziland who reigned between 1889 and 1921 – ‘the most extraordinary native ruler South Africa ever knew, shrewd with a gift of diplomacy and able to extract money from whites – some of which she deployed to help fund and sustain *Abantu-Batho*’ (Limb, 2012, p. 12). This was more than 11 years after Plaatje first edited *Koranta ea Becoana* in Mafeking. At the time of *Abantu-Batho* launch, Plaatje was on his second newspaper, *Tsala ea Becoana*, and on the brink of launching his third, *Tsala ea Batho*.

Limb locates *Abantu-Batho* in the greater universe of the black press following the traditions Isabel Hofmeyr identifies as ‘the standard fare of the Victorian and Edwardian periodical, namely the clipping, summary, or extract from another publication’ (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 5). However, Limb’s bigger aim was to show how *Abantu-Batho* set itself apart from the ‘standard fare’ by ‘posing alternatives to white rule in liberalism, African nationalism, socialism and Garveyism and so helping ignite new African identities and dreams for the future’ (Limb, 2012, p. 13). It claimed a ‘national focus’, and its naming ‘sought to recapture African dignity lost under colonialism’ (Limb, 2012, p. 4).

What also makes Limb’s work indispensable is how he provides journalistic, nationalistic, and political contexts for the benefit of the reader. He traces the roots of the early black press and makes the interesting point that due to harsh anti-black laws in the Transvaal Republic, the black press was concentrated in the coastal regions of Natal and the Cape. The proliferation of titles in the Cape also reflected the much longer tradition of missionary activity and hence greater literacy. It was only after the South African War that in the Transvaal ‘pioneer black newspapers helped inculcate reading habits and impart journalistic skills, thus starting to create an audience and forge a foundation on which *Abantu-Batho* could soon build’ (Limb, 2012, p. 3).

Limb goes a step further and profiles the editorial staff of a newspaper that Plaatje once commented ‘enjoys the unique privilege of being financed by a black capitalist’ and could afford ‘luxuries such as a staff of some half a dozen subeditors’ (Limb, 2012, p. 17). Limb adds that most black papers lacked ‘such editorial diversity’ and were run by a ‘one-man band’, the likes of Jabavu where it was ‘the Editor, his pen, ink and paper’ (Limb, 2012, p. 17).

The overview Limb shares on circulation, process, and structure stretches beyond *Abantu-Batho* to include *Koranta ea Becoana* and *Tsala ea Batho*. Limb evokes Plaatje repeatedly as he draws parallels between *Abantu-Batho* and the black press and the habits of its readers, for instance, when Plaatje once said that, as a boy, he was often asked to ‘read the news to groups of men sewing karosses under the shady trees outside the cattle fold’ (Limb, 2012, p. 27; Couzens, 1990, p. 14). This statement was originally made by Plaatje in *Sechuana Proverbs* (1916, p. 5).

To return to the question I posed earlier on how to define and categorise this section of the press: Is it a ‘black press’, ‘alternative press’, ‘protest press’, or ‘black intellectual press’? The debates among scholars are evident in how the papers are defined and conceptualised, as well as in the arguments about their role, with scholars from the 1960s taking the stance of undervaluing the papers and scholars from the late 1970s bestowing proper recognition on them.

Natasha Erlank is persuasive when she writes about the dexterousness of the black press as framed in the recent volume of *African Print Cultures: Newspapers and Their Publics in the Twentieth Century*. She says that work has been done ‘to show newspapers as much more dynamic than a reduction of their content to anticolonial protest’ (Erlank, 2022, p. 46). She compares the black press to the ‘Swiss Army knife of the text-on-paper world’ (Erlank, 2022, p. 44). She further highlights:

Recent work in the field of public culture and history points to the hybridity and innovation present, not only in what people wrote or in the personas they assumed when writing but also in their choice of writing language. The work is a reminder to move away from viewing the press only as a reflection of the role of the fourth estate in territories colonized by European powers, but also as maps of social aspiration and intent, artistic production, artful avoidance of censorship, and hybrid borrowing in the fashioning of new identities (Erlank, 2022, p. 46).

Students, scholars, and enthusiasts of Plaatje learned of Plaatje's journalism enterprise in more specific detail than before with the publication of *Sol Plaatje: South African Nationalist 1876–1932* by Brian Willan in 1984. Willan, Plaatje's biographer and foremost authority, brought Plaatje into the centre of black historiography some 50 years after his death and 20 years after the first publication of his *Mafeking Diary*. Willan notes that the existence of *Koranta ea Becoana* was an asset to the Setswana-speaking population, as 'it could be of greater value to the Tswana people, keeping them well up to date with current affairs, whether they were of the Bamangwato of the Bechuanaland Protectorate or the Seleka Barolong of the Orange River Colony... - the sun (enlightenment) had now risen amongst the Tswana people' (Willan, 1984, p. 99).

Khumisho Moguerane also examines the critical role *Koranta ea Becoana* played as part of the black press, and with the paucity of writing on Plaatje's newspapers, her work is much treasured. She says *Koranta* became a 'textual assembly' (Moguerane, 2024, p. 65). As the convener of this assembly the newspaper facilitated debate, confirmed, and circulated 'instruction about new repertoires of practice' that would once again 'return personhood to people's daily relationships'. These practices were 'mainly formal schooling, respect for chiefly and patriarchal authority, and residence in the countryside' which was worsened by these anxieties and changes in routine and responsibilities (Moguerane, 2024, p.27).

Moguerane argues that schooling was viewed with importance as it would educate the youngsters about Sechuana and make of them 'proper persons.' Schooling would be the 'bedrock of the *morafe* that these educated men wished to assemble', in other words for *morafe* to stand and be meaningful, the members would have to be educated. As she unpacks the editorial choices and writings that Plaatje made, Moguerane points out that her book makes apparent 'Plaatje's own conception of race and skin colour' grounded in the concept of personhood or *botho* to outline the meaning of blackness, *boncho*. This was done on Plaatje's understanding of the Molemas' place in the *morafe's* future. This approached connected Bechuanaland to a broader, intellectual tradition taking shape in the early twentieth century. Moguerane says black intellectuals were coming up with their own theoretical schemes on race. With *Koranta*, Molema bestowed Plaatje a platform to be 'part of a transatlantic conversation on race and skin colour' along with intellectuals like W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. She further notes that Plaatje's Sechuana editorials in *Koranta* are enough for one to discern what Plaatje's theory of race could have been, 'had he written it'. As my analysis

will show, the newspaper, was also Plaatje's 'cry for help against the emerging colonial conditions' (Moguerane, 2024, p. 27).

As the editor of *Koranta*, Plaatje was transported into a new realm as one of the pioneers of the black press. At just 25, he was in exceptional company with contemporary men of letters who were already legends in their own right, such as John Tengo Jabavu (*Imvo Zabantsundu*), John L. Dube (*Ilanga lase Natal*), A.K. Soga (*Izwi Labantu*), and F.Z.S. Peregrino (*South African Spectator*) – all well into their 30s and beyond.

That Plaatje was an influential newspaperman is unanimously agreed by scholars. At a memorial lecture hosted by the Institute of African Studies, University of Bophuthatswana in 1982, South African writer and academic Richard Rive called Plaatje a great journalist, an 'extraordinary person of many talents' who created 'works of erudition and beauty' out of difficult circumstances. He continued:

With the newspapers Plaatje achieved several things which were to be exemplary to subsequent generations of African journalists: following the example of his friend F. Z. S. Peregrino's *South African Spectator*, he commissioned several portraits of New African intellectuals like Alfred Mangena, Walter Rubusana, Richard Msimang, Harold Cressy; he gave ample coverage of the founding of the ANC in 1912 as the South African Native National Congress; he published the most trenchant critiques of the Natives Land Act of 1913 by New Africans such John Dube, Richard Msimang, Abdullah Abdurahman; although he was fascinated by the dialectic between modernity and tradition, his sympathies tended to be aligned with the latter, even though he constantly wrote that the triumph of the former was inevitable; he was intrigued by the role of the city in facilitating the possibility in the making of modernity; his passionate belief that education and Christian civilisation were the essential instruments in the making of modernity (Rive, 1982).

Masilela identifies Plaatje's journalism as a pillar on which the intellectual and political pursuits of the movement rested. He regards Plaatje as a pivotal figure who chronicled the African experience under colonial oppression and shaped a modern African consciousness (Masilela, 2013 & 2014).

In his appraisal, Khwezi Mkhize calls Plaatje 'one of the leading newspapermen of the 20th century'. He writes that it was Plaatje and his generation 'that grappled with the antinomies of statecraft in the early 20th century, by taking up the problem that *Imvo* had placed at the heart

of South African politics' (Mkhize, 2018, p. 429). By the 'problem', Khwezi means how *Imvo* placed African issues into the colonial public sphere that ignored and undermined their voices as imperial subjects.

Peter Midgley notes that Plaatje's journalism bridged traditional African oral culture with modern print media while preserving Setswana heritage (1997, p. 54). He adds that the newspapers established a platform for African voices and were a commitment to Setswana and identity, as he provided access to a black readership with limited formal education while engaging with a broader audience. Furthermore, Midgley calls Plaatje's journalism 'a tool for advocacy and enlightenment' (Midgley, 1997).

Lesley Cowling asserts that Plaatje, along with John Tengo Jabavu and John L. Dube, were the 'fathers' of the independent black press who wielded political influence. She notes that Dube and Plaatje took up office when the ANC was established in 1912 and notes that the black press publications were associated with African ethnic groups such as Xhosa, Zulu, or Tswana and were produced in the geographic areas where they lived. Cowling argues, drawing on Couzens, that the early black press was thus tied to the political aspirations of indigenous African elites and connected through its key figures to the ANC (Cowling, 2014, p. 105).

The relationship between editorship and political leadership is manifested in the history of media in South Africa. Andre Odendaal, like many scholars, uses newspapers to track political movements rather than examining them for their journalism because of his awareness of the political role that such newspapers of the era played. His book, *The Founders: The Origins of the ANC and the Struggle for Democracy in South Africa*, is still, however, useful to historians of journalism. Odendaal asserts that the earliest newspapers published for black audiences in South Africa were the 'key that unlocked the remarkable story of early African politics' (Odendaal, 2012, p. xiv). He summarises the work he did in isiXhosa newspapers thus:

The contents of these pioneering publications, usually around four to eight pages in length, were often half in English and half in an indigenous language. The English sections, which were usually the part accessed and used by academic historians, often dealt with mainstream colonial politics and the 'native question'. Struggling through the Xhosa sections with my imperfect knowledge of the language, I came upon a treasure house waiting to be explored. For here were a myriad of reports on the activities of the new intellectuals and activists – on everything from local politics to teachers' meetings, debates, choirs, sports, weddings, funerals and even names of hotel guests –

written by the actors themselves, in their own language. I was fortunate to discover early on in my own research and career what scholars currently emphasise: that understanding language is ‘key to the translation, exchange and transmittal of ideas’ in the colonial context, and key to restoring rounded African lives and ideas to the historical record (Odendaal, 2012, p. xiv).

In the words above, Odendaal picks up on the social and public aspects of the newspapers, raising the question of whether politics is confined to English and ‘life’ is to be found in the vernacular. He traces the roots of the ANC, which he says was formed in the crucible of colonialism, first as the SANNC. He notes that Plaatje, the editor of *Tsala ea Becoana*, ‘was one of the four newspaper editors present’ at the founding of the SANNC in 1912; the others were Charles Dube (representing his brother, John L. Dube) of *Ilanga lase Natal*, Levi Mvabaza of *Umlomo wa Bantu*, and F. Monyakwane of *Naledi ea Lesotho*, while J.T. Jabavu did not make an appearance (Odendaal, 2012, p. 468). Plaatje was supported by Chief Joshua Molema in opposing the name South African Native National Congress on the grounds that the organisation needed ‘a distinctive African name’ and not to ‘confuse people’ due to ‘numerous commercial, political, and agricultural congresses and councils’ in South Africa. He was in support of the name Imbizo Yabantu (Bantu Congress), which was ‘suggested by Cleopas Kunene in a letter’, but the council rejected the suggestion (Odendaal, 2012, p. 470). Plaatje was nominated as general or corresponding secretary ‘at the instance of the Native Lawyers who convened the movement’ (Odendaal, 2012, p. 472).

At this time, African editors were also political and partisan actors who were immersed in the issues that confronted their communities. It was not a time when editors were impartial and not loyal to party politics. This period also marks a shift in Plaatje’s trajectory from the early days of *Koranta ea Becoana*, when he was more concerned with societal issues and regional politics. He was not so much a national political player himself, but with Union of South Africa in 1910, the political issues he confronted in *Koranta* became Union-wide.

Odendaal further provides personal insights into how conducting the research on early indigenous intellectuals helped to ‘shape’ his identity and life. Unsurprisingly, it had a profound impact on him as a researcher and compatriot. He says:

I was filled with amazement when I first encountered the source material. Here was a world I knew nothing about, though I had grown up in that very region. It opened wide my eyes and helped to change fundamentally the way I looked at myself and my

country. It also enabled me to be truer in important ways to my own sense of identity and humanity (Odendaal, 2012, p. xiv).

Couzens gives a reminder of how difficult it was to start newspapers at that time, given the desolation and poverty that surrounded Africans. He quotes Selope Thema's descriptions of the conditions of Africans in the early 20th century when they were 'treated as a beast of burden' that was 'knocked and kicked about with impunity'. Thema continues that when the African appeared in court, he was never believed, and his evidence was not accepted. He travelled at great inconvenience in trucks 'almost similar to those used for cattle and horses', and they could study only up to standard 3 (grade 5) at school and standard 6 (grade 8) at training schools. 'Politically he had no voice in the making and administration of the laws. Economically he was kept in a state of abject poverty' (Couzens, 1990, p. 22). Natasha Erlank explains further that 'Africans across southern Africa had few opportunities to be part of a shared space'. It was only through Christianity and mission education that a language was formed and an institutional platform 'rooted in a common set of beliefs' was created (Erlank, 2022, p. 46). It is important to remember this context when considering the history of the black press. The conditions were not readily conducive for them, and the system was already engineered to keep them out of meaningful political and economic participation.

Erlank says newspapermen occupied a 'unique position' in the social worlds of their readers and 'emphasised social mobility' in their 'multilayered experience' as guests and reporters at social events. She notes that they referred to themselves as writers and not journalists, as the term became widely used after the 1930s. 'Many of them wrote for different publications simultaneously, a writer on one newspaper, a correspondent on another' (Erlank, 2019, pp. 91–92). This had the potential of duplicity in the sense of assuming a double identity not stifled by the limitations that come with a commitment to one job. It is likely that the writers needed an additional source of income, as the black press did not generate substantial profits.

Attention will now be given to assessing how literary studies present the practice of journalism and the use of language by the black press. Scholars such as Karin Barber have dedicated some work to understanding the dynamics. Barber notes that the black press existed 'side by side with the English-language press' and that either people of a similar background or the same people wrote for both newspapers. Unlike Benedict Anderson's argument that the role of a press was to consolidate a single national language, in the South African experience, the early press reveals what she calls 'a complex relativism', which speaks to flexibility when writing

for audiences that ‘tended to be either far larger than a linguistically defined nation state, or far smaller’. Barber calls these ‘putative publics’ that had to be convened on a new footing, and this was on display when one observed the ‘experiments with voice and modes of address’ that fuelled the opportunities to ‘invent forms and imagine publics’ in an expanded space (Barber, 2007, p. 153).

Barber argues that local languages were consolidated in a linguistic layer below the official national language, quite often a European colonial language, a point that corresponds with Benedict Anderson’s assertion of ‘the process of linguistic standardisation effected by “print capitalism”’ which Barber says, in this case, was of an ethnic group rather than a nation state (Barber, 2007, p. 160). Plaatje’s efforts to imagine a Setswana nation was up against challenges. Barber asserts:

Vernacular languages could not play a straightforward role in “imagining” the nation in the predominantly multilingual states of sub-Saharan Africa. The official national language was usually the European colonial language; indigenous languages had a potential for fomenting divisions rather than national unity. In many cases, the colonial establishment of national boundaries that corralled together numerous cultural and linguistic populations actually stimulated localised ethnic-national consolidation and competition. Groups of culturally-similar peoples who had previously thought of themselves as independent of each other now began to imagine themselves as unified micro-nations on the model of the nation state; neighbouring peoples who had previously seen themselves as fuzzily related and linked by multiple threads of marriage, trade and cultural borrowing now saw themselves as rival, boundaried entities. Local-language print cultures, which flowered in many parts of Africa in the early colonial period, fed into the consolidation of these emerging cultural-ethnic constituencies (Ricard 2004). They disseminated standard versions of local languages, thus consolidating a linguistic layer above the level of the day-to-day speech of specific localities but below the level of the official “national” language learned in school (Barber, 2007, p. 160).

To further illustrate this point, communication theorist, Kehbama Langmia, advances the Afro-Cultural Mulatto Theory of Communication, which was intended to understand the communication dynamics in tropical Africa within specific settings. However, a case can be

made for it to apply to a general African setting, particularly in South Africa, due to the parallels and universality of the African colonial experience.

Langmia asserts that ‘mulattoistic’ – or more bluntly, bastardised – forms of communication have emerged as Western non-verbal and verbal communicative codes and have spread their influence in the ‘communicative universe of Africa’, resulting in compounded communication patterns between parties (Langmia, 2018, p. 89). He says, ‘African languages and proverbs used to be the solvent with which intra and interpersonal communication formed a perfect union’. However, with European colonial languages elevated to a ‘superior’ position and used in social gatherings, from churches to schools, commerce, and politics, this stunted the development and entrenchment of indigenous languages among their people (Langmia, 2018, p. 86).

What the aforementioned process has yielded is ‘a melange that neither resembles Africa nor Europe or the United States of America’ (Langmia, 2018, p. 86). Langmia’s assertions in his analysis of how language morphed coming out of the newspapers cannot be disputed. The newspapers became a breeding ground, if not a site of clashes, where the Western educational system ‘underrated and disregarded’ local languages and cultures (Langmia, 2018, p. 86).

In conclusion, the history of the black press has been expanded and become substantially more detailed in recent years; however, there is still no universally accepted definition of the black press. What is evident is that no one descriptor fully encapsulates what these newspapers were about or stood for. For instance, it was not always protest they covered, so calling them protest press is rendered insufficient. They may be alternative press if one is to extrapolate from the concept of subaltern publics as elucidated by Nancy Fraser, which argues for a state where ‘members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs’ (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). This is discussed further in the section about publics.

6.4.1 *The role of the editor*

It is evident from studies of the black press that the role of the editor was a crucial cog in the enterprise. When writing about Jabavu at *Imvo*, Siyasanga Tyali notes that Jabavu was not only the founder, ‘owner’, and editor but also took up other responsibilities such as ‘a journalist, postman, reporter, translator and record-keeper’ (Tyali, 2018, p. 304). This, Tyali argues, meant that as editor, he left an ‘indelible mark on all aspects’ of the paper. If anything, black press

newspapers carried the fingerprints and DNA of their editors, who in turn were exalted by their readers.

Natasha Erlank writes that the editor of *Umeteteli wa Bantu* was addressed as *Mhleli* in the letters and correspondence section, in a tradition running from the 19th century. *Mhleli* was translated as Editor. ‘The word comes from the verb “ukuhlela” which means “to sort things/classify” especially in relation to writing’. In the 1920s, *Mhleli* was replaced by *Sir* in *Umeteteli*. Erlank explains that ‘this, despite any knowledge readers might have had as to the identity of the various editors, was an honorific focused on status and role. The editor is almost always addressed respectfully as an unseen, yet benevolent and genial interlocutor’ (Erlank, 2019, pp. 95–97). Khwezi Mkhize notes a similar ‘exchange of courtesies and gratitude granted to a newspaper editor’ in *Imvo* of 1887 (Mkhize, 2018, p. 428).

Much has been written about the role of the editor in the news operation of the early 20th century black newspapers. Tim Couzens, citing Modiri Molema on Plaatje as an editor, described the back-breaking duties of three of four people that had to be endured by one man:

He collected the post, opened and read letters from his readers and kept records of money sent by subscribers. He read papers of other publishers and editors; Government gazettes and papers and translated all from English into Tswana and Xhosa. Using a typewriter he arranged all ideas and news, proof-read various communications and letters and after correcting, editing them sent everything to the printing presses. Besides this he re-read forms and proofs analysing and deciphering mistakes and again sent the correct version to the printers. When all news, information, ideas etc. were finally printed on thousands of reams of paper and folded properly, the papers were bound, addressed, stamped and sent to hundreds of subscribers. This massive task of reading, typing and printing the paper was a daily burden for as soon as the first edition for the day was complete the following week’s daily publications had to be arranged and prepared for. (Couzens, 1990, p. 21)

Couzens himself wrote: ‘It may be interesting to know, in those days, journalism was an unknown thing among the African community. So, it should be no surprise to learn that the editor was everything – reporter, sub-editor, general manager, columnist, the lot’ (Couzens, 1990, p. 13).

Writing about Mahatma Gandhi, a contemporary of Plaatje who ran the *Indian Opinion*, Isabel Hofmeyr notes that, in printing, the expected categories of compositor, machine operator,

foreman, and manager were blurred (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 5). The figure of Gandhi as the editor is fascinating. Hofmeyr says he ‘created his own textual persona’ and featured in the newspaper in letters on him or about him and those he sent to officials, signed articles, and reports on him clipped from other newspapers. The effect of this is that he appeared as ‘an ever-more prominent character, coming in and out of the paper on a weekly basis’ (Hofmeyr, 2013, pp. 80–81).

A further display of the demands on the editors from Plaatje’s time is found in the lecture delivered by Elijah Makiwane to the Natives Education Association in 1884, shared by Tim Couzens. Makiwane expressed the tensions between *Isigidimi samaXosa* and the newly established *Imvo Zabantsundu*. Couzens brings out the pressures that early editors and writers faced, which included ‘the moral pressure from liberal friends’ who could accuse them of ingratitude, given that after all the benevolent assistance they received to lift them up, they criticised white rule. Then there were pressures from white owners who could not stand for ‘a measure of independence by the black elite’. Lastly, the ‘radical pressure from their own class and more traditional sections of the population’ may have viewed them as sellouts or betrayers of the African cause (Couzens, 1990, p. 9).

The role of the editor elevated the above-mentioned early black writers and men of letters to a position of reverence and even admiration within their communities. The power to influence opinion and steer conversation earned them a level of respect, as Couzens writes: ‘The newspapers gave them both a public platform and a measure of social status in the aspirant urban middle class. Journalism gave writers a certain measure of social status’ (Couzens, 1990, p. 34).

When it comes to the content the writers produced, Couzens opines that the ‘newspapers probably influenced the writer’s style’, and this was so because they had a commercial imperative that went hand in hand with attracting and keeping readers, so the newspapers could not be a site for ‘private wrangling of conscience’ (Couzens, 1990, p. 34). What Couzens implies here is that the editor had to prioritise the issues most pertinent to the community. The newspaper enterprise could not be used as a selfish playground where the editor pushed his interests because if they were out of resonance with the burning matters of the readership, then they would disconnect, and the business would fail. So, on top of being purveyors of information, the editor had to remember to balance it with commercial success.

Before Tim Couzens's interest in the black press in the mid-1970s, there were hardly any profiles of editors of the black press from the early 20th century, most of whom were Plaatje's contemporaries. Couzens identified them as missionary education beneficiaries. He highlights that schools such as Healdtown, Lovedale, and Adams Training College contributed to educating early black politicians and editors. He names John Tengo Jabavu, John L. Dube, Selope Thema, and Rolfes Dhlomo as men who 'imbibed' Christian and Western civilisations while studying, arguing that mission ideology was internalised. He explains further:

... successive white governments and proprietors have allowed a measure of freedom to their black newspaper-editors because such men have often been chosen for their innate conservatism. In other words social control in South Africa has been maintained not only through overt violence and compulsion, but also through a colonization of the minds of part of the oppressed population. One must, perhaps, be sympathetic towards many of these black leaders, however. One must remember what Dr Shula Marks has called 'the ambiguities of dependence'. With little political power black leaders have had to walk an ambiguous tight-rope between collaboration with and resistance against their white oppressors (Couzens, 1990, p. 6).

What set Plaatje apart from the rest is that he did not reach the levels of education provided by Lovedale, Healdtown, and the others. He only got as far as standard 3 at the Pniel Mission Station under the teachings of missionary Ernst Westphal and his wife, Marie. Plaatje's aptitude and talent took him far, to the point that he was once mistakenly referred to as a 'Lovedale lovely' in a critique published in *The Friend*, when in fact, he never saw the inside of those prestigious schools that produced 'amakholwa' (African converts). In his newspapers, Plaatje's readers called them 'batlhalefi' (the wise and literate) in Setswana. Couzens draws on Shula Marks, who says that Africans labelled them 'school people' or 'the progressives' as opposed to the 'reds' and 'the blanket people' who applied red ochre on their faces and clothing and preferred blankets to European clothing. The school people became the 'originators' and 'founders' of the black press tradition (Couzens, 1990, p. 7).

This dichotomy between being a kholwa (singular for amakholwa) and African, applied in Plaatje's personal and professional life, as is evident in his newspapers, where he was a vociferous defender of Cape liberal values and the Union in 1910 but also mounted radical protest that attacked the encroaching white oppression. Mokoena indicates that Africans who published and wrote in their indigenous languages as New Africans attempted to reconcile

‘their subjugation as imperial subjects’ as they built up ‘new notions of nationhood that were capacious enough to accommodate ethnic nationalism while also not contradicting the promise of Victorian imperialism’ (Mokoena, 2016, p. 362).

The literature shows that black press editors held a role not just as media managers or publishers but also as figures, conveners, and actors in the public space. They were often beholden to certain imagined publics, and this was complicated. The question of how to categorise the press cannot be answered without looking at how public influence operates.

6.5 *Publics and the public sphere*

The concept of the public sphere, as presented by Jürgen Habermas, has come under intense scrutiny from scholars of communication, journalism, and cultural studies. In their succinct explanation of what Habermas argues, Lesley Cowling and Carolyn Hamilton note in *Babel Unbound* that in Habermas’s configuration, ‘citizens of nations and of the world debate in public issues important to their communities, express their concerns, marshal evidence and arguments to persuade others and hold the powerful to account’ (Cowling & Hamilton, 2020, p. 3). However, they argue that, over time, the needle shifted away from rigidly Habermasian assertions. In contemporary discourse, the public sphere ‘is called upon wherever people come together for collective exchange and expression of opinion, aiming both for a coherent enunciation and the transmission of messages onward to parallel or subordinate bodies’ (Cowling & Hamilton, 2020, p. 4). Cowling and Hamilton advance the argument that the concept of public sphere ‘with its focus on debating forums, proves to be a narrow lens on how ideas emerge, develop form, gather charge and spread’ (Cowling & Hamilton, 2020, p. 4). Afrocentric scholar Kehbema Langmia points out that Habermas’s Public Sphere Theory ‘emanated from Habermas’s observation of Europeans using cafeteria, coffee shops and salons to discuss political issues affecting the government of their countries’ (Langmia, 2018, p. 3). He contends that these kinds of theories are ‘alien to the black community communication experiences’, although ‘there are a plethora of forms of communicative attitudes and behaviours rooted within the black experience on the continent and abroad that need theorisation’ (Langmia, 2018, p. 3).

Cowling and Hamilton use the term ‘convened publics’ to denote the setup of contemporary democracies, the ‘front of house’ deliberations, and functions that take place in society. This excludes those in the margins who do not have their hands on the levers of power. The conversations happening in the black press, for instance, would have been on the periphery due

to this exclusion. Cowling and Hamilton bring attention to the idea that ‘convened’ already communicates that some things are being ‘brought together into the space of the public sphere’, and they come in a particular form. A further understanding is that some things will not be included or ‘sidelined’, and this raises ‘the question of what is not drawn in or is sidelined. The notion of a convened public sphere thus encourages scrutiny of the systems and institutions responsible for the convening and analysis of how they operate’ (Cowling & Hamilton, 2020, p. 27).

Social inequality results in exclusion that leaves many out of participation in the formal public sphere, but organic intellectuals frequently engage in discussions and critical analysis outside the realm of the established intellectual elite (Cowling & Hamilton, 2020, p. 28). Barnhurst and Nerone argue that the public sphere occupies ‘the space between civil society and the state’; it serves as a ‘buffer zone’ that protects individual rights from state interference. It also serves as a ‘steering mechanism for the polity as a whole’, and what is discussed in public would set the agenda for the State (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 46)

Higgins explains the public sphere as ‘a process of dialogue’ which is aimed at forming a ‘public policy aided by the informed intervention of concerned citizens.’ Three pillars are essential to Higgins for the public sphere to stand, and these are ‘an organised and relatively coherent body of government, in other words, a “knowable” civic authority that the participants within the sphere may judge and hold to account’, ‘rationally minded individual citizens who are subject to but remain relatively independent of these governing authorities’, and ‘participants should have the means to communicate their views to the governing authorities’ (Higgins, 2008, p. 27).

Higgins also agrees that Habermas’s original conception of the public sphere has been subject to constructive criticism, and Habermas himself has acknowledged both its dependence upon an idealised historical arrangement and its limited definition of constructive citizenship (Habermas, 1992; Higgins, 2008, p. 28). Having established the criticism and debates around Habermas, where is the black press historically positioned against the different postulations? The black press was excluded and pushed to the margins and not taken seriously as the counterpublic.

In her appraisal of Habermas’s Public Sphere Theory, Nancy Fraser argued for notions of alternative and multiple public spheres. Her main argument was for the existence of subordinate

groups, which encompass women and those in the lower classes of the bourgeois public sphere. In a nutshell, Fraser points to four Habermasian assumptions, namely:

the assumption that it is possible for interlocutors in a public sphere to bracket status differentials and to deliberate ‘as if’ they were social equals [...] a single, comprehensive public sphere is always preferable to a nexus of multiple publics [...] the appearance of ‘private interest’ and ‘private issues’ is always undesirable; [...] a functioning democratic public sphere requires a sharp separation between civil society and the state (Fraser, 1990, pp. 62–63).

Fraser argues against bracketing of ‘inequalities of status’ (Fraser, 1990, p. 63) as ‘inequalities continue to operate through cultural hierarchies of everyday habits’ and that rational deliberation is out of reach for classes lower than the bourgeois, as such, ‘universality... does not exist’ (Butsch, 2007, p. 5). Houston Baker in *The Black Public Sphere* agrees with Fraser that it is ‘exclusionary, overdetermined both ideologically and in terms of gender, overconditioned by the market and by history, and utopian in the extreme’ (Baker, 1995, p. 12). Fraser further points out that in a ‘stratified society’, there is ‘a contestation among a plurality of competing publics’; with this, she presents the concepts of alternative and subaltern counterpublics. This alternative state is further explained by Warner as an ‘identity-based, homogenous group’ that is ‘formed by their conflict with the norms and contexts of their cultural environment, and this context of domination inevitably entails distortion’ (Warner, 2002, p. 63). Fraser posits that in a stratified society, ‘there is limited shared interest and common good’ as ‘stratified societies are zero sum societies in which what is good for one group is bad for another’. In a situation like that, ‘deliberation is futile’ (Warner, 2002, p. 5). Fraser further argues for an ‘overarching “structured setting” in which differences between unequal publics are resolved through contest or other means, but not necessarily deliberation’ (Butsch, 2007, p. 5). Butsch makes a case for contestation, power, interests, force, action, reason, and speech to be legitimate considerations in the public sphere in addition to deliberation (Butsch, 2007, pp. 5–6).

Cowling and Hamilton introduce the work of Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, which explains how ‘marginalised groups in society position themselves in relation to a mainstream public sphere, being at once... oppositional and public’. Here, participants can be seen getting involved in networks and public meetings, and this ‘counterpublic positioning’ may lead to gaining speed ‘that later propels them into mainstream debates and enables them to engage in

these debates' (Cowling & Hamilton, 2020, p. 29) – a 'formulation of narratives' by sectors of the population with 'distinct historical, cultural or religious experiences' driven by shared interests that are not valued or recognised by others. 'Their concerns might be deemed irrelevant to contemporary democratic politics, atavistic or retrogressive' (Cowling & Hamilton, 2022, p. 30). Cowling and Hamilton label these groups as 'sequestered publics' with no intention to gain speed in order to be part of the unitary public sphere; instead, they are 'self-contained domains of discussion' (Cowling & Hamilton, 2022, p. 30). They further indicate:

People who participate in sequestered public discussions may find it problematic that they do not see their concerns reflected in what goes as the mainstream public sphere. Under such conditions, a sequestered public sphere may begin to operate as a counterpublic, providing opportunities for the participants to build up a momentum and seek ways to entering their concerns into the convened public sphere, often through dramatic public interventions (Cowling & Hamilton, 2022, p. 31).

The above is reflected in the black press, in how protest takes up new, different, and innovative nodes that manifest in text, far removed from reasoned deliberation.

Natalie Hopkinson and Taryn Myers take the conversation further by theorising around the black public sphere, which 'stands separate from and intersects with the dominant, male-centred, public sphere' (Hopkins & Myers, 2018, p. 217). They argue that it is useful as

a framework to examine the ways in which black people express their political views and values among other people belonging to the same racial and ethnic group as well as to the larger population. The intention is to publicise new ideas to increase the acceptance of the group's values within mainstream media (Black Public Sphere, 1995). Thus, the Black Public Sphere has been theorised as a harbour for people of African descent marginalised in the larger public sphere (Hopkins & Myers, 2018, p. 217).

To distil Baker's arguments, Langmia reflects on Baker's chapter in *The Black Public Sphere* (1995) in which he points to three known 'salient characteristics of black intergroup communication theory. These are 1. Inter-subjective thought sharing. 2. Communalism (i.e. recognition of collective essence), and 3. Ethnocentrality (ethnic/tribal affinities)' (Langmia, 2018, p. 2).

The constitution of a counterpublic can be seen in the lecture delivered by Elijah Makiwane in 1884 to the Natives Education Association, which was launched in 1879. Jabavu stated that

this was the first organisation or body started independently by Africans without the assistance of missionaries. Said Makiwane:

I believe I am correct in saying that what led to the starting of the *Imvo* was the belief that the Natives required a professionally political paper which the *Isigidimi (sama Xosa)* is not and perhaps could not well be and that a paper issued more often was required and that there was plenty of room for the two. I know that some of those who have taken active interest in the support of the *Imvo* are much more concerned with the success of the *Isigidimi* than that of the *Imvo Zabantsundu*. What is of more importance, however, is the reception the *Imvo* is to get from the Natives themselves. I know that good wishes have been expressed from various quarters but two things are especially necessary - the one is that there be as many paying subscribers as there are well-wishers and the other is that the editor receive contributions in writing as often as possible in order to make the paper truly representative (Couzens, 1990, p. 9).

Two things stand out in the statements above. Makiwane is calling on Africans to embrace *Imvo Zabantsundu* and effectively convene as a public. He uses the words ‘professionally political paper’; as Couzens points out, this was at a time when there was dissatisfaction with the domination of white churches, and moves were being made for independent black churches. In other words, Africans felt that their interests were not entertained or catered for in the white churches as well as the convened public sphere, which in this case was represented by *Isigidimi samaXosa*, whose editors’ independence came into question (Couzens, 1990, p. 9). Therefore, they needed expression elsewhere, and that alternative would be *Imvo*, thereby creating a forum for counterpublic discussions. Furthermore, the fact that he calls on ‘Natives’ to support *Imvo* by taking up subscriptions and contributing writings frequently is a clear display of a campaigner for a counterpublic to take shape – in his words, to be ‘truly representative’.

Imvo, as a convener of the counterpublic, exhibits traits of what Cowling and Hamilton call building up ‘a momentum and seek[ing] ways to entering their concerns into the convened public sphere, often through dramatic public interventions’ (Cowling & Hamilton, 2022, p. 31). Couzens notes that not only did *Imvo* turn Jabavu into the ‘most powerful black politician in the Cape up to the end of the century’, but it garnered ‘practical successes’ as a way of breaking through the convened public sphere and entering their concerns, which included campaigning for the release of Chief Sigcau from Robben Island in 1887, ‘effectively destroying’ the Native Disenfranchisement Bill, challenged the imprisonment for sedition of Chiefs Maqoma,

Gungubele, Matanzima, and Edmund Sandile who were released in 1888 (Couzens, 1990, p. 10). Couzens quotes Jabavu when he extolled the work of *Imvo* and wrote in 1894 that ‘the Natives, it must not be forgotten, have no representation in the Parliament of the colony’, and thereby effectively, to register their concerns and voice their issues they could do it from outside and enter the convened public that was the white press as well as Parliament.

Of particular interest to this study is what Cowling and Hamilton (2020, p. 5) say are the ‘challenges of extreme inequality and legacies of racial discrimination which had seen the centuries-long sidelining of black intellectual publics’. This counterpublic sphere, subaltern sphere, or ‘sphericules’ emerge out of the shaping of the public sphere as a key social imaginary where ‘people whose issues are marginalised in the core sphere constitute themselves into counterpublic spheres in order to have an impact in the core public sphere’ (Cowling & Hamilton, 2020, p. 7).

Michael Warner provides six characteristics of a public or perhaps what others may view as a counterpublic or subaltern. First, it is self-organised by discourse. ‘It exists by virtue of being addressed’ (Warner, 2002, p. 67). Second, it is a relation among strangers. It ‘unites strangers through participation alone, at least in theory. Strangers come into relationship by its means’ (Warner, 2002, p. 75). Third, ‘the address of public speech is both personal and impersonal’ (Warner, 2002, p. 76). He explains that with public speech, ‘we might recognise ourselves as addressees but is it equally important that we remember that the speech was addressed to indefinite others’ (Warner, 2002, p. 77). Fourth, ‘a public is constituted through mere attention... it must predicate some degree of attention, however notional, from its members’. He adds that attention is the ‘principal sorting category’ that separates members from non-members (Warner, 2002, p. 87). Fifth, ‘publics act historically according to the temporality of their circulation’ (Warner, 2002, p. 96). A text must continue to circulate through time to have a public (Warner, 2002, p. 97). Sixth, ‘a public is poetic world making’ (Warner, 2002, p. 114). This means that people shape and define the world they inhabit through a shared concern or discourse.

Warner maintains that the public is united on an ideological level depending on the ‘stylization of the reading act as transparent and replicable; it depends on an arbitrary social closure (through language, idiolect, genre, medium, and address)’ (Warner, 2002, p. 117). With these in mind, one can begin to think through how black press newspapers, in general, and Sol Plaatje’s newspapers, in particular, specifically created their publics.

Of *Abantu-Batho* and its role in the public sphere, Peter Limb refers to what Benedict Anderson has to say in times of change. He revealed that ‘newspapers could influence or connect to the public sphere, politicise people and interpret new ideas, in this way they could be “distinctly subversive”. They could also show the way to alternatives to the status quo’ (Limb, 2012, p. 12).

Limb posits that *Abantu-Batho* did exactly what is explained in the paragraph above, as it presented other options to white rule, such as African nationalism, socialism, and Garveyism, thereby helping to ignite new African identities and aspirations. Limb points out that *Abantu-Batho* challenged the hegemony of a state that was ‘increasingly moving away from a notional liberalism to a complete denial of black rights’. It assumed the roles of a ‘mobiliser and organiser of protests’ by encouraging public debate and getting its audiences to be interested in the work of black journalists; in the end, it developed an African public sphere and the New African. It is important to note that Limb does not attribute all this to *Abantu-Batho* but acknowledges other contributors, notably other papers in the black press collective (Limb, 2012, p. 32).

The black press newspapers found themselves in a unique position. For the first time, African communities that had relied on oral traditions of storytelling were convened around the written word on pieces of paper. Khumisho Moguerane calls them ‘textual assemblies’ (Moguerane, 2024, p. 65). She likens them to the *kgotla* (tribal court), at which men traditionally gathered to debate issues, settle matters, or chart a new path for the *morafe* (nation or people), to use Moguerane’s expression. It was here that Africans could go about their business in the best way they knew how without any interference from a colonial authority. Put another way, Moguerane says a newspaper had gone beyond just a textual manifestation of a *morafe* but stood for the ‘authority of its moral universe’ (Moguerane, 2024, p. 115).

Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu and Limb agree with Moguerane. They assert that papers such as *Abantu-Batho* came to ‘represent a public sphere’, which they further explain as ‘a liberated space where writers were able to articulate their own views on kings in contrast to white stereotypes’ (Ndlovu & Limb, 2012, p. 227). They continue that *Abantu-Batho* was also ‘a liberated space able to accord dignity to African rulers and tradition, just as it won the space to criticise those whom it saw as betraying that tradition or lacking legitimacy’ (Ndlovu & Limb, 2012, p. 248).

On the other hand, Hlonipha Mokoena brings the idea of ‘ibandla’, which she describes as a term with ‘both traditional and modern connotations’. She says it includes a summoned gathering or assembly, which is ambiguous in traditional and religious senses. I agree with Mokoena that it ‘borrowed its idiom of readership from the traditional vocabulary of public assembly’ (Mokoena, 2016, p. 369).

What is to be said of instances in the counterpublic and the subaltern where Makiwane assembled readers for *Imvo* in the 1884 lecture at the Natives Education Association? Or John L. Dube rallying his people to donate money and sell their cattle for a fund to start *Ilanga lase Natal* in 1903, which he so named so that it would be their mouthpiece and act as ‘a guiding light among the Zulus’? Silas Molema recognised that there was a need for an outlet of expression if political, economic, and cultural interests were to be maintained. He thus decided to start a newspaper and to ‘call up’ Solomon Plaatje as editor.

In the aforementioned three cases of *kgotla*, *ibandla* and Makiwane, there is an active move to convene publics or counterpublics in response to a convened public that excludes them and disregards their issues. Here, one can see campaigners who urge their people to gather around, like they would do in a *kgotla*, but this time it is an imagined public. It is called upon not only to debate and speak through the new mouthpiece but to embrace a new technology, platform, and a foreign form of the written word. Public sphere theorists perhaps have to look into understanding this act of active campaigning that convenes a counterpublic or a subaltern by an influential figure in a community.

Hlonipha Mokoena touches on this when she writes about Magma Fuze, the author of *Abantu Abamnyama Lapa Bavela Ngakona* (The Black People and Whence They Came), published in 1922 and recognised as the first book written in the isiZulu language by a Zulu author. She notes that when Fuze realised ‘what it meant to live as a subject without political representation... he offered the newspaper as a substitute for the absent representative’. Mokoena further observes that Fuze ‘accused his readers of being inert and passive and by implication, highlighting his own activism and political vigilance’ (Mokoena, 2016, p. 371). In this instance, Fuze can be seen assuming the role of the campaigner, calling on the Africans to gather around what would be the counterpublic sphere.

Afrocentricity scholar Molefi Asante discusses the multiplicity of dislocations, disorientations, and distortions at the foundation of a generative and productive system, demonstrating the strain of an imperialistic and triumphalist vision of the world. He says African people have

been so destabilised by being ‘off-centre’ and ‘out of location’ within their own culture that they have lost all sense of direction (Asante, 2003, 2014). This is explored in more detail in Chapter 12.

Karin Barber echoes these sentiments in her take of is interpreted as the New African. She says that ‘this public space was new and fragile. It was the face of a new, dislocated, uprooted and ideologically fissured class’ (Barber, 2007, p. 159). Something had to be salvaged from the traditional past that could be used to create a new future ‘when Africans would be fully civilised’ and ‘in control of their cultural, social, and political lives’ (Barber, 2007, p. 159).

In Plaatje’s work through his newspapers, I wish to explore the idea that he promoted the Setswana language and nationhood in the public sphere and as an imagined community. Brian Willan states:

In the newspapers he edited between 1902 and 1914 [sic], he demonstrated the capabilities and potential of his language as a medium of communication. In doing so he hoped to draw Tswana-speakers together, to strengthen bonds of community, to enhance their claims to nationhood. And in the tens of thousands of words in Setswana that appeared in these newspapers, written by himself and his contributors, he built a treasure store of the riches of the language. The pages of *Koranta ea Becoana*, *Tsala ea Becoana* and *Tsala ea Batho* constituted between them the most extensive and most varied archive of written Setswana in existence. (Willan, 2018, p. 474)

Aside from Plaatje himself, indeed, no native Tswana speakers had written, or at least published, any books in their own language (Willan, 2018, p. 475). Tied to the discussion about the public sphere is national identity, which is at the core of what the black press promoted.

In *African Print Cultures*, Emma Hunter provides a critique of Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* and *The Spectre of Communities* where Anderson argued that national identity was dominated by the collective consciousness, and this is the process Anderson sought to explain (Hunter, 2016, p. 284). Hunter says that Anderson’s work was produced in the late 20th century but looking at it from the 21st-century vantage point of critical distance from nationalist movements, she argues that it is no longer clear that nationalism has come to dominate the collective consciousness in the way Anderson thought he had identified.

Hunter presents an argument that older and newer forms of connection and understandings of legitimate authority, defined by religion or heredity, are powerful and tenacious. Hunter brings

in Karin Barber's suggestion that the new collective subjectivities created through print were just as likely to be smaller or larger than the nation. Hunter quotes Barber saying: 'The role of print (and subsequently electronic media) in the constitution of a national imagined community was only one strand in a history that included simultaneous consolidation of local ethnic and other identities and the imagining of supranational communities' (Hunter, 2016, p. 285).

To make her case, Hunter quotes Tony Ballantyne, who argued that the story of the nation has been a key factor in encouraging cultural and intellectual historians to invest energy in producing histories of identities such as Māori, settler, Pākehā, and New Zealander. Hunter explains that historians explored the production of these identities through the print culture, a key focus of this section. She continues to indicate that print has also created new spaces for virtual exchange in which new kinds of networks were created. These networks constituted by and through print were contingent, fragile, and unstable but nonetheless played a critical role in forging the intellectual worlds of late colonialism.

To understand these networks, Hunter turns to the concept of the public. She draws on Warner's definition of a public as neither an all-encompassing, socially defined group, nor social totality such as the State, nor a bounded group such as an audience united to watch a performance, but rather that a public comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation. Hunter argues that a newspaper can play a role as a tool of identity formation and can call into being a new public that is both bounded and unbounded, unitary, and segmented.

Using the 1950s Chagga newspaper *Komkaya* in Tanganyika as a case study, Hunter describes how Chief Thomas Marealle used *Komkaya* to build Chagga national identity, instituting Chagga Day, commissioning a new history and flag, and focusing on language preservation. Marealle established a Chagga Dialect Committee to address the existence of multiple dialects and promote the development of written materials. While Swahili was dominant due to colonial policy, Marealle pushed for Kichagga's inclusion, resulting in a compromise with limited space for Kichagga content in the newspaper (Hunter, 2016, p. 286).

Upon examining Plaatje's work, one is immediately struck by how vast and diverse his public must have been. The Setswana-reading publics were scattered all over South Africa in present-day North West, Gauteng, Free State, and Northern Cape, including Botswana. They were stretched by space and politics. These publics were simultaneously smaller because the newspapers served as a forum open only to those who were literate in Setswana or English, and willing to adopt the vernacular of this public. This public was a unified body made up of

fragmented networks. The fragments were made up of dialectic and totemic allegiances in addition to geographic separation, only held up together by a common foundational language.

The notion of public need not even rely on the idea of a concrete readership or spectatorship but rather on the projection or imagination of groups or subjectivities in print or other mass media (Gal & Woolard, 2001, p. 8). Gal and Woolard argue that representational processes such as these were aspects of power 'figuring among the means for establishing inequality, imposing social hierarchy and mobilising political action' (Gal & Woolard, 2001, p. 1).

The mediated public sphere of modern history shifted the powerplay. With the interests of commercialisation – owners, state, and advertisers – the 'voice' of the public stands the risk of being drowned out and abandoning the core function of the media of being a 'watchdog, an agency of information and debate and a voice of the people to the state' (Butsch, 2007, p. 7).

Butch posits that commercial media presented a threat to the public sphere, as presented by Habermas, with their mandate to meet profit imperatives. This, he contends, turned the public into 'consumers in a market rather than citizens in a public sphere' (Butsch, 2007, p. 8). In the end, what is served is what sells and not what equips the reader with information to facilitate informed public discussion (Butsch, 2007, p. 8). Ornebring is in agreement with Butsch, as he argues that the rise of mass media and mass news led to a revised set of news values and approaches that put a premium on timeliness, simplicity, and entertainment value (Ornebring, 2007, p. 77). Habermas talks about this as a disempowering exercise, where one notices the readers or the public losing their debating power and becoming consumers of a fast-moving commodity; he calls this a 'pseudo-public or sham-private of culture consumption' (Habermas, 1989, p. 160). Butsch calls them 'passive audience observers' (Butsch, 2007, p. 8).

6.6 *Forms and models of news*

The study of form and models in the black press at the turn of the 20th century has only recently attracted significant scholarly attention. Form pertains to how the newspapers looked and presented news and models are the manner in which content was packaged and the business was shaped. Researchers such as Natasha Erlank, Isabel Hofmeyr, and Peter Limb have traced the evolution of the black press, highlighting its development and the emergence of new scholarship on the subject. Their work provides a foundation for understanding how newspapers like *Umteteli wa Bantu*, *Indian Opinion*, and *Abantu-Bantu* contributed to shaping public discourse and identity in black communities.

A pivotal work in this field is *The Form of News: A History* by Kevin G. Barnhurst and John Nerone (2001), which examines how newspaper form records past cultures, concerns, and power structures. Barnhurst and Nerone define form as the visible structure of the newspaper, encompassing layout, typography, illustration, and departmentalisation. They argue that the design and structure of a newspaper communicate its ideals and foster a sense of familiarity and attachment among readers, shaping the relationship between the medium and its audience.

Barnhurst and Nerone identify three historical eras in newspaper design: the Printerly (late 17th to mid-19th century), Victorian (mid-19th to early 20th century), and Modern (early to late 20th century). Each era reflects different priorities, from the text-heavy and functional Printerly style to the crowded and visually varied Victorian, and finally the streamlined, professionally designed Modern newspaper. These shifts corresponded to broader changes in technology, society, and readership.

The transition from the industrial to the professional newspaper in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is especially relevant to this study, as it coincides with the period when Plaatje was active. The industrial newspaper, powered by new printing technologies, became accessible to wider audiences and fused news, entertainment, and advertising. However, its chaotic presentation led to the rise of the professional newspaper, which emphasised standardisation, clarity, and a hierarchical organisation of stories which was a move towards modernism that sought to simplify and map the social world for readers.

Barnhurst and Nerone's analysis extends beyond physical design to consider the underlying philosophies of newspapers, such as the presence of bylines and the role of illustration. They argue that the newspaper's form is shaped by political and commercial imperatives, evolving

in response to shifts in the public sphere and market society. While their work focuses on American newspapers, they provide a way to approach the analysis of the black press and to locate Plaatje against global developments in newspapers. Their insightful analysis on the usage of content, space, layout, and headlines in newspapers from 1895 to 1985 presented in charts, graphs, and text presents a detailed picture of the metamorphosis of the form of newspaper that can be replicated in other settings and environments.

In South Africa, Natasha Erlank indicates that *Umteteli wa Bantu*, which was owned and controlled by the Chamber of Mines, included the casual and irregular intermingling of social and personal news with all the other paper content. 'By sewing people and their activities into the fabric of the paper, *Umteteli* created a niche and identity for itself as constitutive of black sociality in which the constraints imposed by racial segregation no longer impeded upward social mobility' (Erlank, 2019, p. 75).

On form, Erlank uses the words 'promiscuous' and 'mishmash' to denote the layout used by *Umteteli*, as opposed to Barnhurst and Nerone's 'dense jungle'. She argues that this marked out its identity as constitutive of a particular style of African modernity, 'one rooted in shared social experiences rather than in intellectual vision, in the embattled context of a modernising and racially segregated South Africa' (Erlank, 2019, p. 77). The nature of the form of *Umteteli* may have been decided upon by the owners, unlike in Plaatje's case where he was in control. There is a marked difference between the publics that the two papers served. Plaatje sought to convene rural and urban audiences on the basis of a common language and identity, whereas with *Umteteli* the readers were decidedly urban, but with an undeniable rural connection and background. They were not an organic grouping in contrast to Plaatje's readers, but labour that descended on major centres of employment and cities.

Erlank states that *Umteteli* encouraged and exhorted its readers into a status of co-producers, thereby creating commonality through the relationship of readers to the paper. The letters section, Erlank asserts, 'created social publics', which she argues 'marked out a feature of the black press that has so far been absent from the literature' (Erlank, 2019, p. 77). Erlank argues that what set *Umteteli* apart from other newspapers across the continent, both colonial and African, is the way it included its content and the prominence it gave to readers' views (Erlank, 2019, p. 77). It must be noted that *Ilanga lase Natal* also carried a robust readers' section that elevated to prominence the likes of Magera Fuze.

Erlank states that African newspapers were ‘almost never homogenous operations’ and should not be viewed as such. Consistency was not viewed as a virtue, especially when judged against modern newspapers or when using the standards of contemporary historians. ‘It pollinated content between sections and included a mishmash of content’, which might make it seem ‘inept and antiquated’ (Erlank, 2019, p. 79).

Erlank evokes the writings of Isabel Hofmeyr and Derek Peterson when they quote Sylvia Lawson on how the colonial journals have been subjected to over-dissection and underreading, meaning that they have garnered enough attention in studies, yet the content is not fully exploited due to language barriers but also a lack of ‘understanding newspapers as a multifaceted engagement between text and paper’. In the process, what gets lost are ‘the workings of a vast and extraordinary text’, ‘a parade of expressive tricks and marvels’, and ‘a whole print circus’ (Erlank, 2019, p. 80).

When one considers the form of a newspaper, Erlank highlights that this gives one a platform to read the ‘figurative marginalia on a page of a newsprint’, that is to say, ‘a reader’s interaction with a page as a visual expression of meaning’. In the case of *Umteteli*, she says the writers devised a ‘set of techniques for creating an imprimatur that was indisputably their own’, but some of them first earned their experience in *Abantu-Batho* and *Ilanga*. In her article, Erlank gives an example of a column in *Umteteli*, which she says ‘reminds the paper’s readers that its mission is to “habilitate the native” and it requests aspirant letter writers to avoid “citations of grievance” with no “remedial” action attached’. Erlank cites the *Umteteli* report of the Bulhoek massacre of Christians and points out that the editors ‘could highlight contradictions in their editorial writing using juxtaposition and different size type’. She contends that ‘if editors exploited a range of design techniques to experiment with meaning, a further, and related method for putting together a paper is found in how they used their scissors’ (Erlank, 2019, p. 80).

A popular feature of colonial newspapers was the exchanges, which shaped the editors’ content using articles and content culled from other newspapers, journals, magazines, and just about anything considered wordy enough (Newell, 2013, as cited in Erlank, 2019). ‘The exchange editor sat figuratively at the apex of a press web, winding in news and spooling it out again to different publications’. In her analysis, Erlank concludes that *Umteteli* did not ‘liberally plagiarise’ content from other African press. She points out that the early news pages had a

distinctly local feel until it appeared that they had begun using a news syndication service (Erlank, 2019, p. 81).

Umteteli was ‘almost unashamedly parochial’ and had local network ties that reflected a disposition towards ‘Southern rather than South African, trans-ethnic rather than trans-national, and multilingual’. It had relationships with *Ilanga lase Natal* and *Imvo Zabantsundu*, as well as *South African Outlook*, which was formerly known as the *Christian Express*, all of which operated in a shared space. To evade the censors, they put potentially controversial content in isiZulu, Sesotho, or isiXhosa letters in later editions or printed in an ancillary newspaper. The cut-and-paste journalism and passive newsgathering of that time ‘allowed editors to take positions without assuming responsibility for them’. They also played with style to position themselves in relation to their funders, ‘employing ventriloquism to capture a particular point of view, attributing unpopular views to other mouths or anonymous contributors’ and poetry was used in criticising the State because of its ‘double-faced wit’ (Erlank, 2019, p. 81).

Erlank states that letter writing ‘winds like a thread through the vernacular press’. It was here that the praise and chastisement of white presence were expressed by writers such as *UHadi Waseluhlangeni* (Harp of the Nation), whose writings were printed in *Isigidimi samaXosa*. He managed to poke fun at *Isigidimi*’s European audience, partly because he wrote in isiXhosa. Erlank draws tonality parallels with Magma Fuze, who wrote letters on the Zulu past in isiZulu to *Ilanga lase Natal*.

Erlank points out that some of the more interesting material in *Umteteli* appeared in the letters written to the editor, and this led to editors recognising the role of letters written to the newspaper. Eventually, the letters were regularly allocated space on the front page and second page with suggestions for topics to write about. It was as if letter writing was cultivated through guidelines on the correct etiquette – such as the usage of ‘double spacing if typing’ and ‘writing clearly if using pen’, ‘no pencil please’, and ‘write on one side of the page only’. This yielded responses, praise, and criticism of the newspaper so that by 1922, letters were a prominent feature of *Umteteli* (Erlank, 2019, p. 95). There was also a marked shift in language usage. Erlank brings out that ‘by the 1920s, paper conversations were polyglot’ in isiXhosa or Sesotho, but by the 1930s, they occurred more in English, tackling themes about ‘modernity and tradition, customary practices and nuclear families’ as well as male initiation and lobola, the value of education, and the effects of Christianity (Erlank, 2019, pp. 95–96).

Erlank is correct in her analysis that these letters enjoyed an elevated status in *Umteteli*, giving the writers confidence in the paper that they would be ‘heard’ (author’s word) through this call-and-response practice (Erlank, 2019, p. 96). The letters became a social equaliser whereby ‘a two-dimensional social venue in which a common sociability’ could be achieved largely because of the ‘intimacy’ that could only be found in *Umteteli* (Erlank, 2019, p. 97). This intimacy, Erlank explains, came out of how the newspaper ‘constructed the relationship between its readers and the relevant incumbent editor’.

Another engagement with form in the black press is found in the work of Isabel Hofmeyr, who conducted a study on *Indian Opinion*, a newspaper edited by Mahatma Gandhi, a contemporary of *Umteteli*, as well as Plaatje’s *Tsala ea Becoana* and *Tsala ea Batho*. Writing about the experiments in form at that time, Hofmeyr notes that these ‘unfolded in an age of vertiginous acceleration’ with regard to the technology of that time, such as the industrial revolution comforts of ‘trains, steamships and telegraphs’ that speeded up communication. Hofmeyr highlights that, with mounting intensity, the readers were bombarded with more and more printed matter and ever briefer media genres like the headline, summary and extract, which increased the speed of reading (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 4).

Explaining Gandhi’s approach, Hofmeyr states:

He favoured hand printing and encouraged a style of reading that was patient, that paused rather than rushed ahead. He interspersed news reports with philosophical extracts, and he encouraged readers to contemplate what they read rather than to hurtle forward (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 4).

Writing further on form, Hofmeyr mentions the art of condensation that Gandhi employed when he needed to curtail the number of pages. Gandhi made the compositor’s work light and ‘the writer’s work becomes dense and demanding’ (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 70). Gandhi achieved this by reducing the number of Gujarati and English pages but providing more information in fewer words. Hofmeyr unpacks this further by delving into what she describes as the characteristics of journalism, namely, ‘telegraphic brevity, rapid summary, hurried reading, and instantaneous obsolescence’ being reversed. She argues that ‘summary acquires a gravity that pulls the reader’s attention down into the text where reading has to be deliberate rather than thoughtless hasty’ (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 70). Hofmeyr deduces that this practice of condensation in turn produced readers who were thoughtful, deliberate, and sympathetic to the text. On a

higher philosophical level, Hofmeyr indicates that this form of writing was ‘a training ground in self-restraint... and ‘constituted a form of spiritual discipline’ (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 71).

Gandhi used excerpts from philosophers Socrates, Ruskin, Thoreau, Emerson, and Tolstoy, which resembled the columns culled from exchange material aimed at slowing down reading, as Gandhi had intended. His intention was to turn the format of the periodical and the newspaper, which were designed for a hurried and quick read ‘against itself’ and used ‘the art of condensation to pull readers in and slow them down’. This, Hofmeyr points out, was in contrast to the ‘macadamized’ reading, which was intended to move the reader along at great speed (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 89).

Hofmeyr states that the periodical was designed to have a ‘variety of reading pace – rushing and ambling’. This gave the power to the reader not only to choose what they wanted but also how to read what they wanted. She recognises that while one could not compel readers to read in a particular way, ‘one could give advice and cultivate an experimental environment in which certain forms required slow rather than fast reading’ (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 89). She gives an example of the article ‘Extracts from Balzac’, which was about two dozen bite-sized quotations that defied quick reading. ‘To attempt to read them continuously induces intellectual vertigo as one hurtles from one topic to another’ (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 91).

What Gandhi achieved with the ‘juxtaposition of the two genres (news and ethical extract)’ is that he obliged his readers to think about what constituted ethical news reporting. Hofmeyr draws attention to this because, she argues, it was a ‘pressing question in the context of southern Africa where the white-run press endlessly recycled racism, hatred, stereotype and vitriol’. The *Indian Opinion* took a different approach, which was covert. Instead of fiery protest editorial, it routinely printed such extracts with no comment attached in ‘a kind of textual, nonviolent, noncooperation’ (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 92).

Much like what *Umteteli* did when it advised its letter writers on the etiquette of the craft, Gandhi’s Gujarati columns also shared detailed advice and guidelines to readers on how to read in a slow and careful way. This included reading articles repeatedly and keeping copies of the newspaper to make their own collection of clippings. ‘The model of reading was one of perseverance (read the whole paper) and pausing (stop and think, come back later, reread and reconsider)’ (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 92).

Indian Opinion, like its colonial contemporaries, gleaned content from exchange papers from all over the world, and this ‘transnational summary hence constituted much of the paper’s

substance', creating 'a niche and identity' for the newspaper. Gandhi made readers see themselves as part of the 'vast reading commonwealth' through summary and abridgement of international texts, putting the news side by side with the local news clippings. 'This juxtaposition redefined both genres, making ethical discourse "news" and slowing down news reports to the pace of philosophy' (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 71).

The writers and correspondents seldom appeared under their own byline or took up 'the guise of a genius', whereby 'the writer becomes an event rather than a byline' (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 78). In some rare instances, the paper ran bylines, and 'this was tied to occasions of circulation in which the paper sought to dramatize its networks' (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 79). The stance of the paper regarding its staff was that 'we write impersonally' and 'forms of authorship such as fictitious correspondents and pseudonymous and semipseudonymous writing, proliferated, in part to make the journal seem larger than it was' (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 79).'

'*Indian Opinion* included essays, views and opinions from writers and intellectuals across the world, but generally via some other publication' (Hofmeyr, 2013, pp. 82). It became 'one of the great intellectual archives of the world' (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 72). These forms had a longer shelf life than news, and the 'evidence of their prior circulation added to their value, ability to speak to different audiences, and durability making subscribers feel like part of an enduring commonwealth of readers' (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 82). The newspaper carried columns such as Our London Letter, Durban Notes, and Johannesburg Letter, which sought to portray these cities 'as best captured in forms that metaphorically amble along the usual pathways of circulation rather than hurtling along via telegram and telegraph'. The style employed by the writers included the works of Polak, who used the form to 'profile a series of types in the white community in Johannesburg'. In his column he 'highlighted the range of contradictory views within one group unlike pieces in the white press (especially "Man in the Moon" in the *Natal Witness*) that portrayed the Indian community through a levelling stereotype' (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 82).

The interface that a reader had with news in *Indian Opinion* would seem more like a stream of opinion, idea, and belief, culled from other papers than a portfolio of occurrence, as Hofmeyr puts it. She further explains that the pages created 'a vivid impression of an event as a configuration of newspapers rather than as a datelined and distinct episode' (Hofmeyr, 2013, pp. 82-83). When a reader engaged stories that were undated and unattributed, multiple senses of time were created, as 'the reader both feels himself or herself to be in the midst of these

incidents as they are occurring’. However, the reader would also be aware that the news reports are not as fresh as they are when consumed, as they may have taken several days to reach South Africa and Durban specifically (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 83). In conclusion, Hofmeyr states that the reports in *Indian Opinion* took the form of a ‘time capsule’ that released ‘its presentness wherever it is published’. This was necessary for Gandhi’s readership, as the ‘space-time continuum between South Africa and India could take intricate forms’ (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 83).

The insights from scholars Barnhurst and Nerone inform the analysis of Plaatje’s newspapers. The debates sparked by Erlank and Hofmeyr on the early black press also shape the lens through which the newspapers are looked at.

6.7 Conclusion

A theoretical framework that encompasses multiple disciplines has been useful in the framing of this study. The literature review has illuminated pertinent issues and questions that foreshadow the history of the colonial early black press in South Africa. The earlier scholarship of the 1960s and early 1970s failed to dedicate attention to the black press; if anything, the editors and players were relegated to the margins as footnotes and insignificant sideshows. More recent studies have expanded people’s understanding of the role of the black press in society in all its complexity. The layers of how it operated and constituted a black counterpublic sphere have been peeled by scholars, as detailed in previous sections. The case has been made that it was not only political protest that these papers recorded but matters of black sociability that display black agency, creativity, and ingenuity. It is a pushback against the prevailing colonial hegemony. There is much complexity and nuance in how they impact society. The rapidly growing literature on the black press indicates increasing interest from scholars.

The application of the theories mentioned in this chapter enables my analysis to take account of this complexity. The application of the study of forms and models of journalism has enriched my consideration of the way in which the newspapers changed over time and how they crafted the interaction between them and their readers. They also point to the context in which these newspapers operated, riddled with challenges and obstacles, including the limited resources they faced. Scholarship points to both challenges and opportunities that must be explored in the analysis of Plaatje’s newspapers.

7. Methodology

7.1 Introduction – *The archive*

This study relied on the archive of Sol Plaatje's newspapers and presents an opportunity to reflect on the perspectives and debates around 'the archive' in what Carolyn Hamilton describes as 'an important site of contestation in public life' as well as 'sites of purposeful political intervention' (Hamilton, 2020, p. 125). Hamilton reveals that archives and records 'play a significant role in establishing what is understood as the truth about a matter'. They are relied upon to 'expose fictions and misuses of power', yet they have also been criticised for 'biases, omissions and inaccessibility', in other cases for 'underwriting the views of those with power', effectively writing the vulnerable and the powerless out of history (Hamilton, 2020, p. 125). She argues that archives 'are not inert, they are forged and changed in political and public conditions as well as academic engagement'; furthermore, archives 'shape and change political, public and academic discourses and practices' (Hamilton, 2020, p. 125).

Hamilton provides two definitions of the archive, starting with the epistemological interpretation and contrasting it with how Michel Foucault explains it as 'the law of what can be said, the system of statements or rules of practice that give shape to what can and cannot be said'. Her second offering is that the archive is used to refer to 'the repositories of material that can be drawn on, most typically as evidence, but also as inspiration for, say, a creative work'. She credits cultural theory and subaltern 'inquiries' for including stuff outside the repositories as the archive, and these include 'a grave', 'graffiti on a wall', and 'old people in the role of custodians of memory'. However, she warns that without the 'preservatory apparatus' of 'freezing, sequestration or protective recording', these collections of material are treated as 'unreliable' and 'forensically vulnerable' (Hamilton, 2020, p. 126). She illustrates this point through the archive of Socwatsha Kaphaphu, one of the most important royal izibongi (praise poets) who provided extensive oral accounts about the reign of Shaka and the broader history of the Zulu people. Hamilton notes that historians in the 1960s 'steered clear of oral traditions, which they viewed as unreliable because of faulty memory, mutability in transmission and the propensity to be altered in changing political situations, in contrast to archives which were understood to have the virtue of being rendered inert through preservation' (Hamilton, 2020, p. 136).

Faith Nguru and Agnes Lando, in their *Africana Symbolic Contextualism Theory*, posit that

the aspect of orality also plays a key role in this theory. Most of the African songs, wise sayings, worship, way of life, and indeed the entire culture, was not documented. Individuals are living mobile libraries who are able to recall and pass on to the current and future generation vital cultural components (Nguru & Lando, 2018, p. 144).

Hamilton highlights the inaccessibility of these records that have been encrypted and kept out of the public domain by legislation, policies, and protocols. The situation is worse in private archives, where there are screenings that involve ‘varied and sometimes astonishing criteria’. In some cases, ‘the researcher, once admitted, is prohibited from copying items or even taking notes’. She does, however, acknowledge archives that ensure public access as well as civil society activist archival projects that ‘use freedom of information legislation to draw cached documents out into the public domain’ (Hamilton, 2020, p. 127). She states:

Conventionally, archives are understood as cloistered spaces, where stuff is packed away and safely stored. If not actively sealed off from public scrutiny, there their treasures wait, accumulating dust until, perchance, a lonely (and duly accredited) researcher arrives. In archival storage, the stuff is apparently rendered inert, or as inert as possible, by preservation professionals. Archives hardly seem to be central to the swirl of public debate. (Hamilton, 2020, p. 127)

Hamilton argues that the presence of the archive is ‘invariably a power-laden assertion in public life’. She adds that the existence of an archive ‘in any one area or on a particular subject confirms in public life the claim of that area or subject as having a history worth preserving, investigating and reinvestigating in perpetuity’ (Hamilton, 2020, p. 128).

It has been an often-spoken-about fact and awareness that Sol Plaatje wrote and edited newspapers while he lived and worked in Mafikeng and in Kimberley. Still, this archive, while visited by a few scholars across disciplines, has largely lain in neglect in journalism studies ‘pulsating in archival seclusion’ (Hamilton, 2020, p. 135). Without reading, investigation, and reinvestigation, the newspapers, even though were digitised many years ago have lain dormant in the archive for journalism scholars.

Hamilton makes a valid point about what she calls the dynamism of archives (Hamilton, 2020, p. 129). She points out:

... far from being immobilised and rendered inert in repositories, archival materials are dynamic, undergoing losses and gains of all kinds, being relocated, reclassified,

relabelled, recontextualised, revalued and much more besides. Sometimes changes in the environment precipitate changes to the record. Sometimes the record precipitates changes in the environment. When we start to consider change in relation to the archive, much more activity comes into view than we might initially suppose. (Hamilton, 2020, p. 129)

The state of the *Plaatje* newspapers is a case in point. Some pages are illegible and of no use as the ink has faded completely off the page, others are unreadable in places. However, one must bear in mind that there are differences and distinction must be made between the originals, the microfilms and the digital versions.

In 1990, when writing about his frustration when he could not locate copies of the newspaper *Abantu-Batho*, Tim Couzens stated: ‘Unfortunately I have not managed to lay my hands on any early copies of *Abantu-Batho*, since no libraries have files on it - a reflection of the prejudice against or sheer ignorance towards black newspapers of the time’ (Couzens, 1990, p. 22). Peter Limb managed to secure some copies and his anthology, published in 2012 to mark a centenary of the paper, includes at least one piece from each year of publication. His archival sources included the National Archives of South Africa, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe; Campbell Collections of the University of KwaZulu-Natal; Historical Papers at the University of the Witwatersrand; Pitts Theological Library at Emory University; Rhodes House [now Bodleian Library], Oxford; and the School of Oriental and African Studies libraries (Limb, 2012, p. ix). However, Couzens’s sentiments in 1990 still apply to many other black press titles, which have been excluded from the archive and are generally accepted as having ‘not survived’. It is a reflection on the imbalances of the past, the segregation and privileges other sections of South African society enjoyed while others were neglected and disregarded. One remains mindful that some white newspapers have also not survived.

For South African students concerned with the decolonisation of knowledge and the challenging of the universalism of Enlightenment thought, texts of lost ideas – such as the Socwatsha record and various newspapers, now digitised – hold the promise of effecting a contemporary ‘swerve’ out of the trajectory of the ‘archive of Western civilisation’ and of transforming the archive as ‘the law of what can be said, the system of statements or rules of practice that give shape to what can and cannot be said’ (Hamilton, 2020, p. 139).

7.2 *Plaatje newspapers*

The aims of this study are threefold. First, to investigate and identify the position of Sol Plaatje and the contributions he made to the practice, form, and history of journalism in South Africa. Second, to recognise critical factors that influenced how African and Setswana publics were constituted. Finally, to propose a new approach and framing model in Plaatje's historiography using journalism and media studies theories such as public sphere and forms of news. In order to achieve these, every available issue in the Readex/NewsBank² digital archive of the three titles that he edited, namely, *Koranta ea Becoana*, *Tsala ea Becoana*, and *Tsala ea Batho*.

It is worth noting that there is a gap between 1904 and 1909, during which no copies can be located in Readex/NewsBank. Historians have noted that the paper was published sporadically during this period (Switzer, 1997; Limb, 2012; Willan, 2018), and the number of copies that may have survived outside the archive is limited. In the case of this study, the issues found in the Readex/NewsBank archive numbered 283. Every page of every edition was downloaded from the website.

After reading, as Silverman states, the researcher needs to show how they 'attempted to produce a systematic analysis' by being open and clear about what happened during the research and telling the reader 'how we gathered our data, what data we ended up with, and how we analysed it' (Silverman, 2022, p. 522). This section charts descriptive details of the study and discussions of where it intersected with theory.

The newspaper editions were read chronologically, starting with the first issue of 27 April 1901 in the archive until the last issue of 24 July 1915. The content lent itself to themes and subthemes that emerged organically and ranged from 'Black excellence', 'Feminist writing', 'Travel writing', 'Changing face of the native', 'Death and Obituaries' to 'Crime reports', 'Parliamentary reports', 'Politics', 'Protest', 'Education', 'Health', and 'Business'. Close attention was paid to language, including prose and translation, as well as orthography, and their evolution over the 15 years of the newspapers. Other themes were noted that were specific to a certain year, era, or period; for example, the year 1912 was dominated by the work of the

² The Readex/NewsBank archive is a centralised hub of the newspaper archive. On its website, it has been recorded that it has been in existence since 1972 as a consolidator of 'archived information from thousands of newspaper titles... business journals, periodicals and other publications'. It has been used as an online resource by researchers all over the world as a primary source of archived news articles and obituaries. The content on Readex/NewsBank is curated through partnerships with leading news providers globally. The website further explains their business model as a platform for publishers to 'leverage their current and archived content online to generate additional revenue', attracting more traffic and extending their brand.

South African Native National Congress, and 1913 was mostly about the protest against the Natives Land Act and women protests against passes in the Free State, so these were recorded as themes indicative of an epoch in black historiography.

The arrangement of themes and subthemes and the notes generated while engaging with the content were useful in order to make assertions in relation to the two major theories used to frame the study: the public sphere and form of journalism. In a practical sense, while reading the newspapers, themes of stories and content that spoke to the public sphere were noted, as well as observations made on layout and design in response to the issues of form in journalism. The study examined the evolution of front pages, the use of images or graphics, the shape of design and layout, and typography. Furthermore, advertisements were studied, counted, and their value calculated on a small scale to illustrate their relationship to the editorial and financial well-being of the newspapers.

It is through the work of the newspapers that one may decode and make inferences about how Plaatje constituted the black publics as well as to profile the form that the newspapers took. This study will serve to propose a new approach and a framing model in Plaatje's historiography, using journalism and media studies theories, as it is one of the aims of the project.

This inquiry undertook a deep dive into a 120-year-old archive, analysing newspaper texts through qualitative research methods to address its research questions, namely:

- a) What does the study of Sol Plaatje's newspapers reveal about his position in and contribution to the early black press in South Africa from 1901 to 1915?
- b) What forms and models of journalism did the early black press take? What shaped the commercial operations of the early black press?
- c) How does the early black press convene its publics, and what role does language play in the creation of African publics?

Conducting this archival work presented its own unique challenges. As indicated earlier, the corpus was limited by the missing editions in the Readex/Newsbank archive between 1904 and 1909. Ideally, the researcher would have wished to read every issue in order to have a full comprehension of the enterprise, but having missed some years, one may run the risk of being unable to note some significant changes or milestones in those periods.

7.3 *The researcher*

Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln argue for the importance of the researcher's biography in qualitative research. They point out that the researcher 'speaks from a particular class, gendered, racial, cultural and ethnic community perspective' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 23). 'Every researcher speaks from within a distinct interpretive community which configures, in its special way, the multicultural, gendered components of the research act' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 23).

Denzin and Lincoln urge the researcher to confront the ethics and politics of research, especially when it comes to matters of the other and the decolonisation project. The constructivist paradigm which holds that individuals actively build their own understanding and knowledge of the world, rather than passively receiving information, yields findings that are presented in terms of the criteria of grounded theory or pattern theories, as well as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 27).

'Post-cultural feminist theories emphasise problems with the social text, its logic and inability to ever represent the world of lived experience fully. Positivist and postpositivist criteria of evaluation are placed by other terms, including the reflexive, multi-voiced text which is grounded in the experiences of oppressed people' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 27).

John Creswell argues for inquirers to 'explicitly identify reflexively their biases, values and personal background such as history and culture that may shape their interpretation' (Creswell, 2009, p. 177). As a researcher, I brought a few qualities that enriched this inquiry.

Plaatje's newspapers are written mostly in English and Setswana, with a small percentage in isiXhosa, so it was crucial to be able to understand the languages he used. With my background as a Mosotho with dual first languages of Setswana and Sesotho, I am positioned to bring a different eye and dynamic. Not only am I a first-language Setswana speaker, but I studied the language until matric. Furthermore, Plaatje used the Serolong dialect spoken in some parts of North West, Northern Cape, and Free State (Thaba Ncho). Having been brought up in Mahikeng, the former capital of the Bophuthatswana Bantustan and now the capital city of North West province, I was immersed in the dialect, and the nuances and idioms in the newspapers were not lost on me.

Growing up in the Bophuthatswana Bantustan, Sol Plaatje was part of the primary school curriculum. I was exposed early on to the name, perhaps at a superficial level because it was

an introduction to the man and his works in the Setswana language. I always knew that Plaatje edited newspapers but never got to read a single copy, as they were not easily accessible to the public at that time.

In later years, I worked as a journalist. For 21 years, between 1998 and 2019, I was stationed at the weekly newspapers *Sunday Times* and *City Press*, as well as the daily *Sowetan*. During this time, I also presented guest shows on the Setswana radio station, Motswedding FM. I grew up reading newspapers, leaflets, and pamphlets in Setswana, such as *Morongwa* and *Seipone/The Mirror*, both mouthpieces of the ‘state’ of Bophuthatswana and the province of North West, respectively. So, the culture of a newspaper written in Setswana and having conversations in the language on a mass media scale has been ingrained in me.

The aforementioned background equipped me to understand Plaatje’s writing at first reading. It was interesting to find that I understood some stories that were written in English better when they were translated into Setswana by Plaatje. This grasp of the language was advantageous when it came to organising and arranging data into themes.

7.4 *Research methodology*

Linking newspaper archival research with a qualitative research methodology is a commanding approach. It is often applied in social sciences, history, and media studies in order to establish historical contexts, social phenomena, and prevailing narratives. In this approach, newspapers provide a textual dataset which is useful for content, thematic, discourse, and narrative analysis. Archival research is advantageous in that it yields historical insights rich with nuanced meanings. At the same time, the researcher must guard against subjective analysis to ensure rigour.

7.4.1 *Qualitative research*

Qualitative research has been broadly understood to mean a method of inquiry that analyses non-numerical data such as text or audio to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. At the heart of it are the questions of ‘why’ and ‘how’ rather than just ‘what’. It studies empirical materials such as ethnographic prose, cultural texts, historical narratives, first-person accounts, life history, biographical and autobiographical materials, photographs, recordings and artifacts ‘that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in people’s lives’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, pp. 6-7). A qualitative researcher believes that ‘rich descriptions of the social

world are valuable' while the quantitative researcher would be less concerned with such detail. In fact, quantitative research is known for being 'impersonal' and delivered in 'third-person prose' along with graphs, tables, and models (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 20).

This means that qualitative research is a set of interpretive activities that does not belong to one discipline. It does not have distinct methods and practices that are unique to it. Denzin and Lincoln indicate that among the methods at the disposal of a qualitative researcher are archival analysis, narrative and content discourse, as well as tables, graphs, and statistics (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 11). 'They can also draw on and use the approaches, methods and techniques of ethnomethodology, ethnographies, cultural studies and no specific method or practice can be privileged over another' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 12).

The practitioners are located as 'the observer in the world' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 6) and are 'committed to modern, postmodern and post-experimental sensibilities and the approaches to social research that these sensibilities imply' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 13).

7.4.2 *Thematic analysis*

As John Creswell explains, using inductive data analysis, qualitative researchers 'build patterns, categories and themes from the bottom up by organising the data into... units of information. This inductive process illustrates working back and forth between the themes and the database until the researcher has established a comprehensive set of themes' (Creswell, 2009, p. 175). Riffe et al. (2019) point out that, according to Holsti, coding – that is how content is coded according to themes and subthemes – must reflect the purpose of the research, be mutually exclusive and unambiguous, be exhaustive, and be independent (i.e. placing a content unit in one category does not influence the placement of other units). Independence is important for the assessment of coder reliability and later for statistical analysis of collected content data and be derived from a single classification principle (Riffe et al., 2019, p. 60).

7.4.3 *Reading newspaper texts*

To decipher trends, identify patterns, and confirm practices, I had to read newspaper texts from *Koranta ea Becoana*, published between 1901 and 1903; *Tsala ea Becoana*, published between 1910 and 1912; and *Tsala ea Batho*, published between 1912 and 1915. The study was thus wholly based on text.

Perakyla and Ruusuvuori refer to text as ‘naturally occurring materials’ as an idea to differentiate recorded speech or interviews from the written word (Perakyla & Ruusuvuori, 2013, p. 277). They argue that ‘much of social life in modern society is mediated by written texts of different kinds’ giving an example that leisure would not be possible without newspapers, magazines and advertisements. They present that texts of this kind have provided an abundance of material for qualitative researchers to work with (Perakyla & Ruusuvuori, 2013, p. 278).

In their work, the qualitative researcher concerned with written texts does not follow a predefined protocol when they execute their analysis. In reading and rereading text as empirical material, they carve out themes and out of these emerges ‘presuppositions and meanings that constitute the cultural world of which the textual material is a specimen (Perakyla & Ruusuvuori, 2013, p. 278).

The projects that use solely texts as empirical materials lend themselves to different kinds of analytical procedures. This means that the researcher has a variety of choices from many methods of text analysis at their disposal. The degree to which they involve predefined sets of procedures varies, in some cases ‘the emphasis is more on theoretical presuppositions concerning the cultural and social worlds to which the texts belong’. While some methods are ‘exclusively fitted to written texts’ some of these methods are useful in both written and spoken discourse research (Perakyla & Ruusuvuori, 2013, p. 279).

Perakyla and Ruusuvuori argue that historical discourse analysis, which is a Foucauldian approach, is an ‘analysis of texts that focuses on tracing the interrelatedness of knowledge and power in studying historical processes through which certain human practices and ways of thinking have emerged’ (Perakyla & Ruusuvuori, 2013, p. 281).

With the fairly recent uptake of scholarship in the black press, newspaper texts have been a source of interest in informing new perspectives in sociability and black agency. Natasha Erlank argues that the black press has been elevated as an important source of information. She highlights that ‘... historians have turned their attention to the black press, not as a source of information on the black resistance politics of the period, but for what it reveals of the cultural and social lives of black South Africans’ (Erlank, 2019, p. 79)

To make sense of the readings, I applied the practice of periodisation, defined as dividing time into distinct epochs that give meaning to the past. This assists in shaping the way facets of the past are visible to researchers. It is an essential historical practice that orders space in time

(Ebke & Haack, 2024, p. 307). In the case of this study, to observe the change of the context and the newspapers over time, I divided the data gathered into time periods of three years each. For ease of reference, these were coded as ‘The Foundational’, between 1901 and 1903; followed by the ‘The Middle’, between 1910 and 1912; and ‘The End’, between 1912 and 1915 – a natural set of different eras determined by the years the newspapers were published in.

Reading the first editions in 1901 was necessary to locate and bookmark the start of the newspaper and be able to tease out the evolution that would unfold until 1915. The remarkable improvements implemented in 1902 and 1903 already set the tone for an ambitious newspaper that was moving fast and proved to be dynamic. In 1910, the newspaper had a different look altogether, and its contents tell of a nine-year journey. By 1912, the newspaper adopted a new name, *Tsala ea Batho*, and this marked a significant addition: the introduction of isiXhosa content. Over the periods, one can position the newspapers not only in terms of how the form changed and evolved but also in the role they played in convening the black public sphere. The change of masthead and introduction of a seemingly new newspaper is important, as the newspapers present themselves as distinct publications, and periodisation would naturally follow that.

As Cowling noted:

The content of a newspaper is where the organisation constructs its societal role, and where it articulates its imagined relationship with its readers. An analysis of editorials and columns in the newspaper is thus important in order to establish how (it) positioned itself..., how it related to its readers, and in particular, what version of publicness it constructed (Cowling, 2014, p. 30).

Leedy and Ormond (2015, p. 301) note that historical data demands a systematic plan for collection, retrieval, and analysis. Before I began my data collection, I put in place a plan for the acquisition, organisation, storage, and retrieval of data as they advise. I then read the pages chronologically as I would a newspaper, starting from the cover page to the last. I made notes of every article in the form of a summary and then labelled it under a theme:

Public sphere – these were articles that contained reports or debates peculiar and specific to Batswana, other black South Africans, and Africans.

Business of the newspaper – the articles were about what is needed to run the newspaper, usually requests for payments of subscription and delivery of money by agents.

Protest – the articles reflected a strong protest theme, whether it was about the treatment of blacks in trains or the unfair, racist, and discriminatory laws introduced. It must be noted here that some of the editorials were further marked as Radical Protest to indicate the fiery tone or intensity of the language used.

Black excellence – the articles gave attention to positive stories of black men and women achieving on different fronts or displaying conduct worthy of being a role model.

“Light side of life” – the articles were quirky, entertaining, or showed what may be considered general knowledge/human interest.

Travel – these were travel pieces that profiled different journeys and destinations, most of them written by Plaatje.

Obituary – these were tributes written about the deceased, ranging from retired missionaries, community leaders, professionals, and royalty.

Feminist – the articles displayed a feminist tenor, bringing women into the conversation or writing them into history.

Changing face of the native – at a time when the world was moving so fast and the traditional African embraced the vicissitudes that befell them, these articles reflect the metamorphosis. They show an acceptance of or resistance to modernity as a response.

Church news – the articles were either about minutes of church meetings, conferences, sermons, and the clergy.

World news – the articles were about international events or developments that were of interest to the South African black readership, including wars, innovation, or technology.

Plaatje’s position – the rise of the editor is marked by the articles that report on his travels, achievements, and lectures or speeches.

Language – how the newspapers used the language, the register, tone, tenor, orthography and how translation was implemented.

Prose – this was exclusively for what I deemed as great writing that showcased the beauty of language and flair.

Design and layout – this encompasses the form of the paper, including the use of editorial and advertorial space, fonts, font sizes, images, graphics, headlines, and design elements.

Labour – South Africa and later the Union of South Africa was a hotbed of segregation, and that resulted in unfair labour practices in mines and other trades. This category recorded articles that were about labour matters.

Health – the articles were about the health issues that dogged the early 20th-century Africans, from the bubonic plague to Tuberculosis and other respiratory illnesses.

Education – the articles were about schools from primary to secondary as well as the aspirational universities that were out of bounds for most Africans.

Some themes applied to particular periods of years; for example, in 1912, the SANNC became a theme in its own right, and in 1913, the Natives Land Act was a prominent topic that also warranted standing as a theme.

7.4.4 Advertisements

In addition to the editorial content of the newspaper studied, I also looked at the evolution of advertisements. First, I noted what they were about and the identity of the advertisers. Then, I questioned the subliminal meaning of the goods, services, and products advertised. These adverts were grouped by themes, and the analysis was presented in a chronological manner. This method assisted in tracking the change over time in the consumption patterns of early black press readers and informed people's thinking about the commercial side of the enterprise.

7.4.5 Analysis technique

The analysis consisted of deep reading for textual analysis and content analysis. Subheads were devised to identify themes. Articles were read for meaning and understanding, and a summary of notes was taken for each of them as they were laid out on the page. It is worth noting that from 1912 to 1915, the newspapers began including articles written in the isiXhosa language, in most cases translations of articles that had previously appeared in Sechuana or English, or would later appear in one or both languages. These were not read due to my limited proficiency in isiXhosa. In addition, these fell out of the scope of the study, which is focused on the Sechuana and English output. My estimation is that these comprised under 5% of the content in the 283 issues studied.

It must be noted that there were challenges encountered in the reading process, and these had to do with the quality of the newsprint that had faded in some instances. Orthography was also

a challenge in the beginning, but after a few months of reading, one could figure out how some words were written and how they have evolved to look in modern Setswana writing.

7.4.6 *Data analysis*

Paul Leedy and Jeanne Ormond differentiate between primary and secondary data (Leedy & Ormond, 2015, p. 296). They argue that in historical research, primary sources are ‘those that appeared first time’ in forms such as newspaper articles, diaries, photographs, or probate documents. Furthermore, they indicate that historical researchers also look at numbers to decipher trends or draw inferences, for example, how often a theme or a story appears in a newspaper over a certain period. In this way, historical research blends qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Leedy & Ormond, 2015, p. 298). When possible, historical researchers rely on primary sources rather than secondary sources, which may be tainted by bias. However, Leedy and Ormond highlight that even in the case of primary data, a newspaper article, for example, may be slanted in a certain direction, influenced by the writer’s political leanings, basic beliefs, and assumptions. They contend that the absolute and objective truth behind historical accounts may never be determined, and while this is insurmountable, a historical researcher must keep this point in mind when they interpret or read them within a contemporary context. A researcher can use this to their advantage to gain a better understanding of the prevailing perspectives of the time (Leedy & Ormond, 2015, pp. 299–300).

When evaluating and interpreting historical data, Leedy and Ormond (2015, p. 301) maintain that the researcher must determine the validity of the data by confirming its authenticity and meaning. By this, they mean that a researcher must examine both external and internal evidence. To establish authenticity, I relied on previous studies and records of Plaatje’s newspapers, as well as the use of vocabulary and writing style that has become associated with Plaatje. The fact that Readex/NewsBank was a universally accepted and relied-upon source of historical newspapers for scholars and is widely quoted also gave me comfort that the data I collected was authentic and genuine. When it came to internal evidence, I had to apply my mind and question what the author was trying to say and how I could interpret the words, phrases, and sayings that I was reading. The sole concern on internal evidence is ‘what do the words mean?’ (Leedy & Ormond, 2015, p. 302). I relied on my understanding of history, having read the works of Brian Willan, particularly his biography of Plaatje, as well as Plaatje’s own writings in *Mafeking Diary*, which equipped me with context and understanding of the period.

According to Leedy and Ormond (2015), good historical researchers identify, explicitly and concretely, the assumptions that have guided their interpretations of historical data, and this is evident in my report. Language, both Setswana and English, presented a challenge given that the texts were over 120 years old and orthography and semantics have evolved over the decades. As a first-language Setswana speaker, the meaning of words – even though some were obsolete, obscure, and out of use – was easily discernible; thus, I relied on my knowledge to infer or extrapolate some of the meanings so that I could make sense of the readings. Leedy and Ormond (2015) posit that a researcher must inevitably impose certain assumptions on the data when interpreting it. In later editions, isiXhosa was introduced as part of the core offering, which presented a limitation given my limited fluency in the language.

The findings from the archival research, conducted using a qualitative method, were presented by weaving the themes together, supported by examples from the newspaper texts and what they reveal.

SECTION II

8. Model of journalism

Under model of journalism, the study looks at the way content was packaged and the business was shaped. It encompasses the practice of journalism, news content, advertising and language.

8.1 *Background and context of Koranta ea Becoana*

Founded and published in Mafikeng in the throes of the South African War and some 12 months after the guns of Mafeking siege were silenced, *Koranta ea Becoana* would serve as Plaatje's foray into journalism from civil service. Its first edition on 27 April 1901 was one page. It developed to two pages in its fourth edition and increased up to eight pages by 1902. Its proprietor was Silas Molema, who was also identified as the editor in its earlier editions in 1901 – 'E rulagangoa ke mong oa eone' (it is edited by its owner) (*Koranta*, 7 September 1901, p. 2) – and Plaatje was later to call him 'the first Chuana (Tswana) journalist' (Plaatje, 1916, p. xiii).

Koranta first emerged as an insert in the *Mafeking Mail*, the local white-owned newspaper, and was then bought by Molema, who printed it at the Mafeking Mail Printing Works from 27 April 1901. On 16 August 1902, it moved to the Bechuana Printing Works, De Kock Building, Main Street, Mafeking, after Molema bought a printing press, as detailed in the following section (*Koranta*, 16 August 1902, p. 4). *Koranta* was published weekly, on Saturdays, from its inception until its demise in 1909. The publication day was changed to Wednesday from 16 September 1903 to 30 December 1903, and the reason for this was not explained in the newspaper.

The paper first carried the slogan 'E Gatisioa mo Mafikeng Gangoe ka Tshipi' ('Printed in Mafikeng once a week') (*Koranta*, 27 April 1901, p. 1). After eight issues, on 8 March 1902, it exhibited its expanding influence when it took up a new legal and commercial declaration: 'Only authorized medium for publishing Government Proclamations addressed to Natives by Colonial, Protectorate and Imperial Military Authorities' (*Koranta*, 8 March 1902, p. 1). Its focus as a vehicle for the betterment of Africans was clarified when the slogan changed to: 'The amelioration of the Native. Labour, Sobriety, Thrift and Education' in October (*Koranta*, 25 October 1902, p. 1).

In keeping with the religious zeitgeist of the mission press that was a forerunner to the black press, on 6 September 1902, under the headline ‘The Colour of the *Koranta*’ and the subhead ‘evokes true British sympathy and helps its sale’, Plaatje introduced the opening Bible verse taken from Song of Solomon 1:5–6 to his English editorials under Bechuana’s Gazette masthead:

I am Black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar and the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me because I am black for the sun hath looked upon me; my mother’s children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of their vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept (*Koranta*, 6 September 1902, p. 5).

The verse was inspired by the acquisition of the printing presses, although Plaatje says they were warned ‘not to undertake anything so disastrous’. *Koranta* had been printed at the *Mafeking Mail* presses and had experienced unpleasant delays and other inconveniences. He wrote:

It was urged that we could edit a paper and it would subsist as long as it enriched some other printer’s pocket, but that it was monstrous to expect it to last when we were NOT paying exorbitant printer’s rates, and our venture was doomed to failure. These black hands have not only edited and printed a paper but have come to the rescue of a distressed community and delivered their work in two days, for which they had to formerly wait a fortnight and often three weeks. (*Koranta*, 6 September 1902, p. 5)

This marked a celebration of black excellence and the start of a future full of promise and hope for a people standing on their own and not at the mercy of a white establishment.

The Song of Solomon verse was later translated to Setswana for use under the *Koranta ea Bechuana* editorials from 25 October 1902:

Ke moncho me kea eletsega, lona baroalia Yerusalema, yaka litenta tsa Kedara le lilepelelo tsa ga Solomon. Se ntebeng gonne ke le moncho, gonne letsatsi le mphatshimetse: banna ba ga ‘me ba ne ba nkgakalela; ba ntira molebeli oa masimo a bone a mofina; eare eaka ka mofina ea tlhoka moletl. (*Koranta*, 25 October 1902, p. 4; Sefela sa ga Solomon 1, 5 le 6)

A copy of *Koranta* cost 3d from agents or 3s for three months by subscription, or 4s or 12s a year by post in its first year between 27 April 1901 and December 1901 (*Koranta*, 27 April 1901, p. 1).

Koranta was first printed in Setswana, and more specifically in the dialect of Serolong, spoken principally by the Barolong community of Mafikeng and Thaba Nchu, and distributed in the areas of Kimberley, Taung, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg, Klerksdorp, and the Bechuanaland Protectorate, as well as in employment centres of Johannesburg and Pretoria. The introduction of English columns from the issue of 16 August 1902 coincided with the acquisition of the new presses and also indicated a crossover to other readers who might have used English as their first, second, or third language. Articles culled from influential Lesotho newspapers *Leselinyana la Lesotho* and *Mochochonono* were published in the original Sesotho, assuming that this was intelligible to most Setswana as well as Sesotho speakers. Letters and articles written in an orthography that indicated a Setswana dialect different from Serolong, such as Sekgatla, were published in their original form.

Koranta was targeted to be read primarily by Batswana, Barotse, and Basotho, who lived in present-day North West, Free State, Northern Cape, Gauteng, Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. The readers were literate, mostly missionary-educated, mobile, and middle class. The papers were read to the illiterate, as Peter Limb posited that the black press ‘influenced the more politicised and with a mushrooming effect as people passed issues from hand to hand or recounted aloud stories from its pages. The “persistence of oral reading” was “often a collective experience, integrated into an oral culture”’ (Limb, 2012, p. 27). Brian Willan has also noted that ‘to extend its reach further, those who could read were urged to read out its pages to those who could not’ (Willan, 2018, p. 171). The newspaper sold between 1 000 and 2 000 copies across the first decade of the 1900s (Limb, 2012, p. 26).

In the main, *Koranta* shared orthodox Christian views, and, in some cases, it veered towards heterodoxy through its dynamic and robust columns as it challenged the status quo. It was partisan and African nationalistic in its approach, pitched towards a Setswana reader more generally, and ‘the Christian, progressive section of the Tshidi Barolong’ much more specifically (Willan, 2018, p. 165). As the reading of its editions in forthcoming chapters will show, it reflected the Cape liberal values that its editor believed in so much as well as fierce loyalty to the British crown. It raised pertinent issues at the turn of the 20th century: Christianity, role of women, justice in courts, treatment of Natives in trains, disarmament after the South African War, betrayal by the English, commitment to the late Queen Victoria and the reigning King Edward VII, updates on Boer generals’ tour overseas (Paul Kruger, Christiaan De Wet, and Koos De la Rey), and a campaign against annexation of the Mafeking district to Transvaal.

As Brian Willan observed, *Koranta* ‘developed into a very professional publication, marked by exuberance, a sense of humour and an optimistic outlook which sprang directly from its editor’, and it was ‘a vital instrument of unity and modernity’ (Willan, 2018, pp. 169, 171). There was some sophistication and important editorial gains that Plaatje could build on. The use of graphics, sketches, and images, as well as storytelling devices, enhanced the form of journalism and elevated the *Koranta* reading experience.

8.2 Model of journalism – *Koranta ea Becoana* (1901 to 1903)

Koranta ea Becoana set out to serve two clearly demarcated audiences. While it had a masthead on the front page, accompanied by the slogan and its cost, the content was shared inside under the editorial headers of *Koranta ea Becoana* and *Bechuana's Gazette*, dictated by the chosen language of delivery, either Setswana or English. The opening pages were reserved for advertising, with editorial content starting on page three or four and rarely appearing much earlier than page two.

To borrow from Natasha Erlank, the content of *Koranta* was presented in a ‘promiscuous layout strategy’ (Erlank, 2019, p. 92). This denotes a mishmash of news, regardless of beat, theme, or interest. For instance, in the issue of 3 May 1902, one column had no demarcation between articles. It included competing – and not necessarily chronological – reports on a fraudster, John Tengo Jabavu, the Rinderpest, the delay of the paper due to train issues, and the war (*Koranta*, 3 May 1902, p. 2). Figure 4 highlights this.

8.2.1 Columns of *Koranta ea Becoana*

The content of *Koranta* was arranged in the form of weekly and regular columns that carried a distinct flavour. Some were regular, while others came and went over the editions, and these were:

1. Mafokonyana (literal meaning ‘small or little words’): This is the longest-standing and most consistent column that carried news in brief with items evidently harvested from other newspapers or news sources. In some cases, they would be distinctly marked or attributed to the original source; these would typically be news of the day or happenings of the week. The items were about travellers, concerts, social life, and many more.
2. Mafoko a Ntoa/Lintoa: When *Koranta* was launched on 27 April 1901, Mafeking had been relieved nearly a year earlier, the war was still raging in other parts of South Africa

and went on until mid-1902. In this column, updates on mortalities, injuries, prisoners, firearms, bullets, livestock lost or gained, and the different skirmishes and bigger battles were reported (*Koranta*, 15 June 1901, p. 1; *Koranta*, 26 April 1902, p. 2).

3. Likgaolonyana (literally meaning ‘small or little lines or columns’): A variety of news, announcements, reports, and opinions and commentary on political, social, and cultural matters.
4. Timiti: An adaptation and corruption of the English ‘tea meeting’. Reports of social gatherings, recreation, or entertainment marked by singing of *likopelo* (hymns) at the Wesleyan church or some such venue with a fee charged.
5. Lincho: Readers were invited to announce deaths of loved ones in a traditional style of the classified section, charged at 5s to appear twice, or 6s 6d for three appearances (*Koranta*, 2 May 1903, p. 6).
6. Likemo/Linyalo: Readers were invited to announce weddings in the traditional style of the classified section, charged at 5s to appear twice, or 6s 6d for three appearances (*Koranta*, 2 May 1903, p. 6).
7. Matsalo: Readers were invited to announce births in the traditional style of the classified section, charged at 5s to appear twice or 6s 6d for three appearances. The announcement was usually made with respect to the father of the child, for example, ‘On August 18 1901 here in Mafikeng, the wife of Mr Elijah Lekone; boy’ (*Koranta*, 31 August 1901, p. 1).
8. Maronopo a Thaba Ncho: A digest of news, developments, and announcements from Thaba Ncho written with depth and sometimes irreverence. It contained reports on concerts, church events, and trips. Prominent families often reported on were the Goronyanes, Fenyangs, and Motshumis.
9. Personalialia: The content was driven by the news value of prominence. Here, news and announcements on the travels, appearances, and health of prominent personalities of the day, such as magistrates, chiefs, the clergy, and teachers, were shared in brief.
10. Maitisho: This column appeared once – in the edition of 13 December 1902 – with irreverent content about a mentally unstable man at an asylum, a snippet on *Imvo* newspaper, Paul the Apostle, and the German Kaizer. The column appeared again in

1904 and then more consistently in *Tsala* from 1910 (*Koranta*, 13 December 1902, p. 7).

11. Tsa Bakoaleli: The letters section of the paper served as what Natasha Erlank calls ‘a crucible of black sociability’ (Erlank, 2019, p. 94). The editor often requested that writers be clear and concise in their writing because tapping into what readers thought was an important part, *Koranta* had to play if it were to carry forward conversations and influence others in a positive way. There was an almost formulaic way to letter writing, a convention of sorts. They started with the honorific greeting ‘Morulaganyi’ (the editor). The word comes from the Setswana verb ‘go rulaganya’, meaning to arrange, organise, or prepare. This was followed by a humble request to have their words printed in his newspaper. It was as if the writer asked to address, for a brief period, a public gallery under the orchestration of *Morulaganyi*. The letters often ended with a humble apology for taking up the readers’ time while thanking them for reading it.

Outside of the dedicated columns, *Koranta* carried items such as editorials, news articles, opinions, and analyses in longer or shorter variations. In earlier editions, these articles often lacked headlines. The articles would have been penned by Plaatje himself or the correspondents who supplied the news from their different towns or regions; others would have been harvested from the exchanges *Koranta* had with newspapers in South Africa, Africa, the US, and the UK. More often than not, these would be clearly marked either at the top of the article or the end; they included reports from *Imvo*, *South African Spectator*, African Political Organisation (APO), *Izwi Labantu*, *Ilanga lase Natal*, *DFA*, *Pretoria News*, *The Star*, *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, *Mochochonono*, and *New York Age*. This indicates how *Koranta* was embedded in the world of the black press while also drawing material from white-owned newspapers in the region where it circulated, as well as from international influences in the US. The use of bylines was a rare occasion, as most of the articles were not credited.

In typical fashion of the early black press, *Koranta* did not feature news from syndication services but instead critiqued what it saw in the exchanges. As Peter Limb noted, ‘either through lack of money to afford the pricey news feeds of professional agencies such as Reuters or by the reluctance of such white companies to share data, black journalists had to find stories on their own or were forced to reprint what was in other papers’ (Limb, 2012, p. 30).

The absence of images on the pages of *Koranta*, at least until 1902, is explained by Limb in his analysis of *Abantu-Batho* newspaper as some papers being ‘held back by a shortage of cash, an ancient press and limited technical knowledge’. He noted that it was advertisers whose images populated the pages (Limb, 2012, pp. 31-32). *Koranta* was no exception.

Koranta ea Beccoana.

MATLOASANO, MATHEMATIKONG 3, 1922.

Lewanika Kgosi ea Marotsi e mo tsolong go ea meletlong ea segosi kwa Engelane. — Bolefisi ya bo sha kwa Ga-Motselekatsa bo gaila likgomo setlhogo setona kwa Boshona. — Mono keledi o tlhabetse ka natla. Farolong batle la bo' Ra-Tlon la baela ka thata gore ba tshegetse likgomo golo golo gongwe ba li eute boleutse bo tihoke go anama Tse lingwe, tse li thabiloeog boleutse bo eke holi thelegele, li folle. — Mr. Tongo-Jabavu le one o ntsa ale mo Kimberley a tsile Konfrenseng ea Ma-Wesele Methodiste yaka mongwe o baemeli ba Ga-Komane (Queenstown). — Kgosi Wesele o boetse Fatshing ya Tshireleco. — Khumagali ngwe ea segoloma kwa Kapa, eo tlhakantseng mali a Se-Germane le Se-Rushia, Princess Radziwill, o neilwe nyaga lile peli ka go ncaa leina ya ga Mokebusa, a ichonela mangwe a likete-kete tsa gagwe. — Balaoli ba Terena bare ga yana ga ba amogele litshipi mo tereneng fa tse liye fela. Ke shone se kgatisa ea roma o liegileng; me re sa losa. Tsa ntoa li ntse li tloga sentle; se se feletseng fela mo moleng ke phuthologo ea pito ea marena a seburu; fa esale ba ova kwa Choamo bare ba sa ea go bolelela Ma-

shoropo a a tihabamang. Mabutu ale 9 a incetse kwa Matloasano bare ba simolola go otloa fa Magosi a buse a ntse a tlotla kagisho; masha-ropo ga itso sepe. Phutho ea tshipi e e letleng ke e:—
Lincho 25, Magolegon 100
Lithobole 50, Marumo 800
Likoloi 10, le tsho e nsi ea likgomo.
Lefatshe yotlha lo otleelela meletlo ea segosi ea kgodi e u kafa teng Melireli eo mogolo oa New Zealand o tla feta kafa Kapa mo kgodeng eno a ea meletlong.
Esene ere lo batla melao lo labala setatshala se se golo Mr. J. W. de Kock. Liofis, tsa gagwe li lebaganyo le Standard Bank.

MOLETLO O MOCOLO

OA

TIMITI LE LIKOPELO.

Ku Lonboraro, May 7.
Mo Kerokeng e ntle e ntle ea Gabo kwa Lokeishone.

Tikete 2s.; Bana 1s.

EANG KOA GO

H. G. BRADFIELD

Fa lo batla Kaparo tse lintle tsa banna.

Printed and Published at the Matloasano Mail Printing Works, for the Proprietor, Sifas T. Matloasano, Matloasano.

Figure 3: A typical promiscuous layout of *Koranta*

Notes. Here, no less than a dozen unrelated news-in-brief items not arranged in a demarcated order are presented in one column, however the long dash is used to lightly demarcate some news items.

Source: *Koranta* (3 May 1902, p. 2)

8.3 *The commercial – The business of Koranta agents, subscriptions, and street sales: Advertising*

In this section, I attempt to track the advertising that featured in *Koranta* for business reasons and to analyse the advertisements to see who the advertisers were, what kinds of readers were being targeted, and what sort of strategies were being used to attract them.

The first three pages were reserved for advertising from merchants, traders, and mine labour brokers in Mafeking, Kimberley, Thaba Ncho, Bloemfontein, Johannesburg, and Cape Town. Advertisers were selling clothes, fabric, groceries, livestock, medicine and cures, building hardware, photography, and meats. It is not clear how much the rates were for commercial advertising, but as we have seen readers were invited to announce the deaths of loved ones, births, and weddings in a traditional style of the classified section, charged at 5s to appear twice or 6s 6d for three appearances (*Koranta*, 2 May 1903, p. 6).

The overwhelming majority of regular advertisers were white-owned businesses in Mafeking who pitched themselves as allies of Batswana. S. Kemp & Co., general dealer of groceries, clothes, wedding outfits, and ploughs, and buyers of cattle, sorghum, and leather reminded readers that the shop serviced Batswana with good manners; E. Solomon clothing store; and H.C. Bradfield men's clothing store announced that the shop owner spoke Setswana and that they were invited to speak to him (*Koranta*, 7 September 1901, p. 1). C.N. Williams & Co. bakery and butchery sold themselves as the big friends of the Barolong boo RaTshidi. They invited bridal couples to order their wedding cakes and called their bakes 'bread of life', thereby attaching a quality of necessity to it (*Koranta*, 14 September 1901, p. 1).

Proving the vitality and attractiveness of *Koranta* to advertisers, the issue of 14 December 1901, the seventh edition of the paper, was the first to have the front page completely taken over by advertisers (*Koranta*, 14 December 1901, p. 1). The profile of advertisers had by this time evolved to include L. Hoffman & Son, buyers of leather and wool in Bulawayo, Mafikeng, and Vryburg, who traded on their proximity to the reader by providing directions to their stores in the three towns (*Koranta*, 14 December 1901, p. 1). This edition also marked the first time *Koranta* was four pages long, and the editor introduced a subscription price hike to be effective in January 1902: 12s 6d for a year or 13s by post; 6s 6d for six months or 7s 6d by post; and 3s 6d for four months or 4s by post (*Koranta*, 14 December 1901, p. 2). In addition, *Koranta* secured a deal to publish Government Proclamations addressed to Natives by Colonial, Protectorate, and Imperial Military Authorities with a graphic of the royal crown and the initials

E.R., a royal cypher to mark authenticity and authority of a formal announcement (*Koranta*, 14 December 1901, p. 3).

The March 1902 advertising coup of publishing government proclamations came at a time when the black press was viewed with suspicion by the authorities due to its protest tenor. Also, the fact that they were under-resourced and struggled to attract sufficient advertising meant they were regarded as unserious. In the end, most newspapers could not secure a stable stream of income from government alone as an advertiser and therefore depended on the backers and funders as well as commercial advertisers. It is also important to note that it was a time of censorship due to Martial Law and a pioneering newspaper such as *Imvo Zabantsundu* forced to close down. Securing government advertising put *Koranta* in a unique position of influence, which was an anomaly. Rosalynde Ainslie made this point when she said that the black press was ‘unread’ by whites, not distributed by the Central News Agency, and did not benefit from the news and technical services being developed by the big dailies. The black newspapers had low circulation numbers but were rich in political excitement (Ainslie, 1966, p. 47).

While *Koranta*’s advertising base had grown exponentially; the pages nevertheless dropped down to two from the issue of 8 March 1902 and even stopped publishing for three months, with the last edition of this Setswana-only version of *Koranta* being 10 May 1902. It only resumed business with the issue of 16 August 1902, which was four pages long and heralded a new era.

Koranta was printed by the Bechuana Printing Works, owned by *Koranta* founder Silas T. Molema. This followed a fallout with the *Mafeking Mail* printers. The newspaper carried an apology for its absence since May due to delays. The following was stated:

It has been a trying time for us to hold our subscribers’ monies and yet be unable to give them, in print, the joyful tidings of the peace declaration as well as the shocking intelligence of the frustration of His Majesty’s Coronation owing to the King’s ill-health which latter incident is now thank God a thing of the past. Still more disappointing has it been for us to accept remunerative printing and advertising engagements then have them withdrawn because their time had expired and our machinery was not coming forward. (*Koranta*, 16 August 1902, p. 3)

The blame was put on the Martial Law restrictions that delayed the permit for the transportation of the new machinery from the coast to Mafikeng. In addition,

it took the Cape Government Railways 5 days to bring our stationery, type, &c., 15, 000 lbs weight from Capetown; but to come from Port Elizabeth on the same Railways a lesser distance by 70 miles the small jobbing machine on which this paper is printed took, don't get a fit! two months. It could not have delayed much longer had we inspanned our ox-wagon and personally went to fetch it. (*Koranta*, 16 August 1902, p. 3)

The publisher further apologised for the 'sparseness of news matter in this, our first issue, and also to businessmen who sent us advertisements for today's newspaper'. This was because the machine had been set up the previous day; as such, they could not 'produce a full-sized paper in one day', advertisements had to 'stand over for want of space' (*Koranta*, 16 August 1902, p. 3).

Koranta celebrated this milestone with a front page occupied by The Art Metropole photo enlargers and picture dealers of Kimberley. Also on the front page was an advert inviting readers to visit the *Koranta* printing office to buy bags for letters, papers for letter writing and almanacs, with an option of imprinting their name on the material. Furthermore, reading material that could be purchased was *Marang* (Rays), *Loeto loa Mokreste* (The Journey of a Christian), *Dilo tse di choanetseng go itsewa* (Things that must be known), *Dikaelo* (Instructions), *Arithmetike* (Arithmetic), *Dipeleta* (Spelling), and *Dipoconyana le dinoto tsa London* (Small questions and notes from London). Observing from the titles of the books, one can discern a Christian orientation and subject matters that seem to be in line with the formal education syllabus of that time. The sale of printed material other than the newspaper indicates that Molema and Plaatje were trying to also use the printing press as a commercial venture rather than depend on (and pay) other printers. This is an early indication of the commercial model they attempted to set up. The last element on the page was a Kitsisho (Notice) to readers who may not have received their copies of *Koranta*, urging them to contact the office and announcing that Mafikeng residents who paid their subscriptions would have copies delivered to their homes and that non-subscribers could collect their copies from the office (*Koranta*, 16 August 1902, p. 1).

New advertisers included B. Ferraris & Co. food and clothes stockists who traded under their Setswana name Ramochankana le Ramonnana and *South African Spectator*, a contemporary of *Koranta* that was edited by 'a hero in the fight for black rights', F.Z.S. Peregrino in Cape Town,

who ‘published in English and Setebele’ (isiXhosa) and was ‘read by heads of governments in the Cape and Natal’ for 8s for a year subscription (*Koranta*, 16 August 1902, p. 3).

Also occupying space was John F. Flynn, whose name was appropriated to Fleni or Foleni by Batswana, an importer of ‘goods needed by blacks’. Right off the bat, Flynn positioned himself as a friend of the black cause by including the following words in his advert: ‘Lirelang Moncho tshiamisho, a tle a ipabalele’ interpreted as ‘do justice to blacks so that they can stand on their own’. Louis Abrams (nicknamed Ma-Leu) in Taung targeted Batlhaping so they would ‘buy his clothes, wear his shoes, consume his bread and meat from his butchery’ (*Koranta*, 16 August 1902, p. 4).

In subsequent editions, the *Koranta* front page became a battleground for advertisers competing for the above-the-fold space. Notably, Ferdinand J. Jacob, a clothes trader in Mafeking, touted his affordable prices from England and a reward for those who spent over £1 – a cup with images of the king and queen of England. Furthermore, the advertisement informed readers that the store was operated by ‘your children Mr George Mothusi, M.M. Leshomo, D. Mothata and others’. This would have served to engender affinity from the customers (*Koranta*, 18 October 1902, p. 1). It is clear, then, that white-owned businesses saw an opportunity to expand into a black consumer market by advertising in *Koranta*.

The paper followed the model of advertising-driven revenue, and adverts – mostly in Setswana and a few in English, some patented – dominated the first three pages and the last page. New advertisers included Kajee Mahmoed, a clothing merchant who sold shoes, addressing the readers with ‘Litlhako! Lilhako!! Litlhako!!!’ (Shoes! Shoes!! Shoes!!!). The escalating use of the exclamation mark resembled ‘the urgency of the speaking voice of the town crier’, as Hlonipha Mokoena has noted in relation to *Inkanyiso* newspaper (Mokoena, 2020, p. 464). Furthermore, the inconsistent spelling may be an indication of a lapse in proofreading (*Koranta*, 4 October 1902, p. 8).

By 11 October 1902, an advert called on the Barolong ‘after they fought in the Boer War’ to create a memento by visiting the *Koranta* office to buy photographs that sparkle like mirrors depicting soldiers in war scenes to adorn their houses (*Koranta*, 11 October 1902, p. 2). The significance of this advertisement is that it was an attempt to immortalise the contribution of Barolong in the war. They may not have received medals of recognition after the Mafeking Siege, but they could put up the photographs in their homes for generations to appreciate what they endured.

W.N. Cooper & Co. took out full-page advertisements to sell their 19th-century cures and patent medicines. The readers were informed to contact *Morulaganyi oa Koranta* (the editor of *Koranta*) to have the neatly packaged medicines sent to them by post. The treatments were mostly for fever, bronchitis, rheumatics, piles, and biliousness (*Koranta*, 18 October 1902, p. 5).

W.M. Cuthbert & Co. Ltd, 'the greatest shoemakers in South Africa', announced how they had been an 'undiscovered fortune' by Bechuanaland residents, calling them to try on their shoes with the promise of never going back. L. Peach, nicknamed Modihabangoe, scolded Batlhaping in Taung for being uninterested and urged them to buy local goods from his store (*Koranta*, 18 October 1902, p. 3).

An advert by E. Cohen selling fish, canned beef, vegetables and grains, coffee, and sugar in Ga-Molimola might have possibly been a white dealer of Jewish origin, based in the village. This is significant in showing the reach and pull of *Koranta* beyond the obvious centres of business, being the mining cities and towns and emerging urban areas (*Koranta*, 15 November 1902, p. 8).

Phillips Bros. meat sellers bragged about how they sold freshly slaughtered meat in Mafikeng and not imports from Australia that 'put off blacks.' They placed a premium on freshness and taste, as they also touted their breads and cakes, which were baked by an expert brought in from Cape Town (*Koranta*, 15 November 1902, p. 6). Brown & Lurie also boasted about locally produced meat and seafood when they announced the opening of their butchery in Bloemfontein on New Year's Day (*Koranta*, 31 December 1902, p. 6). One observes a trend against meat imports, especially from Australia, that had been touted as of superior quality in the past.

The year 1903 presented an opportunity for Plaatje to build on the hard work he had put into *Koranta*. The first issue, dated 10 January 1903, continued the trends from 1902 with the same advertisers dominating the front page, and the number of pages was consistent at eight, except an odd occasion of nine pages.

In the early years, advertisers primarily came from white business owners in Mafeking, Kimberley, and Bloemfontein. However, in the issue of 17 January 1903, African advertisers began to occupy the pages. A.R. Mashoko, manufacturer of mattresses in Central Road, Kimberley, was seemingly an independent artisan who promised readers to make mattresses to order or restuff old ones. Geo B. Ntsiko, organist and music tutor, offered 'lessons in voice

culture and instrumental music (practice and theory)' for 10s a month (*Koranta*, 17 January 1903, p. 7). F.T. Legalatlali, identified as 'mongoa tiro' (owner), announced the opening of his eatery in the Minchin buildings close to where 'Seeleco used to make lemonade'. He invited locals and travellers to enjoy well-cooked meals in the big house at the end of the street (*Koranta*, 23 May 1903, p. 5).

Mr Bethzail Bogopane of Phokeng, Rustenburg, advertised that he had acquired a magic lantern and that he would be hosting a show at the church of London of the LMS, in the location. He added that Bakgatla chiefs would be in attendance, and entry was one thaler and ninepence for children (*Koranta*, 18 July 1903, p. 4).

Livestock and wild animals were a concern to wealthy Africans. S.S. Mokgoamolimo fired off a notice in the pages of *Koranta* warning that 'anyone found shooting, hunting or pursuing game' in the farm Thagetsi without his permission would be prosecuted by law, dated 28 May 1903 (*Koranta*, 11 July 1903, p. 5). Chief Lekoko bought space in the 'Re Batliseng' (Help Us Find) column, appealing for assistance to locate his three missing donkeys with £1 as a reward (*Koranta*, 18 July 1903, p. 4).

J.S. Mbambo of Main Street, Mafikeng, marketed his leatherworks business, which specialised in the production of shoe, saddles, and harnesses using 'beautiful leather from England' (*Koranta*, 30 September 1903, p. 3). 'Mochoantshi eo Mogolo' (Revered Photographer) Mr Andrew Motsatsing touted himself as the best photographer who cannot be beaten by whites. The advert urged Batswana to support one of their own and stop 'running to white people' (*Koranta*, 30 September 1903, p. 6). From the issue of 23 May 1903, Kabo Molema's business of tea, coffee, sugar, flour, and canned food started appearing. The family ties with Silas Molema are not clear, but he, like other black businessmen, responded to a call to advertise in *Koranta* in order to reach new and sophisticated audiences and grow their ventures (*Koranta*, 23 May 1903, p. 6).

The issue of 14 February 1903 carried an advert from Joseph Gerrans with an image of the cart and carriage store in Mafeking, a contractor of the colonial and imperial governments, as well as the British South Africa Company (*Koranta*, 14 February 1903, p. 6). What makes this an important milestone is that *Koranta* had, up to this point, been a written medium unsupported by visuals in both editorial and advertorial content. This is discussed in detail later in the section on form. Attention is now given to these visual elements, which placed *Koranta* on a par with

the modern designs of the industrial newspapers of the Victorian era that Plaatje must have aspired to.

The advert for Bisseker George & Co. featured an image of an elephant with the words ‘Batlounge koa Port Elizabeth’ (‘the People of the Elephant in Port Elizabeth’), selling clothes and shoes of all sizes, sending them to customers anywhere in South Africa. Again, the familiarity of African venerative speech using totems must have appealed to the readers, more especially since it must have been unusual, although impossible, to have Batlounge (as Setswana or Sesotho speakers) in the eastern Cape given the migration, travels, and business patterns of the time (*Koranta*, 18 April 1903, p. 2).

Capt. C. Goodyear followed the same strategy of familiarity when he introduced himself as a friend of Batswana in an advert calling for labourers from Bechuanaland Protectorate, Griqualand West, and regions of Madiko (Madikwe) and Dicobotla (Lichtenburg) for the mines in Johannesburg. The advert headlined ‘Babereki’ (‘Workers’) in the issue of 18 April 1903 enticed potential employees with improved pay, good meals, clean lodging, and care for the ill. As an agent, Goodyear would gather labourers in Mafikeng or Sefatlhane (Zeerust) before sending them off to Johannesburg with a stop on the way to Krugersdorp for food (*Koranta*, 18 April 1903, p. 6). From 4 November 1903 until the end of the year, this advert occupied the full front page. It was updated with the names of local agents in the Bechuanaland towns of Mafikeng, Kuruman, and Linokana, as well as Serowe, Kanye, and Gaborone in the Protectorate, including P. Lenkwane and Innes Hiten. The monthly pay was specified as £2 10s for above-ground work and £3 for underground work (*Koranta*, 4 November 1903, p. 1). De Beers Consolidated Mines Limited also vied for the attention of mine labourers in the issue of 2 December 1903 (*Koranta*, 2 December 1903, p. 2).

With the advent of cameras and the technology of image-making sweeping South African society, D. Taylor, a photographer with a studio in Mafeking, invited Batswana to take photographs before they die. ‘Many people are bereaved’, the advert reads, ‘because their parents died before they could be photographed. If you do not want to regret, hurry up and take photographs’ (*Koranta*, 19 April 1903, p. 2).

The advertised release of *Kaffir Scholar’s Companion* by Isaiah Bud-M’belle, Plaatje’s brother-in-law, was a case of what Natasha Erlank calls higher-minded solicitation (Erlank, 2019, p. 85). It is a concept related to elevated thinking or persuasion that appeals to one’s reason, morality, or sense of purpose rather than one’s emotions or material desires. The book was

advertised in the pages of *Koranta* using an attractive big-letter serif font with an excerpt of the contents page. The 220-page long volume could be ordered from the Lovedale Book Store at 3s 6d, including postage (*Koranta*, 16 December 1903, p. 6).

In another case of a higher-minded solicitation, Zonnebloem College booked space on the front page of *Koranta*'s 22 August 1903 issue, where it profiled its team, including the principal Rev. W. Parkhurst, as well as lecturers for Bible Studies and hand work. It also provided a brief background of the college's origins to instil affinity and explain why it is a distinguished institution for higher learning for blacks (*Koranta*, 22 August 1903, p. 1).

8.4 *The curious case of Dr Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People*

Making its first appearance in the issue of 31 January 1903 (*Koranta*, 31 January 1903, p. 6) under the headline 'Yaka Mali A Liroa Mo South Afrika' ('Like Blood is Manufactured in South Africa') was a veiled advertorial that would be a hallmark of Plaatje's newspapers. It was presented as an article on the patent miracle cure Dr William's Pink Pills for Pale People, which may have passed as a news story; it is only at close inspection that a discerning reader recognises that it is a paid-for product placement.

Dr Williams' Pills were a popular cure-all quack remedy from Canada at the turn of the century. Trading as Dr Williams' Medicine Company, the arm of G.T. Fulford & Company, it was established in 1887 by George Fulford (1852–1905), a Canadian who obtained the rights to Dr William's Pink Pills for Pale People in 1890. They were originally aimed at the American Civil War veterans plagued by digestive problems, malaria, wounds and post-traumatic stress disorders. This was changed to target a broader audience and the Pills were advertised as a tonic for the blood and nerves, as well as a cure for all forms of weakness in men and women. Within five years of inception, Dr Williams traded in North America, Europe, Asia and the British Empire. Advertisements in the form of testimonials and news items, ostensibly from customers who had made miraculous recoveries and sent to newspapers and magazines ran in 82 countries (Che-chia & Zhejia, 2018, p. 484).

Koranta became part of this international phenomenon. As Chang noted, they adopted a strategy of posing a question that seems at first glance to be unrelated to medicine, so as to hook the potential buyer to continue reading (Che-chia & Zhejia, 2018, p. 485). As such the advertorials were not clearly marked or declared. Some of the articles were invasive and opportunistic and would be placed prominently on the first page of the news section (*Koranta*,

2 May 1903, p. 3). Over time, the readers were smart enough to question some of the articles, and ethical concerns arose regarding the authenticity of the testimonials and the identity of the healed customers.

Hlonipha Mokoena holds that in the early black press, the nature of goods had to be translated into ‘indigenous idiom’ before they could be consumed. However, Mokoena warns that ‘this process was fraught with false starts and incompleteness’. Mokoena uses the concept of ‘archaeologies of materiality’ to explain this. She says the items sold and advertised not only signified the effects of civilisation but also yielded ‘biographies of practice’ that could be read in the paper (Mokoena, 2020, p. 467). This raises the question of what kind of register advertisers used to reach consumers. In the case of Dr Williams’ Pills, it is presumed that Plaatje translated the copy that was submitted by the advertiser from English to Setswana. In this case, Plaatje could decide on the register without compromising the essence of the English version, thereby achieving resonance with the readers he knew better than anyone else.

The long-running advertorials evolved from educational pieces to testimonies using influential celebrities of that time, such as American boxer Jim Holloway. His testimony was penned by Ivor Solva in the *Rand Daily Mail* and seemingly syndicated in *Koranta*. It was long and formal, like a profile of a preeminent athlete (*Koranta*, 8 August 1903, p. 4).

Prominent leaders such as John L. Dube, editor of *Ilanga lase Natal* and founder of Ohlange Institute in Phoenix, who would go on to be the first president of the SANNC a decade later, were also featured in the newspaper article. The article was a glowing celebration of the achievements of the then 33-year-old son of Rev. James Dube and nephew of Chief Umgawa of Amagadi people in Natal. It reported on a liver problem that he had for 12 months and how, with the help of Dr Williams’ Pink Pills, he felt better within two weeks (*Koranta*, 5 September 1903, p. 4). However, in her biography of Dube, *First President* (Hughes, 2011), author Heather Hughes makes no mention of the life-threatening ailment that Dube faced in the early 1900s.

The illness of King Edward VII that delayed his coronation was also spun as a testimony for Dr Williams’ Pills. The king suffered from appendicitis, and it was touted that the Pills cured it, as they did everything (*Koranta*, 31 January 1903, p. 14).

The names of traditional leaders were also used, such as Kgosi (Chief) J.L. Moloto of Pietersburg, Transvaal. His article included an image that purported to be of the chief and his family; this was the first image depicting a black family used in *Koranta*. In his testimony, the article claimed that Moloto called the Pills ‘Mokhonatsotlhe’ (‘the one that heals everything’).

The image of the Molotos was highlighted as a ‘photograph accompanied by words’, presumably as a design and layout achievement for *Koranta* (*Koranta*, 16 September 1903, p. 7).

It is unclear whether the model of using influential and prominent people as brand ambassadors was sufficiently developed in 1903 in order to receive permission to use the famous names that were being used. Ethical issues of truthfulness, accuracy, and even violation of privacy seem to have been overlooked, as the misinformation and exaggeration were peddled in the newspapers for the sake of commercial gain. Newspapers desperate for financial injection allowed themselves to be used as vessels without considering the harm they may cause their readers by promoting false and fraudulent medical information.



Figure 4: Dr Williams' Pink Pills

Source: Courtesy of Jstor

Not everything about Dr Williams' Pills, shown in Figure 4, was bad. While there were real issues of believability where fiction melded with reality, some articles were educative about illnesses that were new to an African society that had for centuries relied on traditional medicine and not Western treatments for kidney diseases, as Dr William's Pills purported to offer.

Some of the salient and important health lessons that the articles dispensed warned readers about the dangers of spitting in public and how this caused the spread of tuberculosis and other chest infections that led to death (*Koranta*, 16 May 1903, p. 7). Other articles reported on the illnesses of young children and questioned the science of the time, sparking debates about whether children should be inoculated (*Koranta*, 30 September 1903, p. 7). There were also

historical lessons to be shared, such as the article on Mr Edward Spinoff in Taung, who stayed in solitary confinement in his store away from other whites when the Boers invaded Bechuanaland for the first time on 11 October 1899, and that made him anxious and nervous (*Koranta*, 27 June 1903, p. 7). Given the quackery of the articles, some of the facts were questionable and not to be taken seriously. Many more articles contained factual inconsistencies and misleading information, such as one about the Pope and Mrs Munks of Kimberley and her illness (*Koranta*, 27 June 1903, p. 7). There was also a strategy of what seemed like fear-mongering in an article about how young women died prematurely, fatigued, diseased, and lifeless, sharing the testimony and image of Miss Johanna du Preez of Vaal Kraanz (*Koranta*, 23 September 1903, p. 7).

Off the shelves and away from the newspaper column testimonials, Dr William's Pills experienced their own court drama in Cape Town, as reported in *Koranta*, when they attempted to stop a competitor from selling what they deemed as similar to their offering – Dr Wilson's Pink Pills for Anaemic People. Wilson lost the case and had to pay legal costs. They were represented by Mr Wilkinson, while Dr Williams' Pills were represented by Mr W.P. Schreiner (*Koranta*, 7 October 1903, p. 4).

An intriguing story was printed in *Koranta* about a black man who ordered Dr William's Pills, and when the parcel arrived at the post office of Van Wyk Rust, Transvaal, he got taxed for communicating with a white man. The story claims that his 'master' dismissed him for writing to a white man, and he was fired and chased out of town as an 'undesirable' (*Koranta*, 25 July 1903, p. 5). The story on its own is outrageous and shows the absurdity of racism, paranoia, and oppression; while the story was in the news section, one still wonders if this could have been another smart product placement tactic.

On the back of the success of Dr William's Pills, another cure named Doan's Backache and Kidney Pills made its debut in the issue of 13 June 1903 (*Koranta*, 13 June 1903, p. 3). In subsequent editorials, the symptoms of kidney disease were described in a detailed and colourful manner (*Koranta*, 18 July 1903, p. 6). However, their testimonials soon went out of sync with the tenor of *Koranta* as a Setswana paper, targeting a Setswana-speaking audience, and believability became an issue that they recognised and addressed. This is evident in the long testimonial of Mr O. van Blommenstein of Adderley Street, Cape Town, which filled three columns and signed off with an oath of veracity from a legal officer in the issue of 7 October 1903 (*Koranta*, 7 October 1903, p. 7).

Dr Williams' Pink Pills main ingredients were iron oxide and Epsom salts (Che-chia & Zhejia, 2018, p. 484).

The Pills were exposed to be misbranded and intentionally making outrageous and fraudulent claims over the curative qualities in a 1916 lawsuit in the United States. At the trial, government medical experts unanimously testified that the pills did not cure the diseases listed on their labels, such as locomotor ataxia and partial paralysis. They were found to contain ferrous carbonate (an iron compound) as their primary active ingredient, often combined with excipients like sugar and gum for formulation. No additional or unique curative substances were identified in the court proceedings (Public Health Reports, 1916, pp. 3383-3385).

When writing about the newspaper, *Umteteli wa Bantu*, Natasha Erlank makes the point that, as advertising became more important to newspapers, newsrooms started to 'split off their advertising and business from their writing and content functions. As a result, editorial power found itself more and more restricted to news content considered apart from the larger functioning of newspapers' (Erlank, 2019, p. 84). Given how populated *Koranta* was with advertisements and advertorials, and what has been recorded as Plaatje's multiple responsibilities as editor, he must have also acted as the commercial head seeking out advertisers. In fact, this is a point Plaatje raised when readers started complaining about the Dr Williams' advertorials. He told the readers: 'They make us laugh when they say we should stop printing the Pink Pills content, who pays every week, the one on whom our newspaper stands... some are behind with their subscriptions and receive *Koranta* by the sweat of Pink Pills. It is costly to produce *Koranta*, every letter, ink and print take up a lot of money'. He concluded by expressing his frustration at the laziness of Batswana and how their newspaper was funded by white businesses. Calling for independence, he asked: 'You will live off the sweat of others until when?' (*Koranta*, 14 October 1903, p. 3).

This section provides an opportunity to focus on the role of advertising in a black press newspaper. Advertising brings certain elements that coexist with editorial content as part of an offering or package that is meant to be engaging, attractive, and experiential. The advertisements enhanced page layout and design, as seen in the ads from J. Gerrans and Dr Williams' Pink Pills. In other cases, the use of fonts, size of typeface, graphics, sketches, and images enhanced the appearance of the pages, moving *Koranta* from a largely word-driven medium to embracing visual elements that gave a reader a full comprehension of what was being communicated. The issue of 2 December 1903 is an example of this. Here, the Dr

Williams' advert was laid out with three images of Mrs N. Hancox of Krugersdorp, a sketch of a white woman in her bedroom just waking up, and another white woman working at a table in her kitchen. Then, an advert from Blake & Co. for ploughs includes an image of the instrument. Furthermore, the page features a mixture of competing fonts, sizes, and both bold and regular typefaces, making it visually striking (*Koranta*, 2 December 1903, p. 6).

There are moments where a black readership may have disconnected from some of the adverts that showed Western sensibilities; for instance, in one of Dr Williams' Pills adverts aimed at teenage girls, the image of a healthy teenage girl was described as that of 'rosy cheeks, sparkling eyes, pretty lips, and a sunny disposition'. The article spoke of Miss Lily Nicholson of Van Zyl Street, Robertson, who made a miraculous recovery and was in good health, thanks to the Pills. One wonders how this was interpreted by black teenage girls whose skin tone could hardly be 'rosy'. Did they connect with the description, or did it repel them as it depicted the likeness of a young white woman, something they could not relate to? The imagery created would not have resonated with the readers sitting in their rural villages or towns (*Koranta*, 20 June 1903, p. 7).

One also wonders about the significance of a white man named Mr J.J. Du Preez of Warrenton, who holds the honour of being the first person to have his image printed in *Koranta* under Dr Williams' Pills advertorial, sharing his problems of back pains from working in the garden (*Koranta*, 16 September 1903, p. 4). For a black readership newspaper, it would have served its purpose better to have these advertorials reflect the audience consuming the content as they did with the image of Chief Moloto and his family that was used soon after Du Preez's.

The relationship between advertisers and the newspapers presented unique concerns. It seems like networks of patronage were enforced in how the deals were structured. It is worth noting that Plaatje openly endorsed the candidature of John Flynn, a long-time *Koranta* advertiser, when he stood for the Fohuli (Vryburg) seat. He addressed the readers: 'My people who have the vote will be thrilled to hear that Foleni (Flynn) intends to stand as a member of Parliament in the coming elections'. He celebrated that as an ally of blacks he needed to be supported because there were not many friends of the blacks, saying this move gave him 'a thrill of satisfaction'. He shared that Flynn was concerned about the ill-treatment of Africans because of their colour and the shape of their heads. 'I would be heartless not to be friendly with black people', Flynn is quoted as saying as he pledged his allegiance to the black cause even if he did not get a parliamentary seat (*Koranta*, 7 October 1903, p. 3). Active electioneering and

campaigning kicked into gear in the following edition, warning black voters in Vryburg, Taung, Phokoane, Kudumane, and surrounding areas to be cautious with their ballots and not to trust other white candidates. They were also advised to ensure that they sign a requisition for Flynn. He called Flynn a ‘shield to protect the black nation’ and ‘tsala ea Becoana’ (friend of Batswana). In the process, Plaatje positioned *Koranta* as an authority on the black vote with the power to sway the outcomes (*Koranta*, 14 October 1903, p. 4).

Plaatje brought in advocacy journalism and activism in *Koranta* but may have opened himself up to scrutiny when coming to the relationship with Flynn in *Koranta*. What did he stand to gain as a newspaper? What privileges or preferential treatment would Flynn receive after his election? Would he have been as vociferous if Flynn supported the black cause but did not advertise in *Koranta*? Was this a payback for the years of loyalty Flynn showed towards *Koranta*? These are some of the ethical considerations that must be confronted when dissecting this relationship and arrangement between a newspaper editor and a businessman-advertiser-turned-politician. On the other hand, one can look at this exercise by Plaatje as selfless and for the benefit of his people. Indeed, the colonial and imperial governments were hostile, even violent towards the Africans, and holding on to a friend and ally who would speak for an African in the corridors of power may have been an option too strong to resist.

A further discussion on early 20th-century black press advertising and how it contributed to the constitution of the public identity can be found in the next chapter.

8.5 *The business*

In his biography of Dr Abdullah Abdurahman, a contemporary of Plaatje, author Martin Plaut talks about describes the economic slump that followed the Anglo-Boer War. Starting in 1903, this downturn persisted for six years and impacted Cape Town the most. During this period, unemployment soared, government spending on public works was slashed, building projects disappeared, and many skilled workers lost their jobs (Plaut, 2020, p. 4). This was also experienced in the interior. Mafeking, over 1 500 km away but inextricably tied to Cape Town not only by a railway line but also Cape liberal ideals of the capital city of the Cape Colony to which it belonged, felt the squeeze.

Khumisho Moguerane appears to be in agreement with Plaut regarding the vicissitudes of post-war depression. She highlights that further north-west of Mafikeng, Chief Bathoen of Kanye in the Bechuanaland Protectorate complained: ‘Here we see great illnesses, Bangoaketse are

dying of many diseases, flu and stomach sickness'. She adds that 'it was a time of hardship in the countryside – starvation, drought, dying animals. It had been going on for some years' (Moguerane, 2024, p. 85).

This economic downturn may have played a significant role in the collapse of *Koranta* from 1904 to 1909 when it struggled to survive and was published sporadically. After running at a loss and being underwritten by Silas Molema, who had 'exhausted all sources of credit available to them, unable to repay either the loans they had taken out or the interest payment due on them' (Willan, 2018, p. 200). Plaatje and Molema were heavily indebted, and their business model was fraught with shortcomings. Willan offers that *Koranta* 'always struggled to get enough paying readers' and therefore its circulation and revenue from subscriptions and advertising 'was limited by poverty and low levels of literacy'; moreover, unlike *Imvo* and *Izwi*, *Koranta* did not receive a subsidy from one of the colony's main political parties, nor did it have wealthy white business backers such as those that sustained *Ilanga lase Natal*. The overall economic conditions in the immediate wake of the South African War had also turned hostile, and it showed in how the newspaper dithered and lurched in what Willan calls 'the confusing sequence of events' (Willan, 2018, p. 2000) that included a potential change of ownership back to *Mafeking Mail*, legal threats from creditors, summonses, and a hostile transference to Bechuanaland Press in 1907. By the end of the same year, *Koranta* was closed, and its assets were bought by Spencer Minchin for £600 in March 1908 (Willan, 2018, p. 211).

Khumisho Moguerane in *Morafe*, her book about the Molema family dynasty, notes that 'Molema was short of money but not of credit' when he launched *Koranta ea Becoana*. She further mentions, 'as a businessman, he had a great capacity for risk'. Owning *Koranta* made him 'the first person of colour to own a newspaper in southern Africa' (Moguerane, 2024, p. 63). The plan was, Moguerane argues, that if *Koranta* succeeded, Molema would pay the initial investors and make some money; in addition, Molema's 'political power had risen as his liquidity declined'. He positioned himself as a tribal leader after the death of Chief Montsioa in 1896, but the new chief, Wessels Montsioa, inspired no confidence. In Moguerane's words, 'Molema's literate following saw no hope of moving forward' with Wessels, 'a polygamous, barely literate man who enjoyed his drink, and spent money only on himself' (Moguerane, 2024, p. 63).

After a sterling three-year run, *Koranta* ran into troubles that began showing themselves by mid-1904. Moguerane states that despite the enthusiasm around the newspaper, readers fell

behind with their subscriptions (Moguerane, 2024, p. 83). The proprietor, editor, and printing staff received little to no financial remuneration, but they remained committed. *Koranta* appeared irregularly after 1904, limping along for at least five more years, with its last issues in 1909. 'Molema put up a brave fight and the staff supported him but it was impossible to finance the newspaper. His transport business had largely collapsed. *Koranta* sank him into a deeper pit of debt' (Moguerane, 2024, p. 84).

Moguerane presents in great detail how Molema attempted to stay afloat as *Koranta* struggled. Molema was helped by his friend and attorney, Spencer Minchin, without whose assistance, Moguerane maintains, 'Molema's financial ruin would have been far quicker'. She says *Koranta* was not the beginning of the problem, but it 'catalysed its severity' (Moguerane, 2024, p. 84). In 1903, Molema borrowed money from the attorney J.W. de Kock amounting to well over £250. Other loans were smaller and point to his growing desperation and ruin, such as the £8 borrowed from farmer and trader E. Fincham in September and £5 borrowed from Grant & Pennycook General Merchants (Moguerane, 2024, p. 84).

By July 1904, Molema faced the reality of having to liquidate *Koranta*, and Spencer Minchin devised a plan to register the newspaper as a Limited Liability Company. This could ensure that some cash flow trickled in. Readers could purchase shares of *Koranta* for £1 each. Moguerane notes that Molema called on his friends and chiefs in the Bechuanaland Protectorate to buy shares. One of those who responded was Chief Bathoen of Bangwaketse in Kanye, who contributed £100 for the upkeep of the newspaper. It is unclear how much others contributed (Moguerane, 2024, pp. 84–85).

By September 1904, *Koranta* had issued only 60 shares, while Molema's transport business 'was turning some returns but not nearly enough'. He was indebted to Charles Wenham for £650 and offered 30 head of mixed cattle, along with all of *Koranta*'s printing machinery, as surety (Moguerane, 2024, p. 85). After two months, he sold the 30 oxen for £290 to meet Wenham's bond premium and pay school fees. Two weeks later, he was back at Wenham's door asking for a further £300 and bound a hundred cattle and six mules.

Molema's other income stream was from his garden in a reserve, which was rented by the Chinese throughout 1904, and this money provided 'a small but steady cash flow'. Minchin advanced him about £250 at the end of October 1904, for which Molema bound his freehold property in the reserve as mortgage. However, by February 1905, he had failed to make any payment towards the loan. Counting on *Koranta* subscription payments, Molema signed a

promissory note to Minchin that he would settle the amount in three months. By mid-April, there was no marked progress with subscriptions. Minchin urged Molema to pass a second bond over his erf through Standard Bank (Moguerane, 2024, p. 86).

Back at the *Koranta* printing office, Moguerane notes that the staff worked without pay, yet they remained hopeful. Summons were also landing on Molema's desk, one of which came from Edward Fincham, who demanded the sum of £8 that Molema had borrowed two years earlier. Plaatje contributed what he could towards *Koranta*'s debt, although Moguerane does not detail this part, but she mentions that rents continued to flow in – 'barely enough to feed a family, definitely not to chip away at the enormous debt' (Moguerane, 2024, p. 86).

At the beginning of 1906, Minchin approached George Whales, who owned the *Mafeking Mail*, with an offer to take over *Koranta*, but the deal fell through. Instead, Molema took out another loan of £200 from a Mrs Murray, offering the printing site and all the machinery as guarantee for payment (Moguerane, 2024, p. 86). Moguerane believes that some of this money 'may have gone towards Wenham's loan'. Standard Bank came knocking with a letter of demand in August 1906, after Molema fell behind with his instalments, and Mrs Murray also called in October 1906. Under pressure, Molema faced the real possibility of seeing the printing press go under auction, but the potential buyers were offering the 'lowest price for house, land and plant', meaning that he would lose the press and remain in debt. He did not sell. The property was attached by Standard Bank in December 1906, and Minchin filed to take possession of the printing plant. Wenham was willing to accept four head of cattle for the outstanding £41-3-7 on his loan, while Mrs Murray and Standard Bank awaited the liquidation of Molema's property and printing plant. Minchin bought time as he looked for another strategy and 'not throw *Koranta* away like something he was discarding. People had built it from the ground, from nothing, risking everything' (Moguerane, 2024, p. 87).

Moguerane notes that Minchin realised that the collapse of *Koranta* was inevitable, but he 'wished the closure to free the proprietor and not humiliate him'. Minchin went back to Whales, who wanted not just the printing plant but a contract to own the copyright at a price of £1037-11-9 (Moguerane, 2024, p. 87). In correspondence with Molema, Whales wrote that he had not heard from Plaatje and that Barolong must decide on the fate of *Koranta*. There were local newspaper reports that the *Koranta* property would be auctioned off on 28 March 1908, 'but Minchin would still not let *Koranta* go down in that manner – a public auction that would see a buyer take all for close to nothing, satisfy sneering white settlers, and leave his friend still

entangled to creditors'. Moguerane explains that Minchin, possibly acting for another party, proposed to buy everything himself for £600, with creditors agreeing to cancel £380-13-7 of the debt. However, £105-12-6 would remain unpaid. Molema was supported by his brother, Joshua, and his nephew, Reverend Molema Moshoele, who together contributed £15-18-11 (Moguerane, 2024, p. 88).

Willan (2018, p. 211) states that Minchin brought the paper to life in 1909 for a few weeks, eventually collapsing the paper, auctioning off its printing plant and ancillary equipment, as well as putting its offices up for auction in June 1909. In his analysis, Steve Lunderstedt pins the collapse of *Koranta* down to economics and Plaatje's capacity. He agrees with Moguerane that *Koranta* shut down 'because of the poor economy of the country (and the region)'. However, he extends it further that Plaatje failed to either 'understand or grasp business economics' because 'he was a journalist and economics was not his strong point'. Plaatje faced a target market with low literacy rates, which translated to low readership, which in turn meant little advertising. 'On both counts where income could be generated, sales of the paper and advertising revenue, it was doomed' (Lunderstedt, 2014, p. 27).

Couzens notes that Molema was haunted by the ghost of *Koranta* until at least 1914. He received a 'Final Demand' notice from lawyers in Mafeking who were acting on behalf of Gaseitsiwe, Chief of the Bangwaketse. He was claiming £100 as 'being certain payment made to you by the late Chief Bathoen in connection with the "*Koranta* ea Becoana" about May, 1905'; he also added interest of 8% (Couzens, 1990, pp. 14–15).

Koranta folded in a tragic way, leaving its ambitious owner in financial ruin and its intrepid editor in the doldrums. It would seem that it was a miscalculated business venture riding on the goodwill of Barolong and Batswana in general. It was short on sound statistics, mathematical calculations, and projections. In the end, it was weakened by some unreliable agents and a subscriber base that was not fully developed or mature enough to carry such a venture.

Moguerane shares that *Koranta* was to serve as 'a light' for Batswana and a "big school" directing the big *morafe* [nation] of "Bechuana" and its constituting small *merafe* [nations] like the Barolong, Bakoena and so on towards its roots' (Moguerane, 2024, p. 70). Still, there it lay in tatters, betrayed by a lack of support from the same people it was meant to uplift and enlighten.

8.6 Discussion

Koranta was welcomed with praise, notably by Rev Jacob Monyatsi of Bloemfontein who composed a poem titled *Lipako tsa Koranta* (Praises for *Koranta*) published in 1902 (*Koranta*, 16 August 1902, p. 4; *Koranta*, 4 October 1902, p. 8). Monyatsi celebrated that Batswana would have a newspaper to bring them news and knowledge as did the defunct *Molekoli*, *Mahoko a Becwana*, and *Moshupatsela*, also acknowledging what *Leselinyana* did for Basotho. He says these newspapers showed a path leading to enlightenment with education, knowledge and wisdom. Monyatsi sees *Koranta* building on this by imparting news every week but cautions that it needs assistance as it serves ‘merafe ea lona’ (your nations) – an important reminder of the role it plays in unity, cohesion and cultural identity. The last stanza of the poem is dedicated to Morulaganyi (Editor) and reads as follows (with author’s translation in brackets):

Uena, Morulaganyi oa batho! (You, the people’s editor!)

Au! Ke bothata go bua le batho; (Oh! It is difficult to address people;)

Ka o tla felisioa pelo; (Because you will lose patience;)

Ichoke me se lape pelo; (Persevere and don’t lose heart;)

U tla bakoa ke tshika tse li tlang. (You will be praised by generations to come.)

Ba teng ba u ba itumelisang; (There are those pleased with your work;)

Coelela pele nametsega! (Carry on and be encouraged!)

Coelela pele choletsega. (Carry on and rise.)

Monyatsi highlights the importance of keeping *Koranta* in business but also recognises the important role that the editor plays. He crafts words that show empathy and understanding of what the editor goes through just to publish an edition, and acknowledgement of the challenges he faces and the sacrifices he makes for the greater good. It is a patriotic act that calls for fortitude and perseverance. He seeks to motivate him and provide assurance that his efforts are seen and appreciated. Monyatsi also evokes legacy in his writing by telling the editor that he will be remembered by forthcoming generations, in other words the work that he was doing was not just for the present, but that it would echo in the future. He completes the poem with words of comfort and a wish for prominence. Plaatje later called Monyatsi ‘the greatest Motswana, dead or alive’ (*Koranta*, 28 October 1903, p. 4).

As Plaatje often noted, the words of support were welcomed and appreciated, but they did not pay the bills. It came down to circulation – agents and subscribers playing their part and the readership base growing so that the paper could attract more advertisers.

Advertising played an important role in the operations of the black press. It was a major source of income, and scholars can gain insight into societal norms and values from it. The distinction between editorial and advertising content was often blurred, not due to underdevelopment but because editors needed creativity to attract readers to brands. This symbiotic relationship is evident in the early design of newspapers, where advertisements shared space with editorials. Eventually, advertising moved to the front page, with written advertorials inside that were sometimes not clearly identified, such as Dr Williams' Pink Pills. This raised issues of ethics, including potential accusations against Plaatje's newspaper for allegedly spreading misinformation, exaggerating claims, and infringing on privacy by claiming that prominent individuals had been cured by miracle treatments. Advertisers used familiarity strategies, addressing readers in ways that suggested understanding their needs.

Beyond advertising, Plaatje and Molema were proactive in acquiring their own printing press, the Bechuana Printing Works, marking a significant milestone that gave Plaatje and Molema control over the production processes. This autonomy allowed them to swiftly respond to market demands and maintain consistent quality. They could experiment with formats and styles, setting *Koranta* apart from competitors. The Bechuana Printing Works produced promotional materials supporting *Koranta*'s business objectives and reinforcing its brand within the community. The additional revenue stream was created in the printing of books and pamphlets sold at the office. The office also served as a direct point of sale for readers. The close association of the advertisers with the newspaper, with them even taking responsibility for supplying the products on sale, highlights an enterprising business model. This mindset helped establish the paper as a leading entity in the black press and set a precedent for future media entrepreneurs.

9. Model of *Tsala ea Becoana*

9.1 Background and context of *Tsala ea Becoana*

Tsala ea Becoana (*The Friend of the Bechuana*) was the second newspaper that Plaatje edited. It was published from Kimberley, where he settled after leaving Mafikeng in 1910 when *Koranta* shut down. *Tsala* was first published on 9 July 1910.

The need to produce *Tsala* was first voiced by John Tengo Jabavu, who became one of its funders, proprietors and printers. He had complained that Batswana were not ‘heard in national debates unlike Zulus, Sothos and Matebele’. For Jabavu, it was also a business decision that would bring in ‘a substantial printing contract’ and ‘the prospect of establishing a stronger presence in the northern provinces’ (Willan, 2018, p. 219).

Working with Jabavu, the *Tsala* syndicate was set up with Mr Moses Masisi putting down £100. He was supported by a group whom Willan collectively called ‘relatively wealthy landowners from the Seleka Barolong settlement in Thaba Nchu’ (Willan, 2018, pp. 218–219). They were identified as Chief J.M. Nyokong, Jeremiah Makgothi, Chief W.Z. Fenyang, Moses Masisi, and Rev. Joel Goronyane (whom Plaatje called ‘the first Chuana (Tswana) printer’) (Plaatje, 1916, p. xiii). However, by mid-1911, *Tsala* mentioned that the directors of *Tsala* syndicate were John Tengo Jabavu, Jeremiah Makgothi, and Thomas Mthobi Mapikela (*Tsala*, 29 April 1911, p. 2) who were all big players in politics. Mapikela was a major leader in the African political and religious networks of the Free State. It is evident that Plaatje’s second newspaper also relied on patronage from leading Batswana businessmen and black leaders to get going, and that in some sense, these figures initiated the project, just as Silas Molema had in 1901.

Jabavu’s interest in the *Tsala* business was through his company, Jabavu & Co. Limited, which printed the newspaper in King William’s Town from 9 July 1910 to 4 November 1911. The newspaper changed printers and moved to J.C. Looney in Kimberley from 2 December 1911 to 13 January 1912. This move, from the eastern Cape to Kimberley, allowed for the readers in Kimberley, Bloemfontein, Klerksdorp, Johannesburg, and Choane (Pretoria) to access *Tsala* on Saturdays, thanks to the speedy delivery by train. What *Tsala* traded on in the big cities and towns was the immediacy of news, indicating progress from the days of *Koranta*, its predecessor, which would take days to reach readers in far flung areas from Mafikeng. This immediacy of news transformed journalism, which had, in the past, rendered newspapers as nothing more than a journal because breaking news and announcements of deaths and births

reached readers days, if not weeks, later, by which time they were old news. The same-day mass consumption, or even a day later, was revolutionary for the early black press, especially for such far-flung towns and cities removed from Kimberley. The last printers of *Tsala ea Becoana* were the Steam Printing Works of the Diamond Fields Advertiser Limited located in Kimberley from 10 February 1912 until *Tsala*'s demise on 8 June 1912.

Tsala presented itself as the 'only Sechuana Gazette for the Government of Union of South Africa, with a wide and constantly increasing circulation' and 'a good medium for Native Consumers'. A testimonial from advertiser Aberdein & Butt was included: 'Our advertisement in your newspaper has increased our Native Trade by 50 per cent'. The paper seemed to be thriving if the last statement in the advertorial was anything to go by: 'Nearly every other post brings fresh subscribers' (*Tsala*, 23 March 1912, p. 3).

In another important technological development for news in South Africa, *Tsala* was reportedly the only black press paper printed on Linotype in South Africa. This followed complaints from some readers that it was unreadable. The newspaper carried a promotion touting itself as 'the only Blackman's paper printed on Linotype' (*Tsala*, 23 March 1912, p. 3). The Linotype was a typesetting machine that cast characters in type metal as a complete line rather than as individual characters, and this was an improvement over the Monotype (Britannica, n.d.). It made for cleaner and clearer lines, resulting in easy reading.

Much like its predecessor and in the tradition of the black press, *Tsala* carried a slogan or payoff line in the form of Biblical verses. On its masthead, it proclaimed: 'Yaka metsi a tsilili mo moyeng o nyorilweng, mafoko a a monate a fatshe ye le kgakala a ntse fela jalo' ('As cold water is to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country') taken from the book of Proverbs chapter 25, verse 25. On the editorial header inside the paper, it had: 'Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall I shall arise, when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me... He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness', taken from Micah chapter 7, verses 8 and 9.

It is significant that Plaatje chose to use two verses that seemingly addressed his detractors. Through *Tsala*, Plaatje also announced his return, if not reinvention. The choice of the latter verse is telling. This marked his re-emergence since the debacle of *Koranta* and its financial doldrums, which had left him heavily indebted when he left Mafikeng a year earlier. A man of unshakeable faith, he leaned on the Word for his restoration and the fact that still, he would rise from the ashes of failure and humiliation. It also spoke of his tenacity and chutzpah. In addition,

the paper ran an advert that announced that he was no longer reachable on Box 11, Mafeking and introduced his new address as Box 143, Kimberley.

The first verse served as a justification for the existence of *Tsala*. It evoked a sense of the need for a newspaper that would represent, address, and speak for certain people. *Tsala* would perform the duty of a messenger that brings good news and enlightenment and would quench people's 'thirst' for knowledge. However, by 4 March 1911, the newspaper had reverted to the 'I am black, but comely...' verse taken from Song of Solomon and used in *Koranta* for many years.

What set *Tsala ea Becoana* apart from *Koranta ea Becoana* was that the former was registered at the post office as a newspaper and carried this notification on its masthead from the issue of 4 November 1911 (*Tsala*, 4 November 1911, p. 1). It is unclear what the circumstances were or what changed in terms of regulations, but this indicates a shift in the formalisation of the newspaper business. Remembering that *Koranta* came into being during the instability of the Boer War and *Tsala* was founded at the start of the Union of South Africa, it is perhaps unsurprising that the legal framework in the country had either matured or became stricter 16 months after the newspaper came into being. Other historical world records show that older postal systems required that newspapers register at the post office for postal discounts. South Africa, under British colonial control, likely adopted the mechanism (US Post Office Manual, 1952, pp. 113-122).

Published weekly, on Saturdays, the newspaper, which was four pages long for most of its existence, cost 3d a copy or 12s for a year-long subscription. Judging by the number of articles written in Setswana, the primary readership was Setswana-speaking, with English being secondary. The circulation of *Tsala ea Becoana* rose from 1 700 in 1910 to 4 000 in 1913 [by this time, it had changed its name to *Tsala ea Batho*] (Limb, 2012, p. 27).

The first copy of *Tsala*, published in the second decade of the 20th century, set the tone for a dire and tumultuous future juxtaposed against the audacity of hope. The four columns on the front page and two more on page 2 ran an announcement from the State Veterinarian on the devastation of the East Coast Fever, further decimating cattle and echoing the sweeping losses of the rinderpest over a decade earlier. A radical protest tone was already present in the first edition, with Plaatje writing that local cattle could not withstand Western civilisation and modern microbes and that one could taste the medication administered in livestock when eating the meat. This was a rejection of the work of the veterinarians and their interventions. He also

brings up the ghost of Barolong paramount Chief Montshiwa, who protested the killing of all cattle during the Rinderpest, calling that memory and betrayal of wiping out livestock ‘still fresh’ (*Tsala*, 9 July 1910, p. 2).

Plaatje maintained an optimistic outlook. He reprinted a report from *Imvo* about favourable auguries for ‘natives’ under the Union, expressing his support for the new dispensation, especially the selection of Edward Dower as the minister of Native Affairs. He believed that Dower indicated good intentions to address the ‘Native Question’. Additionally, the persecution of Zulu king Dinuzulu being ‘squashed’ (albeit he remained in exile in Middelburg, Transvaal and not back home in Natal) bode well for harmony and new beginnings (*Tsala*, 9 July 1910, p. 2). Plaatje back in business with *Tsala* enticed advertisers with a promise to ‘multiply your Native trade’ so that they could ‘retire early in business’. Attracting subscribers was also an early drive that *Tsala* embarked on (*Tsala*, 9 July 1910, p. 4).

Tsala was also a mouthpiece and mobilising tool of the South African Native Convention. It ran large advertisements profiling the leadership as follows: President, Rev. W.B. Rubusana, PhD, East London; Vice-Presidents, Chief Silas Molema, Mafeking, and Mr John L. Dube, Ohlange, Natal; Treasurer, Mr Moses Masisi, farmer, Thaba Nchu; and Secretary, Mr J. Makgothi, agriculturist, Thaba Phachoa. It informed readers about branches in Basutoland, Natal, O.R.C., Kimberley, Transvaal, and Bechuanaland. It further invited readers to send correspondence to the secretary (*Tsala*, 9 July 1910, p. 4).

The first issue of *Tsala* featured adverts targeted at isiXhosa speakers and that might have surprised readers of the distinctly Setswana- and Serolong-aligned *Koranta*. *Tsala* also brought with it an infiltration of borrowed words, either from English or Nguni languages – losing the authenticity and purity of Setswana that Plaatje had made his mission to preserve (*Tsala*, 9 July 1910). This seemingly emanates from the business ties that *Tsala* had with Jabavu and *Imvo*, sharing printers in King William’s Town; therefore, it is not hard to see how Nguni seeped into the Setswana domain. Evident in the first issues, the scope of coverage expanded from the Setswana locales that *Koranta* specialised in as *Tsala* deepened into the coastal towns of Port Elizabeth, East London, and King William’s Town, with a few reports from Natal.

The changes notwithstanding, *Tsala* positioned itself in later editions as an independent race newspaper published in English and Setswana. It further championed the cause of Batswana and added its prestige as being the:

only branch of the Bantu, besides the Zulus, mentioned in the “Encyclopaedia Britannica” and the “Universal Cyclopaedia”. The latter says of them: “They are the most civilised nation in South Africa. The Kuruman Mission of the London Missionary Society has done them good”. (*Tsala*, 2 December 1911, p. 4)

One of the popular catchphrases employed by *Tsala* was ‘Choeu ga di coane, ncho cone dia coana’ (*Tsala*, 4 March 1911, p. 3; *Tsala*, 19 August 1911, p. 3), which is translated, ‘Whites never fall out, only blacks do’ (Plaatje, 1916, p. 26). This was a clarion call for unity among black races in the face of an unrelenting and hostile colonial government. One can deduce that when the SANNC was founded in 1912, this was the mantra that fuelled Plaatje’s involvement and subsequent election as the first secretary-general of the organisation.

9.2 Model of journalism – *Tsala ea Becoana* (1910 to 1912)

When Sol Plaatje launched *Tsala ea Becoana* in Kimberley, the world was vastly different to 1903 when *Koranta ea Becoana* was in business based in Mafikeng. South Africa had just established Union, which excluded black political participation in most of the provinces, and the segregationist intentions were clear as the oppressive laws became more entrenched. It is important, however, to remember that the Cape franchise continued as before. King Edward VII, who had replaced his mother, the revered Queen Victoria, had died, and King George V was on the throne. East Coast Fever threatened to wipe out cattle and devastate Africans.

It was the end of an era, as foretold by the comet ‘mochochonono’ or ‘naledi ea setlhodi’ (Halley’s comet), and seen with the death of a popular Batswana leader, the paramount Chief Bathoen Gaseitsiwe of the Bangwaketse, who passed away on 1 July 1910 at the age of 55. As mentioned in the previous section, he had been one of the supporters of Plaatje at the time of *Koranta*, who contributed £100 when the paper was in dire straits. This chief was a powerful, popular, and respected founding father of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, characterised as ‘second only to [Seretse] Khama by wealth and popularity’ (*Tsala*, 16 July 1910, p. 2).

The Mfengu Chief John Veldtman Bikitsha had also died. He was an exceptional leader of his people, ‘the greatest man to ever live in the Fingo history’, who was remembered in a eulogy in *Tsala* (*Tsala*, 30 July 1910, p. 3).

These events, and mostly the changed political balance of power after Union and then the Natives Land Act, would influence the direction *Tsala* would take and determine the editorial path Plaatje would follow in the last five years of his journalism enterprise. A generation of

leaders he looked up to was phasing out; the times were rapidly changing, and the newspapers would have to respond to that.

The first big departure that *Tsala ea Bechoana* made had to do with the way in which it used and wrote Setswana. The newspaper announced that the letter ‘l’ would no longer be used for the sound of ‘d’, as was the case previously in *Koranta*, and that ‘j’ had replaced ‘y’. This is recorded in the popular Maitisho weekly column, where the author wonders if the readers will follow the new orthography (*Tsala*, 23 July 1910, p. 3). References in relation to the months as practised in the 19th century, such as instant, ultimo, and proximo, were abandoned in favour of this month, last month, and next month. The audience, presumably the same loyal readers who consumed *Koranta*, were welcomed to a new frontier and to bear witness to an evolution in how their language had been represented and the metamorphosis in action, as they embraced the dawn of a new era.

The essence of *Tsala ea Bechoana* remained the same as it exhibited in the self-promotion advert that called it ‘a paper for the nation, impartial, says it like it is and fears nobody’. It further explained that the newspaper was widely read in South Africa and overseas and ‘communicates to Bechoana the laws of Union’. With its team of talented writers, *Tsala ea Bechoana* delivered ‘news from all fronts that Bechoana would love to hear, especially about the government’ (*Tsala*, 1 July 1911, p. 1). The paper also responded to many requests to increase its size, which came into effect on 1 July 1911. This was achieved not by adding more pages to the four offered but by being economical with space and adding more columns instead. In the end, the newspaper went up from five columns to seven; however, this resulted in a finer and smaller word size and tighter typeface, making for a cramped and claustrophobic experience for the reader.

Tsala ea Bechoana’s editorial offering reflected a new direction in a world that had changed remarkably since the founding days of *Koranta*. It also mirrored an invigorated approach in a competitive environment. New additions to the editorial mix included ‘Tlhoatlhoa tsa Mebaraka’ (Market Prices), a weekly digest of markets trading in Johannesburg, Krugersdorp, Potchefstroom, and Klerksdorp on goods such as *furu* (feed for cattle), a bag of mealies, a bag of flour, a bag of mealie meal, *mabele a Setswana* (sorghum), beans, onions, lemons, butter, and a dozen of eggs. Prices for livestock were also recorded for animals such as pigs, turkeys, ducks, horses, mules, and donkeys (*Tsala*, 6 May 1911, p. 3). This is significant to note, not only as evidence of the business activity of black entrepreneurs but also as the root of business

reporting or journalism many decades before the stock exchange became a hive of activity and interest to black readers.

Tsala ea Becoana demonstrated a significant move away from a ‘promiscuous layout’ and focused on a more neat, orderly, and packaged presentation of new items. The sections of the paper were clearly marked, and the use of headlines became a regular occurrence. Meanwhile, images, whether as graphics, sketches, drawings, or photographs, proliferated the columns more and more, mostly from advertisers, with a few exceptions coming from editorial content.

9.2.1 Columns of *Tsala ea Becoana*

The following were the columns of *Tsala ea Becoana*:

1. Mafokonyana: The mainstay column of Plaatje’s newspapers that provided a summary of news in a short and digestible ‘news-in-brief’ format.
2. Sub Rosa.: The name of the column means ‘happening or done in secret, privately, confidentially or surreptitiously’, but its Latin origin means ‘under the rose’ as a token of secrecy, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. So, here, one can deduce that Plaatje aimed to expose that which was clandestine so as to bring it to light. The main characteristic of the column was conversational and written in English.
3. Personalia: It focused on news about personalities, travelling, achievements, career movements, visitations and vacations, as well as conferences attended.
4. On Dit.: French for ‘they say’ or ‘it is said’. The name of the column denotes ‘a piece of gossip’ according to the Dictionary. This might be extended to mean rumours, whispers, hearsay, or some tittle-tattle. It may also be assumed that the news contained here might be devoid of facts and truth or may have not been verified by the author, but this was not always the case.
5. Maitisho.: In this column, the writer identified themselves as a woman. Plaatje scholars are convinced that it must have been Plaatje himself who wrote the column because of the style, flair, and depth. This was essentially a woman venting about life as a woman, the challenges she faced, celebrating womanhood, and making social commentary on morality and other things in a humorous, fireside chat style. The column experimented with voice, genre, and mode of address, which were popular in early African-language publications ‘which betray an uncertainty about the author’s role and about the scope

and definition of their quasi-anonymous publics – but also an excitement at the expanded space in which to invent forms and imagine publics’, as Karin Barber claims (Barber, 2007, p. 153). Elsewhere, Barber calls this addressive style ‘complex layering and levels of inclusiveness’ (Barber, 2016, p. 163)

6. Here, There and Everywhere.: This column implied that the newspaper had eyes and ears everywhere. Its focus was on a variety of news from all angles. Presented in English, they may include pestilence killing animals, the sick, news of the world, politics and elections, the quirky, numbers as fun facts, education, travels, crime, and courts.
7. Maronopo a Thaba Ncho: Reports from Thaba Ncho that appeared with less regularity than in *Koranta*, and some editions incorporated other towns such as Kroonstad and Beaconsfield.
8. Dikgaolonyana: This literally means ‘small or little lines or columns’: A variety of news, announcements, reports, and opinion and commentary on political, social, and cultural matters.
9. Tsa Bakoaledi.: This is the letters section. Because of the limited space of *Tsala ea Becoana* with four pages, the section lacked the intimacy, vibrancy, and dynamism of *Koranta*. The publication was sparse, and the rigour of debate significantly diminished.
10. Dikemo/Matsalo/Dincho: Paid-for announcements of weddings, births, and deaths.
11. Re batliseng: Families looking for lost relatives or even animals.

Note: The new additions were the sophisticated sounding On Dit, Sub Rosa, and Here, There and Everywhere, while Mafoko a Ntoa/Lintoa from *Koranta* had fallen away since the South African War ended. Timiti was also done away with, a possible indication of how entertainment had evolved from tea meetings to mostly concerts in halls. It is worth noting that *Tsala* presented a more comprehensive offering to the reader, but not all columns were included in every edition.

9.3 *The commercial*

The first issue of *Tsala ea Becoana* of 9 July 1910 had little advertising. In the early issues, the front page was used to invite and attract advertisers, with the promise that ‘the “Friend” will multiply your Native Trade’ (*Tsala*, 23 July 1910, p. 1). *Tsala* also promoted its advertising

rates, which were: 3s per inch single column and half price when repeated, and 6s per inch double column and half price when repeated. ‘Standing advertisements’ cost 3s per inch per month single column and 6s per inch per month double column (*Tsala*, 24 September 1910, p. 4).

A regular advert appeared calling on agents to write to the *Tsala* office and submit the monies collected in the month, requesting that they keep to the correct time frame (*Tsala*, 15 October 1910, p. 4). The first advertising in the early editions came from ET Cogle, a butcher selling ‘fat meats’ at low prices in Kimberley and Hadje Nassiep Amos in the Malay Camp, also in Kimberley, promoting his tailoring services that were ‘liked by Batlhaping and all Becoana’, using exclamation marks in ‘Se Lebaleng! Se Lebaleng!! Se Lebaleng!!!’ (Do not Forget!) to denote the town crier (*Tsala*, 30 July 1910, p. 3).

The immediate introduction of graphic adverts written in isiXhosa for Sunlight Soap depicting a distressed little girl in a soiled dress with the words ‘Ndihlambe’ (wash me), as well as for Beecham’s Pills with a clever use of fonts and design elements were an indication of the new world Plaatje found himself in (*Tsala*, 30 July 1910, p. 3). The advert for Wood’s Peppermint Cure for coughs appeared in big letters in isiXhosa (*Tsala*, 13 May 1911, p. 3), translated into Setswana only a year later (*Tsala*, 4 May 1912, p. 2). An advertorial in isiXhosa about Zam-Buk and its healing properties appeared alongside a column of Bible verses headlined ‘Abafundi Bezibhalo’ (Readers of Letters) and news from Equmra (*Tsala*, 24 September 1910, p. 3). The more isiXhosa adverts took up space in *Tsala*, the more editorial content seemed to mirror this with the influx of copy in English and isiXhosa, culled and marked as such, from *Imvo Zabantsundu*. This pointed to a heavy reliance on the coastal paper but also the sisterly relationship between them as mentioned above. Not only had the language changed from Serolong to a hybrid of borrowed words, but, hard pressed for cash and to make *Tsala* a success, Plaatje was left with little choice but to accept what the advertisers were offering him. It must also be noted that Kimberley was a cosmopolitan mining city populated by polyglots, and it might have been a no-brainer for Plaatje to reflect other languages in a paper that had initially exclusively targeted Batswana. Additionally, as *Tsala* was printed in King William’s Town and John Tengo Jabavu of *Imvo Zabantsundu* was a shareholder, it is likely that the newspapers shared advertorial content, only untranslated for a Setswana-English medium that *Tsala* was meant to be.

In September 1910, the front page of *Tsala* transformed with the parliamentary elections of the Union of South Africa approaching in September 1910, and *Tsala* capitalised on the ‘election fever’. A requisition from some 1 400 voters to have Colonel David Harris stand for political office for the seat of Beaconsfield and Griqualand West ran on the front page and was accompanied by his acceptance of the nomination. Election posters calling for voters in Barkly West and West End, Kimberley to elect John Adams took a prominent place on the front page (*Tsala*, 10 September 1910, p. 1), while inside, smaller posters for H.A. Oliver ran in the columns (*Tsala*, 10 September 1910, p. 4). Also in September, making its debut on the front page was what would become the longest-running advert in *Tsala* from The Big Kimberley Store of H.A. Oliver & Co. selling all classes of ‘drapery, clothing and outfitting, trunks, bags, boots and shoes’ (*Tsala*, 10 September 1910, p. 1). The issue also saw the entry of a higher-minded solicitation advert appealing to the intellectual capacity of the readers, run as a competition to translate the following words into Setswana: ‘Comparison, dedication, facts and figures, idea, indication, influence, sensa[t]ion, temporal’. Up for grabs was a clock, and the name of the winner was published in the newspaper (*Tsala*, 10 September 1910, p. 4).

Juta’s booksellers and publishers from Adderley Street in Cape Town provided higher-minded solicitation with their range of textbooks on offer under the banner *Most Successful Collection of Textbooks for South Africa*. The titles included *Europe, its Influence on South Africa* by H.C. Girdlestone, *South Africa and the British Empire* by the late Miss A.S. Bleby, and *New Union Reader* by Rev. J. Whiteside (*Tsala*, 23 March 1912, p. 3). Another example of a higher-minded solicitation was in the form of Hon. M. Campbell of Mount Edgecombe, Natal, who put up a prize of £25 for the best essays on the history of the Basuto nation. In a move to engender reading and writing as well as history recording, Campbell challenged readers, especially Basotho who were natives of South Africa, to submit essays of no longer than 2 500 words. Europeans were not eligible to compete. The winning essay would earn £15, the runner-up £7, and third place would take home £3 (*Tsala*, 13 April 1912, p. 3).

September marked a turning point in the fortunes of *Tsala* as commercial advertisers began filling the columns. The likes of auctioneer and market master D.J. Maritz promoted his livestock auctions on Wednesdays and Saturdays in Kimberley. He informed the readers, whom he identified as ‘Bancho’ (blacks), that he had returned to business like before the wars (presumably he was thinking of the South African War and the siege of Kimberley) and asked them to bring their livestock for a fair trade that they were accustomed to (*Tsala*, 24 September 1910, p. 4).

Patent cures such as Peps throat and lung cure appeared in the paper (*Tsala*, 1 October 1910, p. 3), as did Alonzo Cures made from ‘African herbs, for African illnesses’ with promises to cure issues of blood, bladder, erectile dysfunction, respiratory, digestive, and vaginal infections (*Tsala*, 29 October 1910, p. 4). Mokoena calls this brand of adverts a ‘co-existence between western and indigenous pharmacopeia’, which yielded a creolised vocabulary of illness and health lexicon (Mokoena, 2020, pp. 471–472). This is evident in how Alonzo sold their cures. While the advert was written completely in Setswana with traditional terms for illnesses and body parts, a reader would observe the commercialisation of what might have been traditional *muthi* (cure) that has now been appropriated from the traditional healer and packaged by Alonzo for a modern African.

The Dr Williams’ Pink Pills for Pale People that were so common in *Koranta* made a comeback in *Tsala* with the testimony of Rev. William Koko of the Lutheran Church in Johannesburg. The column, shorter and succinct, and still unmarked as an advertorial, included an image of an elderly black woman (*Tsala*, 11 February 1911, p. 4).

Possibly the first African entrepreneur to advertise in *Tsala* was J.C. Libate (full name Josiah Carl Libate), who announced the opening of their lodge in Bloemfontein at No. 249 Waaihoek, which had a variety of food and cold drinks at cheap prices (*Tsala*, 19 November 1910, p. 4). He was one the barekisi (agents) of the newspaper and a political activist who, John Mancoe presents a biographical sketch of his and classifies him under ‘transport’ in his Mancoe’s Bloemfontein Banu and Coloured People’s Directory (1934, pp. 51,71). Another African advertiser worth noting was T.M. Mapikela, carpenters and architects/builders of Waaihoek, Bloemfontein. They advertised their work backed by a 10-year-long experience in contract building, furniture making for churches and schools, and coffins manufactured with great skill and finesse. He added that he travelled to wherever he was needed (*Tsala*, 25 May 1912, p. 3). Mapikela was a member of the *Tsala* syndicate and a respected political figure, who would, in 1914, join Plaatje and the others as SANNC deputation to England to protest the 1913 Land Act. In the directory, Mancoe also shares his biography and categorises him as a ‘Bantu headman’, ‘chairman of the Native Advisory Board’ and ‘Central Committee (1932)’ and then under carpenters and builders (1934, pp. 2, 50, 51, 72).

Some advertisers were very deliberate in how they targeted a black clientele and readers of *Tsala* specifically. Mutual Benefit Trading Society Ltd on Selby Street in Kimberley called on Batswana and blacks to ‘support their colour’ by buying food, wood, mealie meal, and

vegetables from them and nobody else (*Tsala*, 31 December 1910, p. 2). J.S. Ntsiko of Main Street, Kimberley, promoted his restaurant opposite 3 Star Bakery, enticing customers with the claim that no other establishment provided Batswana with food as good as his (*Tsala*, 7 January 1911, p. 1). The Colonial Banking & Trust Co. of Africa Ltd on corner Simmonds and Market Streets in Johannesburg invited black workers in the city to bank with them by offering products tailor-made for them. Clients could save from as little as five shillings, with interest ranging from three and a half to every 100 saved (*Tsala*, 27 April 1912, p. 3).

Educational institutions also occupied the pages with the Kilnerton Institution in Pretoria busy preparing for the new school year. They advertised that their correspondence class would commence on 1 February 1911 to prepare learners for the school's higher examination in 1912, as did the Emgwali Training School for girls in Dohne, Cape Colony. The name of the school was modified to Mokwale for the Setswana audience, opening on 2 February 1911, and the learners were advised to arrive a day earlier (*Tsala*, 31 December 1910, p. 2). Tiger Kloof Native Institution announced that it would reopen on 3 February 1912, and all students were expected to arrive on that day (*Tsala*, 30 December 1911, p. 3). Pniel Mission Institute took out adverts to promote its boarding school and pupil-teacher classes. This is the same school, a much larger teacher training institute, where, as noted before, Plaatje received his education from German missionary Ernst Westphal and his wife Marie of the Berlin Mission Society and from which he graduated with standard 3 in 1893 (Willan, 2018, p. 28).

Following on the Sunlight Soap graphic from 1910, tobacco manufacturer, Flag Cigarettes, invited readers to 'smoke'. In later editions, the advert bade Batswana who lived in Bucoana (presumably Bechuanaland, Bechuanaland Protectorate or all Setswana speaking areas) to purchase packets that were written 'Bolokan makesinyana, Go tla lwa bona, Dikabelo' [sic] (Save the packets and be rewarded) to save money and receive a reward. This advertisement changed the layout and design of *Tsala* as it introduced a new product that had previously not been advertised in the newspaper, as well as new promotional tactics to win over new smokers (*Tsala*, 7 January 1911, p. 4; *Tsala*, 14 January 1911, p. 4; *Tsala*, 4 February 1911, p. 4). This commercial vivacity and advertising momentum was maintained as *Tsala* entered 1911, and businesses invested in it filled the front page.

Aberdein & Butt of Bloemfontein gave the front page a facelift with their wedding special 'A U Tloga U Nyala' (Are you about to get married?). In a tabular form, they presented what clothing they had to offer wedding parties, such as Japanese silk, white and yellow silk with

floral embroidery, satin, Shelton fabric for shirts, and light fabrics – touting itself as the one-stop shop for all wedding looks. Readers were requested to inform the shop that they read the advert in *Tsala ea Becoana*, possibly a display, to the advertiser, of the reach and influence of the newspaper and a way of proving that they were spending their advertising budget in the right place (*Tsala*, 4 February 1911, p. 1). Zittel & Co. booked a full-page spread to advertise their winter stock of clothes and other items with the headline ‘Speshele sa Ditlhoatlhoa tsa Thoto tsa Mariga’ (Special Prices for Winter Stock). It detailed a variety of garments on sale for women, men, children, and home (bedding, quilts, tablecloths, and blankets) (*Tsala*, 1 April 1911, p. 2).

The December issues of *Tsala* afforded advertisers the chance to experiment with presentation, layout, and design. The new revamped Aberdein & Butt advertisement was enlivened with more graphics and sketches than ever before. They depicted a sewing machine and a white woman in a long cloth nightdress and a cloth, with a new headline, ‘Go Botlhe Ba Ba Eang Go Nyala’ (To all those who are going to get married). This visual feast, made possible presumably because the *DFA* were now printing the paper, represented a leap into a new era for *Tsala*, which was fast becoming heavy in imagery and illustrations as space became precious on the front page (*Tsala*, 2 December 1911, p. 1). Nectar Tea announced its arrival with a prominent vertical layout and design style that cut across the page, informing readers of its healing properties and changed the look of the paper (*Tsala*, 6 April 1912, p. 2).

New advertisers from across Orange Free State (O.F.S.), such as undertaker J. Hodgson in Bloemfontein, announced his new address and promised to bury Batswana with dignity as he promoted his affordable payment plans. Other advertisers such as butcher John Henderson, also known as Ramosesanyane (the skinny man) in Thaba Ncho; food, drinks, and clothes merchant Van Der Riet and Co. in Thaba Ncho; sellers of food, drinks, clothes, and agricultural implements Conning & Co. in Thaba Ncho; clothier D & D.H. Fraser Ltd, also known as Radipere (man of horses); and butcher Mongane Ramagaga in Thaba Ncho all vied for the coveted eye of an African reader (*Tsala*, 2 December 1911, p. 1).

M.N. Ramailane advertised the opening of their lodging and dining establishment called Mokuena Home in Waaihoek, Bloemfontein, to sell hot and cold drinks, coffees, teas, cocoa, and milk. Tobias C. Mvula of Malay Camp, Kimberley, promoted his services as a ‘high class carpenter and cabinet maker with experience of 19 years with Brister & Co. of Port Elizabeth’. He also offered to ‘go anywhere for carpentry work or jobs, at short notice’. Lastly, Mrs E.

Oliphant of 'A' Location in Kroonstad advertised Legae la Becoana (Home of Batswana) as a guesthouse to welcome travellers with various foods and comfortable lodging (*Tsala*, 2 December 1911, p. 4). Mrs Maria Smouse also announced the opening of her guesthouse on Main Street in Kimberley (*Tsala*, 16 December 1911, p. 4).

By February 1912, *Tsala* seemed to be an attractive proposition to advertisers. The old businesses remained as the pool grew wider. The back page was taken up with advertisements, leaving no space for editorial content. New advertisers, such as The Stobie Respirator, promoted their respirator to miners to impede dust inhalation from underground and prevent potentially fatal complications (*Tsala*, 17 February 1912, p. 4).

Plaatje faced ethical conundrums as he did with *Koranta*. Aberdein and Butt enjoyed special mention in Mafokonyana news column, urging readers who live in the Colony of [President] Brand, meaning Orange Free State province, to visit the store and to buy their goods (*Tsala*, 6 May 1911, p. 4). The mention is repeated in the news columns of the subsequent issue (*Tsala*, 13 May 1911, p. 3). This example of blurring the lines between advertising and editorial emanated from a letter by Aberdein Butt headlined 'The Benefits of Advertising', where they celebrated a 50% increase in their sales since they bought space in *Tsala* and asked the Editor for a paragraph mentioning them (*Tsala*, 29 April 1911, p. 2). The reciprocity, which may be interpreted as a network of patronage, problematises the relationship Plaatje had with advertisers that he faced earlier in *Koranta* with John F. Flynn whom he endorsed for political office when he was his long-time advertiser.

It would seem that another conundrum Plaatje had to face had to do with biting the hand that fed him. In a critical editorial headlined 'The Quack cure parasite', written in English Plaatje sharply criticised the same advertisers of patent medicines and cures that for long kept his enterprise afloat. He wrote that their literature was 'becoming a nuisance'. He stated:

Many useful newspaper articles remain unread, because recommendations of patent cures are couched in such alluring language that a reader is apt to mistake a news head for one of their puff and skip it. Some of their pretensions are palpably ridiculous, not to say vulgar, and a credulous Native who believes that everything printed is as good as the Bible, will be led to think that he need only get the right pill or powder, use from 5 to 15 boxes of it and the lost affections of his faithless spouse would be restored. (*Tsala*, 4 November 1911, p. 2)

Plaatje regretted that the 'native press' gave prominence, promiscuously and without discrimination, to these adverts without consideration of the potential harm to the ignorant 'native reader'. 'It is doubtful if the gentlemen at the helm of these organs are aware of the extent of the power for good or evil which they hold' (*Tsala*, 4 November 1911, p. 2). He wrote, questioning the moral choices that the editors of the early black press made. He called on the editors to be honest, citing a journal that had published articles denouncing the liquor trade but later accepted adverts for a bottle store promoting 'best brands of wines and spirits', contradicting its own editorials. If the same logic is applied to Plaatje's papers, then one can conclude that since *Tsala* ran advertisements of Flag Cigarettes, he did not have any issues with smoking.

Plaatje brought the quack medicines nuisance to a personal level, sharing that a merchant in England got hold of the address of his daughter, Olive. She received a packet in the post 'as one of the most representative women of your locality' telling her of the discovery of a new treatment to develop the bust in less than 30 days. Then Plaatje reveals that Olive is 'a little child of seven summers' and so considered the offer 'very interesting'. 'She naturally feels flattered at the idea that she is "one of the most representative women of the district of Kimberley"', and that she has a bust which needs developing', Plaatje retorted. He concluded by admitting that some genuine cures are serviceable in 'out of the way' districts where they may serve as temporary makeshifts in the absence of medical practitioners and chemists (*Tsala*, 4 November 1911, p. 2). He continued to accept Dr Williams' Pink Pills advertorials in *Tsala*.

But, it would seem that even with the torrent of advertisers competing for column space in *Tsala*, the newspaper still faced financial difficulties. The editor called for readers, especially women, to bring in more subscribers in order to stand a chance to win a prize of a 'silver ladies watch'. The winner would be adjudged by an independent and credible upstanding member of society, Rev. P.K. Motiyane of Beaconsfield, who would also count the monies received (*Tsala*, 1 June 1912, p. 2). It would seem this was a new tactic harnessing the power of persuasion of women in their circles of influence. However, it did not help *Tsala* much because the newspaper folded with the next issue.

Willan notes that the finances of *Tsala ea Becoana* were precarious. He mentions a letter, possibly from 1910, in which Plaatje complained that he had not been paid by the *Tsala* syndicate for three months (Willan, 2018, p. 225). Willan further states that Silas Molema was dragged into the debacle when Rev. J.D. Goronyane, part of the syndicate, wrote to him in

January 1911 urging him to collect outstanding monies he owed as an agent and ‘to forward it to him without delay’ so that they could pay the editor and composers. The letter included a dire warning that ‘any negligence on your part would mean the total ruins of *Tsala*’ (Willan, 2018, p. 226). To salvage the situation from his end, Plaatje asked for loans from Joshua and Silas Molema to keep *Tsala* afloat. At one point, Plaatje’s brother-in-law, Isaiah Bud-M’belle, even paid the rent for *Tsala*’s offices (Willan, 2018, p. 226).

Plaatje’s creditors in Mafeking were not letting up. Bud-M’belle settled at least one, but ‘many other debts remained unpaid’. Things got so bad for Plaatje that he could not even visit Mafikeng. Willan recounts an incident whereby Plaatje was invited by Chief Lekoko to discuss a land case, but a special arrangement would be made:

Lekoko suggested he got off the train at Madibe (fifteen miles from Mafikeng) where he could arrange for a cart ‘to bring you privately to the Stadt, in order that you may avoid to be seen by some of your white creditors, and others whom you care not to see. (Willan, 2018, p. 226)

In addition to evading creditors, Plaatje also lost a plot of land in the Stadt, as he had moved to Kimberley, including the house he had built, in which his brother and family lived. This, Willan points out, must have felt a ‘scant reward’ ‘for his services to the Barolong over the past decade’, adding that ‘this complicated his relationship with the Tshidi chiefdom’ (Willan, 2018, p. 227). To survive and to pay off his debts, Plaatje did extra work as an insurance agent selling policies and earning commission and as a contributor to the *Pretoria News* with the column ‘Through native eyes’, discussing contemporary political and social matters pertinent to Africans as well as his travels. He also wrote for the *African World*, a weekly based in London (Willan, 2018, p. 227).

Not only did Plaatje ‘work day and night just to have something at the end of every month to pay up these things’, as he told Silas Molema (Willan, 2018, p. 227), but his star rose as he became one of the acclaimed black journalists in South Africa. He came third in a writing competition at the end of 1910 for ‘educated natives’ sponsored by Mr C.F. Tainton, a member of the Native Labour Commission in 1903. The assignment was to write the best essay on the segregation of the black race. Plaatje’s entry was published in the Johannesburg Chronicle, where he argued that segregation was a desirable yet impracticable idea (Rhodesia Herald, 13 January 1911, p. 10). Willan indicates that for his efforts, Plaatje was awarded £1 10s ‘which can have done little to relieve his financial difficulties’ (Willan, 2018, p. 215). By the time the

SANNC was founded on 8 January 1912, he was prominent enough to be elected general secretary also given his work in the SANC.

In addition to being strapped for cash, having to travel for the SANNC work put a further burden on Plaatje's shoulders, and *Tsala ea Becoana* continued to bleed money. Its last issue was on 8 June 1912. While Willan mentions that what happened was unclear, he believes that it had to do with an accumulation of debt and a situation made more difficult by Plaatje's protracted travels to Cape Town, Johannesburg, and elsewhere (Willan, 2018, p. 240).

9.4 *The business of Tsala ea Becoana*

Looking at the business of running a Setswana newspaper during these years presents insights that are useful in understanding the trading conditions and challenges faced by the early black press in inculcating a reading culture in a new market. Following the business model of *Koranta ea Becoana*, which was essentially a mix of sales by agents and subscriptions, *Tsala ea Becoana* was no different. It became Plaatje's strategy to encourage the agents to not only sell as many copies as possible but, most importantly, to send back the money collected to the *Tsala* office. Under the headline 'Bathusi ba *Tsala*' (Helpers of *Tsala*), it was reported that J.H. Nyokong was the seller or salesman of the month of July 1910 by collecting £2 more than all the other agents. Plaatje's business approach is further observed in the same article where he explains that free copies of *Tsala* were distributed in different areas with the hope of generating interest and that those who did not respond would not receive further copies. Plaatje's one obsession was for this 'korantanyana ea Secoana' (small Setswana newspaper) to grow and be read in faraway places and farms of the Transvaal (*Tsala*, 27 August 1910, p. 3).

Plaatje recognised the midwifery role that he had to fulfil in order for *Tsala* to thrive. He likened the newspaper to a newborn that needed to suckle at its mother's breast and receive care and assistance. This baby needs 'mashi a lobese' (milk), which is *chelete* (money). Send money and grow the business by telling everyone about this Secoana paper, he pleaded. With the headline 'Tlhabang mokgosi' (Scream), printed in block letters, the idiomatic use of the Setswana expression tells of Plaatje's frustration and desperation to attract more readers and portraying his readers as responsible parents of the baby who would not let it die (*Tsala*, 30 July 1910, p. 3).

While there is not much known about the *Tsala ea Becoana* newsroom, *Tsala* provided a short yet telling description of life in the newsroom. The paper highlighted: '*Tsala* newsroom has no

printers, visitors found Mrs Plaatje and Mr Arthur Donald Matlala, unlike *Koranta* where there were machines' (*Tsala*, 6 August 1910, p. 3). This points to the hands-on nature of Elizabeth Plaatje's involvement in her husband's ventures and the support she rendered.

On one occasion a letter congratulating *Tsala ea Becoana* for its success and its potential to grow its white readership was printed. It suggested that the paper might have to print more English pages. It urged Batswana to read *Tsala* and spread the news so that it could receive more subscriptions (*Tsala*, 17 September 1910, p. 4). On the other hand, another letter welcomed the presence of *Tsala* but pointed out that it was 'not in the league of Molema's *Koranta*' (*Tsala*, 15 October 1910, p. 4). This was probably due to the size, which had shrunk from eight pages to four, and the style of writing, which compromised on original Setswana terms, instead using a hybrid that reflected English and Afrikaans influences.

A constant battle Plaatje faced was the money owed to his newspapers by the readers and agents. The amount owed in January 1911 was reported to total £121. As Israel Goronyane, the secretary of the *Tsala* syndicate, said in *Tsala*, the money would be collected by Mr W.Z. Fenyang because *Morulaganyi* (the editor) would not have time to follow up on the debts in all the different places. A plea was sent to all readers and agents to send their dues to Fenyang's address at Box 14, Thaba Ncho, at once before stricter recovery measures were instituted (*Tsala*, 28 January 1911, p. 2). This frustration is further chronicled in the same issue with the main story noting that *Tsala ea Becoana* was not printed by praises that were heaped on it, but rather that it needed money to sustain it. 'If you want *Tsala* to survive, send her food quickly'. A call was made to parents to send announcements of their newborns so that they appeared in the newspaper at a fee of 5s; the same applied to newlyweds too. The weary editor reminded the readers of the *raison d'être* of *Tsala ea Becoana*: 'What surprises us is that Becoana asked us to print *Tsala* so that it could fight their war against whites, now that it is here, they just sit next to it, and expect us to print it with the money from the same whites we are meant to fight'.

As discussed in earlier sections, the bulk of *Tsala* advertisements came from white businesses and traders, and clearly this was a concern and conflict that troubled Plaatje, who must have envisaged a newspaper fully funded by black businesses and printed by black hands. Alas, he had to rely on white money to keep the enterprise afloat. The news item ended with a request for legible writing that made sense, as much time was wasted on attempts to make sense of the letters received. 'The letters printed in *Koranta* are not a secret, what's stopping readers who can't write to ask a friend who can, to write for them' (*Tsala*, 28 January 1911, p. 3).

Moments of celebration when agents accomplished milestones and targets were relished. An article congratulated Mr Nyokong as the best-performing agent. This must have been used as inspiration to stimulate competition among agents so that more newspapers could be sold and more money could flood the coffers of *Tsala*. A reader had already complained that Mr Nyokong was the only one receiving praise, but the editor countered that while other agents dragged their feet, Mr Nyokong sent almost £100 a week, outselling them all. ‘Give Caesar what’s his and God what’s His’, it concluded (*Tsala*, 8 April 1911, p. 3).

The request to have agents send through money became a constant reminder in *Tsala ea Becoana*. ‘Agents are reminded that we do not run this paper for the benefit of our health’, cried the introduction of the story placed strategically under the masthead of *Tsala*. ‘It does not appear to be sound policy to receive money from customers and keep us waiting for months and months for it. Printers do not thrive on praises, they want hard cash, so please settle up’ (*Tsala*, 6 May 1911, p. 2).

The effects of non-payment of agents and readers became clear when the plans to increase the number of pages of *Tsala ea Becoana* to be the size of *Koranta* ‘that was much loved and that Batswana still longed for’ were scuppered because of the outstanding £90. ‘Help us men, you are delaying us and inconveniencing others who have already paid’, *Tsala* wrote (*Tsala*, 13 May 1911, p. 4; *Tsala*, 3 June 1911, p. 4).

The increase in *Tsala* eventually materialised, but it was in columns, not pages. The editor called on Batswana to bring in more readers because this increase required more manpower and money. ‘If you don’t support it, it will collapse’, he pleaded (*Tsala*, 8 July 1911, p. 4). However *Tsala* did succeed in attracting the attention of non-Setswana readers with a report claiming that the white *baas* would pay a subscription so that Klaas could read *Tsala* and translate it, sharing interesting things the editor said (*Tsala*, 15 July 1911, p. 2).

The unpaid £90 debt that had been running for months reached levels of desperation that threatened Plaatje to leave the newspaper and find other employment, according to a letter from J.M. Molebaloa of Ndabeni, Cape Town. Molebaloa, originally from Mafikeng settled in Cape Town in 1903 and reported that his life in the mother city included performing at fundraising concerts, and he thought it was prudent that the same tactic could be used to rescue *Tsala ea Becoana* from the doldrums. His proposal, detailed under the idiomatic headline ‘Sechoaroa ke Nca-pedi ga se thata’ (That which is seized by two dogs is never too strong or Many hands make light work (Plaatje, 1916, p. 86)) was that the agents and readers organise concerts and

tea meetings; collect money from ‘our people who do not read *Tsala*’; and that the secretary of *Tsala* design forms so that readers can approach the wealthy for donations that would be recorded on the paper and sent back to the secretary along with the money raised after three months. Molebaloa begged the readers to aim for the end of September 1911 for the fundraising efforts to bear fruit (*Tsala*, 15 July 1911, p. 3).

The editor responded to Molebaloa’s letter by saying that his call would be heeded by some, and others would ignore him. He recalled how *Koranta* was ‘trapped in the mud’ in Mafikeng, and Batswana of Chief Molema deserted him like the saying: ‘Nonyane tsa “r-r-ru”, batho; eare tlhaka lo shela di rure di ee mo go lole’ (People are like birds of the air; when the bulrush burns they usually flee and make for another one) (Plaatje, 1916, p. 76). ‘And now the [Barolong of] Seleka have attempted to help and are looked on as if they are dancing’, he wrote. Although despondent, Plaatje held out hope that Batswana would contribute to making Molebaloa’s plan succeed because ‘kgetsi ea tsie, e kgonoa ka go tshwaraganelwa’ (It is best to handle a bag full of locust with many hands or Many hands make light work) (Plaatje, 1916, p. 46). He mentioned that other newspapers, such as *APO*, also survived through raising funds by hosting concerts. However, the newspaper of Batswana was supported by white businesses and not the people it was meant for. ‘If whites abandoned it, it would shut down on the same day’, he bemoaned (*Tsala*, 15 July 1911, p. 3).

This sentiment appears again on the occasion to celebrate 16 months of *Tsala ea Becoana* in August 1911. An editorial told the readers that if it had not been for the support of whites, ‘we could have closed the windows by the beginning of 1911’. *Tsala* asked if it was hard for Batswana to ask a friend to subscribe and increase the number of readers. ‘We receive a heap of letters, some of them illegible and they keep saying God will help. The contents of this heap of letters are denied by the German proverb that says: “Tsaea’ a le mongoe, o gaisa bo ‘Modimo o tla thusa’ ba le shome” (One ‘take here’ is better than ten ‘God will help’)’. The editorial urged readers to send money to Mr Fenyang along with letters full of praises. It also drew a comparison between Jabavu’s King William’s Town and the home of *Imvo*, where *Tsala* was printed. It said Batswana would be so embarrassed to see how the Xhosa pay for their newspaper. ‘Postal orders fill the office of *Imvo* like floods of rain... their newspaper stand on their support... white support provides a little boost’. He concluded with a despairing plea:

No, my people of Batswana, let it not be that way. You know they say ‘goora motho go thebe phachoa’ [A man’s home has a white and black (fine) shield or There is no place

like home (Plaatje, 1916, p. 41)]. Are we going to be beaten by these nations we call Maganatshega, Makhonkhobe le Makgari [derogatory terms]. We are trying as best as we can this side, if it all falls apart, it will be because you did not play your part. May everyone send us new names, even one would have been a victory (*Tsala*, 30 August 1911, p. 3).

Another strategy employed by the *Tsala* syndicate was to occupy space in the column Re Batliseng (Help us Find), which was designed to help readers locate their lost relatives. Secretary Mr W.Z. Fenyang who likely replaced Goronyane in a shift in committee roles, placed a call to help find 1 000 new subscribers for *Tsala ea Becoana*. He appealed to readers to interest young men and women in receiving *Tsala* and reading it. He shared his address as well as the yearly, six-monthly, and quarterly payment plans (*Tsala*, 12 August 1911, p. 3).

Recognising that advertising was the lifeblood of *Tsala ea Becoana*, the editor encouraged the readers to patronise the businesses that advertised in *Tsala*. He also advised them to always inform the traders that they saw their business in the newspaper. The editor called on the readers to do this because the advertisers supported the cause of Batswana and not other businesses that were ‘after the money of Batswana but not supporting their efforts’. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the call for support included *Imvo Zabantsundu*, whose editor was a director of *Tsala ea Becoana* and evidently shared adverts as seen in the Woods Peppermint Cure that was run in *Tsala* in isiXhosa on the same page (*Tsala*, 5 August 1911, p. 3).

There were constant weekly reminders to the readers and agents to pay up, as *Tsala* workers needed to be remunerated and debts settled. In one call, they were likened to snakes that lived off the soil (*Tsala*, 12 August 1911, p. 3). A concerning notice was shared that ‘Our agents throughout the country cannot do better than remit all outstandings [money] and enlist more subscribers and advertisers to meet the expenses of the enlarged paper’ (*Tsala*, 2 September 1911, p. 2). Furthermore, a desperate one-liner plea was also made: ‘Please reader, we do not mean to bother you, but the printers want money’ (*Tsala* 23 September 1911, p. 3).

The columns announcing births (Matsalo), deaths (Dincho), and marriages (Dikemo/Manyalo) sustained the early black press, but somehow the readers of *Tsala ea Becoana* had stopped booking these spaces. The weakening of this income stream worried a writer identified as Makamakamake, so much so that in an editorial, they pointed out that other nations asked if Batswana did not die or get married, since the announcements had dried up. They posited that

in the isiXhosa newspapers, these announcements dominated long reams of columns, and that is how they made money (*Tsala*, 23 December 1911, p. 2).

Always chasing up payments and reminding readers and agents of the importance of sending money, in the last issue of February, *Tsala ea Becoana* sent out a prompt to renew subscriptions for 1912 and called on them to advertise *Tsala* to their kin so that the paper could grow readership and all Batswana could help ‘carry this heavy burden’ (*Tsala*, 24 February 1912, p. 2).

In an advert for itself, *Tsala ea Becoana* asserted that ‘Mafoko ga timanoe, go timanoa dijo’ (News is to be shared, unlike food that is not to be shared). It profiled itself as an impartial and brave paper that carried the news Batswana would like to read, especially on education and government. It further indicated that it was read widely, locally and overseas. ‘It’s the one Union government uses to inform Becoana about the laws’ and ‘It has a team of nimble-fingered correspondents’ (*Tsala*, 23 March 1912, p. 2).

Things did not improve for *Tsala ea Becoana*, as agents continued to flout the agreement to send money on time. An editorial expressed disappointment at their conduct for the few days the editor was away from Kimberley. ‘The whites will shut it down if there is no money to pay for printing. Please pay up’, it warned. There were reported incidents of readers being scammed of their money. Some of them paid their yearly subscription of £15 were presented with receipts as proof of payment and still did not receive their copies because the money was never sent to the *Tsala* office. ‘We are unable to list the offending men because our newspaper is read by police, but when they arrest us we will reveal their names, we won’t be quiet even if they get arrested with us, but we remind our friends that we will not release our papers when money has been taken away by other people’, *Tsala* warned. To evade scammers, *Tsala ea Becoana* warned readers to rather receive their copies from the post and to act swiftly against agents that scam them. An example was given of how Rev. J.T. Gabashane dealt with a thief who was stealing his newspapers in Christiana. Even in the gloomy outlook, praise was reserved for trustworthy agents who sent through the monies to the office, chief of whom was Mr B. Maleka of Kimberley, a rising star who began selling six newspapers a week and had reached a milestone of 40, with the willpower to increase it even further. In second place was Rev. Molema Moshoele of Matloasane, and thirdly, Mr Thomas Maseng of GooRatshidi. ‘Had it not been for these heroes, our situation would have been worse’, *Tsala* revealed (*Tsala*, 6 April 1912, p. 2).

Another editorial in May expressed appreciation to the agents who were faithful and keeping *Tsala ea Becoana* in business and scorn for those who took the money of readers and ‘bought tobacco’ instead of sending it to the office. It was a desperate cry, as the newspaper was running out of options and faced closure due to unpaid debts. ‘Rona koano re golegoa ke makgoa’ (Us here we are getting arrested by whites), it lamented. It put the blame squarely on readers who received their copies through the post, too, not just agents dragging their feet in sending money. An attempt to stimulate interest in subscriptions and attract female readers was made with an offer of a silver ladies’ watch for any woman who would bring a list of new readers and their money (*Tsala*, 11 May 1912, p. 2).

As if foretelling its fate, *Tsala* ran an article about the closure of a newspaper in England called the *Evening Times*. It shared that the newspaper was tanked by a debt of £80 000 even though it had over one million readers. *Tsala ea Becoana* sounded warning bells to its readers, asking ‘fa go riana mo tlharing se se metse go tla reng ka se se omileng’ (When it is this bad for a well-watered tree, what about the dry one). This idiom indicated that *Tsala* was worse off than the *Evening Times*, and this could easily be their destiny (*Tsala*, 18 May 1912, p. 3)

Under the column of Personalia, *Tsala* reported that Plaatje had left Kimberley for Johannesburg to attend an executive meeting of the SANNC. He had been in Cape Town, where he addressed meetings of blacks in Cape Town from Sea Point to Simons Town, under the auspices of the Cape Peninsula Native Association, speaking about the SANNC. He had a full itinerary which took him away from the *Tsala* office and once back in Kimberley, as was noted that after his Cape Town trip, he addressed three public meetings – in the Commemoration Hall on Friday; at Greenpoint on Monday; and in the Basuto Burial Society Hall in Number 4 Location on Wednesday evening. It was expected that on his return from Johannesburg, he would address the coloured citizens at St John’s Hall on the invitation of the APO, Kimberley branch (*Tsala*, 1 June 1912, p. 2).

An editor who was becoming a star speaker in his capacity as the secretary of the SANNC heaped a lot more on Plaatje, who already was dealing with a newspaper operation that faced closure. Indeed, all efforts to make the newspaper appealing to readers – by printing it on Linotype (‘the only Blackman’s paper’ to do so), issuing pleas to agents and readers to settle outstanding debts, and employing gentle persuasion and diplomacy – culminated only in the collapse of *Tsala ea Becoana*, with the final issue published on 8 June 1912. There is no record

to suggest that the fundraising suggestion for *Tsala*, as tabled by J.M. Molebaloa on 15 July 1911, ever materialised, and the winner of the ladies' watch was not announced.

9.5 Discussion

Tsala ea Becoana locates Plaatje's journalism at several crossroads when one looks at the historical trajectory of South Africa. Most importantly, it was a period of progress for Batswana as they found their voice among the black nations of the country. They not only saw *Tsala* as a vehicle for expressing their needs and preferences, but also as a tool they used to carve out an identity for themselves. It was in how their language would be represented textually and the issues that mattered most to them such as segregation, tax and treatment in trains, that reflected in the paper. The years 1910 to 1912 were a hive of activity politically, starting with the inauguration of the Union; the interracial calamity brought about by the sexual assault of women that became known as the black peril and its reverse, the white peril; and the launch of the South African Native National Congress marked the three years. It was at these crossroads that Batswana assembled in *Tsala* to seek direction and a common position that emanated from their observations and perspective on the world.

A scan of the advertisers that occupied prime real estate in *Tsala* tells an interesting story of black sociability. A number of them marketed their guest houses and lodges, indicating a vibrant culture of travelling, as espoused by Jacob Dlamini in his book *Safari Nation*. Dlamini's point of departure is that holidaying and travelling have always been part of black culture. The *Tsala* advertisers not only sell lodging but with it comes foods and drinks as ancillary offers in the travel and tourism sector.

Black advertisers, however small they may be, further entrench the arguments made by authors such as Phakamisa Ndzimela that an emergent business community existed as early as the turn of the 20th century. The businesses of the likes of T.M. Mapikela, who ran a carpentry and architecture/building business; the butcher Mongane Ramagaga; and Mrs E. Oliphant and Mrs Maria Smouse, who ran guesthouses in Kroonstad and Bloemfontein, respectively, stand as testament that black entrepreneurs also claimed a stake in the economy of the country, even when the odds were stacked against them by an oppressive colonial government.

Some of the advertisers delivered niche and tailored messages that fostered affinity among Batswana, mentioning special offers for them or calling on customers to patronise their businesses because they are best positioned to respond to their needs. A few of them were white-owned businesses, but in their pursuit of the black pound, they recognised that an emotional buy-in was necessary, and so they formulated strategies that would win them patronage.

In the analysis of the roots of black consumerism, what emerges is the overwhelming number of outfitters who sold clothes and fancy wear to the emerging black middle class. Stores peddled Western fashion and items that would make them look modern, enabling them to function in a society that was fast discarding traditional clothes in favour of blouses, petticoats, suits, and hats.

These garments, as Hlonipha Mokoena argues, became the most visible marker of transitions and transformations taking shape in African society. She states that before the missionaries, it was enslavement and colonialism that shaped the dress code, comportment, and aspirations of the enslaved and the colonised indigenous Africans (Mokoena, 2020, p. 461). Additionally, style and dress are political and proclaim one's rights as 'political pamphlets and soapbox speeches.' The consumption of clothing, Mokoena holds, expressed a 'new kind of manhood which was tied to conversion to Christianity' and asserted a new dignity and 'rebelliousness' that emerged with the availability of European clothing. For both women and men clothing would be a statement of success they were denied by the colonial culture (Mokoena, 2020, pp. 462–463).

A notable trend to observe is the rise of local brands. Take, for instance, the Union Soap advert that informed readers that the soap was manufactured in the Union and not imported from elsewhere. This is also seen in how Colonial Seed Supply (SA) and The Colonial Banking & Trust Co. of Africa Ltd positioned themselves as businesses that were rooted locally. The latter was owned by I.W. Schlesinger, an American businessman who was based in Johannesburg and became a maverick filmmaker (Botha, 2025, p. 47, 71). A national pride sensibility is instilled in consumers who might otherwise have been accustomed to items being imported from Europe and the Americas. Banking and markets also carry a tenor that seems to inform the reader that they are understood and catered for by a business that understands them better.

The presence of advertisements from institutions of learning such as Kilnerton, Lovedale, Tigerkloof, and Bensonvale is an indication of how seriously the *Tsala* readers took education. As they occupied their position in the fast-changing society, blacks recognised the need to be armed with knowledge, and these institutions met their target market in the black press to facilitate a higher intake of potential learners. Competitions based on translations and comprehension of English in the form of essays also heightened the importance of education.

Plaatje was known to be an active campaigner against alcohol, but when it comes to smoking, evidence suggests that he might have not only tolerated it but was a smoker himself. During a

short stopover on the Spanish island of Tenerife when he was on the way to England, Plaatje wrote with a great level of detail and knowledge as he compared different brands of cigarettes sold in South Africa to what he called the Spanish ‘weed’ (*Tsala ea Batho*, 11 July 1914, p. 2). It might therefore have been easy for him to accept an advert of this kind in his newspaper, as he may not have deemed it a disruptive vice holding his people back, like he thought of alcohol, besides smoking had not acquired any sort of stigma by then.

It is important to acknowledge the double role advertisers play in *Tsala*. While they breed a certain kind of reader, a conscious reader and consumer who is aware of the shifts under the Union, these advertisers also impacted the reading experience. Advertisers such as Aberdein & Butt, Zittel & Co., and Nectar Tea experimented with layout and design, use of images, fonts and sizes, and many other elements that elevated the newspaper offering. In the end, the editorial itself made efforts to meet them halfway and introduce storytelling aids that enhanced the overall look and feel of the paper.

Tsala followed in the footsteps of *Koranta*, which folded in 1909 after years of struggling. In one swoop, Plaatje seems to have lost the support and confidence of advertisers from Mafeking, where he ran *Koranta* for almost 10 years. The advertisers that filled *Tsala* were mostly based in Kimberley’s Dutoitspan Road and Beaconsfield; Bloemfontein’s Waaihoek; and Thaba Ncho, with a few in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Was it merely that Mafeking was still recovering from the post-war depression and businesses were struggling, or the relationships had been so severely damaged by debt that Plaatje and Molema incurred while they attempted to resuscitate *Koranta*? Another point to consider is that Mafeking businesses would also be more likely to support a Mafeking paper than one based in Kimberley. Perhaps it had to do with the persuasive work of the Thaba Ncho-based *Tsala* syndicate who funded the newspaper. What is certain is that *Tsala* attracted a large number of new advertisers who were largely absent from its predecessor.

Even with this injected vigour in Plaatje’s newspaper business from the commercial side, *Tsala* still did not make enough money to sustain itself beyond 1912. It was brought to its knees by June 1912 due to the financial woes that had plagued Plaatje during the days of *Koranta*. Not enough revenue was generated from advertising, subscriptions, and sales from agents; this is the common thread in all of the newspapers Plaatje edited. Also to be taken into consideration is that the readership was not that large, given that literacy levels were still low and the dispersal

of the Setswana readers was too wide, spanning thousands of kilometres of travel for copies to reach patrons.

10. Model of *Tsala ea Batho*

10.1 Background and context

Tsala ea Batho (The People's Friend) was established in mid-September 1912, three months after the collapse of *Tsala ea Becoana*.

The reasons for Plaatje's sudden change of fortunes and recovery to be back in business are unclear, but what Willan notes is that he secured financial backing and bought printing presses 'at a knock-down price' following the bankruptcy of *Motsualle oa Babatso*, a newspaper based in Johannesburg. He was also supported by Elka Cele, 'a well-known Zulu spokesman' who lived in Johannesburg helping to raise the £200 needed (Willan, 2018, pp. 240–241). The irony perhaps is that *Motsualle oa Babatso* translates into A Friend of the Blacks, so the amalgamation with *Tsala ea Batho* (The People's Friend) was the coming together of friends who had fallen on hard times and were leaning on each other to get back in business.

It pained Plaatje that Batswana failed to raise their own money for their paper and that he had to rely on inter-tribal cooperation, as Willan put it, to make it a reality. Plaatje wrote a letter to Silas Molema to express his disappointment that Batswana could not even fund the transportation of the presses from Johannesburg to Kimberley (2018, p. 241). In the letter, he outlined that *Tsala ea Batho* would be printed in Serolong, Sepedi, and English to solidify the union between Barolong and Bapedi, and that this would be marked by a series of concerts in Krugersdorp, Nancefield, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Klerksdorp, and Kimberley. The objective of the concerts was '(1) to find money as a working capital [to pay for] workers for a start and (2) to impress upon the people in these concerts to support the combined paper' (Willan & Mokae, 2020, p. 62). He concluded the letter with an appeal:

My request to you is that you ask the chief that while these concerts are organised the Barolong should not be left behind. That is why I suggested to them that they should do something for themselves because it is said that God helps those who help themselves. Please help me by encouraging the chief to do something even if it is a

smaller concert so that it will be read that Mafikeng also took part. It must not appear as if the chief of Barolong does not like unity like Chief Malunga [of the Swazi]. (Willan & Mokae, 2020, p. 62)

Willan underscores this sentiment by pointing out that in Plaatje's mind, there was a 'powerful sense that the Batswana needed to at least hold their own among other African peoples in South Africa, and that he had a special obligation to help them do so'. Plaatje wished for Batswana to have a say in how the newspaper would be run, and they could not do so if they did not contribute (Willan, 2018, p. 241).

It was under these unusual circumstances that *Tsala ea Batho* came to into existence in 1912. There is a seven-month-long gap in the Readex/NewsBank archive because the first issue of *Tsala ea Batho* found is dated 19 April 1913, which is 10 months since *Tsala ea Becoana* was last published. Willan notes that there was a lack of capital, and *Tsala ea Batho* appeared regularly (Willan, 2018, p. 242). Evidence exists of the traces of the paper that were published in other newspapers. Ilanga lase Natal printed a short note headlined 'A Fine Picture' in which it praised the issue of *Tsala* numbered 94, for publishing a photograph of 11 Batswana chiefs of the Transvaal. It wrote: 'They are evidently a worthy group of men with abundant ability. The thanks of all interested is due to Mr. S. T. Plaatye [sic] the Editor. As we look at the picture we conclude that it is well worth framing, not only for its present worth, but for that increased value that historical years will give it' (Ilanga, 11 October 1912, p. 4). It wasn't until April 1913 that its frequency stabilised.

Its masthead carried the name *Tsala ea Batho* and its English translation, *The People's Friend*. Underneath were the words 'With which are incorporated: *Tsala ea Becoana*, Kimberley and *Motsualla oa Babatso*, Johannesburg' which indicated the trans-provincial integration of the two erstwhile newspapers from the Cape and Transvaal. The masthead was also supported by the slogan 'Jaka metse a tsilili mo moyeng o nyorilweng, mafoko a a monate a fatshe ye le kgakala a ntse fela jalo' ('As cold water is to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country'), a reminder to the audience of the important role the newspaper played in informing and enlightening the people on matters pertinent to them and their existence.

The newspaper published in Kimberley was under the proprietorship of the *Tsala* syndicate. It is not clear why Plaatje chose to keep the name unchanged, but the wealthy Barolong of Thaba Ncho were no longer in the picture. It was first printed at Newton Printing Works, corner of Shannon Street and Selby Street, Kimberley (*Tsala*, 19 April 1913, p. 4) and later moved to

Tsala syndicate at their Printing Works, corner of Selby Street and Bret Street, Kimberley, as seen in the issue of 20 June 1914 (*Tsala*, 20 June 1914, p. 6). With pages ranging between four and eight, *Tsala ea Batho* was published weekly, on Saturdays, and cost 3d (approximately 74 cents in 2017) a copy or 15s (approximately £44,24 in 2017) for a year-long subscription.

The readership of *Tsala ea Batho* was primarily Setswana-speaking, with English as a secondary language. However, the introduction of isiXhosa marked a turning point, indicating a significant shift in how Plaatje envisioned the public and community he addressed. *Tsala ea Batho* sold up to 4 000 copies by 1913 and 1914 (Limb, 2012, pp. 26–27; Willan, 2018, p. 254). One of its popular catchphrases was ‘Tladi e iteile’ (Lightning has struck) when it documented the stories of the Natives Land Act of 1913 and what this meant for its readers who would, colloquially speaking, feel the wrath of the destruction of the lightning.

10.2 Model of journalism: *Tsala ea Batho* (1912 to 1915)

It would seem that Plaatje understood the urgency of the time. The demise of *Tsala ea Becoana* came a few months after the establishment of the SANNC. Tempers were high as anticipation built up on what the next chess move the colonial government would make. It was clear that segregation was the way, but how disastrously the Squatters Bill would evolve and result in the Natives Land Act could not have been predicted. Plaatje could not afford to be out of print and circulation at such a critical time as a documenter of history and a watchdog on behalf of his people. Time was of the essence, and he had to act fast. *Tsala ea Batho*, birthed three months after *Tsala ea Becoana* closed, would fulfil this role well.

Tsala ea Batho marked a significant departure from the newspapers that Plaatje had edited since 1901, primarily because it introduced isiXhosa as part of its core offering, which had started in *Tsala ea Becoana* at a minimal rate, as explained in the past section. The language belongs to the Nguni group, and unlike Sepedi and Sesotho of the Sotho group, it is far removed from Setswana, the language of his people. In his explanation, Brian Willan wrote that the inclusion of isiXhosa in April 1913 meant *Tsala ea Batho* positioned itself as an ‘alternative’ to *Imvo Zabantsundu* of John Tengo Jabavu. ‘It appealed particularly to the large Xhosa-speaking diaspora outside the eastern Cape, not least in Kimberley’ (Willan, 2018, p. 255).

Tsala ea Batho was a partisan newspaper, a mouthpiece of the South African Native National Congress, edited by no less than the Corresponding Secretary of the Congress. While it remained moderate in the main, its editorial policy was geared towards protest, with a

confrontational stance occasionally emerging. This was evident in the tone of the editorials, the agenda-setting approach based on story selection, the publication of politically explosive and fiery speeches, and elements that indicated radical protest. The protest was geared towards the two most burning issues of the day: the Natives Land Act of 1913 and the Women's Pass Laws in the Orange Free State.

Some of the staff members of *Tsala ea Batho* were Arthur Matlala, responsible for typesetting; James Dippa, a Lovedale-educated teacher from the eastern Cape; and Eva Mahuma (Morake), a Lovedale graduate and the first black South African woman to receive a Master of Arts degree. She earned it from Columbia University in 1932 after which she was appointed principal at Wilberforce Institute of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1934 (Kumalo, 2022, p. 114; Willan, 2018, p. 254). In an editorial published in *Tsala*, Mahuma was described by her pet name MaDiipone (the one who loves or owns mirrors). 'Coming from the Boers of Victoria West, having taught in De Aar, we will see where those visiting Lovedale will be accommodated now that she is joining Mr Arthur Matlhala in *Tsala*', it said (*Tsala*, 23 December 1911, p. 2).

The front page of the 19 April 1913 issue teemed with advertising from long-time advertisers Aberdein & Butt and Chudleigh Bros, both stationed at Maitland Street, Bloemfontein, selling women's fashion and underwear, shoes and hats, shirts, wedding outfits, mattresses, beds, and blankets. The advertisements are accompanied by a visual feast of no less than six illustrations and decorations that lend an air of dynamism and a modern feel that distinguished the newspaper from its predecessors. Plaatje noted that *Tsala ea Batho* survived on the 'liberality' of white advertisers and not so much on subscription money from the peasants of the Orange Free State and Transvaal (*Tsala*, 3 January 1914, p. 4). More on advertising will be discussed in later sections.

On page three, the newspaper ran a photograph of Paramount Chief Griffiths Lerotholi of Lesotho 'by kind permission of the *Cape Times*'. The image was not accompanied by a story but had a caption that read 'Morena Griffith a Lerotholi. Kgosi e kgolo ea Boshoto. Inkosi enkulu yase Lusutu (The paramount chief of Lesotho). From a photo by Father Hentrich of Leribe Camp, Basutoland'. This heralded a new direction for the form of the newspaper as a visual medium, not only fuelled by advertising, but editorial content as well (*Tsala*, 19 April 1913, p. 3).

The new name and identity of the newspaper pointed to Plaatje's abandonment of the Setswana agenda and prioritising their issues over a wider African sensibility, opting instead for unity inspired by the generosity of non-Tswana well-wishers when he acquired the presses of *Mo tsualle*. This manifests in the introduction of isiXhosa columns and advertising in the paper, a deliberate move to bring the 'Xhosa-speaking diaspora' (Willan, 2018, p. 255) of the Cape Colony and Transvaal into the fold. In fact, in an internal advert, *Tsala ea Batho* positioned itself as 'The Great Bi-lingual Native Organ. Sechuana and Sixhosa'. It also reminded the readers of the high profile of its editor with the line: 'Edited by the Corresponding Secretary, South African Native National Congress' without mentioning Plaatje's name. It further stated that *Tsala ea Batho* was 'published simultaneously every Saturday morning at Kimberley, Potchefstroom, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Bloemfontein and Thaba Nchu'. It is worth noting that Mafikeng, which had been the centre of the Plaatje universe, had fallen off the list for unclear reasons. It may be speculated that this was due to the tensions arising from unpaid debts and conflicts with the Tshidi-Rolong chieftaincy. It also called itself a 'Native "Government Gazette" for the Union of South Africa'. The paper gave the promise to 'increase your Native Trade' by advertising in *Tsala ea Batho*. The advertisement was also translated into isiXhosa, adding the line 'it (*Tsala ea Batho*) gives all the news without fear' (*Tsala*, 26 April 1913, p. 4).

The paper introduced a new font and new masthead but kept the Bible verse on the front page: 'Yaka metsi a tsilili mo moyeng o nyorilweng, mafoko a a monate a fatshe ye le kgakala a ntse fela jalo' ('As cold water is to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country'). The second Bible verse and masthead were dropped, probably because *Tsala ea Batho* was a continuation of *Tsala ea Becoana*. *Tsala ea Batho* soon became an influential paper that broke stories and carried editorials which conveyed a strong sense of radical protest; it harked back to the days of *Koranta* when the paper spoke truth to power with no fear.

The attacks on the Natives Land Act and the reports of the speeches and letters by Dr Abdullah Abdurahman of the APO and John L. Dube, president of the SANNC, were vociferous and explosive, testament to Plaatje's fearlessness. Plaatje's privileged position as part of the SANNC deputation to England in 1914 allowed him to report on the preparations, the journey, arrival, and consultations held, giving his readers a first-hand account and ring-side view of the developments.

Tsala ea Batho was probably the only black press newspaper to have a war correspondent stationed in Europe, sending dispatches, 'live' updates, and long-form journalism of World War I written in an African language for an African audience. This was Plaatje himself, who visited England as part of the SANNC deputation to appeal for royal intervention against the Natives Land Act on the eve of the War breaking out. Not one to fold his arms and be a spectator of one of the biggest historical events in the world, Plaatje got down to business as he harvested fresh content from English papers and other sources, packaged them for his readers in South Africa to keep them abreast of the global developments that threatened their stability, safety, and future.

Along with the rising profile of *Tsala ea Batho* was Plaatje's reputation as 'probably the most widely read black journalist of his day' (Willan, 2018, p. 255). He either published articles and wrote letters to the editor or had his writings in *Tsala ea Batho* reproduced in the *Pretoria News*, *Cape Argus*, *DFA*, and others, thereby enhancing his status as an editor of a respected newspaper and a thought and opinion leader read by white audiences as well.

A new editorial direction was adopted as early as February 1914, when the editorial included Eurocentric content. In the issue of 7 February 1914, a short story titled *Nurse Sorrell's Patient* by Paul Urquhart was placed on the front page. Urquhart was a pseudonym used by Ladbroke Lionel Day Black, who was an English journalist and author. He wrote in different genres, such as mystery, fantasy, and science fiction (Bear Alley, online).

Nurse Sorrell's Patient was published in 1913 and was about one Peter Laurence, also known as Peterkins, who suffered a haemorrhage that could not be stopped and was looked after by his father, Dr Laurence, who, Nurse Sorrell discovers, is actually a stepfather in a relationship with a beautiful woman named Sybil. Laurence would inherit a fortune if the child died (*Tsala*, 7 February 1914, p. 1). The short story continued in the edition of 14 March 1914. In it, Nurse Sorrell witnesses Laurence throwing out the window the medicine and beef tea for the sick boy, replacing it with water and milk and in the night, snuck in to give the boy a drug to increase his haemorrhage. The boy was eventually moved, and it was suspected that Laurence wanted the boy dead so that he could afford to marry the extravagant Lady Sybil with the payout (*Tsala*, 14 March 1914, p. 8).

It would seem that the short story served as a parable and a social commentary on how Africans were treated under colonial rule. In a society so accustomed to idioms and metaphors drawn from the Bible and African folklore, the sick boy could depict the oppressed black population

and the betrayal that they experienced after being loyal to the Crown during the South African War. The fact that Laurence failed to marry Lady Sybil after the scheme to kill the boy was exposed may be interpreted to mean that the evil ways concocted by the State would be laid bare, and the Africans would be saved from doom.

Tsala ea Batho also featured folktales and educational pieces about butterflies, dragons, and unicorns – tales that were foreign to its established African audience but perhaps in line with how they imagined themselves as an educated class of British subjects (*Tsala*, 18 April 1914, p. 8). Some more content seemed to be geared towards young readers, homemakers, general knowledge enthusiasts, and history boffins with the crossword puzzles and conundrums that were clearly reproduced from other sources. It is possible that these may have been found in the newspapers Plaatje encountered in London, and he may have shipped the clippings and directed the staff to replicate them.

From November 1914, isiXhosa became minimal to almost extinct in *Tsala ea Batho*, only to return marginally in 1915. This may be linked to the fact that Plaatje was overseas and had no time to translate copy from Setswana or English to isiXhosa, or maybe the interest from isiXhosa readers waned.

It has been widely reported that *Tsala ea Batho* was published in Sepedi, as indeed stated in Plaatje's letter to Silas Molema dated 14 August 1912 where he mentioned that 'On Monday we will start printing a newspaper in Serolong, Sepedi and English called *Tsala ea Batho*' (Plaatje, 2020, p. 62); however, no evidence of this was found in the newspapers studied.

10.2.1 Columns of *Tsala ea Batho*

Most of the columns from *Tsala ea Becoana* namely, Mafokonyana, Sub Rosa, Personalia, On Dit and Maitisho were retained. Tsa Bakoaledi lacked the vigour of *Tsala ea Becoana* and *Koranta* before that. Letters were sparse with no robust or vibrant debates.

Maronopo a Thaba Ncho fell away and the new addition was Mashejashejane which showcased Setswana prose and poetic language dominated by idioms, metaphors, onomatopoeia, and other figures of speech.

The announcements of births, deaths, and weddings were almost non-existent.

10.3 *The commercial*

‘Advertising is to business what steam is to machinery – the grand propelling power’. – Macauley (*Tsala*, 17 July 1915, p. 4).

The quote above shared in *Tsala* indicates a recognition of advertising as a critical element in business, both for advertisers of the newspaper and for the benefit of its existence. It was a clarion call to businesses to invest in advertising, not only to sell their products to a black middle class, but also to sustain a newspaper that served as a conduit between the merchant and the consumer.

Tsala ea Batho was firmly entrenched in visual representation, largely through the courtesy of advertisers such as Aberdein & Butt of Maitland Street, Bloemfontein, whose serialised promotion of Go Botlhe Ba Ba Eang Go Nyala (To all those who are going to get married) featured six images portraying two white women, an umbrella, cloths, as well as decorations on the front page selling their wares. The advert by Chudleigh Bros., their competitors down the road located at Lower Maitland Street, Bloemfontein, also erupts with imagery depicting a white young man taking off his cap in colonial-style trousers and jacket, a white soldier or policeman startled by what looked like a dragon, and a bed and some decorations, as they advertised their clothes and furniture. To stand out, this advert took on a different font to the usual and made use of copy explaining what they have to offer and what made them the biggest store in Mangaung (Bloemfontein), as well as including images (*Tsala*, 19 April 1913, p. 1). I. Mendelsohn & Co. shared an image of a white bridal couple along with five more images of rings and gems to promote their jewellery business. Weddings seemed to be big business and a selling point in the second decade of the 20th century (*Tsala*, 19 April 1913, p. 4).

Dr William’s Pills continued with the higher-minded solicitation offering health education and background on diseases employing the tactic of testimonials, such as Mr Petros Nkebe of George Town on the root of Rheumatism. On the same page, another cure, Bile Beans cure for stomach and liver, shared the testimony of Mr GS Maritz, Geluuskraal, Odendaalsrust, OFS (*Tsala*, 26 April 1913, p. 7; *Tsala*, 18 October 1913, p. 4).

Peps cough mixture updated their adverts with an image of a white boy, seemingly blocking his mouth as he coughed, on a shaded background. This was the first of its kind, and it enhanced the layout and design of *Tsala* pages that were already being populated with images, varying serif fonts, and text sizes that contributed to the sophistication of the paper (*Tsala*, 14 June

1913, p. 5). In a later iteration, the advert displayed a diagram of the mouth and throat with labels inspired by a biology textbook to explain how Peps cough mixture worked to soothe a cough, sore throat, and fever – a new miraculous discovery in medicine, it claimed (*Tsala*, 19 July 1913, p. 3). A few months later, Peps showed an advert aimed at children with chest troubles; an image of two white babies resting on pillows was accompanied by text explaining the usefulness of the remedy against winter chest perils to mothers (*Tsala*, 16 August 1913, p. 4).

On the back page, the adverts experimented with a variety of serif fonts, decorations, and punctuation – especially the exclamation mark – that made the page attractive. The repeated use of rousing words and expressions that call to action, such as Batlang! (Look for) and Itumeleng! (Be joyous) became a common occurrence.

Mines remained the biggest recruiter and employer as seen in the advert by the Premier (Transvaal) Diamond Mining Co. Ltd calling for labourers in Lobatsi, Bechuanaland Protectorate, to approach agent A.J. Fleischer, promising a fortnightly pay cycle at a mine that used foot pathways and not underground holes (*Tsala*, 19 April 1913, p. 4). The Robinson Group of Companies (Randfontein Mines), known to Batswana as Ga Malotlhakana, made a call for labourers in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, Mafikeng, and Madikoe to sign up with their agent Charles Hall for a six-, nine-, or twelve-month contract guaranteeing ‘good pay, lodging and good treatment for Batswana’ (*Tsala*, 9 August 1913, p. 2).

The adverts that the readers may have already been familiar with were translated into isiXhosa, such as the Kwa Zittel promotion on the front page selling shirts, blouses, and underwear (*Tsala*, 21 June 1913, p. 1). In other cases, the adverts sat side by side, representing the dualism of languages, such as the Zittel & Co. auction advert in Setswana and the isiXhosa translated version under it with slight differences in layout and design (*Tsala*, 21 June 1913, p. 4). The same is seen in the Chisholm & Co. advert in Setswana and the isiXhosa version next to it, also not fully identical with a variation in fonts and sizes (*Tsala*, 21 June 1913, p. 6).

Election time always presented newspapers with the opportunity to voice support for their preferred candidates. For the Kimberley City Council elections on 1 September 1913 the ratepayers in ward 2 were urged to vote for the ticket of Blacklaws, Chandler, and Oppenheimer ‘for experience, efficiency with economy’. It is not clear if the newspaper endorsed the candidates or whether the space was bought by the campaigners, especially with the names of

T.B. Tinson and A.G. Freeman printed at the bottom of the posters as ‘election agent’. Also to note is that Blacklaws was a *Tsala* advertiser (*Tsala*, 30 August 1913, p. 5).

Tsala continued to attract new advertisers such as John Orr & Co., a department store on Jones Street in Kimberley, which had been in business in the city since the 1880s selling clothing and fabrics (*Tsala*, 10 May 1913, p. 1); and Miss Barnes on Florence Road, Kimberley, opened her blankets, clothes, and wedding apparel store opposite the station post office. For convenience, readers were advised to ask Stephen Molohe and Richard Mnguni for directions when in the area, giving the impression of a close-knit community with approachable strangers or agents planted in the streets to help boost business (*Tsala*, 21 June 1913, p. 3). P. Goldberg, ‘the Johannesburg tailor’ stationed at 55d De Beers Road, Kimberley, advertised his services and fashionable Johannesburg designs, adding that he made clothes for the late Zulu king Dinuzulu and that readers would see the photograph of the king on his store window. Thos Milton of Kimberley promoted his carpentry and blacksmith business, while M. Terry, also of Kimberley on Schmidt’s Drift Road, called on the readers to bring their animal skins, wool, and chickens for him to buy. Chas Howie & Co. at Market Street, Kimberley, advertised the same service as Terry’s (*Tsala*, 25 April 1914, p. 2).

The last issue of 1913 (see Figure 34) makes for some interesting observations and questions that may not have answers. The front page is devoid of the customary commercial advertisers; instead, the columns were filled with a message from the president of the Wesleyan Methodist Church Kimberley-Bloemfontein district, Rev. W. Pescod, who wrote from Kimberley. He was also the head of Beaconsfield (Coloured) district of Kimberley-Bloemfontein Circuit and chair of Lyndhurst Road Native School board committee which Plaatje and Bud-M’belle served in. The communication was in Setswana, and next to it was the translated isiXhosa version. On top, the Wesleyan Methodist Church is emblazoned in large bold letters, and on the sides in an Old English font text are the words ‘Wishes of a Merry Xmas & Bright New Year to You’ presented vertically. The contents of the letter reflect on ‘a year of tests and sorrow’ experienced by the faithful, whereby the Natives Land Act broke up families and pass laws harassed Christian women in the Free State. Pescod urged his flock to be patient and loyal to God and the government, sending them his sympathy and prayers. He advised those who may be displaced by the new laws to talk to their ministers and elders and to collect their removal letters so that they could present them to the leaders in the new circuit they may find themselves in. He encouraged parents to send their children to school and to adopt the ‘one by one’ strategy, whereby each member recruits a new member to the church. He reminded the congregants of

the £4 000 debt that is owed for the ‘genootskaap’ (society or fellowship) and asked them to raise funds for it (*Tsala*, 20 December 1913, p. 1).

Given the premium space in a newspaper filled with advertisers – especially at the height of the festive season, when consumers were spending more than at any other time of the year – was this message from the leader of the ‘state religion’ of Barolong, essentially the pope, a paid placement? If so, what were the rates, and how was the deal negotiated? If that’s not the case, the prominence Plaatje put on religion and the church, specifically, was at play. He took the opportunity to turn his people to the Lord after the tergiversations and tribulations of a year that left them as pariahs in the land of their birth. The message was so necessary to be delivered and read that commercial interests were shelved and the front page transformed for the sake of the ceremonious reassurance from the north star of their faith.

Two new adverts from 1915 stand out for how they targeted the black market. A black entrepreneur, Mr Isaac P. Joshua, advertised his business of Dijo le Megodungoana (Food and hot beverages). He informed the readers that the coffee stall, called First and Last was now under his management, selling coffee, cocoa, tea, and sausages prepared with great care and cleanliness. W.N. Cooper, a chemist in West End, Kimberley, with branches in Mafikeng, Zeerust, and Madikoe reminded readers that he had spent a long time with Batswana preparing their medication. He was now selling his own Cooper’s Green Pills to clean the intestines; Pectoral Balsam medication for phlegm; and Blood Mixture medication to clean the blood (*Tsala*, 26 June 1915, p. 2).

The year 1915 was a challenging time for *Tsala*, as it struggled to stay afloat. World War I thundered on, with serious repercussions for newspapers in South Africa, as the large-scale conflict resulted in a shortage of paper and increased costs. Plaatje was also based in London, having departed in May 1914 with the SANNC deputation. The paper never identified the acting editor by name, but Brian Willan posits that his wife, Elizabeth, held the reins, assisted by her brother Isaiah Bud-M’belle, who had to be careful politically given his public servant position.

There were no significant strides made in advertising during the war period. *Tsala* retained some of its long-time advertisers, noticeably Dr Williams’ Pink Pills, the Robinson Group of Companies, W.N. Cooper chemist, Virata energiser, Nectar tea, and Sacco Herb Extract, while others fell by the wayside. The front page was consistently taken up by the Native Recruiting Corporation Ltd. since 13 February 1914, advertising a long list of names of mines and the

managers in charge under the headings: Mine, Sesuto name, Xosa and Zulu name, Compound manager, and ‘Native’ name. For example:

Table 1: List of names of mines and the managers in charge

Mine	Sesuto name	Xosa & Zulu name	Compound manager	Native name
Crown Reef	Ha Mafopoka	Mavumbuka	C.E. Howe	Ngqondela
Durban Roodepoort Deep	Ha Mohlati	Mhlati	T.E. Thompson	Mehlwana
Jumpers Deep	Jomposo Deep	Bobo	D.W. Robertson	Nkomiyahlaba
New Primrose GM	Plimlose	Sinqaunqau	R. Bodley	Bobe
Robinson GM	Ha Robinson e Moholo	Kwelomi	M.C.H. Bradbury	Madevu

Note: See Appendix 5 for a comprehensive list (*Tsala*, 13 February 1914, p1)

The names shared in Table 1 indicate the several languages and how they were used for the convenience and comprehension of the speakers. White compound managers received informal names that were influenced by their features, such as T.E. Thompson, known as Mehlwana (small eyes) or M.C.H. Bradbury, known as Madevu (the bearded one). Also, the translation from Sesotho to Nguni languages was phonetic, as seen in Ha Mafopoka, which became Mavumbuka. This illustrates how mining brought communities together and possibly provides a way for linguists to trace the roots of the language that became known as fanakalo. Alexander Andrason identifies fanakalo as ‘a pre-pidgin jargon’ that emerged in the Eastern Cape among isiXhosa speakers. It became a lingua franca between Bantu and non-Bantu speakers as well as speakers of different Bantu languages, used in work and trade situations such as mines, farms and construction sites. It has since spread to neighbouring countries of Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia (Andrason, 2023, pp. 1-2).

In the last issue of *Tsala*, an order was given in the form of an advert that ‘advertising should be accompanied by a remittance, except where otherwise charged’ addressed to agents throughout South Africa by Sol T. Plaatje, who is identified as ‘publisher’ (*Tsala*, 24 July 1915, p. 2). While in the throes of financial difficulties, *Tsala ea Batho* took up space in its columns to promote itself in a striking and extensively worded advert that ran for a few weeks, starting on 9 May 1914. It was a value proposition to woo advertisers and impress readers, explaining why it was the ‘best native newspaper’. It essentially assured them that it was the best in the business, well-connected, timely, and often ahead of its competitors, and provided instances of when this was on display. It read:

The *Tsala* announced exclusively in July 23 1913 (a whole week before any other Native newspaper) the death of Hon. J.W. Sauer, Minister of Justice and Native Affairs. The *Tsala* forecasted the names of the Natives' Land Commissioners a whole week before the fact was known by any other Native paper. The *Tsala* published the return of Dr Abdurahman for Woodstock simultaneously with the daily papers. The *Tsala* gave the first news to the Natives of the results of the Tembuland elections, although one of the defeated candidates is an Editor, his defeat became known to the *Tsala* readers four days before it appeared in his paper. The *Tsala* is the most alert and most accurately informed Native newspaper in South Africa. Order it from The Editor, PO Box 143, Kimberley. Post free 15s per annum. (*Tsala*, 20 June 1914, p. 5)

In effect, *Tsala ea Batho* was pleading its case in the marketplace of news merchants – to both readers and advertisers. It presented its argument to demonstrate how agile and ‘with the times’ it was. The root of good journalism is contacts and sources, and *Tsala* proved to be doing well in that regard, if the scoops mentioned in the promotion were anything to go by. Upon reading the advert, one may deduce that *Tsala* traded in the currency of immediacy and accuracy, and that it had an ambitious and competitive editor who enjoyed being first with the news without compromising on quality or truth. *Tsala* moved the needle towards modernising journalism and crafting the values and manner of practice for the profession.

Tsala ea Batho used to tout itself to advertisers as ‘always reliable as an advertising medium’ (*Tsala*, 4 July 1914, p. 5). In 1915, the message was still the same, and it shared its advertising rates card with the following information:

Head office: Corner of Shannon and Brett Streets, Kimberley

Cape Town office: Central News Agency, Long Street, Cape Town

English, Secuana, Sesutho, and Xosa

Advertisement tariffs: Four shillings per inch. Single column. Repetitions half price.

Eight shillings per inch. Double column. Repetitions half price.

Standing advertisements: One shilling per issue. Single column.

Two shillings per inch. Double column.

Agents throughout the whole of South Africa.

Accredited by merchants as being UNPARALLELED [sic] for the extension of Native trade. A large and ever-increasing circulation. (*Tsala*, 26 June 1915, p. 2)

A month after the foregoing advert appeared, *Tsala ea Batho* ceased publication, and this marked the end of 15 years of Plaatje editing newspapers.

10.4 *The business*

Tsala ea Batho was created out of necessity. It was a time of intense protest as Africans faced a bleak possibility of being made landless. Batswana needed to have their voice represented in what amounted to a fight for their lives and livelihood.

While *Tsala* stood up against the tyranny of the Natives Land Act and highlighted the brave women who protested against the pass laws in the Orange Free State, it distinguished itself from its predecessors in terms of language and focus. It published some articles in isiXhosa, and its content diversified to reflect a sensibility of a middle-class British subject who aspired to the fictionalised world of fairytales and unicorns.

What scholars have not ascertained is who edited *Tsala* while Plaatje was away in England. It is believed that his wife, Elizabeth and her brother Isaiah Bud-M'belle held the fort, but, unfortunately, the references in the newspaper are not specific. The newspaper only talks about the 'acting editor'.

It is probably opportune that, as the last newspaper Plaatje edited is discussed, the focus be placed on the commercial a bit more in an attempt to understand how the advertising figures added up. The advertising rates of *Koranta ea Becoana* are not known, but the tariffs for *Tsala ea Becoana* and *Tsala ea Batho* are available, which means that this discussion will be limited to the latter years of 1910 to 1915.

The area covered by Setswana speakers in South Africa and Botswana is vast: from Upington in the west to Hammanskraal in the east, it is over 800 km; from Thaba Nchu in the south to Francistown in the north, it is over 1 000 km. Even with the most conservative of calculations, this is a massive area when one considers potential readers. The strength was in numbers, or was it? This would have been attractive to advertisers, but things are not always as they seem.

A quick comparison of the fees reveals that in *Tsala ea Becoana*, it would cost an advertiser 3s per inch for a single column and half price when repeated; the amount would be 6s per inch in the case of a double column and half price when repeated. When it came to standing

advertisements, the figure was 3s per inch per month for a single column and 6s per inch per month for a double column (*Tsala*, 24 September 1910, p. 4).

In *Tsala ea Batho* in 1915, the rates were 4s per inch for a single column and half price for repetitions; this was up by a shilling from 1910. For a double column, it would set back an advertiser 8s per inch with repetition costing half price; this marked a 2s increase from 1910. For standing advertisements, the rate was one shilling per issue for a single column, and 2s per inch for a double column (*Tsala*, 26 June 1915, p. 2).

For context:

- Three shillings (3s) in 1910 was worth approximately £11.73 in 2017; 6s in 1910 was worth approximately £23.45 in 2017.
- One shilling (1s) in 1915 was worth approximately £2.95 in 2017; 2s in 1915 was worth approximately £5.90 in 2017; 4s in 1915 was worth approximately £11.80 in 2017; and 8s in 1915 was worth approximately £23.60 in 2017, and in 1915 it could pay a day's wage for a skilled tradesman. This information is sourced from the currency convertor on the website www.nationalarchives.gov.uk*.

By rough estimation, in 1915, one edition of *Tsala* of six pages (*Tsala*, 17 May 1913) would likely bring in £41-10s-5d in advertising alone as the main source of income, and this would have to be put against paper, ink, printing and other production costs, delivery (postal stamps for subscribers and agents), salaries for composers and correspondents (it is unclear whether the latter were paid or not), and the administration of the office. A few more pounds might trickle in from agents and subscribers.

In today's calculations, £41-10s-5d equalled approximately £2 449.41 in 2017, which amounts to approximately R57 940 in today's terms. A worrying report in *Tsala* in 1913 recorded that £378 (about £22 300 in 2017 or approximately R520 000) was still owed by agents who had failed to send the money to the office in months, a year, or even two. Despite this shortfall, a faster printer was purchased (*Tsala*, 30 August 1913, p. 5).

* Detailed calculations are provided in Appendix 1.

10.5 *Inside the debt collection war room*

Agents proved to be unreliable, and a few who honoured their commitments were celebrated. For example, Mr Peter Koloane of Fordsburg sent 15s from the first and second editions of *Tsala ea Becoana* (*Tsala ea Becoana*, 23 July 1910, p. 3). ‘Had it not been for these agents, our situation would have been dire’, the newspaper noted (*Tsala*, 8 April 1911, p. 3).

There was also a concerning warning that some readers lost their copies after being scammed by unscrupulous agents who issued them receipts but never sent money to the *Tsala* office. The names of these agents would not be published ‘because our newspaper is read by the police’. Readers were urged to be cautious and rather subscribe to receive their copies at the post office (*Tsala*, 6 April 1912, p. 2). A letter was received from Mongane Ramagaga of Thaba Ncho, who complained that the *Tsala* agent did not issue him a receipt after he paid up for a yearly subscription in February 1911 and therefore has no idea as to when his renewal was up (*Tsala*, 23 December 1911, p. 2). What can be observed from the foregoing is that *Tsala* was open to criminal elements who dipped into its pocket, eroding the trust between readers and the paper. Some agents took advantage of the business, and that came at a big cost to the newspaper.

Mr F. Mokaila of Mafeking was singled out for his efforts to recruit new readers; in total, Mokaila raised £1-11s-3d (*Tsala*, 20 March 1915, p. 2). More praise was heaped on Mokaila, who increased his readers to 55 and contributions to £2 14s (*Tsala*, 29 May 1915, p. 3). While Mokaila’s efforts were admirable, it was a case of too little, too late, as *Tsala ea Batho* went out of business in under two months after this glowing celebration.

Apart from agents who did not send money to the *Tsala* office, the newspaper had to deal with subscribers. In 1911, it was reported that both readers and agents owed *Tsala ea Becoana* £121. It was agreed at an editorial meeting that Chief W.Z. Fenyang would collect all the outstanding money so that they could service the debts of the newspaper. A warning penned by Israel Goronyane, as secretary of *Tsala* syndicate, was sent to readers to pay up before they instituted debt collection procedures (*Tsala*, 28 January 1911, p. 2).

Some sound advice was shared with readers to rather opt for the subscription route instead of buying from agents. It justified this by saying that the paper came to the reader by post, and if there was a change of address, it would still follow them. ‘Going to an agent has its disadvantages, you may find copies finished. It also bothers us that the paper is read by people we do not know’ (*Tsala*, 1 November 1913, p. 5). This was a smart move to grow a database and establish a direct link and relationship with the reader instead of relying on the agent who

served as the middleman. It also distinguished between dependable agents and rogue elements who stole money from readers and the newspaper.

The real impact of non-payment was that the newspaper could not be developed or its pages increased further. In May 1911 a sum of £90 was outstanding from agents, and this delayed progress and scuppered any plans the newspaper had (*Tsala*, 13 May 1911, p. 4). This came up again in an editorial about how Morulaganyi wanted to extend *Tsala ea Becoana* to be the size of the popular *Koranta ea Becoana* that many still wished for. *Koranta* was eight pages long on average. This could not be achieved with *Tsala* because of the £90 debt (*Tsala*, 3 June 1911, p. 4).

Defaulting agents were threatened with ‘cheap advertisement in these columns’, which meant a naming and shaming campaign that never actually materialised (*Tsala*, 26 July 1913, p. 4). To indicate the urgency of the matter, editorials aimed at agents were published under the masthead as the big headline article of the week. Under the headline *Magente a Rona* (Our Agents), the newspaper pleaded with agents to send the money they had on hand and not wait any longer. It was a desperate plea to salvage a situation that was getting out of control. Stating that ‘there’s many of you and when you add it all up it will amount to something significant’. Furthermore, it appealed to the agents’ moral conscience by reminding them that other people were working on producing a newspaper they benefited from, yet were not being paid. ‘Our workers of *Tsala* don’t appreciate working for the entire week only to be told at the weekend that there is no money to pay them. We are trying, send through the money!’ Readers were reminded to renew their six-monthly subscription. ‘Where do you think we find the paper, the ink and the machines? Send your names and addresses at once, do not delay us. It costs money to print the newspapers, send money through men!’ (*Tsala*, 26 July 1913, p. 5).

All these attempts, warnings, and pleas were futile. In an editorial, the newspaper bemoaned the fact that the current issue of 28 March 1914 was hard to produce as the team worked day and night while the printers were out of town. It pointed out that the main problem was that readers took too long to send in their money, and temporary workers could not be afforded. ‘There are many outstanding debts against many names in our books’, but when a copy gets stolen or goes to the wrong address, ‘you should hear the insults from that reader, but if he receives even 30 issues there is no conscience to ask himself where the newspapers come from and how they are printed, and who paid for them at the post office’. The editorial expressed a bitter regret: ‘We realised that working for Becoana is death because other nations don’t trouble

us... We don't have problems with white agents and the agents based in Kimberley because we chase after them, the worst are those in far flung areas'.

It further detailed: 'The way things are so bad, we took the bookkeepers advice and removed all the names of agents at the beginning of the year, the money we lost to agents in 1913 is £84'. The parting shot expresses betrayal and sabotage: 'It seems Becoana do not like seeing the newspaper printed and they wanted to weaken it' (*Tsala*, 28 March 1914, p. 5).

It must be stated that the Natives Land Act of 1913 also made a dent on the business of *Tsala*. The newspaper reported under the headline 'Molao oa Mafatshe' (Lands Act) that Mr D Mosome, their agent at Wolvehoek, in the Orange Free State, had stopped trading because people had been evicted from their land. He sent 16s for the month of September and asked that no further copies be sent until the evicted reached Madiko; for now, there were no customers to service (*Tsala*, 11 October 1913, p. 6). In other cases, some big cities and centres lacked agents; for instance, a letter by David Tlale complained that Mangaung, the capital of the Free State, did not have a single agent (*Tsala*, 13 December 1913, p. 6). This was not a problem for *Tsala ea Becoana* which had barekisi/agents such as Mocher, Libate and Ntlatseng based in Mangaung and were listed until the beginning of 1912 after which the list of barekisi disappears, a possible symptom of a business in dysfunction.

10.6 Discussion

This is an attempt to make sense of the economy of *Tsala* as an example of a newspaper edited by Plaatje. It also gives an indication of the hurdles faced by the black press with a weak economic base, low literacy rates and poor distribution networks.

What emerges is that the system was fraught at every turn. Money that went into the production of the newspapers was disproportionately higher than the funds coming in. Advertising rates were remarkably low, and the reliance on agents to sell copies and send the money to the office was a failed mission. Some agents either 'bought tobacco' or sat on the money for months on end, trying to accumulate more. Subscribers who did not pay on time still received copies, which put a further strain on the finances of the paper. Criminality also had a hand in the collapse of the paper, whereby agents collected monies from readers but did not issue them with receipts, making it difficult for anyone to follow the paper trail. This must have left even the most enthusiastic of readers disheartened and feeling scammed. No real action was taken against known offenders to recoup the money except for a few threats.

The newspapers appear to share a common thread of bleeding money and failing to sustain themselves in the long run. While this does not provide a comprehensive explanation, it goes some way towards portraying a picture of why black press newspapers, such as *Plaatje's*, often struggled to survive. In the words of Steven Lunderstedt, *Plaatje* served a target market with low literacy rates, low readership, and little advertising or low rates of advertising. 'On both counts where income could be generated, from sales of the paper and advertising revenue, it was doomed' (Lunderstedt, 2014, p. 27).

Plaatje was there to serve a cause, to be the light and voice of his people. In the process, he neglected the fundamentals of a business, and the price he paid was high. It left him broke and battling ill-health, but this did not deter him. The mission was bigger than anything, as he continued to write and speak on behalf of his people in South Africa, Europe, and the Americas, even when his newspaper enterprise 'went up in flames'.

11. Forms and data representation

11.1. *The Form of News*

One of the anchors of this study is the theory of form as espoused by Kevin Barnhurst and John Nerone in their seminal book, *The Form of News* (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001). They argue that form is the shape in which the newspaper delivers the news to its readers. This section delves deeper into the concept of form and attempts to apply it to Plaatje's newspapers in order to locate them in the journalism of the day, in particular that of the black press. The analysis breaks down the forms that the newspapers took and traces the metamorphosis of the different sections.

Looking at Plaatje's three titles over a 15-year period reveals a trajectory of growth and development. The newspaper evolved from the humble and modest one-pager of 1901 – showing only news and a few advertisements while still maintaining some sophistication in simplicity – to a bumper 16-page edition in 1903, populated by design elements that included images, advertisements, and a lively presentation of the news pages.

Using Barnhurst and Nerone's categories of analysis, the early *Koranta ea Becoana* would fall under what they conceptualise as the Victorian era, in which the newspaper form was typically crowded and busy. The design they call 'vernacular' is noticed for its use of varied but ad hoc typography. Hierarchy or categorisation was underplayed, as news was unsegmented and presented the idea of an 'unmapped' world. Indeed, the 'boundary between advertising and editorial content was not clearly demarcated', as discussed in previous sections (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 13).

According to Barnhurst and Nerone (2001), social, cultural, and political shifts during the Victorian era reimaged the public sphere and repurposed the use of newspapers. With the rise of mass politics, the editor took up the job of composing content. The emergence of a 'national market society' as well as commercialisation of the press turned newspapers into business arrangements (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 16). Newsgathering became an occupation, and two types of reporters emerged, namely, 'the correspondent' and 'the scavenger'. The former was usually pseudonymous, observing events and personages in powerful places, and wrote with authority and confidentiality. On the other hand, the scavenger was an anonymous newshound who read exchange papers and attended courts, theatres, and social events at taverns for information that could be turned into a column. They both contributed to making

content active and miscellaneous. Typography was based on custom, convention, and financial considerations (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 17).

It is not easy to fit the newspapers in the neat categorisations that Barnhurst and Nerone present when they discuss style, which deals with the ‘most immediate visual appearance’ or type, which is the ‘dominant position in its production’ (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 14). They use metaphors to shuttle between historical periods, ranging from the 1780s to the 1880s in American history. It is acknowledged that the study does not take into consideration the African press, but is used as a key benchmark for international trends.

‘The printer’s newspaper operated under a town-meeting metaphor, the editor’s under a courtroom metaphor and the publisher’s under a marketplace metaphor’ (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 15). The printer was a key figure, and his tasks included those of publisher, editor, copy editor, reporter, and designer. In my earlier discussion of the role of the editor (under Literature Review), it is evident that Plaatje and the other black press editors did the multitasking that fits this description. Furthermore, when reading the newspapers, the metaphors of town meeting, courtroom, and marketplace seem appropriate all at once as ideals of operation. This is because the newspapers offered a robust platform for discussion and conversation in the form of a town meeting or ‘kgotla’ in traditional African terms – a voice in the courtroom of political opinion – and the newspaper as a ‘commercial tool and marketed good’ (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 16).

While *Koranta* has been identified as a Victorian newspaper with partisan characteristics, it found itself at the crossroads of innovation and change as the era of Modernism dawned in the first decade of the 1900s. In Barnhurst and Nerone’s conceptualisation the introduction of illustrations was a key marker towards Modernism. In the case of *Koranta*, the introduction of graphics and sketches to break the domination of typography placed it in transit from Victorian to Modernism. As will be shown in subsequent sections, illustrations took the form of portraiture and storytelling to reinforce traditional notions of civic culture. Pictures served as curiosities to attract and inform readers but were seen as interlopers as text remained the primary mode of news. The images were presented in a way that depicted a separation between the text and them as a ‘background scenery’ (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 18).

By 1903, *Koranta* had adopted an industrial type that reflected modernist influences – a further metamorphosis of the publisher’s newspaper from the Victorian era – as Barnhurst and Nerone (2001, p. 20) describe it, a development that would also mark its successors, *Tsala ea Becoana*

and *Tsala ea Batho*. This ‘visual vocabulary of Modernism’, as they call it, is observed in how typography and text developed. Imagery and graphic design became sophisticated, and a system of departmentalisation, hierarchy, and production processes became clearer.

Using what is available in the Readex/NewsBank archive, as the most comprehensive collection of Plaatje’s newspapers between 1901 and 1903 and then 1910 to 1915, while acknowledging the gap between 1904 and 1909, this data provides the closest and most accurate reflection of Plaatje’s newspapers. The periods in the archive that do not have newspapers, when checked against literature from sources such as Brian Willan, correspond to times when the newspaper was printed irregularly, except for 1904 where copies have survived, however outside the Readex/NewsBank archive. As a result, there are few instances where copies were not found because they did not survive.

By Willan’s count there were 37 editions published in 1904 and a further 44 issued between the end of 1904 and November 1907. It was the most tumultuous period of Plaatje’s journalism and newspaper venture, which he called ‘the most trying year’ due to financial struggles. It is in the form – number of pages and number of advertisements – that one can also track how the newspaper is performing commercially. Form and funding are inextricably intertwined.

This section provides a snapshot and profiles the main characteristics of Molema and Plaatje’s enterprise. The figures show how many pages the papers carried, the frequency of publication, and the breakdown of the pages. Furthermore, there is the metamorphosis of the front pages of *Koranta ea Becoana*, *Tsala ea Becoana* and *Tsala ea Batho*. The design elements ranging from the usage of space, columns, images, illustrations, fonts, and sizes are also explored.

11.2 The size of the newspapers by number of pages and frequency of publication

The figures that follow provide an indication of the size of the newspapers by number of pages and frequency of publication.

Koranta ea Becoana 1901 to 1902



Figure 5: *Koranta ea Becoana* – Number of pages (1901 to 1902)

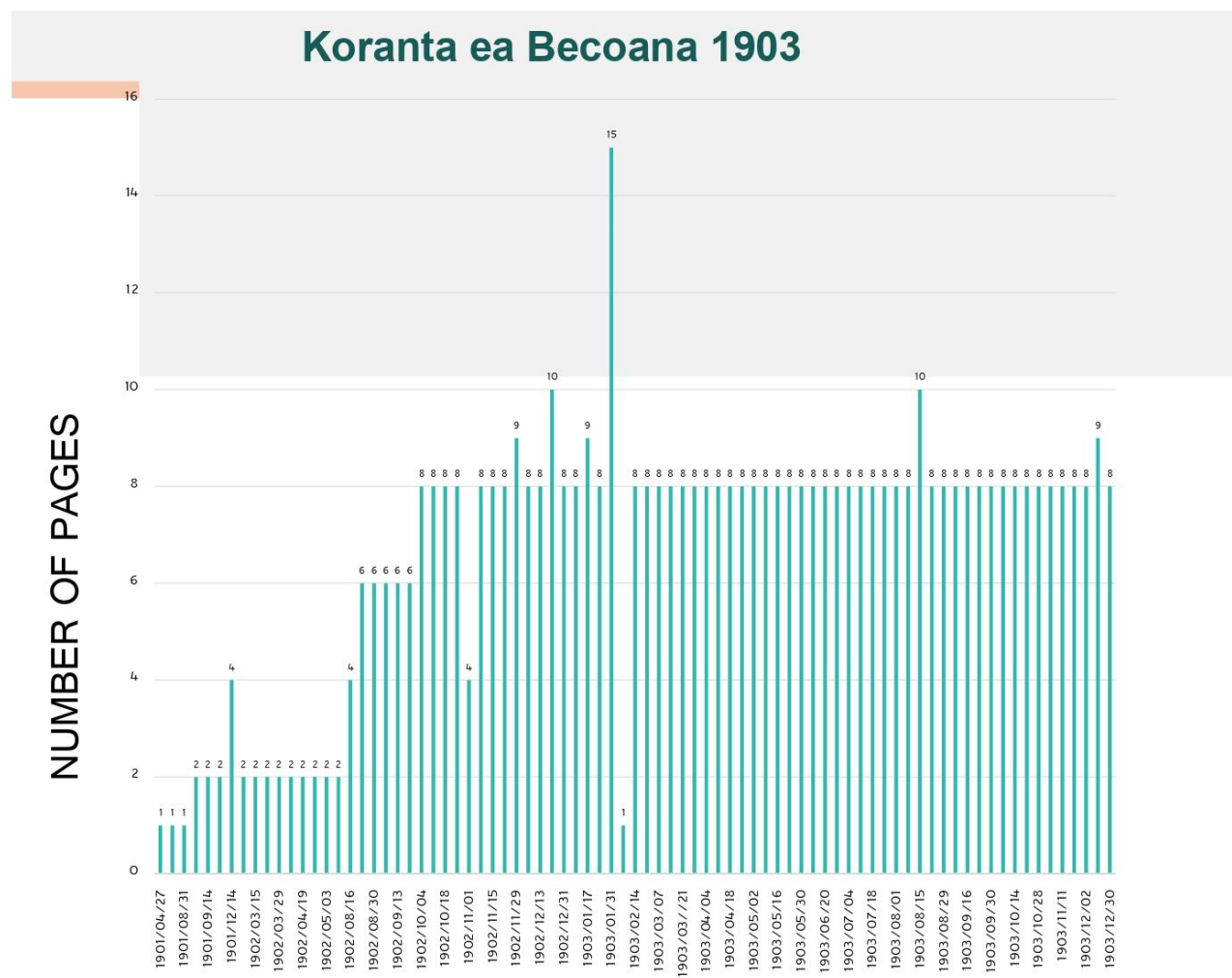


Figure 6: *Koranta ea Becoana* – Number of pages (1903)

Tsala ea Becoana 1910

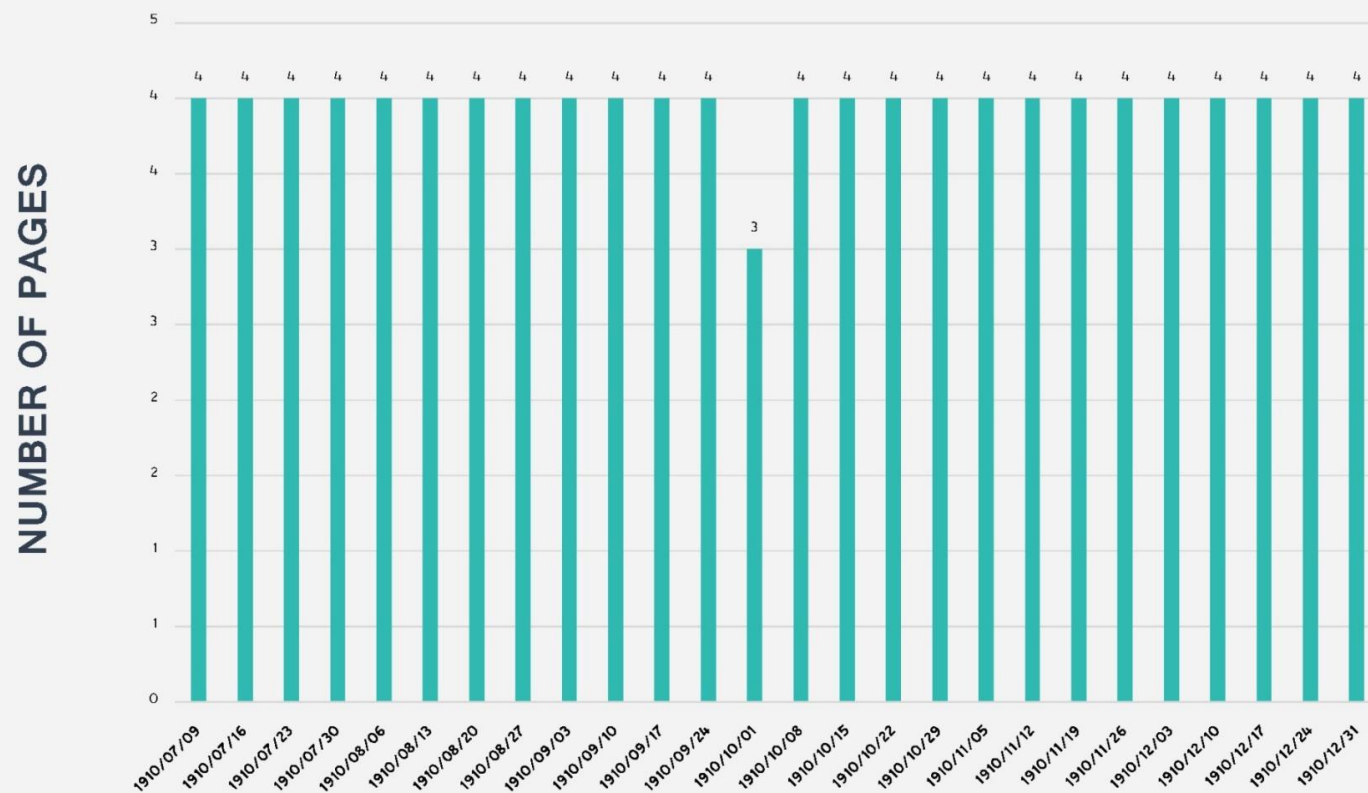


Figure 7: *Tsala ea Becoana* – Number of pages (1910)

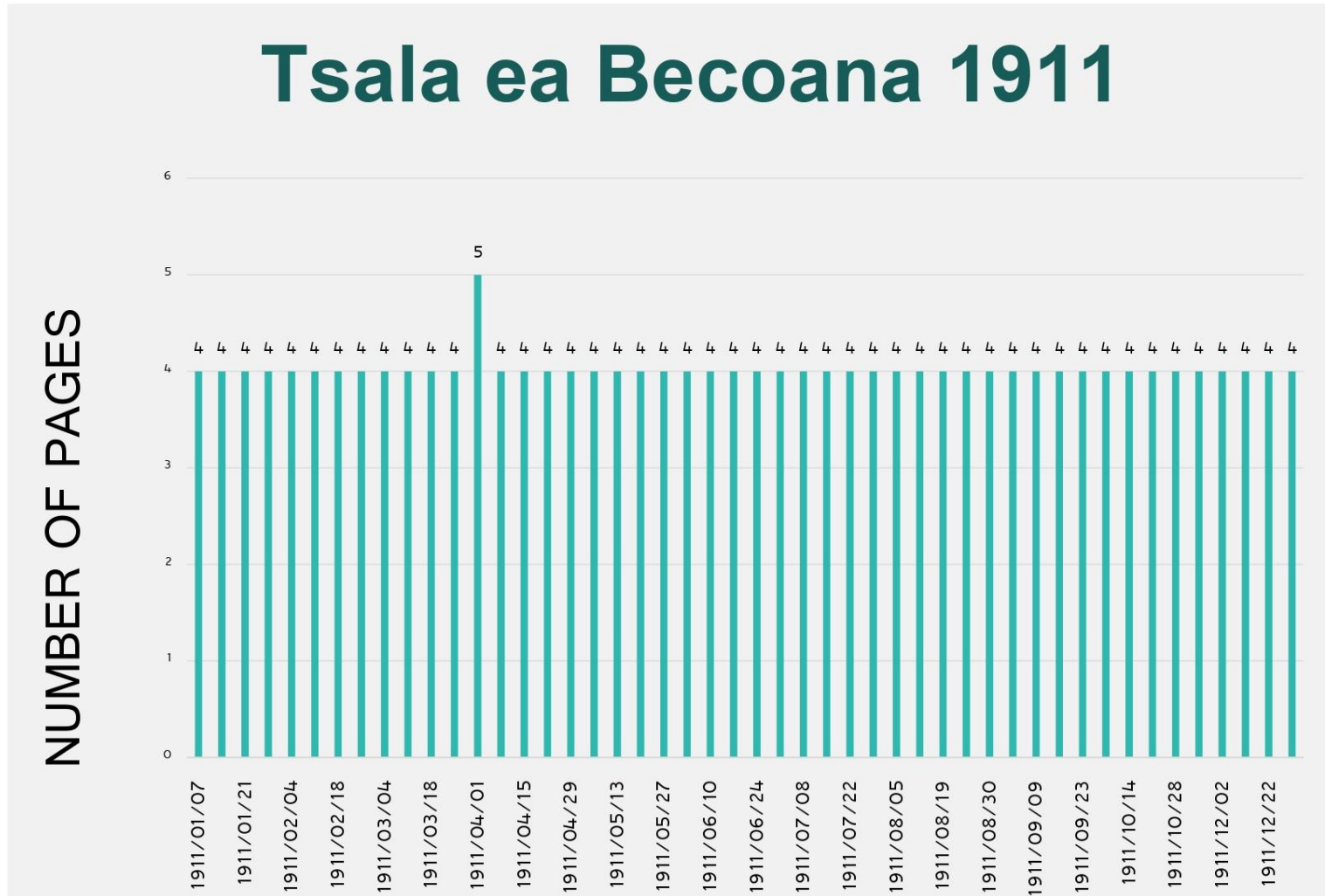


Figure 8: *Tsala ea Becoana* – Number of pages (1911)

Tsala ea Becoana 1912

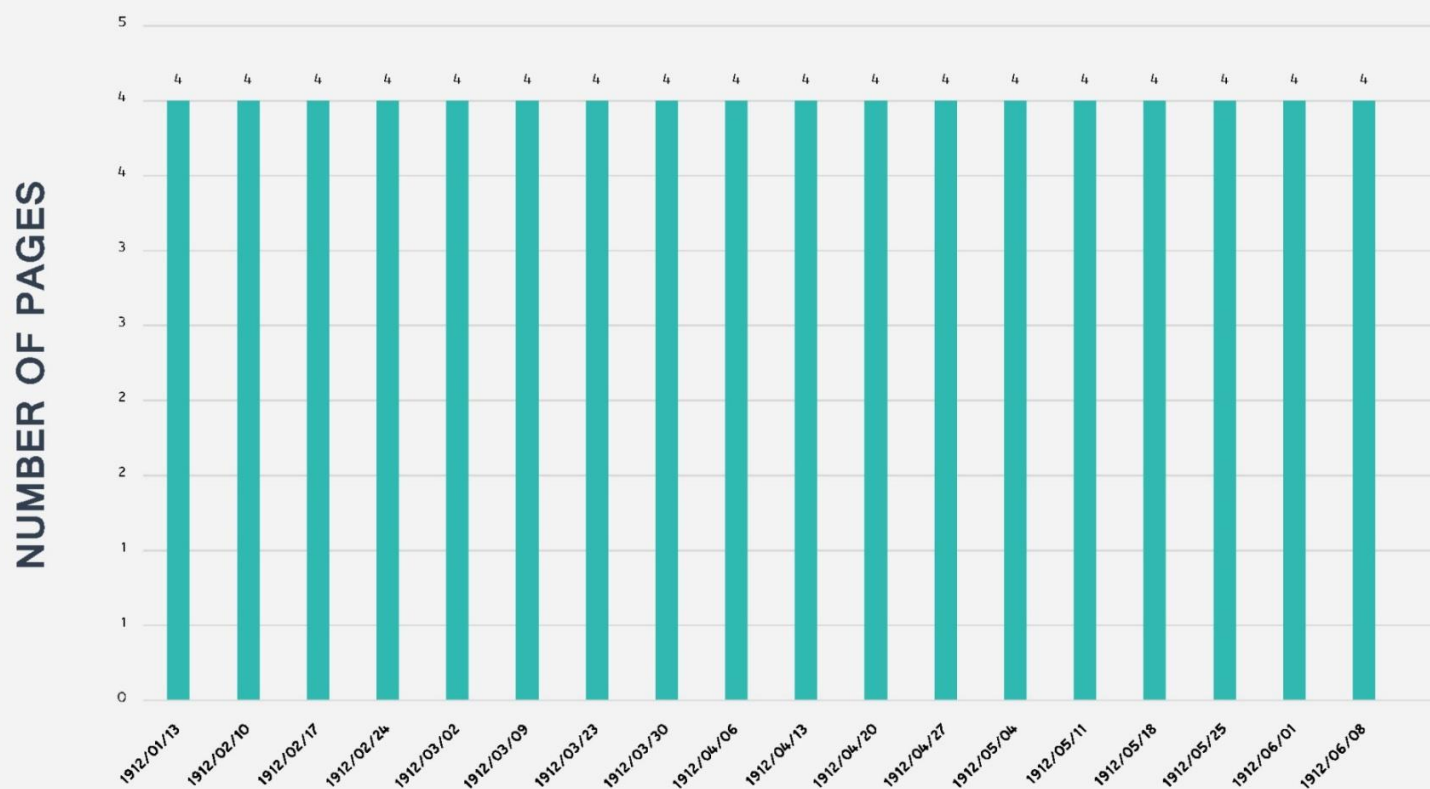


Figure 9: *Tsala ea Becoana* – Number of pages (1912)

Tsala ea Batho 1913

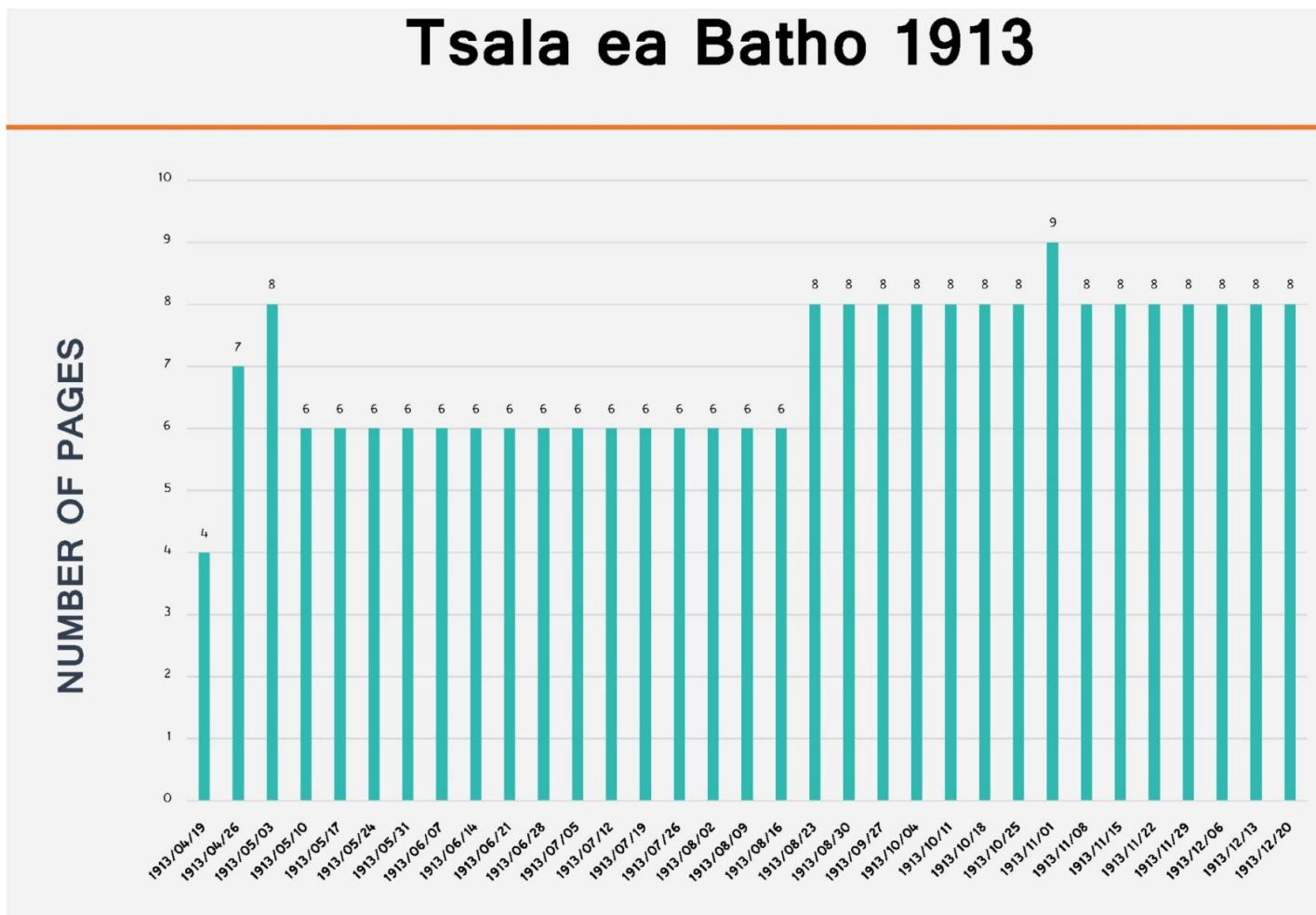


Figure 10: *Tsala ea Batho* – Number of pages (1913)

Tsala ea Batho 1914

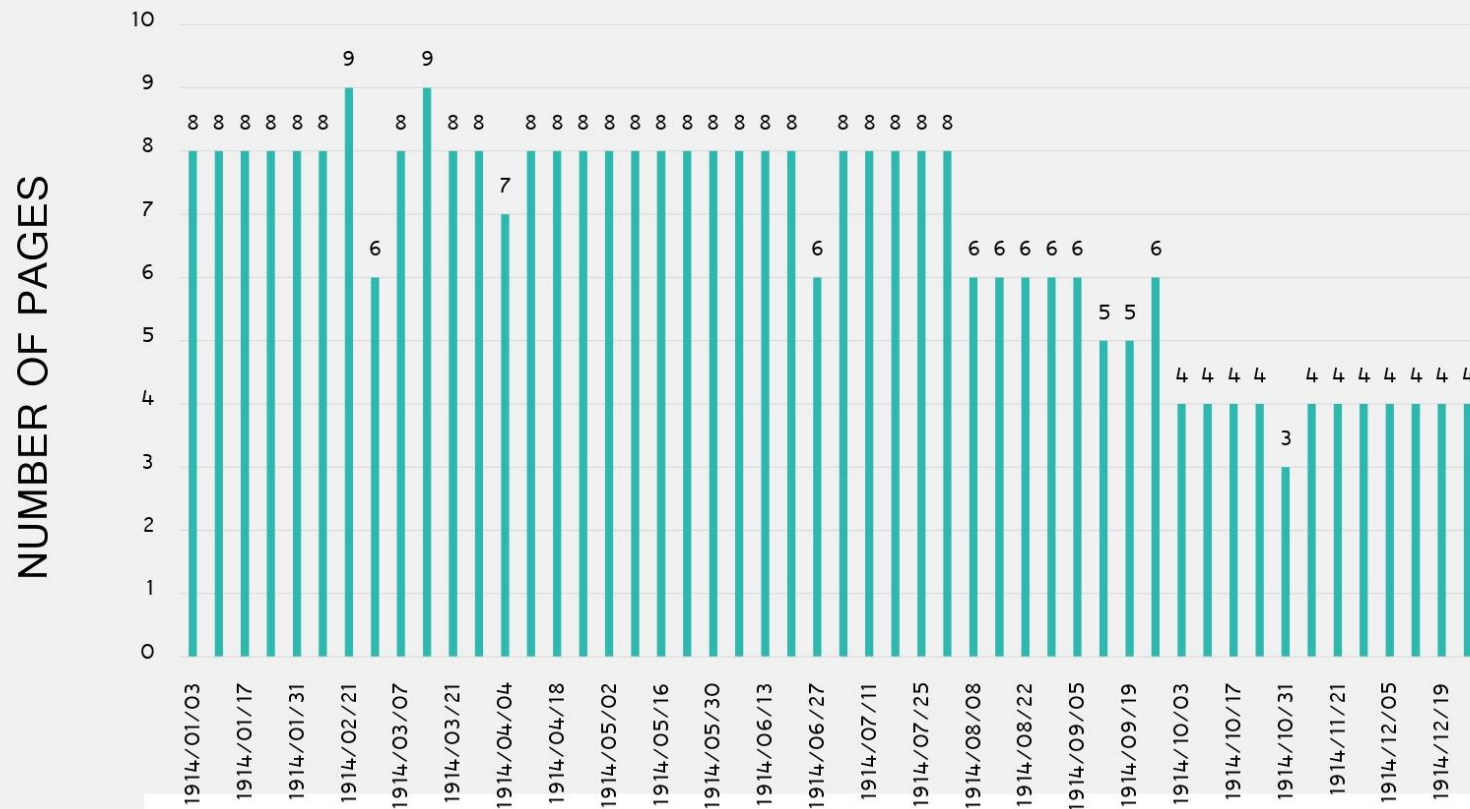


Figure 11: *Tsala ea Batho* – Number of pages (1914)

Tsala ea Batho 1915



Figure 12: *Tsala ea Batho* – Number of pages (1915)

Frequency of publication 1901 to 1915

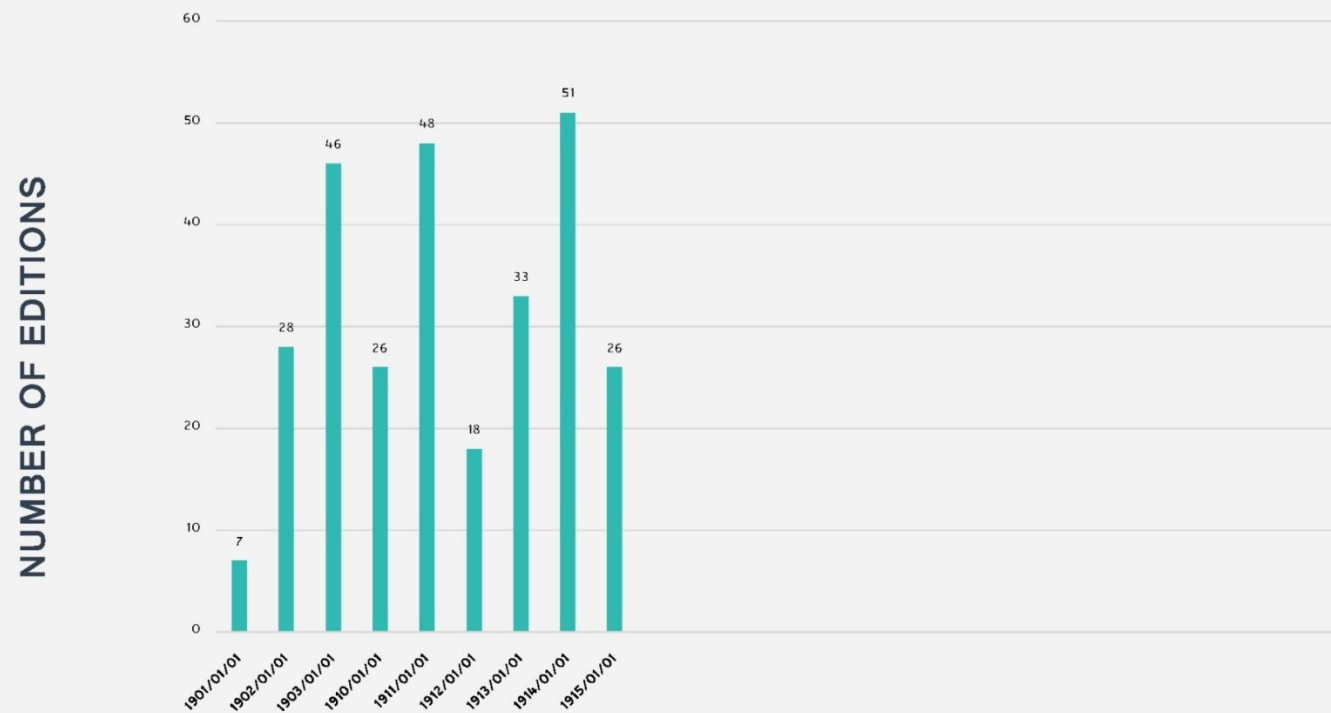


Figure 13: All three newspapers – Frequency of publication (1901 to 1903 and 1910 to 1915)

A closer look at the graphs reveals the inconsistent nature of the enterprise. From the early days of *Koranta ea Becoana*, there is a natural progression from one page in early 1901 and building up to the Christmas edition of 1902, which reached a record 10 pages. This is in line with the common newspaper practice of making a roaring trade in the bumper festive season edition. However, the unpredictable page numbers can be explained as the teething stages of the enterprise. Two milestones brought about stability. First, it was Plaatje's official full-time involvement as the editor of *Koranta* from May 1902 after resigning from the Cape civil service in March 1902. Secondly, the acquisition of the printing presses in August 1902 alleviated the production difficulties and delays the paper faced while printing at the *Mafeking Mail* presses. The long wait for the printer to be ferried from the coast and the delay experienced due to the martial law that prevailed in South Africa during the South African War explain the long gap seen in the graph for June and July 1902. *Koranta* immediately reaped the benefits of having its own printer, which brought about a smoother operation and much-needed stabilisation, as represented in the graph from August 1902 (Figure 5).

Going into 1903, the challenge was to either maintain or grow the newspaper. It appears that this was achieved, as the graph indicates consistency maintained throughout the year, with an average of eight pages. The anomaly of 15 pages on 31 January 1903 (Figure 6) has been identified as an archiving error, as several pages were repeated, creating a misleading impression of the largest newspaper ever published; in fact, the edition comprised only eight pages. One can deduce that 1903 was the most stable year following the growth spurt and momentum gained from 1902.

Tsala ea Becoana started operating in mid-1910 and was immediately marked by the regularity of the four pages it published throughout the year (Figure 7). The 1 October 1910 entry may be an archiving error of a missing page. The consistency was carried over into 1911 (Figure 8), until the newspaper ceased publication in June 1912 (Figure 9). Despite the financial difficulties exacerbated by agents who either failed to deliver payments on time to the *Tsala* office or 'bought tobacco' with the money collected or readers who did not renew their subscriptions, the newspaper was stable and kept its end of the bargain with its readers. Plaatje had been under pressure to increase the size of the newspaper as they demanded. He responded astutely to the ever-present shortage of cash by increasing the number of columns while keeping the page count unchanged. This resulted in a cramped space, but more was included, and the critics were silenced.

Tsala ea Batho was in business in September 1912; however, the Readex/NewsBank archive only has copies from 19 April 1913 (Figure 10), which issue initially had four pages but these were increased to six within two weeks. By August 1913, the paper had doubled to eight pages. The momentum was maintained throughout 1914 (Figure 11). In the first half of the year, Plaatje was involved in raising awareness and funds for the SANNC deputation to England as well as being embroiled in the debates around the trip to protest against the Natives Land Act. The deputation sailed from Cape Town in May, paving the way for an acting editor to take the reins at *Tsala ea Batho* in the second half of the year. The pages dropped to six from August, and by October, they had been reduced to four. This may be attributed to World War I, which triggered a paper shortage and drove up prices of essentials such as ink.

The newspaper was consistently published at four pages for most of 1915 (Figure 12), with some anomalies of one or five pages that are attributable to archiving errors. *Tsala ea Batho* would become one of the casualties of World War I, as it closed in July 1915 while Plaatje was still in London, where he stayed when the rest of the SANNC deputation returned home while he attempted to publish *Native Life in South Africa*, a political book that critiqued the Natives Land Act of 1913.

Figure 13 provides a snapshot of the number of editions published throughout the years. The most successful year was 1914, with 51 issues. As a paper that had leapt into modernity and showed industrial characteristics, regularity and a consistent presence were critical to its success. In 1903 and 1911, there were 46 and 48 issues, respectively. The year with the fewest issues is 1901, with seven, which is understandable because the paper was still finding its feet, and systems were being put in place. At just 18 issues, 1912 was not great for business. It must be noted that this is the year *Tsala ea Becoana* ceased publication, and a number of initial issues of *Tsala ea Batho*, estimated at 27, are missing in the archive.

11.3 The evolution of the front page over the years (two issues representing each year)

In this section, a series of cover pages are presented to depict the change and form of the newspapers over the years. Barnhurst and Nerone highlight that the form of news creates an environment in which contemporary values in political and economic life are observed. It is a three-dimensional experience with sights, sounds, and smells that is repeated to the point of providing reassurance. Daily life forces ‘mould the space we call the newspaper... leaving obvious scars and embellishments’ (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 6).

Barnhurst and Nerone metaphorically identify the Industrial newspaper as a department store and the front page as a 'crowded store window' and 'the face of the newspaper'. How the front page was designed became critical. The front page serves as the window into the news environment that allows readers to 'interact with its surface textures and deeper shapes'. There are unspoken rules that facilitate and enable certain reading practices while they work against others. The form this takes has the potential to direct 'meaning making', or in other words, the field of vision of the audience (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 7).

Since they believe that form is 'never innocent or neutral', Barnhurst and Nerone (2001, p. 9) turn the adage, 'you cannot judge the book by its cover' on its head. Form re-enacts and enforces patterns of deference. As one pages through the years of *Koranta ea Becoana*, *Tsala ea Becoana*, and *Tsala ea Batho*, it becomes clear that newspaper content, particularly on the front pages, was run predominantly as text. Words served as tools to deliver visual descriptions and were arranged in a physical space along the lines that Barnhurst and Nerone (2001, p. 13) noted in the American press.

e Gatisioa mo Mafikeng Gangoe ka Tshipi.

10.3

MATHACO SEETEROSIGO 15. 1901.

TLHOATLHOA 3d.
KGOTSA 3s., kgoeh tse tharo.
NGOAGA 12s., e lueleloa pele

Koranta ea Becoana.

MATLACO, SEPTIEMBRE 15, 1901

MAFOKONYANA.

Pusho e umaka lipaakanyo tsa go aga tsela ea molelo e e coang mono e ea Gauteng.

Magosi a Lohurutshe, loa
Linokona le loa Poe, ana ale
mona ka Tshipi eno. Le
Kgosi Segale, ea Kgatleng, e
lebelecoe go goroga mo malat-
sing ano.

Litlogoloana tsa Moshui, tsa ga Setori, li bolotse koa Ostrelia go etela New Zealand.

Mekobo ea gauta e e simo-
lotseng tiro ea shupa: mongoe
le mongoe o lira ka bomashini
bale 50. Go etleelicoe ele-
mentsi e yanong e letileng
tetelelo ea Pusho-fela.

Go ntse Pico e tona ea
Makgao mo Toropong ka See.
7: ga ikaleloa go koalela
Balaoli fa Makgao a toropo
a eletsa gore goromote o
Kapa o ka phimolosa yanong
ra laola yaka baagi ba fatshe
ya Tshirele, Erile ba ba sa
lumaanong le mngopollo o
bare bone ba eletsa fa mole-
lone o ka fetolola gore o re
gabelo koa Transvaala, ere
Kimberley o mo gabelo mo
Koloning e ncha ea Noka e
Nehoi, yanong re laoloe ke
Chosane Temane e laoloe koa
Mangauze.

[illegible]

KORANTA-ngo e a Bancho, kor Koloni, eare—"Re amogetse lokoalo lo lo latelang, lo re lo gatsang ka boitumelo. 'Ka mosho ono, Kgosi e Kgolo Mapondo, Sigaau, e gako Molanye le Matona a eone jo

leka leamaruri ya ngaka, tha selupe. Go choshe shelling a filtho kafa tlase ga lennogo go rongoa banna bale ba rataro goa ea go thela botho ka ngakeng ngoo: yooe poto ea Kgosi e ucuile le mosimane, a e phuthela ka khat, a nago e filtha ka khat, a nago kaletsela go leka go phutha otlase tse. Mopondo goe tsisoa ea lingaka tse e senoge mo bathung. Koranta eo gape eare: "Re ka ngakola Matona a Kgosi gore a tsee leano ya senye semane, ye le molemo, a choshe ngaka tsa selupe yaka ele 'mor'o-e-motona-e-balo', a ba utlise kaatho e leleko-ko leleko senyane e se utseng yaka kaa Matondong; ga go kaatho epe e ka feturiro mo batsiatsi ba ba li-choaka, mo re eletsela Kgosi gore e e leke."

Mo gara ga lipeco tse lint-sintsi tse li etetseng South Afrika go bonala go santse go tla tlhaga ngoe gape. Maloba Natal o tlhagaeo ke thoromo ea lefatshe, matlo a tsikinyega thata bogolo a a tlhatlaganyeng.

KORANTA ea St. Helena e
bolela fa Maburu mangoe a
teng a kile a ikeletelatsa go
thoba; leano ya one le lemo-
giloe go sale motshogare, a
lala a lisicose. Erile bosigo bo
sa goa fitlheloa mefago ele-
mentsi e bolokolole fa losing-
loa loatle go bonala fa bana
ba tlhuta mokorona mongoe,
fa thoko ga setlhaeke, ba ngue-
ka one. Go fitlhelose le lik-
hane mo mefagong, tse go
sholofeloang fa li tla senola
mama a balogi ba leano.

JOEL MOSHOU, o "Apulana", o ngongongeshe Kgosana, ya mhashole e be hakehang mo go wone are Paulo, Kgosi vora Tlhlili koa Lotlhabane, a mba chonyena. Are e mo tseetse masimo le likagolele ebile e ntsa e bopela go tsatsa utlo a gagane. "Mashole a isa kgotse ko go Magasetratra. Erile Joel a boloka ke Mr. de Kock, a buelala Barolong, are e ke Morolong ebile ke isa: la kgang isa morafe li sekoka ke Kgosi, mutho a e Mkgosong ka bathole a Secocana e sa mo fihlela tshimishimo. Ebile ke tshimishimo e tshimishimo a sena, sepe le taolo ba mafatsa a Secocana, me ke tlhokile go are Kgosong ka e ulolana le Paulo, fela yaka Magazeta a mono le Magasetratra." A boelika pele are: "Erile ko Kganelo are Mafika ka bo gele

mo tširong eaga Ranthoakgale
ale a 'naea tlhobolo ka tša-
bhehela Maburu."

Magosetrata eare a atihola
are: "Ke bona fa ele kgang
en' Barolong 'me e ka sukoe
ke Kgosi Wessels pele. Mose-
kisi o tla una le go tla koana
fa Lekgotla-ya Morolong le sa
na lirela tshiamo."

Erile ka Loaborarō kgetse
on reolisa koa Goora Tshili:
ere e sena go tsena ka sebakā
a se tolele Kgosi Wesese ale
athola ka gore: "Eroku
erile re kgamecoe ke baba
Moshu a ba thusa, go boiaoa
batlhabaneli le baikobeli ba
Moshui, ke mo naea kgolei ele
ngoe fela: ere e shoa ale a
tloile molelane oa lefatše
ya Ga Molopo ka thoto ea
ragane."

MAFOKO A NTOA

KOA MOREYA GA NOKA E
NCHO.—Maburu aile 800 a
thahasete Toroponyaua e
Jamestown ka kgoeli e e shu-
leng. Aaa a gogoa ke Kri-
tshing. Eare ka a fitlhel
motae o lisoce ke Mavolunteer
aile 60 ba 'seka ba choara
bothata hope: ba thopa thoto
oa mabentele ale mararo ba
ea nthla ea Bokone ka cone,
ba bolaiile thaka ea rona 4,
sekoa 1. Goo holaoa baba
bangoe le mgora Komondat
Myburg. Ba gopa le thobolo
lile 75 le marumo ale mantse
thata.

Maburu a a latsene ke Kolonel Seobel a tsa go a tlhetha laof le Barkly East ka laabo 6 la kgwele ene. Mo-phato o a buke na kgogagela Lera e go lina ka lichaka. Na choganeloana thata ba ntshabela ka ntsha cotlha ba sa itse le ko ba eang teng. Go choarua Maburu ale 20, lipitso 166, marumo 13,000, litlhoobo 25, boale 198, likobo 200, liaparo le thoto ele ntsi thata e e gapihuo kgo Jamestown.

Erile ka letsatsi yoo gabo go choaranyane e nngwe gauti Steynsburg, go choarua Maburu ale 22 ka marumo lo boale le lipitso le litlhobo lo, go buua Maburu mangao a shule.

TRANSEFALA.—Ngaka ngoe
ea Seburu eare Maburu otlhe
a lapisicoe ke ntoa: fa ana
anale kgoro ea go tla bogosi
yoa one a kabo a ineela ale
montsi.

Ntoa ea ga General Benson o fithile koa Choane ka Seete, 5 ka Maburu ale 40, likgomo 2,0 00 le linku lile 4,000. Bare ba tsile ba raleitse lefatshe

yelo thata yelo senang liyo.
Go nale likgaga tse Maburu a
iphitlhang mo go cone ere a
bona a choeroe aro a ntse a
iphitlhetse Maburu a letile
go ineela mo masholeng.

DE WET.—Ba bangoe bare
o nale Louis Botoa, gaufi le
Matloang. Polelo engoe eare
o koa ntlheng ea tšela ea
Mapotukisi o letile karabo ea
ga Paulo.

Mabura a a mo liatleng tsa
rona vaanong a feta 19.000.

KOA MOSEVA. — Mogatsa Louis Botha o fithile koa Engelane ka Seete 8. O gana go bolelela batho se o se tlet-seng. Ka Tshipi ona a ile Kerekeng e kgolo ea Chache ea St. Paul. O sholofela go boela koano fa gara ga kgoeli e e kafa teng.

PAULO o letile go kopana le ene koa Holland.

Peco ea Buboniki.

Boloesetse yoo bo botlagaag
yoo ero ba raga go nlogela-
ga bo simolologeng teng, koa
Kapa, yaanong ba thlasasetse
le koa Basi. Mela eo yone e
e botloko, mo bathung ba ba
naho, e ba utlolasetse koa Port
Elizabeth ebile bano ba ba
gana go lira fa bothata yoo
melao ea yone bo sa fokolole.
Tiro e eme. Ka Seete 10 ho
ntse pico e tona mo Lokei-
shene ba laletsa Magesetrata
le naga ea yone. Ba ba
bolelela fa ba gana go patle-
hoa mokento. Bare ke gureng
fa ba e care a na ba laletsa
terena, koa Basi, a entse pele.
Bare fa mokento o choanetse
Banocho ke gore le Makgona
bahumanegi, a nnanng mo
matlonyaneng a a nashoe, o
a choanetse.

Magesešratra are gana thata
ea go phimola molao oa Goro-
mente me o tla koalela Pusho.
Are ba akelicoe ka batho ba
ba raea bare mokeno o
bolae. Go tla tla mogoloane
mongoe oa Lekgoa le Moruti
eo Moncho oa Kapa a tla go
ba thaloganyetsa mokeno.
Aba are ere kamoshō ba boele
tirong, me go bonala fa ba
senke ba lira valo.

Fa esale boloetsa bo simo-
loga, ka-Kapa, bathoqere batho-
bale 700; mogo bone go shule
324. Fa ba kgangangoa ka
litshika Makgoa ge bobutse
180, goa shoa 58; Makgoba
180, goa shoa 207; Bancho
tota 140, goa shoa 61.

Notes. One of the earliest front pages is marked by the absence of advertising and the simplicity of the columns. The news articles, all in Setswana, ranged from the Bubonic plague to the ongoing South African War, just 13 months after the end of Mafeking siege. It was a one-pager printed in Mafikeng and published once a week on Saturdays.

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KORANTA EA BECOANA,

e Gatisioa mo Mafikeng Gangoe ka Tshipi.

No. 17.

MATLHACO, LOETSE 21, 1901.

TLHOATLHOA 3d.
Kgotsa 3s., kgaele tse tharo.
NGOAGA 12s., e lueleloa pele.

C. N. Williams & Co.,

Litsala tse li kgolo tsoora Tshili tsa

MABAKA le SELAGA.

Ba reka LIKGOMO le LIHUTSHANE.

Ba rekela nama go feta Lilaga tsa mono eotlhe

LINEGOA TSA BOTSEHOLO.

tse. Folouru le Sebun, Le Likausi tse li tlotse tsa methale eotlhe.

Fa lo ema batlang KUKU ea LONYALO kon go

C. N. WILLIAMS & CO.,

Mo sehageng sa Lerotholi

MAFIKENG.

E. SOLOMON, Golebagana le Steshene.

Liaparo, tse lincha tsa,

Bahumi le Bahumagali, Bohutshe le Litlhako.

GO NALE LILOANA TSA METEME LE LINO.

O itse Secoana eang go muisa fela.

S. KEMP & CO.,

(MO MOTSING OA GALE OORA WEIL)

BAREKI, BAREKISI,

LE BAANANYI. . . .

Ba tla gu rekisetsa liyo le liaparo, tsa methale eotlhe, ka tlhoatlhoa tse li koa tlase thata.

Ba rekisa le Liloana tsa Matlo

tse lipolase le **TSA MASIMO.**

Ba tla reka sengoe se u ka se rekisang ebong

Likgomo, Mabele, Matlalo.

Go rekisa batho ba ba thotetsang go rekela Becoana ka matsetse a mahl.

S. KEMP & CO., Barekisi, MAFIKENG.

MINCHIN & SONNENBERG,

Batsetse ba Tlhopola a Engchane, a Koloni, le a Buchanaland.

LIOTISI: CAPETOWN, VRYBURG, & MAFIKENG.

Kitsisho e e Bogale.

NA, eo lema ya ka le fa thase ga kitsisho, ke kaletse go amogela tlhato tsa methale eotlhe, go li rekisetsa hantzi ba cone kom ba ka amogelang tlhoatlhoa tse li seimong gone, ebong:

LIPELESA, MEBILI, LIKGOMO, MABELE, LIKUKU, LIKOKO, LIPULI, MATLALO.

Mali a tla con fa re nama libana ka mabogo.

F. A. MUHLENBECK,

Go lebagana le Steshene, MAFIKENG.

MOTSE OA BALIRI

BA BUCOANA LE

Fatshe ya Tshireleco.

EREKA yaanong Baliri ba thase kaletse go amogela tlhato tsa methale eotlhe, go li rekisetsa hantzi ba cone kom ba ka amogelang tlhoatlhoa tse li seimong gone, ebong:

Babereki botlhe tlang kono Mafikeng, mo go

F. A. MUHLENBECK,

Mohali oa Litiro.

J. McLOUGHLIN, Morekisi oa Liyo

le Lenoo.

Meteme ea Liloana tsa methale eotlhe.

Liaparo tse linche tsa.

Banna le Basail.

Bohutshe le Litlhako.

O lebaganye le Steshene, MAFIKENG.

A U BATLA MAFALU, MARASE.

Semapa kgomo Semolo

Letaele liaki eo o ka rokang fela

kafa likeleleong tsa gaga.

Sama ang kon go

I. COHEN,

Eo Ntho e fa gare ga seng:

ba Fentisi mo Marakeng.

MAFIKENG.

EANG KOA GO

H. C. BRADFELD

Fa lo batho liaparo tse linche tsa banna.

Ereka Kgoleli tse tharo yaanong li fetile.

RA. MOGELI ba ka thusa

Tlho e Kpatisho thata fa ba

ba tlhophanele go shafatsa

Lipaka tsa bane.

Koranta ea Becoana.

MATLHACO, LOETSE 21, 1901

MAFOKONYANA.

LORD MILNER.—Molaoli eo Mogolo o boetse Transfala.

KGOSI SEBELE, oa Bakoenana Molepolole, e mono. Kgosi e shafetse re sholofela e itekanetse mo 'meling.

KOA TLHAPING.—Mono Tauung Batlhaping ba shoecoe ke kgosana, moroa Mahura, eo na a bilioa Molema, o kgaogile ka Tsothothano, Loetse 13.

MABELE.—Ga ba a tshamokise kon Koloni. Kasper Jacobus Grobelaar oa Kraddock o atholeloe botshelo yotlhe mo teronkong ka tiro e e thata. Koa Somerset bale barataro ba neile paka tsa li fotafetanang—go simolola fa nyageng tse peli go ea mo botsheleng yotlhe. Mongoe a lefisa £500 fa golimo ga nyaga tse peli.

OOM PAUL.—Moroa Paulo oa gofela o inetse maloba. Bare vague erile a utloela a batla go ngataga; are fa esalo khumagali e shoa ga ese aka a amogele mafoko a a botlhoko yalo.

PARLAMENTE.—Bane melao ba gono go tuloa ba tla phuthaga ke kgoleli oa Phalane go tse yaanong ba tla kopana ka Ngomatsale. Gare lumele gore a se tla nna ka litokololo tsa bone lingoe lile mo ntoeng li thabana le Maburu. Tse lingoe li mo teronkong ka utlha ea borukutlhi, tse lingoe litshabetsa Holland le Maburu. Molao oare goseka goa feta ngoaga ba sa phuthaga me ngoaga e tla fela ka kgoleli e kafateng; me mo ntoeng melao e royoa royoa fela.

MOSHI PRESIDENT McKINLEY. Kgosi ea United States, Amerika, e fulile ke motho ka pistole mo maleng gabeli. Motho, co, bare ina ya gagae ke Czolgosz, aba a choarda. Kgosi e tshilele tshipi ele ngoe fela, esena co hloa, ea kgaoga maloba ka Matlhaeo. Czolgosz o na ale fa pele ga Baatlholi ba Amerika maabane. Go busa President Roosevelt mo boemong yoa ga Makinde.

MO SEBATENG SA ABRAHAMA.—Duke le Duchess of Cornwall and York ba sale

Figure 15: Koranta ea Becoana, 21 September 1901

Notes. By this time, advertising had become a prominent feature on the front page and editorial dedicated to one column. The news items were about Paul Kruger, the Parliament, and the war. It had developed into a two-pager.

Source: Koranta (21 September 1901, p. 1)

KORANTA EA BECOANA,

"Bechuanas' Gazette."

Only Authorized Medium for publishing Government Proclamations addressed to Natives by Colonial, Protectorate, and Imperial Military Authorities.

No. 40.

MAFIKENG, MATLHAC, MOPITLO 8, 1902

S. KEMP & CO.,

(MO MOTSING OA GALE OORA WEIL)

BAREKI, BAREKISI,
LE BAANANYI. . .

Ba tla gu rekisetsa liyo le liaparo, tsa methale
eotlhe, ka tloathloa tse li koa tlase thata.

Ba rekisa le Liloana tsa Matlo

tsa lipolase le TSA MASIMO.

Ba tla reka sengoe se u ka se rekisang ebong

Likgomo, Mabele, Matlalo.

Ba rekisa MEGOMA ea MABOGO le ea
LIKGOMO.

Fa lo batla, Liaparo tsa KEMO le
Litshiro tsa Banyatloa, tse li logiloeng
sentle, tlang koano lo tla li fitlhela.

Go rekisa batho ba ha tlonteng go rekela Becoana
ka maitso a mantle.

S. KEMP & CO., Barekisi,
MAFIKENG.

W. N. COOPER,

Fa lo batla Meleme ea meanete!

Cooper's Pectoral Balsam, 1s. 6d. le 2s. 9d.

(Molemo o o iteng Ligothola.)

Cooper's Bronchitis Mixture, 1s. 6d. le 2s. 6d.

(O o iteng Sekuba sa Banyana.)

Cooper's Rheumatic Cure, 2s. 6d.

(O o iteng Segatseta sa Maoto.)

Cooper's Antibilious Pills, 1s.

(Likgoloane tse li tloang Mala)

Hutton's Fever Powders, Meleme e e thusang fivara, le

litlhare tse lingoe tsa sekgoa, tse li molemo.

W. N. COOPER,

Kafa Botlhahatsi Yoa
Maraka oa
Mafika.

Le koa
1st End,
a Kimberley.

Meleme eaga Cooper e ka rekoa mo mafelong a a latelang:

Mr. Forbes, Mr. C. Riley,
Marootane, Mochudi,
H. Mitchelson, A. T. Hutton,
Mafikeng, Mafikeng,
H. C. Taylor, R. C. Lee,
Kanya, Gaborone,
J. Solomon, W. Horne, Kanya.

E. R.

KGAOLO EA MAFIKA.

Molao oa Ntoa,
KITSISHO NO. 16.

Litsela tse li coang le tse li tsenang mo Mafikeng.

GA go mocoafu o tla letleloang go
tsena kgono go coa mo Mafikeng
fela faese ka litsela tse li latelang:---

- (1) Tsela ea Fuhuli.
- (2) Tsela ea Lobatsi.
- (3) Tsela ea Mmohibulu.
- (4) Tsela ea Maphachwe.
- (5) Tsela ea Molemane.

Litsela tseo li tla buloa ka 6.10 ka
mosho, li coaloe ka 6.30 maitsoho.

Nako ea kamosho ea pulo, e tla u-
tloaioa ke moloi oa setimela sa ntsha,
ea lephakela ea maitsoho, ea coalo, e
utloaioa ka kanono e e tla ne e hule mo
Kampeng ea Mashole maitsoho.

Ebile go tlagisio a Baicho gore ba
seka ba thebela mo meguleng e e likileng
motse ka ba ka huloa, fa ba leka go tla
yalo.

Ka Taelo,

KENNETH MACLACHLAN.

"Ra-Melao."

Asst. Provost Marshal.

Mafikeng, 8 Mopitlo, 1902.

E. SOLOMON, Golobagana le
Steshene.

Liaparo, tse lincha, tsa

Bahumi le Bahumagali, Bohutshe le Litlhako

GO NALE LILAOYA TSA METEME LE LINO.

O itse Becoana eang go naitsa fela.

H. MITCHELSON, "Marontko"
Mafikeng

O rekisa Liyo, Lino, Liaparo tsa methale
eotlie, le Liloana otlie tse li tlokoang ke
baagi ba ba kgakala le Toropo.

Ke Moroa Ra-Tina teta, se Miteng fela.

Figure 16: Koranta ea Becoana, 8 March 1902

Advertising took up the entire front page, and the newspaper presented itself as the 'Only authorised medium for publishing Government Proclamations addressed to Natives by Colonial, Protectorate and Imperial Military Authorities'. The first proclamation, seen in the top right-hand corner below the masthead, announced the martial law restriction of Africans' entry into and exit from Mafeking using several routes such as Fuhuli (now Huhudi in Vryburg) and Lobatsi (now Lobatse in Botswana) which would be open between 6.10 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. only.

Source: Koranta (8 March 1902, p. 1)

Koranta ea Becoana,

"BECHUANAS' GAZETTE."

Only Authorized Medium for publishing Government Proclamations addressed to Natives by Colonial, Protectorate and Imperial Military Authorities.

No. 1.

MAFIKENG, MATLHACI, PHATO 16, 1902.

Published by
JAMES BROTHERS, Ltd.
280, Du Toit'span Road, Kimberley.

PHOTO
ENLARGERS.

The Art Metropole.

PICTURE
DEALERS.

ISA SECHOANCHO se gago ba se ntsi ka mabala eelhe e u e ekehang. Ba tla se atolela ere u ipone a
rebathe: Bontle le Bogolo.

LECHOANCHO li tengwa mo li ipone tse li eletsang.
KE BAEKISI! ba lihoancho tsa ntoa ea Maburu tse li levoang mo litlasing, tsa ho Underwood &
Underwood: u bone Mshole a ntsi a tlhahana ere ba utlo. Ua li thoka koodela.

JAMES BROTHERS, Box 280, Du Toit'span Road, Kimberley.

Mo Tlung ea Kgatisho! Mo Tlung ea Kgatisho!!

Likgetsana tsa Marifi---le Pampiri TSE LI NTLE tsa go koalela
litsala tseno. Li nale bo Almanaka ba monongoaga le ba isago.
Re ka go gatisetsa leina ya gago mo go cone fa u rata.

Likoalo tsa Serolong, Setlhaping, Seshotho le Setebele, Libebele,
Litestamente le likopelo li santse li laelicoe.

Tse li Gorogileng ke tse:

Marang, Loeto loa Mokresete,

Dilo tse di chwanetseng go itsewa,

Dikaelo, Arithmetike, Dipeleta,

Dipoconyana le LINOTO TSA LONDON,

Secoana fela.

KITSISHO.

Eo o ese a amogeleng KORANTA ea gagae o locoa gore a rialo re
itsise re bone go e romela.

Faele Babali ba ba agileng mono Mafikeng rare fa ba
tsile go hulela Koranta tsa bone pele, e tlane ere li sena go
gatisoa li romeloa koa matlung a bone. Eo o sa hulelang
pele a tie go e itseela.

Figure 17: The front page experienced a dramatic overhaul on 16 August 1902, with a new serif typeface introduced to the masthead

Notes. It connoted the handicraft of calligraphy and stone inscriptions, that is the style of texts or designs historically carved or engraved onto stone surfaces (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 199). The adverts were stacked up in an orderly form, resulting in neatness and clean lines, even in the conflicting font choices and sizes of words.

Source: *Koranta* (16 August 1902, p. 1)

Koranta ea Becoana,

AND BECHUANA GAZETTE.

THE AMELIORATION OF THE NATIVE.

Labour, Sobriety, Thrift and Education.

No. 15.

MAFIKENG, MATIHAQO, NGWANATSELE 22. 1902.

Ferdinand J. Jacob,

Mo Setorag se Bopologolo Sa le

WHITELEY, WALKER & CO.

MOREKISI OA LIAPARO.

Methale eotlhe ea Likobo, Liaparo, Licoalo le Litlalo tsa methale eotlhe ea Banna le Basali

Gago Setoro sepe se cheereng Liaparo yaka sa mo.

Gago Morekisi ope o tloathlhoa li koo tase yaka tseme.

Ke rekisa ka tloathlhoa tse Englane.

Go rekeng Thuto e e tloathlhoa e fetang li, o tla abela sinela se se nang le tloathlhoa tsa Bana-ba-Pontle Kosi le Kosi, kama ntle.

Barekisi bame ke Bana ba tona, ba Mr. George Muthusi, M. M. Leskomo, D. Muthata le babangoe.

Fa le batla Liaparo tlang koo go

FERDINAND J. JACOB.

MO SHUPING YAGA WHITELEY.
MAFIKENG.

MINCHIN & SONNENBERG

Babuleletse ba Makgalla a Englane, a Kholo, le a Bechuanaland.

LIOFISI: CAPETOWN, VRYBURG, & MAFIKENG.

Wirsing Bros.

BAREKI, BAREKISI
LE BANYANYI BA METHALE

EOTLHE EA LITHOTO,
MO MARAKENG OA MAFIKA.

Ba reka Likgomo, Likobo tsa Liba-
rana, Mabele, Mebili, Linaka le lipapali
tsa Secoana eotlhe.

Ba nale matlo koa

Malibogo, Ga-Khunoana,
Geyadomp, Phaluchwe,
Molopolole, Mhalapye.

H. MITCHELSON

"MARONAKO"
OA MAHURUTUNG

O rekisa Liyo, Lino, Liaparo tsa
methale eotlhe, le Liloana eotlhe tse li
tlhokoang ke baagi ba ba kgakala le
Toropo.

F. J. Myburgh,

KLEEN-ISARA
OLD MAIN STREET, GAUFI LE LIPASSE.
KIMBERLEY

Mosogeli ea aparo tsa banna

Fa li batla, Mafajo, Maras, Kooa, Samapo, le tse

Ehlo le rekisa le aparo tsa li segoang tsa

Tso ka Lilethabana.

KA TLHOATLHOA TSE LI FOKOLICONG.

B. JAGIRDAR.

Go bapa le Apothike
ea ga LENNON.

O itise Litsala tsa bo tsa Secoana fa
rekisa Lithoto tsa Methale eotlhe.

LIYO LE LIAPARO:

ka tloathlhoa tse li oleng.

TLANG LO ITEBATEBELE GA LO SKO LO DROAHLATA.

S. KEMP & Co.

Mo Goo Ra Weil.

Ke gone go fitlang

Lithako tse Lintle tsa

Banna, Basali le Banyana.

Lilampi le libone, Printe tsa-Germane,

Lipampiri tsa Marifi, Listeisi (Bostrok) tse lintle.

Mesese le aparo tse lingoe,

Methale-thale ea Lisilika.

TLANG LO ITEBATEBELE

E. Solomon,

GOLEBAGANA LE STESHEN

Liaparo, tse lincha, tsa Bahumi le
Bahumagali, Bohutshe li Lithako

Go nale Liloana tsa Metemo le Linco.

O itse Secoana eang go muisa fela.

DENNISON & CRANSWICK,

BAFANTISI LE BO AGENTE.

Ba nale Lifantisi tsa Matlhaqo, tshipi eotlhe.

Mebili, Mabele le likoko lia-rekoa lia rekisioa.

P.O. Box 22.

Telegraphic Address: "DENNISON," Mafeking.

Figure 18: Amelioration of the Native

'Labour, sobriety, thrift, and education' became the new slogan for *Koranta ea Becoana*. It kept its neat approach, with lines demarcating advertisements in rows as the era of Modernism dawned.

Source: *Koranta* (22 November 1902, p. 1)

KORANTA ea BECOANA.

AND BECHUANA GAZETTE.

THE AMELIORATION OF THE NATIVE.

Labour, Sobriety, Thrift and Education.

No. 63.

MAFIKENG, LABORARO, NGWANATSELA 1. 1903

Thoutlue, M.
Chakane, S. M. Ka Post 4
Mafikeng, 12. 41.
P. Mafikeng 12. 41.

Babereki!

CAPT. C. GOODYEAR, Tsala e thata-thata ea BECOANA, o amogetse taolo eotlhe ea BALIRI ba BECHUANALAND, TSHIRELECO, GRIQUALAND WEST, le Distreke tsa bo MADIKOLE LICOBOTLA, ba ba ba ba eletsang go ikontraka mo go WITWATERSRAND NATIVE LABOUR ASSOCIATION, METLOBO ea koa GAUTENG, JOHANNESBURG.

METLOBO e luela TLHOATLHOA tse LIKEDICOENG.
koa GOLIMO £2.10. mo MESIMENG £3. ka KGOELI.

Matlo a a phepa, Manno a a siameng,
- - le koko e e molemomo baboboling

BALIRI ba phutheloa mono Mafikeng, ba romeloe koa Krugersdorp. Go agiloe matlo a boikhuco mo tseleng, mo mefago e bonoang teng. BABEREKI ba ka ikontraka mo baphuthiung ba :-

L. SOLOMON,
KURUMAN.

INNESHITEN,
GA GABORONE.

MAGENTEA A LIRANG
LE MAGOSIA KANYE le

MOLEPOLOLE.

W. CLARKE
SEROWE.

P. LENKWANE,
MAFIKENG.

H. A. PAYNE,
LINOKANA le ZEERUST.

LEFA ELE mo motsing oaga CAPTAIN GOODYEAR
kaesi, Mono MAFIKENG.

Figure 21: A campaign by the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association to recruit labour intensifies its search for workers from Mafikeng for the mines in Johannesburg and Krugersdorp offering wages of £2.10 above ground and £3 underground. The advertisement appeared in Koranta, 4 November 1903

Notes. The campaign informed potential recruits of clean lodgings and good care in case of ill-health. This is the last year of *Koranta* in the Readex/NewsBank archive.

Source: *Koranta* (4 November 1903, p. 1)



Figure 22: After a six-year absence in the Readex/Newsbannk archive (*Koranta* was published sporadically until 1909), *Plaatje* re-emerged with *Tsala ea Bechoana*, which was four pages long and sold for 3d on 9 July 1910

Notes. *Plaatje* was now based in Kimberley, and this was its first look. It was heavily crammed with fine typeface and included the Biblical slogan ‘Yakametsi a tsididimomoeng o nyoriloeng, mafoko a monate a fatshe je le kgakala a ntse jalo’ (‘As cold water is to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country’). It brought the news of the East Coast Fever devastating the cattle in the form of a government proclamation.

Source: *Tsala ea Bechoana* (9 July 1910, p. 1)

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T SALA EA BECOANA.

"Yaka metsa a tšilili mo moeng o
nyirileeng, matoko a a mona a fetehe
ye le kgatale a nise fela yalo."

THE
Friend of the Bechuana

"As cold water is to a thirsty soul,
so is good news from a far country."
—Psalms 135: 6.

[Vol. I.—No. II.]

KIMBERLEY, SEPTEMBER (LOETSE) 10, 1910

[Thoutlhat 3.]—Xwaga 12/.

Barkly West le West End, Kimberley

WOUTELANG JOHN ADAMS.

Leina ja ntlha mo Pampiring ea Baloto Lo seka loa
koala sepe gape.

Choang X fela go lebagana le ina Ja ntlha



JOHN ADAMS.

A u Moamogeli?

Nyaca?

Romela 12/- jaanong-koa go
Morulaganyi.

"Tsala ea Becoana,"

Box 143, Kimberley.

U tla amogela "Tsala ea Becoana"
sebaka sa kgoleli e 12.

ZONNEBLOEM COLLEGE.

SEKOLE seno se tšimile ke Bishop Gray go tuta bana ba
Magosi la tana ba hangoe ba batho ba banocho.

Se ntle baruti ba le batho le ba ba rutang kgatisho le
go betla.

Se amogela baruti ba botlha ba bagole le ba botlha. Se
ruta go tloga mo go Standard I. go go Standard IV. le tšh
thobo tša ga Goumonte le tša University se a di rutela, le
botlha ba ba tšh tselang baruti le go lita Baboleli ba lencosa
Molimo.

Tarilo mo ngoangeng ke £18, (leshoma ya liponto le ntle
ponto di fura meoana e le nbele) go tsa koa mashomeng a
mabeli a nang le ponto li le nne (£24).

Se buce gape ka Phuku (July) 18.

Basimane ba ba tšh boba ba kopisa gore ba tše le
likole tše li ba kaeang mo meoeng, fa ba siame.

Go ntle bukanyana e kaelang batho go tše ka ga sekole
muna fa batho ba li senka ba ka kouga Moruti gape a di ba
romele.

Rev. W. H. PARKHURST,
Zonnebloem College,
Cape Town.

"Tsala ea Becoana" THE BIG KIMBERLEY STORE.
(The "Friend of the Bechuana")

Erektion ka Dikwe ootile ka Matlase
mo Kimberley —
English le Senaosa.
Thoko — — — 12/- naga.

BARKISI.

Fransistale.

Mr. J. M. Nyelego, J. Miers
Rev. J. D. Groenewald, ... Phoka Ncho
Mr. J. Rump, ... Parye
John Mocher, ... H. ...
J. C. Linder, ... H. ...
J. G. M. ... H. ...
E. M. L. ... H. ...

Transvaal.

Mr. T. Molima, ... Potchefstroom
Peter Kolosa, ... Potchefstroom
Janso Mahau le Rev. R. Kungu, ... Potchefstroom

Jeremich Phile, ... Kimberley
Rev. M. J. Mochrie, ... Kimberley
Rev. Stephen Tsele, ... Potchefstroom

Chas. J. O. More, ... Potchefstroom
Rev. H. M. ... Potchefstroom

Southwestern.

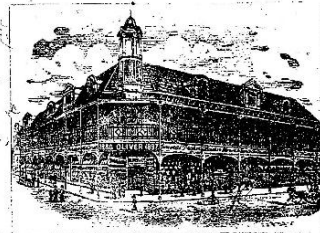
Mr. Theo. G. ... J. ...
John ... J. ...
Rev. D. ... J. ...

Rev. E. ... J. ...
Rev. Mr. ... J. ...
Chief ... J. ...

Mr. ... J. ...
Mr. ... J. ...
Mr. ... J. ...

Mr. ... J. ...
Mr. ... J. ...
Mr. ... J. ...

Mr. ... J. ...
Mr. ... J. ...
Mr. ... J. ...



Where all Classes of
DRAPERY, CLOTHING & OUTFITTING,
TRUNKS, BAGS, BOOTS & SHOES,
Can always be had at lowest prices; for Cash Orders by Post
receive prompt attention (when Money Order is enclosed).

H. A. OLIVER & Co., KIMBERLEY.
BOKSBURG & GRAHAMSTOWN.

Se Lebaleng!

Se Lebaleng!!

Se Lebaleng!!!

Maaga e e pup tsa a mabala eo
tše ea le SENEIRI, e e rapane
le B. ... B. ...

Hadje Nassiep Amos

28, BOSS STREET.

MALAY KAMPA

E. T. Cogle,

111 Jones Street,

Mo Mokgothang oa No. III.

Selaga sa Nama tse

di Mahura.

Ka Tloathoa tse di

Okocutloong.

Figure 24: Design elements introduced to transform the front page, most notably an image of The Big Kimberley Store and an election campaign to vote for John Adams for Barkly West and West End, Kimberley

Notes. The use of conflicting fonts and sizes makes for an attention-grabbing interface.

Source: *Tsala ea Becoana* (10 September 1910, p. 1)

"As cold water is to a thirsty soul,
so is good news from a far country."
—Proverbs of Solomon.

[Thoatlhoa 3d—Ngoaga 12/-

W. W. HOY,
Molaxodi ng o Tshageditseng.

TSALA EA BECOANA.

"Yaka meta" a tselili mo moeng o nyorileong, mafoko a a monate a fatshe yo le kgakala a ntse fela yalo."

THE
Friend of the Bechryana
February 4, 1911

"As cold water is to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."
—Proverbs of Solomon.

Vol. I.—No. 31] 32

KIMBERLEY, J. OLIVER & CO., PRINTERS.

[Tlhoatlhoa 3d—Ngaaga 12/.

A U TLOGA U NYALA.

Re nala tse tse e ntsi ea Dilo, ta Kemo ta di ka go tsemedisa. Tlhoatlhoa ta cone di chosile sentle gore mongwe le mongwe a di ipolele. Re tlhomashele fela le nane di tla ga kgathela, ebile re itse fa go nna Wente's ope o ka go rukeleang sentle jwa rona. E tse afa u talle go raka u bolele gore a u badile kitsho o mo TSALENG EA BECOANA.

Selika o Tshettha le e Chosue a e Malomo. 2s 6d, 3s 6d le 4s 6d jarata.	SELEKA E TSHETTHA a e Japanese 1s 6d, 2s 6d le 3s 6d.	Manela a Manotha a Selika. 1s, 1s 6d, 1s 6d, 1s 6d jarata.	Kanta tee Selika tee di Tshettha. 1s, 1s 6d, 1s 6d, 1s 6d.	Mokgabo ea Selika o mo Setiba. 4s 6d, 5s 6d, 6s 6d le 7s 6d.	Furumo eo moosetlora oa Sateiso 6s 6d, 7s 6d, 8s 6d, 9s 6d.
KASMUE BO MOSETLHA. 2s, 2s 6d, 3s 6d jarata.	DIKRAUHE TRA BANYADI 5s 6d, 6s 6d le 7s 6d ngoo.	Bolostre ba Kemo. 1s 6d, 1s 6d, 1s 6d ngoo.	Banto tee tala. 1s, 1s 6d, 1s 6d, 1s 6d ngoo.	Khako tee dikhuo. 6s 6d, 7s 6d, 8s 6d, 9s 6d, para.	Dikroubu tee di logi- loozur. 1s 6d, 1s 6d, 1s 6d para.
LENTE E CHOSU. 6d, 1s, 1s 6d jarata.	KGELE TSE DI OHOEN. (tee di dikante) 6s 6d, 7s 6d, 8s 6d le 9s 6d ngoo.	Kaushu tee Mabogo. 1s 6d, 2s 6d, 3s 6d para.	Bostroko tee Choeu. 1s 6d, 2s 6d, 3s 6d, 4s 6d.	Hemr a Bua di. 6s 6d, 7s 6d, 8s 6d, 9s 6d, ngoo.	D droes. 1s 6d, 2s 6d, 3s 6d.
BO KAMISOLE. 1s, 1s 6d le 2s ngoo.	MANG KA TENG. 2s 6d, 3s 6d le 4s 11d ngoo.	Khai ee Shelton ee dihempe. 1s jarata mebila setleng.	Flanel, tee e th 6d, 6d, jarata.	chulleng di jarata.	Khai e o lotolae. 1s, 1s 6d le 2s jarata.

Dilo Cotlehe tse di batlegang di mo fa u rata go dira moeseng oa Chenche: Khai tse di ntseng jalo 1/3, 2/3, 2/4, le 3/4 jarata.

ABERDEIN & BUTT,

Wenkele eo Fensteri di tona
Go leba gana la Town Holo Bloemfontein.

The recognised LEADING Music Warehouse in South Africa.

R. MÜLLER,

Pianos, Organs and all other kinds of Musical Instruments.

HEAD OFFICE AND SHOW ROOMS: 77, STRAND STREET.

Telephone: "RELLUM."

ADDITIONAL SHOW ROOMS: 40, STRAND STREET.

Telephone: 180.

P.O. Box 133.

CAPE TOWN.

H. A. Scott & Co.,

Clothiers & Boot Merchants.

METHALETHALE ea Hempe tee Bane tee di thata, 2s, 6d., 3s, le 3/4
BOHEMPE le Dikapo tee Bapi tee Gaitsee mo Schoteng 2s, 6d., le 3, 6d.
PAKA TRA BANNA tee di sigilong fela jake tee bo Santri 3s, 6d, le 50s.
MARUKHOB a khakhi le a matla tee tse tota a Badiri, 4s, 6d, 6s, 6d,
10s, 6d., le 15s. 6.

ARUKHOB a setofo a a thata, a a shoothlha di oleag, 4s, 6d., 5s, 6d.,
7s, 6d., le 10s. 6d.

DIRUPHE, DITLHORO, MEIKGATLHO, DIKOB, DITLHAKO tee
"talle tee dikhuo le tee dikhumon, 8s, 6d., 10s, 6d., 12s, 6d., le 15s. 6.
DITLHAKO tee Bapi ke cone tee di ka rekoang bogolo ba Baberaki,
14s, 6, le 16s. 6d.

Seforo sa bone sa sigolo se ka bonas mo TOISPAN ROAD fela fa
Tremo ea Besconfield e felaang tang.

H. A. Scott & Co.,

4-6 Dutoitspan Road,

KIMBERLEY.

E. T. Cogle,

111 Jonas Street.

(Mo Mokgothang oa No. III.)

Selaga sa Nama tse
di Mabura.

Ka Tlhoatlhoa tee di
Okocococeng.

BECOANA le BANCHO
BOTLHE! Thusing 'mala
oa loua, se tlholoe reks go
sele fela fa ope Dijo, Dikong,
Maup le Mersgo mo

Mutual Benefit Trading
Society Ltd.,

(Fa tshimologang aa Hands Street)

3 SELBY STREET,
KIMBERLEY.

J. Klein.

Practical Tailor & Outfitter
27 & 29 Old Main Street.
Kimberley.

MOSIGI oa Maanete Paka
tee gagoe di simolola ka
£2 10/-, Di fele ka £5 5/-.

Koantle ga tee di sigilong,
ebile o nala methale e
mentaintsi ea Dithako, Ma-
butahe, Bo Hempe, Dituku
le Dikomereese tee meshoroto
Eotthe-lele.

SILSON BROS.,

Lewenkele ja Dijo.

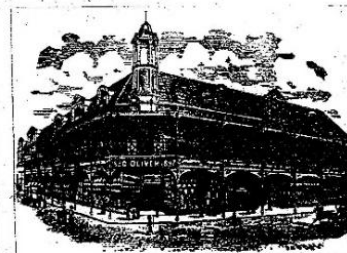
LOWER JONAS STREET, KIMBERLEY.

DIKOP, DITRE, DISHUKERE, DIJO TRA TSHIMO.

Methale senthe ea dile tee di eang Dipitri, Dijas, Dinoleo, Dithipa le
dile cotthe tee di ka tshikang mo Matlong.

Batho ba Bancha ba rekeloa ka thekegelo e Kgolo

THE **KIMBERLEY STORE.**
BIG



Where all Classes of—

DRAPERY, CLOTHING & OUTFITTING,

TRUNKS, BAGS, BOOTS & SHOES,

Can always be had at lowest prices for Cash. Orders by Post
receive prompt attention (when Money Order is enclosed).

H. A. OLIVER & Co.,

KIMBERLEY,
BOKSBURG &
GRAHAMSTOWN.

Figure 27: A new advert from Aberdein & Butt of Bloemfontein added a new look to the front page, selling wedding clothes under the headline 'A U Tloga U Nyala' (Are You About To Get Married?)

Source: *Tsala ea Becoana* (4 February 1911, p. 1)

"As cold water is a healthy food,
so is good news from a far country."
—Proverbs of Solomon.

[Theatrical 3d—Ngoaga 12/-

TSALA EA BEGOANA.

THE Friend of the Baccana,

Koranta sa morafe e e sa gobeleteng.

He sa lobeng maloko
He sa boifeng ope.

Wenkele eo Fensterre di tona
Go leba gana le Town Holo

THE BIG KIMBERLEY STORE

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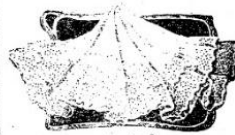
Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper

"As cold water is to a thirsty soul,
so good news is from a far country."

Tlhoatlhoa 34 Ngo 12 ka yose 15

RE NAME: THORPE, J. NICK: JAY: DOB: 1-1-1940: SEX: M: WGT:

Mekgabo na Bagadi, Dicono Isa kea Teng, Bolosire, Le Gierase, Dishushe, Kuforo Isa Ishipi, Paha Isa Majenilemqe Huishe Isa Basidi, Selika Isa Maledi jain jalo



2011年12月10日
 2011年12月10日
 2011年12月10日
 2011年12月10日

Re Ntsha Di Trading Stamps

UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS.
HIGH SCHOOL FOR NATIVES

SCHOOL, HIGHER

JUNIOR SCHOOL, HIGHER.

[illegible]

M. M. MANTKE, H. A.

Banna ! Banna. Bonang Fa !

For the case NYAFA, the results are similar to the NYAFA case.

⁸² For example, see the discussion by J. H. Dunning, "The Role of the State in Economic Development," *The Journal of Law and Economics*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1967), pp. 1-28.

[illegible]

SENEIRE

WALTER ADAMS
Siege Buildings opposite De Beers Road

KIMBERLEY.

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NOV 9 STATE DEPT

"As cold water is to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." Proverbs of Solomon.

VOL IV-No. 121

KIMBERLEY SATURDAY, MORANANG (APRIL) 26 - 1908

REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER

Re nale thota entsi ea dilo tsa Kemo

Re nale thota o ntsi ea dilo tsa kemo.
Mekgabo ea Basadi Bicono[tsa koa teng, Botlosiri, Le Dikranse, Dishushu, Kofotse tsa tshepi, Paka tsa Majantlemane Harshe tsa Basadi]
Selika se Maled iale iale.



Dikgole 5/6
15/6 se le sen
fela.

No. 4220 Hempel na Nainsuku
jaka mo:chon-cho 2/6 O.S., 2/11

No. 1243 M. cere
ko teng = N. in
sukin o o gakiame
ta-nr, o r i gaki
ome Th : low
4/11

N. 0002 K. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1.
N. 0002 K. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1.
... a ...
th. trong.

Dihutse tsa Basadi tse di Kgabisicoeng
18s. 6d. to 42s.

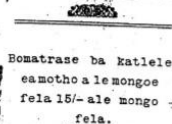
Koala re tla go romela Koala la Ntlohoatlhoa lo lo nang le diehoancho. Re Witsa Di Trading Stamps.

ABERDEIN & BUTT—MAITLAND STREET, BLOEMFONTEIN.

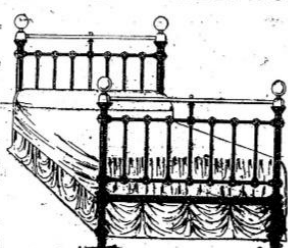
Chokotsa tlhathloa kametlhae:the.
 Wenkele la dilo tse di siameng.
 Lower Maitland Street, Bloemfontein

BA LO LALETSA GORE FA LO LE MO MANGAUNG LO ETELE SETORO SABONE
SE SEGOLO SESE NANG LE DILO DI LE DINTSI.

Ditsela tse difaphegileng tse di batlang kelotihoko e e faphegileng.



Bomatraxe ba katlele
eamotho a lemongoe
fela 15/- ale mongo
fela.



Bomatrasedakatl'ele ea
batho ba le babedi 25/-
a le mongoe fela.

Dikobotsa boboa 9/6 .le
12/6 e le ngoe fela.

Ukatshase ba go romele-
la dilo tse u di batlang
ko go ron u romela le madi
u tla thusisa gononako.

Katlele. ea motho a le mongoe fela 25/
Katlele ea batho ba le batedi 60- 65-
75/.

Dihempē tsa Majentle-
mane 2/6, 3/6, 4/6, 10
5/6, elengoefera.

Dipaka tsa Majentle-
nane tsa Tuidi tse di
pududu 25/-, le 35/-, go
ea kogo 75/- e le ngoe
fela.

Ditlhako tsamajentle-
mane tse dincho 10/6,
12/6, 15/- go ea kogo 25/.

Se senyetse madi a gago

nyane. Eako lebenKe-
leng je le tonna jaga
CHUDLEIGH u reke ka
tlhotlhoa eko tlase.



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Wishes of Merry Times & bright New Year to You

TSALA EA BATHO

"Tala, metse a tšiditi 'no morong
o greebeng mafoko a a monate a
fathe je le 'Tsala e a nne fela jalo."

THE PEOPLE'S FRIEND.

"As cold water is to a
boat so it goes news from a
country.—Proverbs of Solomon."

GOVT. STAMP

With which are incorporated: "Tsala ea Becoana," Kimberley and "Motsuallie oa Babatso," Johannesburg.

VOL. IV—No. 157]

KIMBERLEY, SATURDAY, FRIKONG, JANUARY 31, 1914

[Registered at the General Post
Office, Kimberley.]

"Umhlobo Wabantu."

The People's Friend.

Lidibaniise 1

TSALA EA BECOANA, Kimberley.

or

MOTSUALLE OA BABATS'O, Johannesburg.

LIPUMA NGANKANYE, NGAYO YONKE IMIQIBELO,

kwazindawo

Kimberley,

Johannesburg,

Pretoria,

Bloemfontein,

Nase

Thaba-Ncho.

IXABISO 3D.

OKANYE 158. NGONYAKA.

LINIKA ZONKE INDABA NGAPANDLE KOLOVICO

Libhalelwa ngu Nobhala jikelele we

South African Native National Congress.

I Arente ziyafuneka kuzo zonke indawo.

Bhalelani, Nitumele Intlaulo ku

The Editor,

"TSALA EA BATHO,"

BOX 143, KIMBERLEY.

Do you wish to Retire Early from Business?

Of course You Do!

Then ADVERTISE in the

Tsala ea Batho

The Great Bi-lingual Native Organ

(SECHUANA and XOSA.)

Edited by the Corresponding Secretary,

South African Native National Congress

Published simultaneously every Saturday Morning at

Kimberley, Potchefstroom, Johannesburg, Pretoria,

Bloemfontein & Thaba-Ncho.

Notice "GOVERNMENT GAZETTE" for the Union of South Africa
Nearly every Post from North, South, East and West brings fresh Subscriptions
Write for Particulars to

The EDITOR,

TSALA EA BATHO

Box 143, Kimberley.

It will increase your NATIVE TRADE.

This is Time You

ADVERTISE

Your

TRADE

Figure 36: A full front-page promotion of *Tsala ea Batho* profiling its influence, impact, and significance in the black press

Notes. It also sought to cement *Tsala's* relationship with the South African Native National Congress and to attract much-needed subscribers and advertisers.

Source: *Tsala ea Batho* (31 January 1914, p. 1)

TSALA EA BATHO.

"Jaka metse a tsididi
mo moeng o nyoriloeng
mafoko a a monote a fat'se
jelo k'akala a ntse fela
jalo."

THE PEOPLE'S FRIEND,

GOVT. STAT. DEPT.

"As cold water is to a
thirsty soul is good news
from a jail."
P. 100 of 30

Incorporated with "Tsala ea Becoana," Kimberley & "Motsuallie oa Babatso," John

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER.]

VOL. IV.]

KIMBERLEY, SATURDAY, JUNE (SEETEBOSIGO), 20, 1914.

Native Recruiting Corporation Ltd.

Chairman :

General Superintendent :

C. W. VILLIERS.

H. M. TABERER.

Maina a Metlobo cothe le a beng ha metlathelo ke a, le a beng ha cone :

Nanga Amagama emigodi no magama abagati benkomponi :

MINE.	SISUTO NAME.	XOSA & ZULU NAME.	COMPOUND MANAGER	NATIVE NAME
Aurora West United G.M. Co., Ltd.	Sibinyane.	Sibinyane.	J. L. Blaine	Maletlo
Bantjes Cons. Mines, Ltd.	Ha Etachani.	Etants'eni	T. H. C. Garner	U. M. Ba
Brakpan Mines, Ltd.	Brakpan.	Brakpani.	V. T. Harrison	Maletlo
City Deep, Ltd.	Ha Siti Deep.	Majon-bolo.	P. T. Alexander	Baba
Cons. Langlaagte Mines, Ltd.	Krisisi.	Eksisi.	W. S. Taft	Maletlo
Crown Mines Ltd., comprising:				
Crown Deep.	Mafestere.	Mafestile.	S. K. McKenzie.	McKenzie
Crown Reef.	Ha Mafopoka.	Mayumbuka.	C. E. Howe	N. M. Ba
Robinson Central Deep.	Ha Robinson Centr.	Pikinini Komponi.	E. Kukard	Kukard
Langlaagte Deep & No. 12 Shaft.	Pikinini Kimbiri.	Pikinini Kimbiri.	T. G. Cochran	Madolo
South Rand.	South Rand.	South Rand.	J. W. Lawrence.	Nis'ibona
Cons. Main Reef Mines & Estate Ltd.	Maboya.	Maboya.	F. W. Blockley	Maboya
Durban Rodepoort G.M. Co., Ltd	Mtonono.	Mtonono.	G. W. d	Skokan
Durban Rodepoort Deep, Ltd.	Ha Mohlati.	Mhlathi.	T. E. Thompson	Mehwana
East Rand Prop. Mines, Ltd., comprising				
Angelo.	Nyonif Mohlophie	Nyonif Mhlope.	G. Blair Hook	Sigumba
Cason.	Bobo.	Bobo.	A. P. Norton	Mataman
Driefontein.	Matamane.	Matamane.	S. R. Haines	Mbula
Hercules & Angelo Deep.	Mzikinya.	Mzikinya.	G. F. Lipp	Baka Baka
New Comet.	Komete.	Komete.		
Blue Sky.	(Closed down).			
Ferreira Deep, Ltd., comprising				
Ferreira Deep, Ltd.	Pashfash.	Fasifasi.	L. W. Laver	Lomane
Ferreira G.M. Co., Ltd.	Bobo.	Bobo.		
Golden Deep, Ltd., comprising:				
Golden Deep.	Ha Mateketi.	Mkanywana	A. S. Edmunds	M. M. Langwana
Jumpers Deep.	Jomposo Deep.	Bobo.	D. W. Robertson	N. M. Ba
Glencairn Main Reef G.M. Co., Ltd.	Makause.	Makause.	G. S. Lishman	M. M. Langwana
Geduld Prop. Mines, Ltd.	Geduld.	Geduld.	L. W. Jenner	M. M. Langwana
Ginsberg G.M. Co., Ltd.	Madoda.	Madoda.	H. P. Gaze	M. M. Langwana
Govt. G.M. Areas (Modder.) Cons., Ltd	Inkosi.	Inkosi.	J. P. Crosbie	M. M. Langwana
Knight Central, Limited	Ha Mfithshane.	Mfithshane.	E. Trollip	M. M. Langwana
Knight's Deep, Ltd., comprising				
Knight's Deep (East Section).	Tandabantu	Tandabantu.	J. P. Moseley	M. M. Langwana
Simmer & Jack East (West Section).	Mlongwana.	Mlongwana.	R. H. Smith	M. M. Langwana
Meyer & Charlton G.M. Co., Ltd.	Mahleki.	Mahleki.	G. D. Clarenc	M. M. Langwana
May Consolidated G.M. Co., Ltd	Ha Stanyule.	Kwa Stanyule.	F. F. Curran	M. M. Langwana
Modderfontein "B" Gold Mines, Limited	Mangaca.	Mangaca.	A. H. G. Pigg	M. M. Langwana
Main Reef West, Ltd.	Maboya Deep.	Maboya Deep.	J. W. Blockley	M. M. Langwana
Modder Deep Levels.	Mpondweni.	Mpondweni.	R. J. Judd	M. M. Langwana
New Goch Gold Mines, Ltd.	George Goch.	George Goch (Kwa Mafuta.)	R. E. Lagerwall	M. M. Langwana
New Kleinfontein G.M. Co., Ltd.	Mpholo.	Mpholo.	J. K. Hirst	M. M. Langwana
New Modderfontein G.M. Co., Ltd.	Mphlati.	Mphlati.	T. Duff	M. M. Langwana
New Primrose G.M. Co., Ltd.	Sincaunqau.	Sincaunqau.	R. Bodley	M. M. Langwana
New United Main Reef G.M. Co., Ltd.	Mashangana.	Mashangana.	E. Hurford	M. M. Langwana
Nourse Mines, Ltd.	Madonela.	Madonela.	C. Y. Brabant	M. M. Langwana
Princess Estate & G.M. Co., Limited.	Mazambane.	Mazambane.	H. F. Ottoway	M. M. Langwana
Robinson G.M. Co., Ltd.	Kweloni.	Kweloni.	M. C. H. Bradbury	M. M. Langwana
Rodepoort United Main Reef G.M. Co., Limited.	Ha Goodwin or Mohlepula.	Kwa Goodwin (Mhlepula.)	G. A. Langton	M. M. Langwana
Robinson Deep G.M. Co., Ltd.	Nkonyama.	Nkonyama.	G. St. Leger Devenish	M. M. Langwana
Rose Deep, Ltd., comprising:				
Glen Deep.	Nyosana.	Nyosana.	I. Crosbie	M. M. Langwana
Rose Deep.	Rose Deep.	Rose Deep.	do	M. M. Langwana
Simmer & Jack Prop. Mines Ltd.	David (Simmeren) Jeké	Dambaza.	G. W. Smith	Dambaza
Sub-Nigel, Limited.	Dipi.	Dipi.	G. E. Rawlinson.	M. M. Langwana
Simmer Deep, Limited.	Susane.	Susane.	F. M. Pearse	Susane
Spring Mines, Limited.	Nkotshane (Springs).	Nkotshane (Springs.)	E. W. Granger	M. M. Langwana
Vangyn Gold Mines Estate, Ltd	Tomase (Van Ryn).	Mas Thomase.	H. Owen	M. M. Langwana
Van Ryn Deep, Limited.	Masambane.	Masambane.	N. J. Crosby	M. M. Langwana
Village Deep, Limited.	Vinshi.	Madonela.	C. J. Becharan	M. M. Langwana
Vogelstruis Estate & Gold Mines, Ltd.	Mafastel Rodepoort.	Mafestile Rodepoort.	D. W. Swan	M. M. Langwana
Village Main Reef G.M. Co., Limited.	Ha Mapokomela.	Mabokumela.	F. S. Pelframan	M. M. Langwana
Witwatersrand G.M. Co., Limited.	Ha Mafutha.	Mafutha.	H. L. Mills	M. M. Langwana
Wolhuter G.M. Co., Limited.	Duma.	Duma.	E. G. McEwan	M. M. Langwana
Witwatersrand Deep, Limited.	Masikinke.	Masikinke.	R. A. Keell	M. M. Langwana
West Rand Consolidated Mines, Limited	Ha Mfithshane.	Mfithshane (Mbona.)	D. B. Russel.	M. M. Langwana

Figure 37: The font of The People's Friend moniker changed with the new advert from the Native Recruiting Corporation Ltd

Source: Tsala ea Batho (20 June 1914, p. 1)

Tsala ea Batho

"Jaka metse a tsididi
mo moeng o nyorileong
mafoko a monate a lat'se
tela kgakala a mte fela
tela."

THE PEOPLE'S FRIEND,

"As cold water is to a
thirsty soul is good news
from a far country."
P. REVERIS of Solomons.

Incorporated with "Tsala ea Becoana," Kimberley & "Motsuallie oa Babatso," Johannesburg.

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER.]

VOL. V.]

KIMBERLEY, SATURDAY, JULY PHUKO, 24, 1915.

[No. 229]

Native Recruiting Corporation, Ltd

Chairman :
General Superintendent

C. W. VILLIERS.
H. M. TABERER.

Malua a Metlobo cotibe le a beng ba metlhatlho ka, le a beng ba cono
Nanga Amagama emigodi na magama abogati benkompol:

MINE.	SESUTO NAME.	KOSA & ZULU NAME.	COMPOUND MANAGER.	NATIVE NAME.
Aurora West United G.M. Co., Ltd.	Sibinyane.	Sibinyane.	J. L. Blaine	Madubula
Bantjes Cons. Mines, Ltd.	Ha Ebachani.	Ebanisheni	T. H. C. Garner	Umhlaba
Brakpan Mines, Ltd.	Brakpan.	Blakpani.	V. T. Harrison	Mashigela
City Deep, Ltd.	Ha Siti Deep.	Majombolo.	P. T. Alexander,	Bobo
Cons. Langlaagte Mines, Ltd.	Krisisi.	Eksisi.	W. S. Taft	Mafuta
Crown Mines Ltd., comprising:				
Crown Deep.	Mafestere.	Mafestile.	S. K. McKenzie.	McKenzie.
Crown Reef.	Ha Mafopoka.	Mavumbuka.	C. E. Howe	Ngqondela
Robinson Central Deep.	Ha Robinson Central	Pikinini Komponi.	E. Kukard	Kukat
Langlaagte Deep & No. 12 Shaft.	Pikinini Kimbali.	Pikinini Kimbali.	T. G. Cochrane	Madolo
South Rand.	South Rand.	South Rand.	J. W. Lawrence	Ntshindana
Cons. Main Reef Mines & Estate Ltd.	Maboya.	Maboya.	G. Wood	Maboya
Durban Roodpoort G.M. Co., Ltd.	Mtonono.	Mtonono.	T. E. Thompson	Skokian
Durban Roodpoort Deep, Ltd.	Ha Mohlati.	Mhlati.		Mehlwana
East Rand Prop. Mines, Ltd., comprising:				
Angelo.	Nyoni Mohlopho	Nyoni Mhlope.	G. Blair Hook	Sigumba
Cason.	Bobo.	Bobo.	A. F. Norton	Mataman
Driefontein.	Mataman.	Matamahe.	S. R. Haines	Mbula
Hercules & Angelo Deep.	Makinya.	Mzikinya.	(Compound closed)	
New Comet.	Komete.	Komete.	G. F. Tripp	Beka-Beka
Blue Sky.	(Closed down).			
Ferreira Deep, Ltd., comprising:				
Ferreira Deep, Limited.	Fashash.	Fasifasi.	E. Weaver	Longone
Ferreira G.M. Co., Ltd.	Bobo.	Bobo.		do
Geldenhuis Deep, Ltd., comprising:				
Geldenhuis Deep.	Ha Matekoto.	Mkonywana	A. S. Edmunds	Mahlabangwana
Jumpers Deep.	Jonposo Deep.	Bobo.	D. W. Robertson	Nkomiyahlaba
Glencairn Main Reef G.M. Co., Ltd.	Makausi.	Makausi.	G. S. Lishman	Mangangamela
Geduld Prop. Mines, Ltd.	Geduld.	Geduld.	L. W. Jenner	Mazitulele
Ginsberg G.M. Co., Ltd.	Madoda.	Madoda.	H. P. Gaze	Mpanthlana
Govt. G.M. Areas (Nodder.) Cons., Ltd.	Inkesi.	Inkesi.	J. P. Crosbie	Mgoni
Knight Central, Limited.	Ha Mlithshane.	Mlithshane.	E. Trollip	Sompungana
Knight's Deep, Ltd., comprising:				
Knight's Deep (East Section).				
Simmer & Jack East (West Section.)	Tandabantu.	Tandabantu.	J. B. Moseley	Ntshindana
Meyer & Charlton G.M. Co., Ltd.	Mtongwana.	Mtongwana.	R. H. Smith	Mazitulele
May Consolidated G.M. Co., Ltd.	Mahleko.	Mahleko.	G. D. Clarence	Matateni
Modderfontein "B" Gold Mines, Limited.	Ha Stanyule.	Kwa-Stanyule.	E. E. Currin	Ntsekezu
Main Reef West, Ltd.	Mangaca.	Mangaca.	A. H. G. Pigg	Maspigg
Modder Deep Levels.	Maboya Deep.	Maboya Deep.	J. W. Blockley	Maboya
New Goch Gold Mines, Ltd.	Mpondweni.	Mpondweni.	R. J. Judd	N'pondweni
New Kleinfontein G.M. Co., Ltd.	George Goch	George Goch (Kwa Mafuta).	R. E. Lagerwall	Bo
New Modderfontein G.M. Co., Ltd.	Mpholo.	Mpholo.	J. K. Hirst	Maqaga
New Primrose G.M. Co., Ltd.	Mohlathe.	Mhlati.	T. Duff	Dlovu
New Unified Main Reef G.M. Co., Ltd.	Pimlosi.	Sinqunqau.	R. Bodley	Bobo
Nourse Mines, Ltd.	Mashangana.	Mashangana.	E. Hurford	Unguni
Princess Estate & G.M. Co., Limited.	Madonela.	Madonela.	C. Y. Brabant	Masenengane
Robinson G.M. Co., Ltd.	Mazambane.	Mazambane.	H. F. Ottoway	Mlithshane
Roodpoort United Main Reef G.M. Co., Limited.	Ha Robinson e Mohoia.	Kweloni.	M. C. H. Bradbury	Madevu
Robinson Deep G.M. Co., Ltd.	Ha Goodwin or Mohlepuia.	Kwa Goodwin (Mhlepuia).	G. A. Langton	Nganencane
Rose Deep, Ltd., comprising:	Ngonyama.	Ngonyama.	G. St. Leger Devenish	Longone
Glen Deep.				
Rose Deep.	Nyosana.	Nyosana.	F. Crosbie	Manguke.
Simmer & Jack Prop. Mines Ltd.	Rose Deep.	Losi Deep	do	
Sub-Nigel, Limited.	David (Simmeren) Jeka.	Dambuza.	G. W. Smit.	Dambuza
Simmer Deep, Limited.	Dipi.	Dipi.	G. E. Rawlinson.	Malanguza
Springs Mines, Limited.	Susane.	Susane.	E. M. Pearse	Susane
Van Ryn Gold Mines Estate, Ltd.	Nkotshane (Springs).	Nkotshane (Springs).	E. W. Granger	Mazinyo
Van Ryn Deep, Limited.	Tomase (Van Ryn).	Mas Thomas.	H. Owen	Unyasa
Village Deep, Limited.	Masambane.	Masambane.	N. J. Crosby	Longone
Vogelstruis Estate & Gold Mines, Ltd.	Vinishi.	Madonela.	C. J. Buchanan	Nkomvhlaba
Village Main Reef G.M. Co., Limited.	Mafestel Roodpoort.	Mafestel Roodpoort.	D. W. Swan	Mahewu
Witwatersrand G.M. Co., Limited.	Ha Mapokomla.	Mabukumela	E. S. Palframan	Umhlelazi
Witwatersrand Deep, Limited.	Ha Mafutha.	Mafuta.	H. I. Mills	Milis.
West Rand Consolidated Mines, Limited	Duma.	uma.	E. G. McEwan	Matweni.
	Masikinke.	Makingi.	R. A. Keell	Mabalana or Mqangweni.
	Ha Mfichane.	Mfithane (Mboma).	D. B. Russell	Sebenyana.

Figure 38: The last front page of *Tsala ea Batho*

Notes. For a stretch of over a year, the design was kept the same, showing a rare consistency, perhaps pointing to other commercial issues at play, such as the financial stress that had befallen the paper and that stifled creativity. Also worth noting is that Plaatje was overseas and therefore not as hands-on as he had been in previous years and editions, which were often spruced up and freshened.

Source: *Tsala ea Batho* (24 July 1915, 1)

The front pages of *Koranta ea Becoana*, *Tsala ea Becoana*, and *Tsala ea Batho* show a constant change towards refinement that would resonate with its readers. In the samples shown, I recorded the biggest transformations over the years as well as what may be considered small cosmetic changes. This is to show the fluidity of publishing at that time and how, while a new audience was being developed and groomed, this allowed space for constant experimentation and innovation.

The pages moved from being bland, with rows and rows of text, unimaginative use of fonts and sizes, as well the absence of imagery, as shown in Figure 39 (*Koranta*, 7 September 1901, p. 2), to an appealing presentation that showed skill in design, attention to detail, and compartmentalisation or demarcation between editorial and advertorial, as illustrated in Figure 40 (*Koranta*, 16 August 1902, p. 2).



Figure 39: Bland page, with rows and rows of text, unimaginative use of fonts and sizes, as well the absence of imagery – Issue of *Koranta* (7 September 1901)

Source: *Koranta* (7 September 1901, p. 2)

11.4 Design and layout – use of font and size, graphics, and images/photographs

The first image of a human to appear in *Koranta ea Becoana* was that of a Mr J.J. Du Preez of Warrenton (shown in Figure 41) as part of the Dr William's Pink Pills advertorial in 1903 (*Koranta*, 16 September 1903, p. 4). The second image was that of the family of Kgosi J.L. Moloto of Moloto, Pietersburg, Transvaal (depicted in Figure 42), also part of the Dr William's Pink Pills advertorial (*Koranta*, 16 September 1903, p. 7). This is further evidence that the design element of the early black press was driven primarily by advertising companies. There was much more innovation and creativity from advertisers to draw attention to their products, and editorial content benefited from this too. As Peter Limb points out, there was a limited use of images in the black press because newspapers such as *Abantu-Batho* were cash-strapped and lacked technical expertise. Limb also says that imagery, such as cartoons, were of the advertisers (Limb, 2012, p. 32).



Figure 41: The first image of a human to appear in *Koranta ea Becoana*

Source: *Koranta* (16 September 1903, p. 4)

KORANTA EA BECOANA (BECHUANA GAZETTE), LOBODABARO, LUBETSE, 16, 1903.

Sechomane se se nang le Mshaka.



HELA BAROLONG.
Le Becoana lotlhe,
Koa Lebenteleng ya Becoana
(Koa Maphahane)

GO GOROGILI
MABELE... MEBILI... MAUPE

le methale-thale ea liloana
tse li rekisioang ka tlhoa-
tlhoa tse li koa tlase ga
tsa toropo.

Tiang lo Boneng; Tiang lo tseba-tebeleng mo
Lewenkeleng yaga SETA-YEABO.
Mo goo ra ROELANE.

MOROKA INSTITUTE.
Go butlega ASSIST. TEACHER, ka bonako eo o
nang le kico ea go ruta Standard IV.
Application le qualifications, li tla amogela go fitlisa
la 18th. September, 1903. Tiro go simolola ka
1st. Oct. 1903.
Ka taela ea Schools' Committee.
I. M. COBONYANE.
Principal, Moroka Institute.
Thaba Nchu O.R.C.

**Sekole sa Lesseyton sa
Baroetsana sa Lithuto
le Litiro.**

KAGO e oketse ka kago e ncha ea Sekole.
Pelo fa sekole se se gone ga go na botlha,
Sekole se lekola ke Lekgotla ya Thuto ya
Koloni. Baroetsana ba rufon go khutla ka
Standard sa shesha, thuto eotlhe ele e e
lekelang ka tirong tsa ntlo le tsa thimo.
Tumelo le thuto tsa Bebele li mo thuteng
ea Mookani.
Go nala manno a batho ba se kae fa golimo
ga paloe e gone.

F. W. Beech.
Mafeking
Mafeking ea ba masimane ba "Singer"
Ba masimane ba leego thutathuthe ya bona ke C8. Fa
nangwe a noma nala se ke tla hakele tereka go kha-
tla mo Lobatse.
Fa a a go thutathuthe nangwe tsa go masimane bakeng, kono bakeng
J.W. Beech
Box 11
Mafeking

W. RUSSELL & Co.
Butuwayo Road.

KITSISHO E E BOGALE MO BANCHUNG.

W. RUSSELL, ka MAFIKING, o oketse go bolokele
Becoana lotlhe fa e e maphahane, eo e nomaletang
bheke lea Kanderdian le la Bets le Kofffontein.
Eo e nomaletang go ena Johannesburg o ka noma tla le
go o tla nomaletang. Satefo na gague se lekgotla ya
Betshe sa Tervet, le tla leona likhato tsa tseba le
nangwe. Tla tseba tseba ka noma, le tla le tseba noma
le tla le tseba noma. E tseba o noma liloana tse
tseba tseba tse o o rekisioang ka thutathuthe tse o o tseba
tseba tseba tse o o rekisioang ka thutathuthe tse o o tseba

Figure 42: The second image of humans to appear in *Koranta ea Becoana*

Source: *Koranta* (16 September 1903, p. 7)

More human images followed in subsequent editions. These included the likes of Miss Johanna du Preez of Vaal Krantz (*Koranta*, 23 September 1903, p. 7), a man with a top hat on horseback who joined the sheep and cow image in the Flynn advertisement (*Koranta*, 30 September 1903, p. 3), and an image of Mr BJ Willemse of Vryburg (*Koranta*, 28 October 1903, p. 7).

While the first object to be illustrated in *Koranta* was the store of J. Gerrans in Mafeking in the 14 February 1903 issue (*Koranta*, 14 February 1903, p. 6), visual content soon became more frequent. Examples include a graphic of a bicycle in a G. Rowley advertisement (*Koranta*, 11 November 1903, p. 8) and a striking pictorial spread featuring four farming images. This special, courtesy of *Umhlobo Wesminya* from Marianhill (a Trappist institution), showcased various ploughing methods around the world: cattle in the US, camel in Arabia, horse in Egypt,

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Source: *Koranta* (18 November 1903, p. 6)

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11.5 Typography: Usage of space, columns, headlines, font, size, and number of stories on a page



Figure 45: Crammed content in *Tsala ea Bechoana*

Source: *Tsala* (10 September 1910, p. 3)

The schizophrenic and chaotic riot of design, fonts, and sizes – difficult to read and unattractive to the eye, with crammed and dense content – reflects the space constraints the newspaper faced 10 weeks earlier when production started in Kimberley (*Tsala ea Bechoana*, 10 September 1910, p. 3). The situation worsened as the font size was further reduced to cram in all the content, resulting in difficult reading and minimal design elements, as depicted in Figure 46.

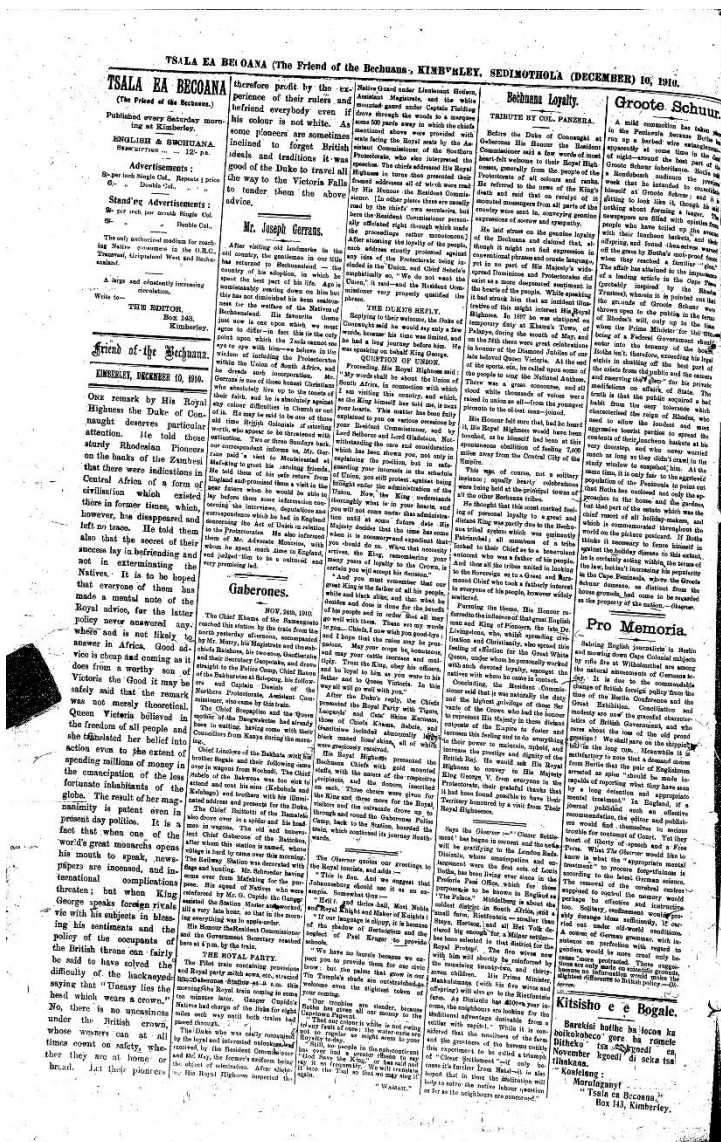


Figure 46: Small size letters and few design elements in *Tsala ea Becoana*

Source: *Tsala* (10 December 1910)

Tsala ea Becoana started in July 1910, with great promise in terms of page layout and design. There was less promiscuity. However, the headlines remained as titles or labels, a tradition that Barnhurst and Nerone (2001, p. 197) say comes from the book and the form of advertisements. The headlines in *Tsala* were simplified and truncated in a horizontal layout and attractive typography by 1912. Barnhurst and Nerone (2001, p. 198) highlight that modernism turned the headline into 'a pointed summary of the news' and no longer just a table of contents. It carried codes of news value and cultural codes were embedded. The stories in *Tsala* followed a horizontal layout as well as neat and clear partitions to mark content (*Tsala ea Becoana*, 10 December 1910, p. 2). The use of illustration, in the form of images and advertisements,

transported the reader to the new decade, the second of the 20th century, with commercial representations prominent (*Tsala ea Becoana*, 10 December 1910, p. 3).

There were benefits to be enjoyed from the exchange papers. In 1911, *Tsala ea Becoana* ran an article on world wars under the title *Dintoa-Ntoa*, along with sketches of Victor Emmanuel III, King of Italy, and Mohamed V, Sultan of Turkey. The write up was a feature of newsmakers and personalities, taken from *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, as shown in Figure 47 (*Tsala ea Becoana*, 4 November 1911, p. 3)



Figure 47: Newsmakers featured in *Tsala*

Source: *Tsala* (4 November 1911, p. 3)

The new layout introduced in 1911 had eight columns, up from seven and five, with many more visual elements and the use of graphics, including carts and human hands. A £100 prize was thrown in as part of a competition for fountain pens as shown in Figure 49 (*Tsala ea Becoana*, 2 December 1911, p. 4).



Figure 48: Layout with eight columns – *Tsala ea Becoana*

Source: *Tsala* (2 December 1911, p. 4)

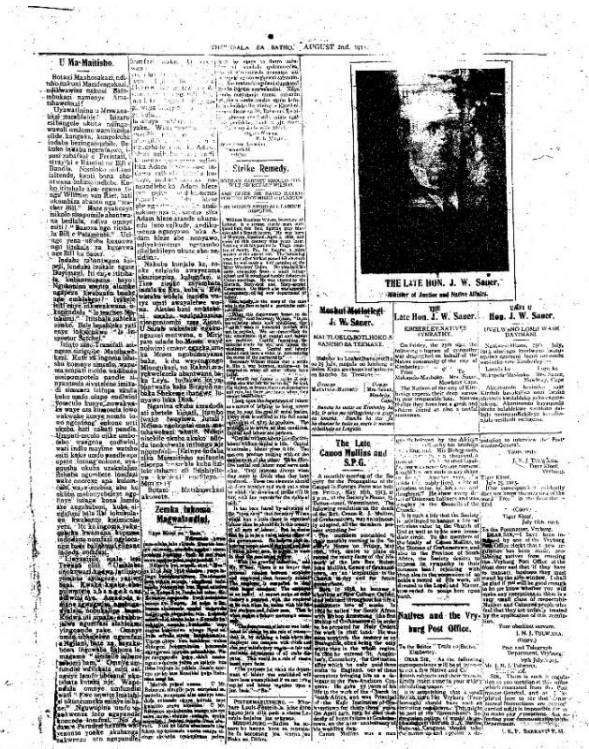


Figure 49: New layout and design elements introduced in 1913

Notes. A photograph of the late Hon. J.W. Sauer, Minister of Justice and Native Affairs, is shared with a letter about Kimberley 'natives' expressing their sympathy to Mrs Sauer, from Makapela-Mashoko, published in Setswana, English, and isiXhosa.

Source: *Tsala* (2 August 1913, p. 3)



Figure 50: The Mexican Trouble: Movie poster design in 1914

Notes. Three prominent photos were arranged across the top half of the page: President Wilson of the United States; President Huerta of Mexico, seated on a long chair; and the American ambassador, whom some believed brought the Trouble about. Three strong characters and stars set the scene for narration.

Source: *Tsala* (25 April 1914, p. 4)

11.6 Discussion

The newspapers have one prominent feature, which is the absence of the byline. In fact, the presence of a byline became 'an occasion', to borrow the words of Natasha Erlank. There are a few articles that are clearly marked as authored by Plaatje or by other correspondents from

Thaba Ncho or Johannesburg. Specialist writers, such as P. Sidzumo, received bylines. Barnhurst and Nerone (2001, p. 201) note that the byline ‘to a significant degree recognises the reporter’s subjectivity. The discovery of the subjectivity of the perceiving individual is one of the prominent features of the modernist movement’. The letters were also signed, in some cases with pseudonyms or acronyms such as L.L.L.L.L.M.M., which made no sense, so that the identity of the author could not be guessed.

As early as 1903, Plaatje experimented with visual imagery; whether this was an elementary graphic showing livestock or an agricultural implement, he was at pains to position his offering as modern and current. Barnhurst and Nerone argue that illustration indicates an awareness of subjectivity. Furthermore, they say that the existence of illustration in the news indicates ‘an initial engagement with modernism’ (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 201).

The number of pages that comprised each edition over the years hold some important clues to the business of the newspapers. The periods of stability are marked by a consistent number of pages, as well as by advances in design and layout. The drastic reduction in the number of pages is often concomitant with a stifled and conservative approach to design and layout. One can therefore deduce that Plaatje’s financial woes and other challenges that befell his enterprise were reflected in the form of the newspaper he produced.

Looking at the evolution of the front page, it is evident that there was a marked improvement over the years. Perhaps more interesting to note is the momentum that the newspaper, especially *Koranta ea Becoana*, had gained before its collapse. Assessing the editions of 1903, it attracted advertisers, and the front page became a competitive site as commercial interests jostled for space. This seems to have been short-lived, as the demise of the paper began in 1903 and accelerated in 1904, culminating in its total collapse in 1909. Plaatje was back in business in 1910 with a new title, *Tsala ea Becoana*, which would propel him back to the position of influence that *Koranta* had managed to achieve a few years earlier. With the advancement of time and technology, *Tsala ea Becoana* showed a significant increase in design elements, including images, graphics, and photographs. In many ways, it picked up the momentum *Koranta* had in 1903. After it rebranded to *Tsala ea Batho*, the newspaper continued to showcase storytelling devices and the use of images in its form and presentation. With the absence of Plaatje in Kimberley as part of the SANNC deputation in England, the newspaper relied on syndicated content to a greater extent than before. However, judging by the stagnant front page, one may conclude that while it met the needs of a committed long-term advertiser,

this did nothing to make the newspaper appealing to readers through imaginative design or presentation.

11.7 Conclusion

The three newspapers provided Plaatje with a platform to experiment with form and convey a message of allegiance and identity through Christianity, utilising scriptures. The three periods of the newspapers are quite distinctive. The early years, from 1901 to 1903, of *Koranta ea Becoana* are marked by modest beginnings and modernist influences, which is evident on the pages as they become more design-oriented and include more visual cues. *Tsala ea Becoana* represents the intermediate years whereby the newspaper built on the momentum of *Koranta ea Becoana*. The design became modern and competitive, and the presentation of stories – using various visual devices – reflected a well-thought-out process and a clear intention to elevate the news offering. This was achieved by taking advantage of the privileges afforded by exchange papers such as the *Cape Times*, *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, and *Umhlobo Wesminya* from Marianhill, from which Plaatje sourced images and photographs. The years of *Tsala ea Batho* represented an apogee in terms of physical appearance and form before things declined towards the end. The paper slowed down in its innovation and creativity, partly because of the absence of Plaatje as the de facto project leader of the enterprise and also because of the financial strain the business came under.

This section presented the form that the newspapers took and looked for the meaning behind the advances in designs as well as the decline in innovation. The analysis shows that Plaatje, and the black press, could not fit neatly into a single category as espoused by Barnhurst and Nerone's global and transnational lens of journalism. This is so because of the exceptional colonial and African circumstances in which the newspapers operated. Plaatje's newspapers seem to be closest to a hybrid of the partisan and Victorian forms with modernist influences. This fusion was better suited to serve a nascent Setswana public sphere. Looking at the framework of Barnhurst and Nerone, the Printerly form dating to pre-19th century was characterised by small, text-heavy, haphazard presentation that put the focus on disseminating information by printers and not editors. The partisan form of the early 19th century was editor-driven, politically engaged, and carried advocacy and an ideology, while the layout was simple and reflected an editorial voice. The Victorian form from the mid to late 19th century was a professionalised operation with a structured visual presentation of columns and headlines. It was targeted at authority and a broad appeal. It also bore industrial and imperial values. By the 20th century, newspapers had become standardised, visually complex, and driven by advertising and mass readership as per the Modern form.

So where does that leave Plaatje? One concludes that it is the partisan-Victorian lens with Modern leanings that best encapsulates the journalistic form Plaatje took. The newspaper carried the partisan features of being editor-centric and serving as a platform for advocacy and mobilisation. Furthermore, the editorial dominance is seen in how Plaatje wrote and curated most of the content, and his 'voice' gave the newspapers an identity. His political advocacy on issues such as trains, war compensation, disarmament, incorporation of Mafikeng into Transvaal, taxation, labour, Natives Land Act, and unfair acts of the Union aimed at the disempowered African is in line with a partisan focus on ideological campaigning. His focus on a community of mission-educated African and Setswana speakers and readers echoes partisan tendencies. The use of simple, text-heavy designs with few illustrations, minimal headlines, editorial, and letters put a premium on message over visual refinement, and this is seen as a reinforcement of partisanship (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, pp. 14–16, 63–65).

Turning to the Victorian tendencies of the era's global print culture, Plaatje's use of Setswana and English was aimed at educating and elevating his readers; he adopted a formal tone and structured arguments in the style of Victorian journalism. He hankered after universal principles of justice and fairness in his writings, pitching his newspapers as moral counters to what was peddled by colonial publications. The structure of the newspaper may not have been as visually elaborate as those of Victorian dailies, but the consistent, neat columns and headlines pointed to a better-organised and professional offering (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, pp. 17, 81–84, 105).

The Modern tendencies of the Industrial paper are mainly observed in the standardised paper and reliance on advertising. Plaatje's papers carried some visually appealing advertising, and its business model was driven by the support of advertisers. The audience may not have been massive, but the numbers of sales and readership were pointing upward (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 188, 213).

In the final analysis, it is important to note that Plaatje's newspapers diverted from the linear Western trajectory drawn by Barnhurst and Nerone because of the colonial and racial context. These included the lack of resources and the precarious financial position the newspapers operated under, hence a simple partisan layout and no visual grandeur. The newspapers played a counterpublic role to a marginalised group, something that is not addressed by Barnhurst and Nerone. In the end, Plaatje's papers fell under the Modern form era, yet they were barely modern; instead, they fused partisan characteristics and Victorian sensibilities.

SECTION III

12. Who we are

12.1 Introduction

Molefi Kete Asante proclaims that Afrocentricity ‘seeks to discover African agency in every situation’. He explains that it concerns itself with questions such as: ‘Who are we?’ ‘What did we do?’ ‘Where did we travel?’ ‘What is our role in geometry?’ ‘How do we as a people function in this or that contemporary situation?’ (Asante, 1999, p. 50). The title of this chapter is inspired by these provocations and is offered as a response.

Furthermore, while it was not intended as such from the start, this study has ostensibly also been a response to a call made by Karen Haire. In her review of Brian Willan’s 2018 biography *Sol Plaatje: A life of Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, 1876-1932*, she wrote that ‘until we have plumbed the depths of his [Sol Plaatje’s] large “treasure-trove” of Setswana journalism as [Brian] Willan calls it, we risk overstating the case for his diplomacy and evenness’. She continued that ‘the scholarly excavation of his Setswana journalism may take time’ (Haire, 2020).

To frame this discussion, I lean on the scholarship of Asante which is grounded in the assertion that restoring and recentring African experience and ideas is vital for a genuine understanding of African realities, both in academic discourse and wider society. At the heart of his argument lies a powerful critique of Eurocentrism, which he contends has long dominated scholarship by framing European experiences, values, and knowledge systems as the universal standard. This dominance renders African perspectives invisible or peripheral, causing profound psychological, cultural, and intellectual harm.

Eurocentricity presents the particular historical reality of Europeans as the sum total of the human experience. It imposes Eurocentric realities as universal i.e., that which is white is presented as applying to the human condition in general, while that which is non-white is viewed as group-specific and therefore not human (Asante, 2014, p. 47).

To counteract these effects, Asante advocates an Afrocentric approach which intentionally centres African agency, culture, and history. He argues that this is not merely an academic exercise, but a necessary act of reclaiming dignity and voice. By placing African people at the core of their own narratives, Afrocentricity empowers them to act as agents and creators of

knowledge, rather than passive subjects or objects within someone else's historical framework. This shift has transformative implications: it enables African scholars and students to reclaim ownership of their identity, cultural legacy, and intellectual traditions.

Moreover, Asante's framework addresses the deep psychological and epistemic wounds inflicted by colonialism and systemic alienation. He introduces the concepts of dislocation, disorientation, and distortion to describe the consequences of uprooting Africans from their cultural and historical roots. Dislocation refers to the severing of ties to ancestral geographies and traditions, a violence experienced both by those on the continent and in the diaspora. Disorientation emerges from the imposition of foreign worldviews that fracture African identity, leaving individuals and communities unmoored. The deliberate misrepresentation of African histories and philosophies that push them out to the periphery as inferior while privileging Western paradigms produces distortion as epistemic violence (Asante, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2014, 2018; Asante & Ledbetter, 2016). These triple concepts underscore the urgency of Asante's Afrocentricity to restore and re-centre African perspectives. This would deal with the fissures of dislocation, reorient the mind and perception, and amend the distortions created by systemic alienation dating back centuries.

The key functions of restoring and recentring African experience and ideas in scholarship, according to Asante, are to reorient intellectual discourse toward African realities, heal the fissures created by centuries of colonisation and exclusion, and enable Africans to see themselves as the central actors in their own stories. This transformation not only benefits African societies but also enriches global scholarship by broadening the range of perspectives, values, and insights available to all.

The work of Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912) takes supreme importance as one of the earliest African intellectuals to correctly gauge the European tendency towards domination of Africa. He carved out the philosophy of Africanness to counter the pressure European cultures applied on the Africans and to mitigate the complications this would bring. As Robert July put it, 'he re-established the psychic and emotional sense of security of the African in the face of Europe's intrusion' (July, 1968, pp. 210, 232).

Blyden's belief was that each race had its contribution to make and that 'if the races were equal and complementary, it followed that each had its own culture to contribute to the totality of human civilisation' (July, 1968, p. 214). He cautioned against attempts by other races to destroy or swallow up others as 'wicked and immoral' because 'every race has a soul, and the soul of

the race finds expression in its institutions, and to kill those institutions is to kill the soul – a terrible homicide’ (July, 1968, p. 214).

July notes that there was a marked pushback against this intrusion, especially in West Africa, where Africans asserted their identity through clothing, language, ceremony, and custom, followed by political activities. An example he gave was the breakaway churches in Nigeria at the end of the 19th century. Newspapers that were oriented towards African Nationalism in Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and Nigeria also delivered sharp criticism of government policy (July, 1968, p. 209).

If Sierra Leone had Blyden, South Africa had William W. Gqoba. Ntongela Masilela points out that Gqoba was among the ‘first African poets to poeticize the intellectual discourse between Christians and Non-Christians about education and civilisation in the conflict between tradition and modernity’. He sought to conscientise Africans against the impending dislocation (Masilela, 2013, p. 12).

Fackson Banda makes a compelling argument that a knowledge of African political thought is necessary in people’s attempts to understand African media. Banda correctly argues that African political thought influenced the structure and function of media in Africa. He states that mass media has been implicated in the colonial, postcolonial, and neo-colonial experiences of Africa and that it is ‘inconceivable’ to separate discussions about African media and discussions about Africa’s colonial and anticolonial efforts (Banda, 2008, pp. 84, 91). Lastly, Banda argues that using the lens of African political thought when studying media helps to transgress Western analytical categories of African media cultures. This allows for Afrocentric knowledges and understandings of African media to be explored (Banda, 2008, p. 84).

Natasha Erlank indicates that as African nationalism spread, the form of the ‘partisan and printerly’ newspaper became a common format, maintaining momentum into the 20th century. She gives examples of the *Imvo Zabantsundu*, *Abantu-Batho*, *Indian Opinion*, and *Izwi la Bantu* (Erlank, 2019, p. 83). She explains that all mission schools subscribed to international newspapers, and visitors left behind copies of the newspapers they picked up in their travels around the world. As mission education recipients, these men [and women] were exposed to the world of letters and literacy (Erlank, 2019, pp. 90–91).

This was the world Plaatje, as a young reader, found himself immersed in, and possibly how his African nationalist sensibilities and consciousness might have been fanned. André Odendaal recounts the significant work done by *Imvo Zabantsundu*, the first independent black

newspaper, which he claims was disseminated in the Free State, the province where Plaatje was born in 1876. The Africans reported regularly about the conditions in the republic. One of the correspondents is identified as W.N. Somngesi of Rouxville, who described the Free State as a 'slave state' as early as 1891. Somngesi also had his letters published in the *Cape Mercury* and *De Express* of Bloemfontein (Odendaal, 2012, p. 169). By the 1890s, a teenage Plaatje had moved to Kimberley, where he worked at the post office as a messenger and was a regular reader of *Imvo* (Willan, 2018). It is reasonable to assume that this exposure to protest literature already sensitised, if not radicalised, him to the reality of the black experience.

Ntongela Masilela writes extensively about the New African Movement, which he describes as a 'historical intervention of the New African intelligentsia through political, cultural and intellectual praxis in the construction of African modernity in South Africa' (Masilela, 2013, p. 1). In this, one can deduce that the movement was a result of geo-political and geo-cultural shifts that moved a society steeped in tradition to confront Western influence. This group of intellectuals needed to construct a new reality and position themselves and their people in a different world and a new age of the 20th century that was not always welcoming or accommodating of their presence in it.

Masilela reveals that the editors of the black press were conscious of themselves as new Africans 'creatively establishing new epistemologies and new knowledges to rationally make sense of the historical meaning of the intervention of European modernity in African history' (Masilela, 2013, p. 14). The early writings of Plaatje and Pixley ka Isaka Seme were among the early constructs of the New African movement and Masilela links this to the founding of the Pan African Association and the Pan-African Conference organised by Sylvester Williams in London in 1900 (Masilela, 2013, p. 3). Williams was born in the Caribbean and came to South Africa to work as a barrister in 1903, making him the first black man to be called to the bar in the Cape Colony (*Koranta*, 4 November 1903, p. 4).

Masilela highlights that most of the learned amakholwa, were graduates of the missionary education system. Masilela agrees with Blyden and Asante above that this was 'an expression of the triumph of European colonialism and imperialism over the African peoples and their histories'. Masilela goes on to say that the educated were thankful for what the missionaries taught them but 'came to resent and eventually resisted their process of acculturation into Europeanism and Eurocentricism'. Masilela is correct to label it 'a profound historical conundrum'. Theirs was a tricky balancing act and a double-edged sword assignment. On the

one hand, they rejected ‘white domination and hegemony’ characterised by colonialism and imperialism, while on the other, they embraced European modernity ‘with the intent of transforming it into African modernity’. It was about constructing a new hybrid society from the ground up that ‘would transcend African tradition while in a state of continual dialogue with it’ (Masilela, 2013, p. 1).

The work of Antonio Gramsci (1971) is useful in understanding colonial societies and the dynamics of hegemony and power. Gramsci explains hegemony as the process by which the ruling class secures the consent of the subordinate classes by shaping cultural, intellectual, and moral norms so that the dominant ideology appears natural, just, or ‘common sense’. Institutions such as schools, churches, and media play a crucial role in spreading and reinforcing dominant ideologies, making the existing power structure seem inevitable and legitimate.

Gramsci holds that where there is power, there is resistance which often takes shape in the cultural arena. However, for the resistance and an alternative social order to take root, there would need to be a strategic and long-term struggle. Gramsci brings in the concept of counter-hegemony, whereby subordinate groups challenge the prevailing dominant ideology. This is waged through a ‘war of position’ in the form of alternative institutions and narratives aimed at undermining hegemony and fostering a new ‘common sense’ that reflects the interests of the oppressed. A facilitator from the subordinate class, in the manner of an ‘organic intellectual’, plays a cardinal role in organising resistance and entrenching a revolutionary worldview among their people – the facilitators are, in effect, project managers of a coherent political campaign.

Gramsci suggests that a ‘historical bloc’ is formed when resistance is successful. This is a social force of ideology, culture, and economic interests aligning to challenge the ruling order. In applying Gramsci to Plaatje’s newspapers, these can be seen as counter-hegemonic instruments which challenged the colonial hegemony of white supremacy and economic exploitation to build an alternative narrative and to create a new common sense. Plaatje himself emerges as an organic intellectual who used the power of the black press to articulate black grievances, foster unity, and uphold African cultural identities. This is highlighted in Gramsci as the press’s role in the war of position, building a new historical bloc transforming society.

Plaatje’s newspapers provide insights into the new society that was shaping up. As traditional African customs and practices were undermined by colonial influence and fundamental changes occurred, the people had to chart a new way forward in which they could see

themselves as subjects and not objects. From an Afrocentric scholarship approach, these publications may be viewed as tools to assert African agency and resistance against imposition by facilitating a communal public discourse.

Drawing on the work of Maulana Karenga in *Maat: The Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt* (Karenga, 2004), Asante offers Maat as ‘a style of life, a point of orientation, consequently, that which inspires a people to achieve communication despite otherness’. He points out that this could be seen as ubuntu among the Zulu (Asante, 2014, p. 24) and, by extension, botho among Batswana. This conjures up ideas of a non-dominative and non-combative society, which is hardly what colonialism was about.

What Asante teaches about Maat is the inevitability of good overcoming evil, harmony overcoming disharmony, order instead of disorder. It is a belief that justice and truth would prevail. In a sense, communication in ancient Africa was for the common good and called on the communicator to be ethical and true to their words. Asante cautions that a violation of the authenticity required by Maat would be a danger to society (Asante, 2014, p. 24).

In this chapter, where the aim is to theorise the colonial African public sphere, it is critical to consider these important concepts and bring them to bear in the study of the early black press. Using an Afrocentric paradigm to study public discourse in a colonial African society is useful and may lead one to new insights. It is through this lens that matters of identity, positionality, and power dynamics can be identified. Using Afrocentric approaches reclaims agency and identity and empowers scholars to defend African cultural elements that may otherwise be overlooked and marginalised.

In *Morafe*, Khumisho Moguerane tells the story of the Molema dynasty of Bechuanaland, of which Plaatje’s benefactor, Silas, was a patriarch. Moguerane presents the idea that in the early 20th century, the black press was a form of ‘textual assemblies’ that came to represent the ‘kgotla’ or the chief’s court, where men congregated to discuss the issues of *morafe* (nation). She highlights that *Koranta* had a forerunner in *Mahoko a Becwana* where literate men debated change – ‘whether or not they were still adhering to the old ways’ in the face of Western influence onslaught. She points to a letter-writer, who noted in 1891, that the people were following neither Secwana nor Sekhoa and were in the middle. ‘I don’t know Becwana, what we are, because we are not doing the practices of either *Secwana* or *Sekhoa*. For how long are you going to be undecided?’ (Moguerane, 2024, p. 65).

This is a scathing attack that reflects what Asante calls the dislocation and disorientation of Africans under colonialism, when African society was at a crossroads and was called upon to make a choice in the complex entanglement of tradition versus modernity. The issues continue to play out in the public discourse facilitated by *Koranta* and *Tsala* in the years that followed.

To complicate this issue of Tswana identity, Moguerane notes that Batswana as a nation already had a name ‘Bechuana’, ‘but it was not a *morafe* yet unless its people properly calibrated its moral compass and followed it’ (Moguerane, 2024, p. 65). Therein lay the challenge. A fragmented people sharing a common language yet carrying totemic and dialectic allegiances that could derail the nation-building project. It fell to a newspaper to weave them together like a basket – via dialogue. In Moguerane’s words, it was like a ‘big school’ directing the big *morafe* of Bechuana and constituting small *merafe* such as Barolong towards its roots. All this was dependent on literacy, which formed the bedrock that revealed the circle of people connected to make *morafe* (Moguerane, 2024, p. 70). She goes further to indicate that ‘reading the newspaper was like a weekly, maybe even daily, ritual of initiation’. *Koranta* came to represent an assembly of Batswana and brought them into the *morafe*. It rallied Batswana around it as a ‘totemic emblem’ (Moguerane, 2024, pp. 71–72). They could gather together as ‘collective repertoires of reading together, learning together, writing together, especially in the sacred proficiency of their vernacular and new literary language, Sechuana’ (Moguerane, 2024, p. 72). Whether *Koranta* succeeded or not is debatable, but what emerges is that questions of identity and oneness could not be overlooked.

A decade after *Mahoko a Becwana*, the dialogue pushed towards a new direction and some relative decisiveness was observed on the all-important question of ‘who are we?’ For starters, the orthographical conflict over the nation’s name was settled for a while; it was no longer Becwana but Becoana. *Mahoko a Becwana* was edited and run by missionaries from the LMS, and *Koranta ea Becoana* was funded by a Motswana and Morolong chief in Silas Molema and edited by a Motswana and Morolong man of letters in Solomon Plaatje. With the newspaper, the two men asserted their authority and agency over their language and how it should be represented in words. This may be seen as a territorial claim to what or who Batswana are, or at least, should be. However, the debate over Becoana would continue for decades afterwards until it was decided to be Batswana as it is known today.

The launch of *Koranta* came during what Moguerane calls ‘this moment of alarm among educated men’. By this, Moguerane points to the shift in identity as tradition wrestles with

modernity for the soul of a people. She says *Koranta* advanced a certain agenda, which was anchored in modernity – this was schooling to discipline the young, train them into Sechuana, and preserve the morafe. Moguerane further states:

To the literate and those who aspired to literacy, *Koranta* was a sign revealing itself as a sacred symbol amidst an unsettled moral environment. It was finally a message from *morafe*'s own ethical universe from 'long ago'. It was a long-awaited message transmitted from *morafe*'s antiquity to their own present reality about who they really were (Moguerane, 2024, p. 69).

Brian Willan is in agreement with Moguerane, as he identifies one of the characteristics of *Koranta* as having facilitated 'a distinctive conversation' about the 'existence of Batswana as a people, what this meant in practice, and how they should order their lives' (Willan, 2018, p. 170). He notes that readers wrote letters 'to express agreement or point to the difficulties of finding the right balance between old and new, of gaining new knowledge and skills without compromising their identities as Batswana' (Willan, 2018, p. 170). Furthermore, inappropriate behaviour was often criticised, 'reflecting a deep ongoing concern with personal and communal morality' (Willan, 2018, p. 170). These sentiments evoke the ancient Maat philosophy of communication, as championed by Asante, which places harmony, balance, and order at its centre, achieved through dialogue.

The following section sets out to examine the ways in which Plaatje's newspapers imagined and constituted its readers as a public, dealt with issues of identity and nation and imagined a way forward for Africans, Batswana, and later more inclusively other inhabitants of southern Africa. This is in response to the research question: How does the early black press convene its publics, and what role does language play in the creation of African publics?

As the title of the chapter 'Who we are' suggests, this study sees the newspapers' relationship with their readers as essentially a search for identity and orientation in a society facing massive and rapid changes. I had intended to approach the newspaper content through one aspect of this, to think just in terms of a public, or sociability, or identity or African political thought, but this would not have been sufficient to capture all the elements involved. The picture is of a complex and heavily nuanced intersection of different and conflicting demands on the colonised African and educated subjects. To fully explore the newspapers, I had to take an interdisciplinary approach that encompasses all the different elements that come into play.

To carve out a clearer picture of their response, I examine the letters section because this is the kgotla or Moguerane's 'textual assembly' or the Habermasian 'coffeehouse' space for critical and rational debate. It is here, from the letters in *Koranta*, where Batswana tussle over issues that can be seen as a model of the public discourse that dominated early 20th-century colonial society, where matters of identity, personhood, and nationhood were ventilated to determine a new path fashioned by modernity.

This will be followed by an inquisition into language as one of the most prominent markers of identity and culture. Looking at how language evolves assists in deciphering what it denotes of who the speakers are. Language has proven to be a vital factor, and the difficulty of the nation-building project is evident here due to the numerous dialects and influences; the strategies Plaatje turns to in response can also be seen. In addition, language was constantly changing in response to societal changes; therefore, this part of the analysis is subdivided into three distinct periods: those of *Koranta ea Becoana*, *Tsala ea Becoana*, and *Tsala ea Batho*. At the core of the black press and what it stands for is the notion of centring black agency. This is achieved by identifying and marking black excellence in different fields as a way of affirmation, validation, and providing an alternative narrative to the prevailing European hegemony. Lastly, advertising has been shown to be an essential part of identity, as discussed in previous parts of this study. What a society consumes or prioritises often reveals much about who they are.

Given the scope of this study and the space allowed, it was not possible to include an extensive range of other content, such as health and education reporting, crime and courts, travel writing, the role of sport, the transnational modalities of the newspaper, and reflections on the British Empire. I had also intended to use the perceptions of death, the social commentary of the Maitisho column, the intersection of religion, church, and community life, and the feminist agenda in his analysis, but had to reserve those for other projects outside of this study.

12.2 From the letters

The column of Tsa Bakoaleli, as discussed in the previous chapter, created a band of notable letter writers who were always ready to share their thoughts in this imagined community, the likes of Joseph Gape, whom Willan identifies as 'a local farmer who lived in the Mafeking Reserve and a man of some standing' (Willan, 2018, p. 151); B.R.P. Phokontsi; L. Liphoko; Mr Lefenya; James M. Molebaloa; and J.G. Ntlatseng, whose presence and voices gave *Koranta* a distinctive character. There was robust debate, protest, celebration, and what seemed to be a cohesive *morafe* (nation) as the subject of conversation. As Peter Limb writes about *Abantu-*

Batho, the letters section was the ‘Facebook of the 1900s’ that created African politics as ‘a new media for Africans with a wider national and linguistic reach than before and a strident new assertiveness’ (Limb, 2012, pp. 298-299).

J.G. Ntlatseng was preoccupied with the role the newspaper could play in fostering nationhood. He expressed his wish that *Koranta* may not be used as a platform for bickering among believers. ‘We must look ahead’, he called on fellow readers, ‘so that before all the old men are dead, *Koranta* would have shared our history, that is to say the old stories and sayings of how the Batswana of old lived’. He further urged that books must be published on Batswana history, in their language. He concluded with a blessing: ‘God bless the editor so that we may soon read about our history’ (*Koranta*, 25 July 1903, p. 6).

Some hot topics generated what Natasha Erlank identifies as a ‘call-and-response style conversation... initiated by letter writers and not editors’ and ‘reader generated content’ (Erlank, 2019, pp. 96–97). This often had to do with the cultural practices of the time, locating the personhood in nationhood, that is to say the capacity and boundary of one’s individuality (*botho*) in relation to the collective nation (*morafe*). A popular topic was ‘bogali’ or lobola. An anonymous writer who called himself ‘One who longs for your civilisation’ questioned the significance of bride price paid in cows and whether this was a business transaction between a buyer and a seller or a marriage. The writer sparks debate as they pick a side, calling it ‘a sale’ and arguing instead for older practices whereby a father would approach the father of his potential daughter-in-law to arrange a marriage without the youngsters’ knowledge. Then the future in-laws are presented with 10 or 20 cows, while the bridal couple does not know until the news is broken to them by their parents. The writer bemoans the fact that the girl has been sold off to a rich man and says it is not a marriage and that women are bought to work in the fields as ‘hard labour’. He asks when the people will leave the Dark Ages, calling them to ‘take off the old Adam’ so that white people can stop looking down on them as primitive (*Koranta*, 29 August 1903, p. 4).

Items of fashion generated great interest among young people who were confronted by Western styles and sensibilities. A report from a Wesleyan Youth timiti (tea meeting) held at West End in Kimberley on Moroa Mokuena’s speech about how he disregarded women who wear *doeks* (head wraps) and not hats, sparked what would become a marathon debate playing out in the letters section (*Koranta*, 1 August 1903, p. 3). A writer who identified themselves as E.L.P reacted with rage towards Mokuena’s doek attack (*Koranta*, 15 August 1903, p. 4), which led

to further letters from J. Chapman from Molepolole, who agreed with Mr Leteane and Mr Lefenya on Mokuena's doek attack and a letter from L. Jebetle as well as J.J. Nqai who called for Mokuena to not be allowed to write to *Koranta* again (*Koranta*, 22 August 1903, p. 4). Nqai and Z.M. Rabanye's reaction to Lefenya's reaction to Mokuena's doek provocation further compounded matters (*Koranta*, 29 August 1903, p. 6). Joining the fray as well was Sareel Molokoane (*Koranta*, 5 September 1903, p. 7). The matter was finally settled by a letter from Maanyapodi at Lovedale College, who expressed their support for Mokuena's stance on doeks (*Koranta*, 23 September 1903, p. 3). Maanyapodi were a group of Batswana students at Lovedale and possible harbingers of the new wave of Western sensibilities. The changing face of the Africans was debated here, by men only, in a matter that affected women's choices. The men made the call on what women had to wear to be considered keeping with the times as decided upon by the 'consciously progressive', as Emma Hunter calls the younger generation (Hunter, 2016, p. 296).

This debate demonstrates what Jacob Dlamini (among others) has noted: that for the black elite, 'the onset of the modern world meant abandoning old customs for new ways'; they converted to Christianity and deserted indigenous belief systems, took on Western-style education; and appropriated European clothing as well as mores and forms of conduct (Dlamini, 2020, p. 146). However, Dlamini asserts that they did not view this as 'mimicry'; instead, it was the adoption of modern ways 'as a sign of their active presence in the birth of the modern world'. Dlamini invokes the words of Selope Thema, a key figure in the later years of the black press. Thema said: 'It is my firm belief that we can be Christianized without necessarily being Europeanised. And it is essential that it should be so; for we have qualities which are indispensable to human progress and happiness' (Dlamini, 2020, p. 147).

Another debate had to do with wedding practices or rituals. J.G. Ntlatseng's letter questioned the need to throw rice at a bridal couple, seemingly like confetti at weddings. He challenged Africans to explain why this was a necessary practice (*Koranta*, 25 April 1903, p. 6). He got his answer from D.D.M. Moshodate, who explained the symbolism of rice – growing in size when cooked – as a representation of the good wishes of the guests at the wedding to have the family of the newlyweds grow in the same manner (*Koranta*, 9 May 1903, p. 6).

There was a particular interest in the letters with morals and conduct, especially of women. The editor had some ethical considerations he wished to draw attention to, for example, when C.C. Maseloanyane of Salisbury, Mashonaland, wrote a defamatory letter complaining about the

conduct of a woman known as Sekgarameco or Mochuliemang, accusing her of having 'loose morals'. Maseloanyane claims to have chased her out of his house after he took her in following the death of her husband, and he (Maseloanyane) found her in bed with a Shona man 'undoing' his missionary work by seducing his converts. He asked for her family to fetch her. The editor stepped in, asking the author to rather contact her family than turn to newspapers (*Koranta*, 13 December 1902, p. 6). This was a futile exercise because the letter ran, and the reputation of Sekgarameco was already ruined.

Another concern with women was seen in a letter calling them to join the Christian women's formation of Moikgatlo oa Boitshenkelo, whose members included wives and daughters of Kgosi Moroka and Kgosi Tshipinare of Barolong booSeleka and promoted prayers for problematic children and campaign against alcohol. It was authored by Mrs K. Goronyane of Thaba Ncho, the wife of Rev. Joel Goronyane. The editor responded by committing to use *Koranta* to spread the message (*Koranta*, 29 November 1902, p. 7). A provocative letter by Joseph Gape called on women to 'stop treating themselves like slaves' by being submissive and subservient to their men (*Koranta*, 29 November 1902, p. 6).

The moral conduct of Barolong when they arrive in big cities was a concern, as they were at risk of losing their values and identity. A writer who signed off their letter as Mr A.R.R.R.R.B bemoaned that since the people of Mankuroane of Taung arrived in Greenpoint, Kimberley, there was no rest for anybody else. They always drank traditional beer and Western alcohol, he (presumably a man) complained. Old and young drink and sing Hymn 230 from the *Lontone* (Church of London of the LMS) hymnbook titled *Ha Lehihi le ka Hela Mono Lehatshing* (If Darkness Could Disappear in the World), he complained, calling it blasphemous (*Koranta*, 2 May 1903, p. 4). Letters were also concerned with seriously political and potentially explosive issues, such as a complaint about the disarmament of Batswana after they cooperated with government during the South African War (*Koranta*, 15 November 1902, p. 7).

Transportation or trains, in particular, were a contested space because blatant discrimination was on display there. A letter about Tlhakanchuke's experience on a train with white men explained how badly he was treated by the said white men who told him that natives thought they were equal to whites. The editor's response was typical of his Cape liberal beliefs of equal rights for all civilised men in the Cape Colony (*Koranta*, 28 February 1903, p. 5). Peter Mothibeli wrote about self-respect and good behaviour in trains, blaming a lack of education for those who behaved badly (*Koranta*, 20 June 1903, p. 6). At a time when third-class

passengers were put up in cattle trucks which were not covered on top and were rained on while in transit, writers called out this violation, as well as the cost of tickets and reduction of prices for whites only (*Koranta*, 2 December 1903, p. 5).

A Setswana identity was important to the readers and must have pushed D.R. Moshugi to fire off a letter to the editor, complaining about the usage of Sesotho in *Koranta*. However, the editor dismissed his complaint as ‘hateful’, instead asking Moshugi to ‘love thy neighbour’, and pointed out that there were no Sesotho newspapers in the Orange Free State – only Afrikaans and English were available (*Koranta*, 23 September 1903, p. 6).

The editor did not censor his detractors and he allowed the conversation to play out on the pages of *Koranta*. BRP Phokontsi of Kimberley wrote in to complain that *Koranta* did not have news of value and that it mixed Setswana and English (*Koranta*, 29 August 1903, p. 6). So keen were letter writers to put across their voices in *Koranta* that Plaatje had to issue a warning about writers who complained that their letters were not being printed. He asked whether the whole newspaper should be filled with letters and he should sacrifice the news. He called the complainants insufferable and that they bordered on abusing their patience as the producers of the newspaper (*Koranta*, 6 December 1902, p. 7).

Volz is correct when writing about the letters in *Mahoko a Becwana*, *Koranta*’s predecessor and argues that the opinions reflected were limited, as they were from a small population of mission-educated elites who had hoped to ‘benefit from British imperialism’. This is something that could also be seen in *Koranta*. Volz goes further to critique the Africans’ use of ‘European-designed written forms of their languages and framing their analysis in terms comprehensible to Europeans’, therefore taking up European perspectives which placed orality and indigenous knowledge in an ‘inferior position’. In the end, Volz argues, African Christians adopted ‘elements of European culture as their own’ (Volz, 2020, p. 601).

In contrast, what can be observed here is that the letters were vectors that transmitted the clash of ideas as modernity firmed up its grip on the Africans who found themselves in a culture in flux. It was a robust public discourse that was steeped in the principles of botho and Maat and the conception of the African public sphere that Asante put forward. Through the letters, one gets a sense of agency and a determination of a path for the New African. The discourse is not shepherded by missionaries or colonial masters but centres on African perspectives and dialogue.

Of interest is the issue of language and its usage in communication, bearing in mind that according to the principles of botho and Maat, it had to stimulate harmony, balance, order, justice, truth, righteousness, and reciprocity. How then was language utilised?

12.3 Language

In the chapters of this study, I delved into the ‘treasure trove’ of Setswana as well as English journalism of Plaatje. The ‘scholarly excavation’ was a time-consuming and demanding exercise that spanned over three years. It took me to places of interest in Plaatje’s journalism: Mafikeng, from where he ran *Koranta ea Becoana*; Thaba Nchu, where the *Tsala* syndicate was based and a substantial readership of the newspapers came from; and Kimberley, where Plaatje ran *Tsala ea Becoana* and *Tsala ea Batho* from and where he lies, buried, at West End cemetery.

Koranta provides an opportunity to study the socio-linguistics of the early literate Setswana writers and readers. It is not necessary to be an expert, for one can rely on everyday experience to understand how people from various parts of the country speak different dialects and that how language use is influenced by social background. How young people speak is often difficult for an older generation to understand, and some might even find their language offensive. Men and women use language differently too. A register – the form of the language chosen depending on social context, audience, and purpose of communication – is another factor to consider. This refers to how an adult speaker chooses their language, despite social standing, according to the addressee and the situation in question, whether casual or formal sensitive to a situation (Palander-Collin, 2000, p. 466).

Brian Willan notes that Plaatje used the orthography devised by Canon Crisp³ in *Koranta* ‘but adapted in accordance with his own views and the needs of his newspaper’ (Willan, 2018, p. 197). ‘His orthography, it is fair to say, had a bias towards the Tshidi Barolong dialect, justified in his view because he considered it one of the purest forms of the Tswana language’ (Willan, 2018, p. 197).

The difficulty with translation is that it may be limiting and may dilute the original language, a shortcoming Plaatje himself knew all too well as he stated in an article about Bishop Coppin’s address to Barolong in Mafikeng, saying that ‘it is scientifically impossible to translate all of

³ Crisp was a linguist in native languages who served Barolong from 1868 to 1886 and contributed to their grammar and orthography through numerous publications including the New Testament in Secoana (1885) and The Bechuana of South Africa (1896) (*Tsala*, 24 December 1910, p. 2).

Bishop Coppin's address to Sechuana' (*Koranta*, 23 May 1903, p. 4). However, what I attempt in this section is to commit to record, on a small scale, what Plaatje stated in 1916 as 'to save from oblivion... the proverbial expressions of the Bechuana people' (Plaatje, 1916, p. 1).

First, the evolution of orthography across the three newspapers will be considered, starting with *Koranta ea Becoana*, which will be followed by *Tsala ea Becoana*, and lastly, *Tsala ea Batho*.

12.3.1 *Koranta ea Becoana*

Plaatje mentions that as far as he is aware, the first person to commit Setswana to paper was Robert Moffat, who compiled a spelling book and translated the Bible to Setswana in 1857. This meant that he had to 'create the language from a literary point of view' to use it as a 'written medium of thought' and 'expression of entirely new ideas' without assistance from educated Natives or Europeans familiar with the language (Plaatje, 1916, pp. 3–4). Itumeleng Mothoagae and Boshadi Semenya concur that Moffat 'saw Batswana as incapable of teaching him the language and decided to embark on a self-teaching exercise' relying on his memory that contained 'linguistic and cultural signs of his European origins' (Mothoagae & Semenya, 2015, pp. 48-49). However, Part Mgadla and Stephen Volz maintain that Moffat received assistance from 'a few multi lingual Griqua and Batlhaping at Kuruman (Mgadla & Volz, 2006, p. xxi).

Volz writes that *Mokaeri oa Becuana* (Instructor/Animator of Batswana) published by the LMS in the 1850s was one of the first Setswana monthlies to appear and was part of the attempts by missionaries to promote literacy and Christianity. Volz further points out that missionaries believed that everybody should read the Bible in their own language, and as such, British missionaries worked on creating written forms of African languages (Volz, 2020, p. 599).

Plaatje, in his words, acknowledges the role of missionary newspapers in writing Setswana. He called his file of the copies of *Molekudi ua Bechuana* (The Bechuana Visitor), 'a partly religious, partly political and social monthly', 'one of his most valued treasures' (Plaatje, 1916, p.4). It was followed by *Mahoko a Becwana* (the Bechuana News), 'a monthly review of current news and religious comments', and then *Moshupa-tsela* (The Guide) issued by Lutheran missionaries at Bethanie in Transvaal. They held the baton until *Koranta ea Becoana* came on the scene in 1901 (Plaatje, 1916, pp. 5-6).

Volz characterises the growth of *Mahoko*, with a circulation of under 500 but read out in community gatherings, as responding to a 'demand among Tswana for the news and

information that a Setswana-language newspaper might provide'. This meant direct access to news as well as an opportunity to learn more about their communities (Volz, 2020, p. 599).

A letter published in *Koranta* in October 1902 by Jeremiah G. Ntlatseng (earlier referred to as J.G. Ntlatseng) of Bloemfontein countered the suggestion by Mr J.C. Libate, who was one of the agents and had asked readers not to share copies of *Koranta* so as to push up circulation. Ntlatseng, by contrast, encouraged the sharing of the paper, taking the view that news would travel by word of mouth and readers would soon want to acquire their own copies because 'mpha-mpha e lapisa, motho a kgonoa ke seyo sagagoe' ('give me, give me is too tiresome'), and then send their names to the printers (*Koranta*, 25 October 1902, p. 8). This was a tricky balancing act. On the one hand, Plaatje would have wished to have the paper widely bought and read, but due to low literacy levels, he had to contend with the oral consumption of the paper, which translated into high readership numbers and influence but low circulation figures.

The legacy of the missionary orthography carried on in *Koranta*, which Plaatje identified as 'the first native-owned paper' (Plaatje, 1916, p. 6). When the missionaries recorded the language from oral sources, there were some orthographic errors committed. The letter 'l' was used to denote a 'd' sound; for example, the town of Ditsobotla would be written as Licobotla. Furthermore, in this particular example, the use of 'c' instead of 'ts' in Licobotla further signifies the Serolong dialect that *Koranta* used, and this is widespread in the pages, showing how Plaatje understood his language to be written. More examples may be found in the word 'tswe-tswē', which means 'please', and *Koranta* writes it as 'coe-coe', not to be confused with the sound 'cow', but closer to 'tsesebe'. One may notice that the letter 'w' is also replaced by 'oe', a practice that is still in use to this day. For example, the surname Mokwena may also be spelt as Mokoena, a matter of personal preference.

Confronted by Western names that may not be well represented in the Setswana lexicon, *Koranta* sought to naturalise some of the names to suit the African palette. Written and spoken Setswana language did not use certain letters, such as 'v', 'x', 'q', and 'z' in the original names and words. The core alphabet was updated only a few years ago when 'v' and 'z' were permitted in the orthography of loanwords by the Pan South African Language Board. Furthermore, the click sounds found in Sesotho and Nguni languages are not represented in the Setswana alphabet.

To make it easily pronounceable for the reader and to add familiarity, flair, and in some cases, adulation, the following names assumed a different identity in *Koranta* as they became Setswana-fied, indicating an orientation and disposition:

- Queen Victoria became Setori (*Koranta*, 27 April 1901, p. 1), Cecil John Rhodes was Mokebusa (*Koranta*, 19 April 1902, p. 2), Baden Powell was Patana Paulo (*Koranta*, 15 November 1902, p. 6), and JF Flynn became Fleni or Foleni (*Koranta*, 15 November 1902, p. 2; *Koranta*, 30 November 1903, p. 4).
- Some towns and cities were referred to by their African names, but in later editions, these were used interchangeably with the names that carried a European origin.
- Pretoria was Choane (see above the Serolong context of ‘ts’ and ‘ch’ because elsewhere this name would be Tshwane) (*Koranta*, 15 March 1902, p. 2), Rhodesia – Gamotselakatse (the home of Moselakatse/Mzilikazi) (*Koranta*, 5 April 1902, p. 2), and Lesotho – Leshotho (the first ‘h’ to emphasise a Serolong pronunciation) (*Koranta*, 15 November 1902, p. 4).
- Rivers are referred to by their original African names, such as Noka e Tshetlha – Orange River (*Koranta*, 14 September 1901, p. 2).

African identities (and European) were also adapted to suit a Serolong orientation, bearing in mind the absence of clicks and other letters in the Setswana alphabet, such as z or v, such as Zulu – Manzula (the ‘z’ used was pronounced more like ‘s’) (*Koranta*, 25 October 1902, p. 6), and Xhosa – Matebele (*Koranta*, 10 May 1902, p. 2).

In his book, *The Kaffir Scholars’ Companion*, Isaiah Bud-M’belle notes that some words were coined by newspapers ‘to facilitate our comprehension of civil, administrative or political government’ (Bud-M’belle, 1903, p. xvii). Some examples that emanate from court proceedings or parliamentary processes are: Hard lebere – hard labour (*Koranta*, 22 November 1902, p. 6) and Opogafa – Tax money (*Koranta*, 21 March 1903, p. 6).

Plaatje notes that historians described the Batswana as ‘the most peace-loving and timid section of the Bantu’ (Plaatje, 1916, p. 1). He further warns that this statement seemed to be in conflict with the facts, pointing out that ‘fighting their way south, from the Central African lakes, some of the Bechuana tribes became known as “The People with the Sharp-spear”’ (Plaatje, 1916, p. 1). Plaatje cautions that Batswana ‘were the only Natives who indignantly, though vainly, protested against the South African Defence Act which debars Native citizens from joining the

Citizen Volunteer Force'. He writes further about Barolong that a British Commissioner wrote to the War Office as follows:

They are by nature far from being bellicose. They only desire to be left alone to cultivate their land, tend their stock and hunt in the Kalahari Desert. A great proportion of them have assumed garments of European cut, missionary work has been actively prosecuted amongst the Bechuana and numbers are now professing Christians. They are represented as apt scholars, and generally as being morally and intellectually superior to the native tribes of the coast. (Plaatje, 1916, p. 2)

Taking its cue from this bold assertion, *Koranta* carried a distinct approach and flavour that reflected more closely Serolong susceptibilities, predispositions, and emotional responses. It used idioms, proverbial phrases, aphorisms, and expressions that are unique and idiosyncratic to Barolong, and these can be seen in how it expressed shock and disappointment.

In an article about one Patrick O'Hara standing trial for viciously assaulting a Boer soldier, *Koranta* concludes with the line 'lo pelo li thata MaIrishe oora Hara' ('how heartless of you the Irish of O'Hara') (*Koranta*, 9 May 1903, p. 6). The usage of the prefix 'oora' denotes a patronym and allegiance to a particular house of lineage. This is found mostly in African societies when matters of identity arise and one has to claim their belonging. *Koranta* extends this to an Irish family, humanising and making them relatable to a Setswana reader and not to be seen as foreign. More examples are found in the way *Koranta* expresses alarm, surprise, or apprehension:

- 'Leuba oe!' (Oh! Drought) (*Koranta*, 1 August 1903, p. 4) – apprehension and frustration over the effects of drought.
- 'Ba opisa tlhogo ka dikhuduga' (they give a headache with their moving') (*Koranta*, 27 June 1903, p. 4) – frustrated by how often the people moved around places.

To further exhibit the sophistication of Setswana, Plaatje quotes Archdeacon Crisp, who commented:

It is said that an English peasant uses a vocabulary of from 300 to 400 words. A Bechuana shepherd uses at least 4 000. His language possesses a fecundity of terms and acuteness of idiom will enable those who learn it to explain any problem and to convey any message upon matters which affect mankind in common (Plaatje, 1916, p. 7).

Panegyric and venerative speech codes are on display as *Koranta* congratulates the new Chief Balirile ‘Tshela tlhe moroa Sejankabo, Matlhaseloa a ragogile’ (‘Long live the son of Sejankabo, the attacked ones have arrived’) (*Koranta*, 16 December 1903, p. 7) – not calling the chief by his name, instead in reverence of his father or earlier ancestor as often African praise poetry does.

Plaatje’s strength was his conduct of language, whether it was Setswana or English; his dexterity in both was unquestionable. His coverage of the trip to Cape Town of Barolong chiefs to petition for an increased compensation following their losses from the South African War and the siege of Mafeking is resplendent with sentimentality, sincerity, beauty, and the power of prose (*Koranta*, 31 January 1903, p. 5; *Koranta*, 31 January 1903, p. 12; *Koranta*, 15 August 1903, p. 4; *Koranta*, 15 August 1903, p. 5). A comparison of his deftness in the vastly different languages points to his abilities as a polyglot as well as a skilful former court translator, both evident in the examples above.

A reading of *Koranta* also opens up new vistas for language historians and linguists because it is a repository of popular aphorisms, proverbial phrases, and expressions in use in the early 1900s, some of which have now disappeared from everyday speech or become obsolete. Plaatje provides a reminder that in the absence of schools and books, the Batswana acquired their vocabulary and its use with purity and correctness from their parents, especially their grandmothers, mothers, and aunts (Plaatje, 1916, p. 7). In today’s terms, with the proliferation of English and European languages spoken in the homes of Batswana, this tradition has been lost. Here are a few examples, some with translations taken from Plaatje’s *Sechuana Proverbs With Literal Translations and Their European Equivalents* (Plaatje, 1916) and others with the inferred or literal meaning as understood by the researcher after reading them in context, for example:

- Se rekele kolojane kgetsing. – Do not pay for what you have not seen yet (*Koranta*, 25 October 1902, p. 8)
- Pelo choeu e ntsha lobelo. – Satisfaction incites bravery (*Koranta*, 25 October 1902, p. 8) translation (Plaatje, 1916, p. 81)

Some words were borrowed from Western speech, while others have fallen out of use or have been replaced with new sayings, as seen in these examples:

- Nibi Yara (*Koranta*, 10 January 1903, p. 6) – New Year (now Ngwaga o mosha)

- Likemo (*Koranta*, 29 November 1902, p. 4) – Weddings (now Manyalo)

Appendix 2 provides an extended list of names, words, and expressions in Koranta ea Becoana.

Plaatje noted that most of the Setswana vocabulary, proverbial phrases, and aphorisms ‘originated on the pastures or the hunting field’ but acknowledged that ‘the poverty of the language comes into painful prominence’ when ‘concrete objects’ are left ‘on the veld’ and abstract ideas have to be expressed. But, still, some of the sayings ‘find close parallels in European folklore’ (Plaatje, 1916, p. 8).

Plaatje’s choice to publish *Koranta* in Serolong also brings its own complexities in the bounded yet unbounded, and unitary yet fragmented Setswana public, that is to say a nation that also carries allegiances and influences that chip away at the unity of *morafe* (nation). The promotion of Serolong meant that the growth of other dialects would be stunted if not disregarded, for instance, the Sekgatla of Rustenburg or Sehurutshe of Lehurutshe. Emma Hunter’s discussion of the *Komkaya* newspaper that convened the Chagga public in northeastern Tanganyika, discussed in chapter 10 (Komkaya and the Convening of a Chagga Public 1953-1961) of *African Print Cultures*, recounts how a paramount chief of the Chagga, constituted a Chagga Dialect Committee ‘with the idea of striking a happy medium between the three dialectic groupings’ as a solution to the question of what language the newspaper would use (Hunter, 2016, pp. 287–288). In the creation of *Koranta*, this vital step was missed. Molema and Plaatje operated instinctively on what they knew and what came naturally to them as Barolong men, inadvertently discounting the other totemic allegiances and considerations.

Language debates were not unique to *Koranta*. When *Mahoko a Becwana* was launched, an anonymous letter-writer asked in whose language it would be since ‘Macwana’, as the whites called them, were ‘a variety of different nations and languages’ (Volz, 2020, p. 603). Even the etymology of Batswana was uncertain. Volz quotes David Ramoshoana, a Morolong intellectual, who in 1927 presented that it may be rooted in ‘Abetswana’, the early isiXhosa term for ‘residents of the interior’, further linking this to the earlier iterations of Becwana and Becoana (Volz, 2020, p. 603).

The reader of *Mahoko* objected to the missionary assertions of Tswana unity based on linguistic grounds. Belonging to polities that were determined by ancestral totemic allegiances, these *merafe* (chiefdoms) or *ditshaba* (nations) had regional variations in their customs and dialects (Volz, 2020, p. 603). These ditshaba included Barolong, Batlhaping, Bahurutshe, Bakwena, and Bakgatla, which had pronunciation and vocabulary variables that could not be collapsed into

one written language. Furthermore, these ditshaba also had different congregational and missionary persuasions: Barolong and Bangwato dominated by the Methodists or the LMS; Bahurutshe, Bangwaketse, and Bakwena dominated by the Lutherans or the Berlin Mission Society; and Bakgatla dominated by the Dutch Reformed Church missionaries.

Volz again quotes Michael Tsabadira Moroka, a Morolong evangelist who argued in case of *Mahoko* that ‘our language will never be right, because there are many Secoana merafe, and it is not just a single, uniform language’ (Volz, 2020, p. 604). The solution was to use all the different dialects, and the result was a confusing blend of Sekwena, Setlhaping, and Sengwaketse (Volz, 2020, p. 604).

The same debates play out over a decade later in *Koranta*. The preference of one dialect over the others had a bearing on the audiences *Koranta* attracted and kept, as it put Serolong in an elevated and superior standing, resulting in the minimal presence of Sekgatla (see Chief Segale Pilane’s article in *Koranta*, 8 August 1903, p. 4 for the difference between Serolong and Sekgatla) and other dialects in the newspaper; in fact, one encounters more Sesotho than any other Setswana dialect in *Koranta*. This is not to say that *Koranta* failed the Batswana, but it is a point worth noting when one considers the efforts of the newspaper in convening the Setswana public over their common language, however splintered.

Willan writes that, for Plaatje, being ‘a Morolong was to have a wider identity as a Motswana’, not attached to a chieftom, but rather a common language of Setswana. With their language written and Plaatje being literate, he joined a community with a new notion of being Motswana (Willan, 2018, p. 33). However, this observation does not take into account dialects and totemic affiliations that Batswana had possessed for so long. Karin Barber calls this problem ‘a complex relativism’, implying that audiences tended to be far larger than the linguistically defined nation state. She says writing for these ‘putative publics’ meant ‘convening people on a new footing’. The result of this was experiments with voice, modes of address, and ‘an excitement at the expanded space in which to invent forms and imagine publics’ (Barber, 2007, p. 153).

12.3.2 *Tsala ea Becoana*

In *Tsala ea Becoana*, the issue of the choice of dialect for the print medium dating back from the establishment of *Koranta* resurfaces 10 years later. The orthography had, until *Koranta* and *Tsala* existed, been determined by different mission societies. They worked with different

Setswana totemic identities teaching literacy and translating the Bible and publications such as *Mahoko a Becwana* by the LMS. For instance, the Wesleyans had their own Wesleyan Missionary Society and Church of London under the LMS worked mostly among Barolong; Berlin and Hermannsburg Mission operated mostly among Bahurutshe; and Bakgatla encountered the Dutch Reformed missionaries.

On the occasion of the revision of the translation of the Setswana Bible in 1911, black Setswana scholars were excluded and the exercise was led by white missionaries: Geo Lowe as chairman and E Gottschling as secretary. Isaiah Makgothi of Thaba Ncho wrote to *Tsala* to protest what he called ‘sickening solecisms’, an occasion that was marked by a byline. Makgothi gave context of how Setswana had been fractured and splintered by providing an example of the conflicted spelling of the word ‘sluggard’, which could be written in six different ways, all of them considered Setswana: mmoduhadi, moluhali, moruhari, modufadi, molufhali, and modufhadi. Makgothi said it was hoped that ‘these good men of God may some day appreciate the justice of agreeing upon the form of spelling and end those confusing anomalies’, but with incompetent scholars not supported by native Setswana speakers, these would persist.

Makgothi attacked the translation committee, calling it ‘laughable’ that it comprised missionaries ‘who know absolutely less than next to nothing about Sechuana’ and a secretary ‘who speaks many languages but Sechuana is not among his linguistic accomplishments’. The committee’s inclusion of the phrase *hela* or *hedile* (it is finished) riled Makgothi up. He complained about the inclusion of the ‘dialectic idiosyncrasy’ of Molala’s Batlhaping, which he considered to be ‘a triplet’. Makgothi asked for the courtesy to follow the one common language of the hundreds of thousands of Bechuanas who venerate the duiker, koodoo, crocodile, elephant, buffalo, ape, and other tribal totems, respectively ‘instead of attempting to foist on them the dialect of a disintegrate offshoot which has lost its original language and tribal totem and whose poets were sentenced, not long ago, to long terms of imprisonment for sedition, but this is by the way’. The inclusion of the last part of his argument reminds one of how deeply divisive the issue of dialects and orthography really was.

However, Makgothi makes important arguments. He criticised the note that the letter ‘f’ was ‘used in foreign words’, reminding the authors that in the words darkness (lefifi), feather (lefefa), and (lightweight) bofefo, the letter ‘f’ occurs twice in the Sechuana translation of each. He condemned the ‘grave omission’ of the letter ‘j’, the missionaries arranged that the letter ‘y’ perform both its own and j’s function. To demonstrate the results of this gaffe, Makgothi shared

a practical anecdote. If one found another person eating their breakfast, one would say 'a ua njela' (Are you eating my food?), but with the letter 'y', Batswana would have to say 'a ua nyela' (Are you defecating?) (*Tsala*, 14 January 1911, p. 2). A slight change of one letter could ruin a perfectly innocent enquiry and turn it into an insult. He advised that the missionaries read *Tsala* for a better grasp of the authentic language.

Tsala continued the tradition of *Koranta* as a bastion of Serolong writing, orthography, and idiosyncrasies, using the letter 'c', for example, which was absent in other dialects. There were a few exceptions to the use of Serolong in the form of articles printed in Sepedi and authored by Sefako Makgatho, a writer from Pretoria, and some Sesotho articles culled from *Leselinyana la Lesotho* newspaper in Morija. In Tsa Bakoaledi (the letters section), Makgatho wrote wholly in Sepedi about the conflict in the Bopedi royal house, which dated back to 1811 with the murder of Sekhukhune by Kgoshi (Chief) Mampuru. The letter was signed by Makgatho as 'President Transvaal' of the Native Congress, on 15 April 1912, in Kilnerton (*Tsala*, 4 May 1912, p. 2).

Makgatho returned the following month in the Tsa Bakoaledi, when he was identified as 'our correspondent'. The headline was 'White Perile Jaanong' (Now it is White Peril), as he flipped the debate about the so-called black peril to reflect the other side. Makgatho did not set out to fit with normal *Tsala* protocols. Instead of addressing Plaatje as Morulaganyi, as he was widely known, he chose to use 'Molukishi', the Sepedi equivalent, in effect clarifying his identity and the language he intended to employ. Makgatho started off the lengthy report with an apology that, due to illness, he had not been sending the newspaper news from Transvaal. However, for that week, he had news of a white man who was arrested for raping a 'Letebele la ga Mokiba' (Mokiba Ndebele) woman in Bronkerspruit (sic), in a case of 'white peril', the converse of the black peril (alleged sexual assaults of white women by black men).

Other stories were of Baas John Zuir, who shot dead a young herder out in the mountains and was being protected by the commissioner. This had become a concerning pattern and Makgatho noted that since the end of the South African War the number of blacks killed in Transvaal 'stood between eight and ten'. And that nothing was done to the white perpetrators who were never arrested or stood trial because they always claimed that 'it was an accident'. Makgatho also reported that black people bought their own place called Eersterust in the east of Pretoria but were told by Rev. H Schloeman of the Lutheran Church that he was God and that the congregation could not buy land on its own and construct a hall for dance and politics;

otherwise, he (Schloeman) would never teach or preach there. The evictions of people from Kilnerton for no reason were also recorded, including the heartbreaking story of Mrs Mokone, a mourning widow who was kicked out of her home. His report ended with the announcement that on 24 May 1912, the Transvaal Native Council, a part of the South African Native National Congress, was formed with Makgatho himself as chairman (*Tsala*, 8 June 1912, p. 2).

The fluidity of the language and orthography persisted, as observed in how the newspaper itself was confused by how it presented itself. The official name was *Tsala ea Becoana*, but when translated into English, it became Friend of the Bechuana. This begs the question of what the difference is between Becoana and Bechuana? Is the latter considered 'English' and the former indigenous? Or was this indicative of a deeper problem that Batswana faced – a standardisation of a language that demanded unanimity across dialects and totemic allegiances? *Koranta ea Becoana* was likewise translated to English as *Bechuanas' Gazette*.

One major distinguishing feature between *Koranta* and *Tsala ea Becoana* is the proliferation of borrowed words in the latter. The new words seemed to follow phonetical construction. This practice allowed for an infestation of borrowed words that were disruptive and began a new corruptive trend. Here are some examples:

- Netifi – Native (*Tsala*, 26 November 1910, p. 4)
- Bed Hopo – Bad Hope (*Tsala*, 16 July 1910, p. 4)
- Rumu – Room (*Tsala*, 23 July 1910, p. 4)

Places

- Jermane Iseta Afrika – German East Africa (*Tsala*, 9 July 1910, p. 1)
- Orenche Frei Stata – Orange Free State (*Tsala*, 14 January 1911, p. 3)
- Ostralia – Australia (*Tsala*, 13 April 1912, p. 2)
- Kimbili – Kimberley (*Tsala*, 30 March 1912, p. 2)

Days of the week

- Mantaga – Maandag (Afrikaans for Monday) (*Tsala*, 1 October 1910, p. 1)

- Dinstaga – Dinsdag (Afrikaans for Tuesday) (*Tsala*, 1 October 1910, p. 1)
- Satertaga – Saterdag (Afrikaans for Saturday) (*Tsala*, 1 October 1910, p. 1)

It is not clear whether Plaatje resorted to a compromise of melding the languages because of the raging debates of conflicting Setswana orthography and dialects or was influenced by isiXhosa speakers whose language comprised a great number of borrowed words, as indicated by Bud-M'belle in his book *Kaffir Scholars' Companion*. Bud-M'belle makes the point that isiXhosa was influenced in this way as a result of 'commercial intercourse' with Dutch and English and the 'introduction of foreign commodities, customs and ideas'. Other words were introduced by the missionaries; some 'have been admitted into the language to supply the place of ideas for which the natives have no expression of their own', some words were 'coined by newspapers to facilitate our comprehension of civil, administrative or political government', while other words came through the 'Hottentot' language. Bud-M'belle said that, comparatively speaking, isiXhosa had more foreign words than isiZulu, Sesotho, Setswana, or any other Bantu language (Bud-M'belle, 1903, p. xvii). He added that some 'Native words' were necessitated by the advent of Europeans and would be unknown to Africans of the 18th century (Bud-M'belle, 1903, p. 48). Pioneering isiZulu author Magma Fuze also noted in his book *The Black People and Whence They Came* that the Xhosa 'get interested in foreign words, and then adopt them as their own' (Fuze, 2022, p. 15).

A reader, F.M. Khonkhobe, noted that *Tsala* was not in the league of Molema's *Koranta* because of the language, the writing style, and its impact. He called *Koranta* 'a firearm' that gave them confidence that they had a shield to defend them (*Tsala*, 15 October 1910, p. 4).

E. Tshongwana of Lusikisiki, Pondoland, wrote in to congratulate the Cape University for encouraging the study of mother tongue. He argued that the growth of language was concomitant with the development of character. However, Tshongwana also complained against the hybridisation of words, which he argued will confuse the learner. Furthermore, he was unhappy about the clumsy and confused spelling of the examiner Rev. J.S. Moffat, who used spelling prayer books authored by missionaries. An example was the use of 'oa' instead of 'w', for instance, in Lokoalo instead of Lokwalo. He said the former was 'clumsy', while the latter was 'graceful'. Tshongwana asked that the council of education not take the missionary view of language and rather use the Bechuana view as represented by the *Tsala* newspaper (*Tsala*, 24 February 1912, p. 3).

Not all was lost, as some words were Setswana-fied, as seen in *Koranta*. Here, the difference with what came later was that an attempt was made to make the sound natural to a Setswana speaker; for example, the letter Z is not used in Setswana or any kind of clicks. Examples follow:

- Tuba-ka-loseka – Tuberculosis (*Tsala*, 23 July 1910, p. 4)
- Ketshebaye – Cetshwayo (*Tsala*, 29 October 1910, p. 3)
- Kresejana – Christiana (*Tsala*, 27 August 1910, p. 4)

Tsala ea Becoana also had a sizeable number of idioms, proverbs, and expressions that were used to communicate importance, severity, or frivolity. Here are a few:

- Go lemala ga namane ke go thoba (*Tsala*, 23 July 1910, p. 3) – Let a calf (a child) once break out of the fold, and the weakness will become its habit (Plaatje, 1916, p. 40)
- Shuping go a boeloa, sebopelelong ke gone go sa boeloeng (*Tsala*, 23 July 1910, p. 4) – You may return to the ruins but not to the womb (Plaatje, 1916, p. 89)
- Makgoa a mashweu, macwa metsing – White people who came out of the water (*Tsala*, 12 November 1910, p. 3)

Tsala ea Becoana measured Setswana against other languages in an attempt to locate it within the universe of linguistics. For example, in one small article, it sought – tongue in cheek – to show the differences between languages by noting that *Imvo Zabantsundu* claimed the surname of the new South African premier, Botha, meant ‘to greet’ in isiXhosa, ‘to lie down’ or ‘chew the cud of a cow’ in Setswana, and ‘to stir up’ in Sesotho (*Tsala*, 23 July 1910, p. 2)

Tsala also carried original Setswana terms for Western concepts, such as:

- Naledi ea setlhodi – Halley’s comet (*Tsala*, 30 July 1910, p. 3)
- Tlhangoe wa tlotlo – Honourable secretary (*Tsala*, 13 January 1912, p. 2)
- Bolo ea mphai – Tennis (*Tsala*, 19 November 1910, p. 4)

Appendix 2 provides an extended list of names, words, and expressions in Tsala ea Becoana.

As the first editor of a Serolong newspaper and a speaker of the language, it could be said Plaatje lost momentum with this compromise. However, the other view could be that Plaatje positioned Setswana as a language evolving, coping with modernity, and having to innovate

and create words that had no equivalents in Setswana because of their Western origins. Acculturation theory refers to how language is a vector for culture and its manifestation. It is a balancing of two cultures, whereby individuals or groups adopt or adapt to the traits, behaviours, or norms of another culture (Berry, 1997). In other words, the evolution of these words was an indicator of the dualism reflecting how the African reading public had to embrace Westernisation that had infiltrated their lives in a trade-off between African authenticity and Western sensibilities. Looked at from the Afrocentric approach, this indicates the dislocation of the Africans due to colonial pressure but also a creative response to colonialism and modernity.

Tsala ea Becoana also contained examples of fine Setswana-style writing with idiosyncrasies, euphemisms, idioms, onomatopoeia, and colour, including a mix of languages such as Afrikaans. This can be seen used to full effect in the article headlined *Koffyfontein* about a fight between a Motlhaping, a Xhosa, and a coloured man (*Tsala*, 1 October 1910, p. 2).

World events had a bearing on the paper and infiltrated the language used. A historic event such as the sinking of the *Titanic* was a big news item for *Tsala ea Becoana*, which described it as ‘a village on water’. The glamour of the maiden voyage from Southampton for the wealthy and the glorious palatial features of the giant cruiser are detailed in poetic language, and the loss of life, which numbered 1 508, was compared to the death of Pharaoh and the floods of Noah, reflecting the religious frame of reference the newspaper held (*Tsala*, 27 April 1912, p. 2). The *Titanic* tragedy seeps into the idiom arsenal of *Tsala*, as it is utilised in subsequent stories in reference to acts that went on quietly. In the story about Henry Burton’s repeal of the Moor’s Act which prohibited the holding of political meetings by Africans in Natal, *Tsala* described it as being ‘as noiseless as the sinking of the *Titanic*’ (*Tsala*, 4 May 1912, p. 3).

The translation of different articles further stratified *Tsala* audiences. The Setswana articles were about chiefs, society, and other issues affecting *morafe* (the nation). The English articles were aimed at authority and the State, matters of politics and protest. The stories would appear in the same edition in different languages or in the subsequent issues in either Setswana or English, depending on the original language of use. The quality of Plaatje’s translation – which can be traced by the style and tone and cross checked with his other writings – was impressive, proving to be the essential interpreter. However, there were moments when the languages proved insufficient to cover each other, as he noted at the address of Bishop Coppin in Mafikeng in 1903 (*Koranta*, 23 May 1903, p. 5).

Appendix 2 provides an extensive list of names, words, and expressions in Tsala ea Becoana.

12.3.3 *Tsala ea Batho*

Tsala ea Batho marked a significant departure from the newspapers that Plaatje edited since 1901. It introduced isiXhosa as part of its offering. The language belongs to the Nguni group, and unlike Sepedi and Sesotho of the Sotho group, it is far removed from Setswana. In his explanation, biographer Brian Willan wrote that the inclusion of isiXhosa in April 1913 meant *Tsala ea Batho* positioned itself as an ‘alternative’ to *Imvo Zabantsundu* of John Tengo Jabavu. ‘It appealed particularly to the large Xhosa-speaking diaspora outside the eastern Cape, not least in Kimberley’ (Willan, 2018, p. 255).

The inclusion of another language meant a further compromise on the Setswana that Plaatje sought to preserve and promote. The isiXhosa was in the form of articles presented in separate columns and then there was a hybridisation of language where Setswana got mixed up with other languages including isiXhosa, Afrikaans and English.

This infiltration of foreign words led to a reader (M.G. Mosalakae of Lesseytown, Bowker’s Park) to complain in a letter about ‘Ngotlelo ea puo ea Secoana’ (The shrinking of the Setswana language). Mosalakae noted that *Tsala* educated the readers about the difference between Y and J, and D and L, and now asked if it was wise to take other languages and use those words instead of original Setswana words. While admitting that it was good to know other languages and to give each due respect, he maintained that a Motswana should not address another Motswana in English. Mosalakae shared an example of a letter written in a grotesque hybrid language of English, Afrikaans, and Setswana meant to pass as Setswana, and it read in part: ‘Ke amogetse borifi joa gago, likontentshe tsa lona tsa intumedisa. I am quite well. O dumedise bo Ausi le Aubuti, Anti le Ompi thata. Goodbye. Ke nna oa gago always. GM’ (I received your letter, its contents made me happy. I am quite well. Please pass my greetings to sister and brother, aunty, and uncle. Goodbye. I am yours always).

‘I thought Barolong of Thaba Ncho kept the language pure, but a man from there wrote in *Tsala* that “Tanki pula” and Mrs Fenyang “ka loantlha la October”, if he wanted Tanki and October, he could have used Sechuana equivalent’, complained Mosalakae. He cautioned Batswana: ‘Leave foreign words like autata, aumama, anti, tanki, soare, kapoko, soporo, borakafese, and others’. However, he admitted that there were some words that lacked Setswana equivalents

and would be used as borrowed words such as comb (kamo) and collar (koloro) (*Tsala*, 1 November 1913, p. 6).

Mosalakae's plea did not translate into success as *Tsala ea Batho* continued with code-switching, which is the practice of alternating between two or more languages or dialects in a single conversation or sentence. It is a common phenomenon in multilingual societies, which is a negotiation of interpersonal relationships, and a signifier of perceptions or desires about group memberships in navigating social contexts (Myers-Scotton, 1993, p. 478). In this case, it was a result of the bastardisation of language and the intrusion of foreign words coming from all directions. This does not mean that there were no pockets of excellence as far as the language went. A new column titled Mashejashejane was introduced, which seemed to be a playfield for fine Setswana writing. The authors showcased poetic language and prose marked by metaphors, onomatopoeia, and other figures and forms of speech. The reports contained in the column varied from political commentary on SANNC meeting in Kimberley, a plan to remove Queen Victoria's rule and replace her with Paul Kruger, and political, historical, and cultural commentary of a New African on how the days of 'buying kings with glasses were gone', as had been the case in the early years of colonialism and conquest in Africa. The use of onomatopoeia also enlivened the copy, as the author wrote: 'Ka kora-kora, ka kora-kora, ka mara-mara, ka shoaba-shoaba, ka pitlagana' (I looked around, I got ashamed, I was pressed), describing a possibly awkward situation that they found themselves in.

The mission to unite Batswana continued, so in Mashejashejane the writer evoked totemic allegiances, praising the contribution of Bahurutshe towards a fund to send the SANNC deputation to England to meet King George V, which would afford Batswana the opportunity to be counted among the black nations that took a stand against the Natives Land Act. The author asked about the whereabouts of Batlhaping, Bakgatla, Bangoaketse, and Bakoena in these efforts of Congress. To demonstrate how fragmented they were, the column explained that the Bahurutshe chiefs took the train to Johannesburg, then Kimberley, without asking anyone for assistance, while the Phokeng chiefs took the train from Tlhabane to Choane, then to Johannesburg, and finally to Kimberley, without asking for assistance. This highlighted the silo mentality of Batswana and the unwillingness to reach out and cooperate towards a common cause (*Tsala*, 14 March 1914, p. 5).

In another column of Mashejashejane, language is used to communicate technological advances and the changing face of the Africans. The writing, in the style of a wandering

wayfarer and a vagabond hymn with repetition, refrains, and melody, was meant to pull Batswana out of the old times and encourage them to embrace what modernity offered. The writer complained about the trains to Botswana and that Batlhaping were still primitive, 'like during the time of Makuroane's rule, not developing with the times'. The travels led him to the land of Barolong and Bakgalagadi, where he found that they had shot and killed a white man. He made a comparison between the Biblical Naboth's Vineyard and the land of Barolong booRatshidi in Moleloane, Mafikeng, which the whites had been 'craving for' for so long, as it was revealed in the work of Sauer land commission. As Africans lost their lands, the municipality of Mafikeng received a letter from the commission about border of the Montshiwa Reserve as drawn by the Imperial government and not the Union, so Mashejashejane wrote. The column wished Chief Silas Molema's eldest son, who was on the way to England, safe travel and urged him to prepare for the SANNC deputation when it arrived. The author concluded his journey with a train ride from Lohurutshe to Rustenburg, where he said he found a Boer minister who was leaving his congregation and advised them not to buy from Indians because they take all the money. Other ministers believe that there are two Gods, one for the white skin and another for the black skin. (*Tsala*, 28 March 1914, p. 3).

Some of the sayings in *Tsala ea Batho* indicating hybridity or creolisation:

- Jopo – a job (*Tsala*, 19 April 1913, p. 3)
- Potere – Potter (*Tsala*, 13 December 1913, p. 7)
- Faefe, sikisi, eite, naene, tene – five, six, eight, nine, ten (*Tsala*, 1 November 1913, p. 7)
- Neitifi Lende Eketi – Natives Land Act (*Tsala*, 23 August 1913, p. 3)

Original Setswana names

- Piano – Tinkane (*Tsala*, 21 June 1913, p. 5)
- Segatsetsa – Refrigerator (*Tsala*, 12 July 1913, p. 2)
- Bothekisa – Timekeeper boys (*Tsala*, 10 May 1913, p. 4)

Invented Setswana names

- Jarafantene – Jagersfontein (*Tsala*, 13 December 1913, p. 7)
- Beaconsfili – Beaconsfield (*Tsala*, 13 December 1913, p. 7)
- General Krisijane (De Wet) – General Christiaan De Wet (*Tsala*, 6 December 1913, p. 6)
- Herisemeto – Harrismith (*Tsala*, 25 October 1913, p. 6)

Appendix 3 provides an extended list of names, words, and expressions in Tsala ea Batho.

In conclusion, Kimani Nehusi identifies language as a ‘marker of humanity’ and ‘a supreme representation of culture’. He adds that it contains the history of a people and a record of their progress through space and time and that if understood correctly, so much can come out of language (Nehusi, 2022). Itumeleng Mothoagae and Boshadi Semenya argue that language carries power as it names, defines and signifies. It has the capacity to regulate access to discourse and the practices that make the discourse possible. Therefore a ‘consensual or relational community’ emerge out of a language (Mothoagae & Semenya, 2015, p. 47).

This section has illuminated the complex intricacies and dynamics of how language is used as a tool not just for communication but also how it informs identity and culture, as well as reflecting the changing times in which speakers and readers find themselves. What made the challenge more difficult for Plaatje was the multitude of dialects caused by the dispersed nature of Setswana speakers. How he privileged Serolong over the others also stood as a stumbling block in his efforts to create an identity using language. In the end, he had to deal with contestation over prioritising one dialect over the others.

It is important to note that different groups experienced different positioning in the colonial period, as Tswana communities lived variously, and at different times, under colonial rule, in Protectorates or within the Union of South Africa. There was also the difficulty of the ‘swamping’ of the language by English and Afrikaans. This resulted from the prevailing colonial hegemony that undermined and eroded African cultural identity. The rapid changes in language use over time indicate how rapidly the environment was changing and how both colonisation of the regions that Batswana lived in and the global march of modernity overwhelmed Batswana and other African people. This led to the dislocation and disorientation that Asante refers to, manifested by the dilution and decimation of authentic African languages.

12.4 *Black excellence*

One of the key identifiers of *Tsala ea Becoana* and Plaatje's journalism in general is the attention devoted to stories and articles that reflect the exceptional achievements of blacks in South Africa and the world. Plaatje gave prominence to these inspirational and feel-good news items. In some cases, his own name gets mentioned in this connection, as in the article about the successes of the Wesleyan Church choir in Kraaifontein as the top choir in Cape Town under the conductor Mrs Benjamin Appolis. The reader is reminded that Plaatje himself trained the members of this choir when he was still a young man living in Kimberley, even before he got married. Plaatje was described as 'strict', and that trait was seen in how he ran his newspapers. It concluded with the congratulatory missive: 'Well done Sol!' (*Tsala*, 27 August 1910, p. 3).

The presentation of black excellence was mainly that of Christian, mission-educated men, most of whom attended colleges like Lovedale or obtained degrees in the UK or the US. A few emerged from prominent families as second-generation achievers. There was a small number of women who were acknowledged.

A boxing match between black and white boxers represented a racial bout in which the winner would have made his people proud. Thus, when the Johnson vs Jeffries fight captured international headlines, *Tsala* followed the developments. The fight was won by Johnson, an African-American who earned £20 000 against the odds. This also meant big gambling returns for blacks who bet that he would floor Jeffries. *Tsala* records that 'blacks filled their tanks with cash', with one pundit pocketing £8 000 (*Tsala*, 27 August 1910, p. 3). This represented a moment of racial pride whereby an oppressed black man managed to beat his oppressor in the sporting ring, a reminder that blacks can still triumph in the most hostile circumstances, not only in the US but also in South Africa.

Race pride is what *Tsala* highlighted. It reported under the headline 'Lawlessness in Transvaal' an incident in which a Mr Wolmarans was charged with assaulting, swearing at, and ejecting Mr Sefako Makgatho, president of Transvaal Political Organisation and Vice President of the SANNC from the first-class compartment of a train. It reported that about 500 Boers gathered to support the accused. The court erupted at the sight of Montshiwa⁴, identified only as 'a native

⁴ George Montshiwa was born in Mafikeng in 1885, studied law in the UK, qualifying in 1910 as the third African barrister in South Africa. He practised in Pietersburg as a solicitor. Plaatje included his photograph in *Sechuana Proverbs* as 'the first Mochuana called to the English bar'.

lawyer from Pietersburg' (now Polokwane), who caused a sensation when he walked into the well of the court and some of the farmers saw a black lawyer for the first time. A racist farmer complained to the court orderly that a black man was sitting on the chair of the solicitor's table and asked if he could throw Montshiwa out the window, and the farmer was threatened with six-months imprisonment with hard labour for contempt of court (*Tsala*, 2 March 1912, p. 3). The figure of Montshiwa in the court stood as a beacon of hope for blacks who were excluded from many professions. Finding exceptional achievers like him gave some satisfaction to readers, showing that blacks too could occupy positions of influence in the courts.

Plaatje prized education. For a man who only held a standard 3 qualification from a German mission school, he identified the need to educate black children as a fast-track to a better life and opportunities in a fast-changing world. It is for this reason that he took several Cape Civil Service proficiency tests while employed as a typist and court interpreter in Mafeking. *Tsala* upheld achievers in education and paraded them as worthy role models for the young. An example was one Nehemiah Motshumi, who was identified as the first Motswana to pass the Cape Matriculation certificate (*Tsala*, 10 February 1912, p. 2). When the 1912 matriculation results were announced, *Tsala* highlighted the success of black learners such as Mr H. M'belle (Horatio, the son of Isaiah Bud-M'belle), Mr Matete and Mr Bikitsha (*Tsala*, 24 February 1912, p. 3). *Tsala* recognised the excellence Mr C.R. Moikgangoa, a Lovedale staff member and linguist, who also rendered services at the Native Congress as secretary of committees and interpreter (*Tsala*, 9 March 1912, p. 3).

One of the fashionable expressions that was used to justify colonisation in the early 1900s was 'raising the natives.' This was bandied about as an undertaking by the white race to elevate blacks to their level of 'civilisation'. When *Tsala* ran a profile of Rev. John L. Dube's work at Ohlange Institute in Natal, culled from the *Cape Argus* under the headline 'Raising the Native', it was a moment of empowerment in which an African leader asserted the agency of his people. The inspirational piece told of how Dube had introduced industrial work to 'natives', taking his cue from the work of Booker T. Washington, the African-American leader who was born enslaved and went on to be a founder of Tuskegee University. Dube had been to America for six years to study and work, sitting at the feet of Washington to learn how he managed to run his institute. On his return home, Dube worked with missionaries and realising his deficiencies, he went back to America with his wife, Nokuthela Ndima, to acquire industrial training. He

returned home for the second time to build his own institution, and students started with farming, 'a carpenter's shop in which they made equipment needed for the school' and 'a printing press which is still under a Zulu'.

For a long time, they had no government support because he was viewed suspiciously due to his American education. However, Ohlange had now introduced better methods of farming, which were restricted by the shrinking land at the disposal of the native. It also reflected the modernising or 'civilised' native who was moving out of huts and needed furniture. 'Girls' learned home industries, making baskets that 'found favour in Europeans', and old wooden pillows considered better than the ones made by 'savages'. Literature was published in their own tongue, and the newspaper *Ilanga lase Natal* boasted advertisements from white businesses. Next was a tailor's shop for them to make their own clothes, and at £6 a year for boarding and tuition, the institute was reasonably priced (*Tsala*, 30 March 1912, p. 3). The significance of this article cannot be overstated. It encapsulated the heroics of black excellence from a man who was impacting lives and truly 'raising the native'. It must have left the readers inspired and wanting to do more for themselves and not always be at the mercy of whites.

When writing about death in colonial West Africa, Stephanie Newell pointed out that printed obituaries functioned as 'mediums of social memory'. Furthermore, it was through the biographies of long-dead men as well as obituaries of the newly dead that literate West Africans generated an archive of African heroes that served to inspire locals as examples and points of reference for personal achievement' (Newell, 2016, pp. 390–391).

Tsala was no exception to celebrating African heroes, as seen in the obituaries of Chief Bathoen Gaseitseoe and Veldtman Bikitsha and heroes in the African diaspora. Plaatje offered a rich and celebratory portrait of Chief Bathoen's leadership and character. While the historian, Dr Silas Modiri Molema, the son of Silas who funded *Koranta*, described Bathoen's reign as uneventful, claiming that 'nothing that calls for attention happened in his time' (Molema, 1963, p. 58), Plaatje instead emphasised Bathoen's remarkable reputation and influence. He considered him second only to Khama, the famed leader of the Bamangwato nation and the grandfather of Sir Seretse Khama, the first president of independent Botswana. Plaatje praised Bathoen for his tact, geniality, and statesmanship, arguing that these qualities allowed him to thrive as a Christian ruler under British colonial oversight, a notable achievement given the complexities and pressures of colonial rule in southern Africa. Plaatje's tribute to Bathoen highlighted the chief's visionary approach to governance, especially in matters of environmental stewardship

(*Tsala ea Becoana*, 16 July 1910, p. 2). One from the diaspora was Edward Wilmot Blyden (See 12.1), who was eulogised in the obituary headlined ‘A Great Negro Savant’ reproduced from *African World*. Blyden was equated to ‘a giant of Booker Washington stature’. He was a teacher, philosopher and scholar who could read Latin and Greek as well as speak several European languages. He wrote the seminal book *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* in 1886. (*Tsala*, 9 March 1912, p. 3). Newell is correct to assert that in the political context of colonial rule characterised by racial discrimination against Africans, the obituaries became ‘halls of fame’ contributing to ‘a counter-colonial if not an overtly anticolonial, historical archive of black role models for readers to emulate’ (Newell, 2016, p. 391). This is evident even in the phraseology of the tributes such as ‘the greatest man to ever live in Fingo history’ in the case of Bikitsha (*Tsala*, 30 July 1910, pp. 2–3). ‘He was a gentle mannered and sympathetic ruler. Just and with common sense’ in the words of another tribute to Chief Bathoen (*Tsala*, 16 July 1910, p. 2).

The choice of role models, as highlighted by the newspapers, points to what was believed to be exemplary model behaviour and conduct. The readers were called upon to strive for achievement and prove their worth in a hostile environment, against the odds and in the face of opposition. Excellence was depicted in the sporting ring, church, courtrooms, and classrooms. Superficially, it may seem like a simple moment of victory for an individual, but at its core, the win was for the community and was tantamount to claiming equality with the white race, proving that they are as capable, talented, and competent as anybody else. This must have inspired others on many fronts.

12.5 Advertising

Advertising has proven to be an invaluable resource when it comes to issues of identity and class in societies that undergo significant and rapid change. From my perspective as a specialist in the black press of South Africa, I am continually struck by the intricate interplay between advertising and the construction of selfhood among black South Africans, especially in the formative decades of the twentieth century. To think through how advertising contributed to the conversation about identity and being, the study turns to the work of Hlonipha Mokoena. She took a different approach as she called on scholars to go beyond the theoretical positions of the imagined community and public sphere when analysing the consumption patterns of the educated Christian black elite as reflected in the early 20th-century press. She advocated for ‘a more nuanced study of the buying and spending choices of black newspaper readers’, including the meaning of advertised goods as a form of ‘purposive behaviour’ and ‘a marker of social

class'. From this, one could make inferences about how Africans viewed themselves (Mokoena, 2020, p. 454). She called the pages of the early black press a 'storehouse of the class aspirations' (Mokoena, 2020, p. 457) and a tool of political agitation and status affirmation (Mokoena, 2020, p. 462).

Mokoena's insights on the bilingual black press as a cultural *vade mecum* are particularly illuminating. These newspapers were more than mere chroniclers of events, they were a mirror and a lamp, reflecting and illuminating the aspirations, anxieties, and evolving identities of their readers. The press became a space where the amakholwa could see their sociability represented in the printed word, and where the *zeitgeist* of the time was refracted to readers through linguistic, cultural, religious, and political labour (Mokoena, 2020, p. 469).

One fascinating example is an advert in *Tsala ea Becoana* that invited readers to translate complex English words into Setswana. This act of translation was not just linguistic but deeply cultural, asking readers to grapple with the very meanings and values that shaped their lives: moral and lesson, quantity-quality, happiness-pleasure, fortune-luck, predilection-disposition, selection-election, transformation-civilisation, clever-cunning, Congregational, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Protestant-Methodist, Doxology-Grace, and natural-unnatural-supernatural (Tsala, 29 October 1910, p. 1). These exercises are evidence of the black press's role in fostering intellectual engagement and cultural negotiation, contributing to the evolution of a distinctly African modernity.

Clothing is probably the most advertised commodity in *Plaatje's* newspapers. This is so because, as Mokoena argues, and I concur, it is through clothing that transitions and transformations in African society can be clearly marked. The association between clothes and social aspirations dates back to the slave society of the Cape of Good Hope. Mokoena's argument that enslavement and colonialism shaped the dress code, comportment, and aspirations of the formerly enslaved and the colonised Africans resonates deeply with my own findings. If anything, the mission school, Christianity, and the mining compounds accentuated the function of clothing as a social class marker, making a political statement of new dignity and rebelliousness (Mokoena, 2020, pp. 461–465).

What is particularly compelling is Mokoena's notion of the 'double bind' whereby Africans had to decide whether to master the sartorial language of colonisation or to resist its domination. The act of choosing what to wear was never neutral. It was fraught with cultural significance and political implication. Clothing 'changed the cultural sphere and made clothing essential to

the functioning of the imagination itself' (Mokoena, 2020, p. 463). The black press has captured this tension, documenting both the embrace and the subversion of colonial sartorial codes.

Moreover, while imagining themselves anew, the 19th-century African literates invented tradition by using clothing to establish novel ways of being African. The arrival of new garments, and other household goods such as sugar, flour, and sweets, necessitated the invention of a new lexicon and this is vividly illustrated in Plaatje's newspapers (Mokoena, 2020, p. 463). The act of naming these commodities in Setswana was itself a creative and political act, situating foreign objects within an African framework 'as a lexical object in a relationship with other extent objects' (Mokoena, 2020, p. 464).

As Mokoena notes, the translation of goods into indigenous idiom was essential but also challenging, often incomplete and subject to false starts. This resonates with my own observations on the role of language in negotiating modernity and materiality. Advertisements such as those for Dr Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People encapsulate what Mokoena calls 'archaeologies of materiality', producing 'biographies of practice' through the language, register, and tone used (Mokoena, 2020, p. 467). These advertorials are invaluable historical artefacts, revealing the subtle ways Africans navigated the world of goods and meanings.

Mokoena's description of advertised goods as 'foreign objects that both represented and solidified the experience of being colonised' is a powerful reminder of the ambivalent legacy of the black press. On one hand, these advertisements extended the civilising mission of colonialism; on the other, they became tools for Africans to articulate new modes of existence and identity (Mokoena, 2020, p. 459). The emergence of creolised words like Likukisi (Cakes), Shukere (Sugar), and Flouru (Flour) (Koranta, 15 November 1902, p. 6; Koranta, 31 December 1902, p. 6; Koranta, 31 December 1902, p. 2) demonstrates the dynamic and creative adaptation of language, reflecting both heteroglossia and heterodoxy, and marking consciousness and class status in the kholwa community (Mokoena, 2020, p. 474).

Importantly, the way advertisements were crafted presented Africans as discerning customers. The emphasis on value, aesthetics, and customer service; sometimes even guaranteeing that business owners spoke the customers' language; was a recognition of African humanity and agency against the backdrop of colonialism. These moments in advertising history attest to the resilience and creativity of African consumers. Mokoena is right to argue that advertisers undermined colonial assumptions of African ignorance and poverty, instead presenting the

African as a ‘modern subject’ with legitimate desires for both necessities and luxuries (Mokoena, 2020, p. 459–460).

Advertising in the black press was not merely a commercial enterprise but a cultural and political phenomenon that shaped, reflected, and sometimes contested the identities and aspirations of black South Africans. It is through these pages that we glimpse the ongoing negotiation of modernity, tradition, and belonging in a rapidly changing society.

12.6 Discussion

The early twentieth-century black South African press emerged as a vital site of negotiation, contestation, and cultural production in a society marked by rapid urbanisation, colonial impositions, and shifting patterns of self-identification. The press, far from being a mere chronicler of events, reflected the aspirations, anxieties, and evolving identities of its readers. The interplay between language, identity, and class as articulated in the columns of Plaatje’s newspapers and the broader black press is worth an examination. I draw upon theoretical frameworks and historical examples to situate the analysis within ongoing debates on colonialism, modernity, and African selfhood.

The phenomenon of macaronic language, whereby multiple languages intermingle within a single expression, serves as a powerful indicator of the state of flux experienced by early black press readers. Urbanisation and the migration from rural villages to burgeoning cities precipitated a confluence of languages, compelling individuals to adapt to new linguistic realities. As Plaatje and his contemporaries navigated these transformations, the evolution of language in the press became emblematic of a population rapidly assimilating to urban norms, often privileging the literate urban readership over rural dwellers.

This linguistic adaptation is not merely a reflection of demographic shifts but a marker of cultural negotiation and identity formation. It is in these moments of hybridity and transition that the press captures the very pulse of modernity and where language becomes both a tool and a terrain for the articulation of selfhood and social aspiration.

In theorising the evolution of language and its relation to identity, Hlonipha Mokoena’s scholarship is instructive. Mokoena contends that the black press operated as a barometer for linguistic change, registering the spread of literacy and the secular reach of missionary presses.

Her insistence on a nuanced study of consumption patterns and the meaning of advertised goods as purposive behaviour foregrounds the role of the press in class formation and status affirmation.

Complementing Mokoena's analysis is Kehbema Langmia's Afro-Cultural Mulatto Communication Theory, which foregrounds the sacrifices made by 'natives' in Western-driven African cities. According to Langmia, the adoption of oral Creole/Pidgin and, subsequently, Western languages such as English and French, represents a strategic accommodation to material power and expatriate influence. The theory highlights the pressures faced by migrant youths, who are compelled to abandon mother tongues in favour of languages that facilitate upward mobility and access to elite networks.

Critically, while Langmia's framework elucidates the dynamics of linguistic adaptation under colonial modernity, I argue that it risks underestimating the creative agency of African language users. The evidence from the black press suggests not a passive sacrifice, but an active negotiation. We observe language mixing and translation as acts of resistance, assertion and cultural invention.

Language in the early black press was inextricably linked to identity. The passionate debates that unfolded in print revolved around how readers spoke and wrote their languages, with the press serving as a crucible for the formulation of new self-perceptions. These debates were not merely academic, they shaped the evolution of language itself and reflected broader struggles over recognition, dignity and belonging.

Looking at these dynamics, one is struck by the dual function of language in the press. It operated as both a tool of protest and a celebration of culture. The act of translating English terms into Setswana, for instance, was not a straightforward linguistic exercise but a deeply political and cultural negotiation, situating foreign objects within African frameworks and asserting the legitimacy of indigenous idioms.

The missionary enterprise profoundly shaped the linguistic landscape of the black press, often with problematic consequences. Plaatje's 1916 critique of missionary approaches to Setswana phonetics underscores the limitations of colonial language policies. He lamented the failure to accurately reproduce the sounds and tones of Setswana, resulting in frequent mispronunciations and even obscenities from preachers whose grasp of the language was tenuous (Jones & Plaatje, 1916, p. viii).

Historical accounts, such as Cecil Northcott's biography of Robert Moffat, further illustrate the pitfalls of missionary translation efforts. Moffat's lack of linguistic training led to circumlocutions, the introduction of foreign terms, and orthographic errors, some of which persist in Setswana today. The translation of "epistle" to "episetole," mistakenly understood as "pistol," exemplifies the unintended consequences of these missteps (Northcott, 1961, pp. 121–122). Moffat could not distinguish the 'd' and mistook it for an 'r': modisa (shepherd) became morisa; mokaedi (instructor) became mokaeri; Kudumane became Kuruman; and Kgalagadi became Kalahari.

I interpret these historical episodes as emblematic of the broader struggle over language in colonial contexts: the imposition of foreign linguistic norms often resulted in the distortion of indigenous languages, yet also provoked creative responses and acts of reclamation by African speakers.

The black press was not merely a passive recorder of linguistic change; it was an active agent in the mobilisation of language as a tool for protest, radicalisation, and cultural affirmation. The newspapers provided a platform for raising issues, contesting injustices, and celebrating African cultural heritage. In this sense, language became a site of struggle, a means of resisting colonial domination and asserting new modes of being African.

My own engagement with these texts reveals the press as a space where the boundaries of tradition and modernity were constantly negotiated. The emergence of creolised words and inventive translations reflects a vibrant process of cultural adaptation, signalling both the resilience and creativity of African communities in the face of colonial pressures.

The intersection of language, identity, and class is further illuminated by the work of Robert July and Jacob Dlamini. July's analysis of colonialism's impact on African society highlights the destructive effects of British land policies and the conversion of Africans into squatters. Plaatje's opposition to the Natives Land Act, as documented in *Tsala ea Batho* and *Native Life in South Africa*, exemplifies the press's role in articulating resistance and shaping political thought.

Dlamini's reflections on the 'civilised natives' and the formation of a self-conscious elite offer critical insights into the class dynamics of the period. This new African elite, scaffolded initially by missionary education, developed distinctive standards of excellence and a corporate identity that set them apart from the broader black population. Their efforts to establish schools,

newspapers, and organisations signified a strategic claim to social and cultural capital, even as colonial authorities sought to marginalise them (2020, pp. 155–166).

From my perspective, the press was instrumental in both documenting and reinforcing these class distinctions. Through its language, content, and editorial choices, it helped to construct, and sometimes contest, the boundaries of elite identity, while also providing space for broader expressions of African selfhood.

Engaging critically with the sources and theories discussed, I am compelled to foreground the agency and ingenuity of African actors in shaping their linguistic and cultural destinies. While colonialism imposed significant constraints, the evidence from the black press points to a dynamic process of negotiation, adaptation and resistance. The interplay between macaronic language, identity formation, and class aspiration reveals the press as a site of ongoing contestation—a space where Africans articulated new forms of modernity and belonging.

I contend that future scholarship must move beyond reductive binaries of assimilation and resistance, recognising the complexity and creativity inherent in African responses to colonial modernity. The press, as both a cultural agent and historical archive, offers invaluable insights into these processes, demanding sustained critical engagement and nuanced analysis.

In synthesising the findings of this discussion, it is clear that the early black South African press played a pivotal role in mediating the relationships between language, identity, and class. Through its columns, advertisements, and debates, it reflected and shaped the aspirations, anxieties, and strategies of African readers navigating the challenges of colonial modernity. The press was not only a barometer of linguistic and social change but a catalyst for the invention of new traditions, the articulation of class identities, and the assertion of African selfhood.

Ultimately, the study of language in the black press reveals the deep interconnections between cultural production, political struggle, and social transformation. It invites us to reconsider the narratives of colonial history, foregrounding the voices and agency of those who, through the printed word, claimed their place in the modern world.

SECTION IV

13. Findings

In investigating the contributions Plaatje made to South African journalism through the newspapers he edited, the study questioned the factors that influenced his practice and the form this took as he constituted the African and Setswana publics, and to a lesser degree, how the African nationalist philosophy manifested itself in relation to the newspapers. Out of these emerged new insights and frameworks with which to view Plaatje's philosophy and politics.

In the previous chapters, I shared information about the model of journalism practised by each of the newspapers, including both the editorial and commercial aspects. Furthermore, I interrogated the form this journalism took and how Setswana and African publics were convened through the articles, editorials, and letters contained in the newspapers.

This study allowed the excavation of some of the essential elements as far as journalism practice, processes, and values at the turn of the 20th century and the black press tradition are concerned. It illuminated how Plaatje's enterprise was run, how it set the agenda for the black readership, and where it located Africans in the colonial milieu. Through the three newspapers edited by Plaatje, the idea of what a black newspaper represented in colonial times and its role as a tool of protest, a record of sociability, a celebration of travel and culture, and a repository of language and history is revealed. These newspapers were born out of necessity. The colonial authorities excluded Africans from participating in the running of their country, and they were denied the franchise in the Transvaal and Orange Free State, two strongholds of readership for Plaatje's newspapers. As a subaltern press, the newspapers served to express their standpoint on the issues of the day and to criticise the lack of justice for the African masses. The issues varied during the nine years under study, including, among other things, unfair treatment of blacks in trains, war compensation, and Chinese labour imports from 1901 to 1902; attempts to turn South Africa into a 'white man's country' in 1903; the 'black peril' in 1911; Women's pass laws in 1912; Natives Land Act in 1913; and the SANNC deputation to England in 1914. The coverage of these issues provides an insight into what the lived African experience was in the wake of the Boer War leading up to the establishment of the Union and the concerted effort to dispossess and weaken blacks thereafter.

An in-depth and thorough reading of Plaatje's newspapers in the Readex/NewsBank archive and an application of thematic and content analysis made it possible to formulate ideas of how

a black press paper could provide a platform of expression for those who were excluded and overlooked by a racist administration. The reading revealed a more complex and varied experience. It was more than just protest. The newspapers carried articles that celebrated the life and achievements of black excellence in different fields, such as education, health, and law. An irreverent column called Maitisho brought to life a feminist perspective by a sassy and brave 'woman' who was ahead of her time. Some of the columns illuminated the black social life at church, tea meetings, concerts, fundraisings, sports, weddings, and funerals. There was also a strong sense of travel, whether in the travel writing tradition or in reports of holidays and visits undertaken by the upwardly mobile middle class from Cape Town to Bulawayo. These travellers included teachers, the clergy, merchants, or businesspeople.

The commercial side of the newspapers has been interesting to study. The business model, as espoused by the black press pioneers who served a community with low literacy rates and a new reading culture after centuries of orality, proved to be a challenge. The newspaper could be received in one of two ways: through an agent or direct subscription. The latter was easier to manage because the copies would be sent to a specific address via the post office as a distribution vehicle. The newspaper office had a database of the recipients who renewed their subscription either at six-month or yearly intervals. This posed its own challenges, with readers who delayed sending payments, exerting pressure on the newspaper's finances, especially when copies continued to be sent out, incurring postal costs.

When it came to agents, the system was fraught with pitfalls. First and foremost, the newspaper depended on the goodwill of the agents. In an ideal world, they recruited readers, collected money from them, and then sent it to the newspaper offices. The agents would then distribute the papers to the readers. This did not always prove to be the case. Some agents would collect the money and not send it to the office immediately; they would wait for it to accumulate, putting pressure on the office as it scrambled for cash flow. Others would collect the money and never send it to the office, 'buying tobacco' instead. Some would collect the money and not issue receipts as evidence of payment and then disappear, leaving the readers stranded. There were also reports of some readers who received receipts but never copies of the paper. This betrayed the trust between the reader and the paper. However, perhaps the most significant damage it caused was to cripple the newspaper. The behaviour of some of these agents were acts of criminality that Plaatje tolerated but to his detriment. There were threats were made in the newspaper about involving police and debt collectors, but there is no evidence that these were followed through.

Secondly, the uneven distribution of agents in some parts of the country meant that potential readers were not serviced; some big centres, such as Mangaung, were at one point without an agent. Thirdly, with the Natives Land Act and the dispersal of people, the newspapers lost readers simply because they had no permanent addresses or were in transit and their agents could not facilitate the distribution of the paper. It was noted, though, that there were some outstanding agents who were dependable and diligent in the recruitment of readers, collection of money, transfer of money to the office, and distribution of the papers to readers, and these were highlighted in the newspaper.

While the newspaper did not make much money from subscriptions and agents, it also fell short with advertising. The rates were low in comparison with the white press, which, granted, had a bigger readership and resources. The production costs were also astronomical when one considers that Plaatje's newspapers had their own printing presses since 1902 in Mafeking with *Koranta ea Becoana*. In 1910, he printed in King William's Town using John Tengo Jabavu's *Imvo Zabantsundu*'s facilities. By 1911, he used the presses of other newspapers in Kimberley. In 1912, he acquired the presses of *Motsualla oa Babatso* from Johannesburg, which were costly to transport over a distance of approximately 500 km to Kimberley. White papers were owned by conglomerates, political organisations, or wealthy merchants who could save costs by sharing the presses or offices. On the other hand, for the black press, it was ideal to run everything by oneself, in one's backyard, like an artisan in a craft business. This allowed for one to have control over editorial and production processes.

My findings will now be considered and presented under the following headings: public sphere, form, language, and advertising, which will be followed by conclusions.

13.1 Public sphere

Plaatje's challenge was to keep his audience engaged, in other words, to convene a public sphere that would debate critically and contribute to conversations about their destiny as a people. The newspaper was a business venture in the first instance, which sought to commodify news and content and monetise it. Therefore, it not only required the emotional and sentimental buy-in of Barolong and the wider Setswana-speaking public but also called on them to part

with money. However, Plaatje faced low levels of education coupled with limited spending power. How, then, could he effectively convene this public sphere? The third challenge was language and its use. As Cowling argued, ‘discourses read over time are not static but shift and change; they may also evolve in relation to different contexts’ (Cowling, 2014, p. 37). Cowling further makes an interesting point about the dynamics of language and links it to Marxism, which proposed that ‘the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas... the class that has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the time over the means of mental production’. With the exclusion of large swathes of Africans from the running of South Africa, a voice was needed to express and, in some way, influence conversations in a public sphere that did not recognise them. As the counterpublic theory asserts, these conversations happened in the subaltern, meaning as a marginalised or subordinate social group.

The concept of public sphere is articulated by Jürgen Habermas as a space where private individuals come together to engage in rational-critical debate, forming public opinion that is independent of state or market influence (Habermas, 1989). In the application of Habermasian philosophy to an analysis of Plaatje’s newspapers, as part of the early black press, it has been established in this study that even though the public sphere model dates back to 18th-century European bourgeois society, it does have relevance to a colonial context. Plaatje created a black counterpublic sphere that converges with and diverges from the ideals of Habermas. Looking at the core arguments of Habermas: inclusivity, rational-critical debate, public opinion formation, and independence, there is something to be said about how Plaatje measures up within the constraints of a systematically oppressive 20th-century colonial South Africa. As such, Habermas’s bourgeois ideal has a utility as a resistant subaltern space.

On inclusivity, as Habermas imagines the public sphere, in colonial South Africa the spaces excluded black South Africans and Plaatje’s newspapers can be seen as becoming a textual arena for deliberation. Here, mission-educated Africans could connect with one another to become a network of conversations in their different persuasions as teachers, merchants, labourers, and rural elites. Sections of the newspapers, such as *Tsa Bakoaledi* (the letters), facilitated discussions on common issues ranging from the political and economic to the cultural and fashionable. This is what Habermas would identify as a participatory forum. This forum also included editorials and articles that generated an African perspective.

The rational-critical debate was adapted to a colonial context. Plaatje's editorials carried reasoned arguments informed by his knowledge of the legal, traditional, moral, and economic systems that he used to challenge colonial policies. This is on display in editorials about court cases, tax issues, treatment of blacks in trains, blatant racism encounters, and his campaigns against the Natives Land Act, in which he deploys evidence and observation and makes an ethical and moral appeal. While Habermas assumed an equal footing of participants in the bourgeois sphere, in Plaatje's case, the power dynamics were not in his favour, and his debate was a form of protest rather than a negotiation.

When he formulated the theory, Habermas assumed a singular public sphere. This has been challenged by scholars such as Nancy Fraser who argues for the inclusion of counterpublics, where marginalised groups express alternative narratives in these subaltern spaces. Plaatje's newspapers fit neatly into this space. In a white-dominated colonial setting that shut out black participation, Africans found the newspapers to be an effective platform to articulate their interests against colonial supremacy. The use of bilingualism augmented this counterpublic. Setswana resonated with his core audience, and English was used for a broader reach, bridging tribal divides and nurturing a nascent black national consciousness.

In the Habermasian tradition, an effective public sphere is autonomous from the state and the market. Plaatje was free from direct government control; even though he carried government notices in his papers, he operated independently. His biggest problem lay in his finances. He lacked a strong backer with financial muscle, and Silas Molema could only sustain the enterprise for a few years. However, relying on the goodwill of agents to send money back to the office and for subscribers to renew at the correct time left him crippled. This brittleness and vulnerability highlighted a diversion from Habermas's ideal. Despite the constraints and challenges, Plaatje admirably upheld editorial independence in line with the autonomy that Habermas prioritises.

Habermas holds that the intent of the public sphere is to influence political power through public opinion. On this score, Plaatje achieved brilliant results. By exposing and contextualising issues that were pertinent to Batswana, Plaatje helped his audience formulate a political critique of their realities, circumstances, and position in society. This further engendered and radicalised political thought on black rights, the franchise, treatment in trains, living wage, justice, fairness, war compensations, the native question, tax, and annexation. This helped a largely traditional African society emerge to confront modernity and a new oppressive

dispensation. The coverage and analysis of lengthy parliamentary debates, the publication of debates by lawmakers, city council minutes, and reports of the 'blue books' (*Tsala ea Becoana*, 5 August 1911, p. 2) enriched political thought and engaged the readers in the processes of how policy was formed and how they were affected. These efforts laid the intellectual groundwork that would result in organised resistance. This is especially evident in the latter years between 1912 and 1914 in the work of the SANNC and how early African nationalism took root.

Attention will now be given to how Plaatje's journalism diverted from Habermas's model. The bourgeois sphere is meant to be inclusive, but Plaatje served a literate minority of mission-educated Africans. Habermas assumes a relatively free state, while in colonial South Africa, there were racial barriers and oppression, resulting in the black counterpublic sphere taking the form of a subversive act. Habermas is Eurocentric in outlook, and he ranked print and rationality highly. On the other hand, Plaatje exploited Setswana orality to reflect African communicative patterns and codes.

In conclusion, Plaatje's newspapers convened a black public sphere for rational-critical debate, uniting a counterpublic against colonial discrimination. The papers fashioned African opinion in an oppressive context. Because of the unique challenges of operating in a colonial context, lacking resources, serving a readership with low literacy levels, and in an unequal society, they advanced a resistant and culturally distinct arena. Plaatje's combination of purposeful advocacy, logic, and community participation resulted in his newspapers becoming effective tools of black agency, reinventing the public sphere in a colonial setting.

13.2 Form

The journalistic form of Plaatje's newspapers was a unique cocktail that suited his colonial circumstances in the early 20th century. His newspapers do not fit into the linear trajectory and neat boxes, as argued by Barnhurst and Nerone (2001). Instead, what emerges is a practice that borrowed from the partisan – they were editor-centric, with Plaatje's advocacy voice dominating the content to mobilise his audience. They carried Victorian sensibilities – observing the formal tone of the editor, how he structured his arguments, and the bilingual offering that indicated Victorian professionalism and conveyed a moral authority to educate and affirm Africans. The drive for advertising as a source of funding and the emerging mass

audience point to the Modern form that the papers took. These papers are found to be partisan-Victorian with Modern leanings.

The papers were strapped for resources due to limited funding, resulting in simple layouts that were text-heavy and lacked the Victorian grandeur; however, they continued to fulfil their advocacy role effectively.

Some important findings on how the form of journalism practised by Plaatje differed from the journalism of the present day have emerged. These findings are essentially indicative of the early black press. The news articles were presented without headlines; the advertising columns, by contrast, were decked with headlines, subheads, and other devices. This absence of headlines from news items stretched from the early years of *Koranta ea Becoana* until the turning point in August 1902 when the newspaper acquired its printing presses. From here onwards, the design and layout were strengthened with the introduction of elementary headlines, which achieved some order in the presentation of news items (*Koranta*, 16 August 1902, p. 3). Particular regular columns were clearly marked, and the reader was alerted beforehand by the use of the headlines as what was contained in the columns. By 1903, there was innovation in design, and the headlines and subheads aimed to draw in readers. They were presented in bold, larger font size, and some in capital letters ending with a full stop. It was not until *Tsala ea Becoana* when the form metamorphosised to a more pleasing and eye-catching presentation achieved through the use of headlines and subheads. In some cases, experimentation was undertaken, whereby readers encountered what appeared to be an advert or a movie poster. Advertising played a significant role in influencing news presentation. Not only did it serve as inspiration, but it provided a template to make the news more appealing.

Bylines were generally absent, except for special reports, which were treated as an occasion. Special reports and correspondents were credited appropriately, such as Mr Sebopioa Molema oa Lovedale (of Lovedale)'s article on 'Motse oa ga Montshioa' (Montshioa's village) (*Koranta*, 15 August 1903, p. 4) and 'Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons' by H. Sylvester Williams, who was a lawyer and a Pan-African activist (*Koranta*, 18 July 1903, p. 5).

The use of pseudonyms in articles and letters was widespread. These were presented as letters or acronyms in most cases. Correspondents were not identified; however, the exchange paper was credited at the beginning or end of the report. The editor's voice was articulated in the letter's section with his response to the letter and the signature 'Mor. K. ea B'. (Morulaganyi

oa *Koranta ea Becoana* – Editor of *Koranta ea Becoana*); on a rare occasion, it was Ed. B.G. (Editor of *Bechuana Gazette*). This was so because the letters were mostly printed and published in the Setswana columns, an indication of Plaatje's intention to convene a Setswana public sphere that conversed in their mother tongue.

Stories were presented in no particular order. When the front page was taken up by advertising from December 1901, news was relegated to page two, and later to page three, as the page numbers increased. In the end, there was no idea of a splash, a lead story, or headline news. What was contained inside the paper was not even hinted at on the front page. The reader would have to go in with blind trust that the newspaper would have something of interest to them.

The newspaper served as an indispensable news service; there were few, if any, other news sources, given the absence of radio and television, and only film as another medium. Buying and reading a newspaper was not just to inform oneself but an act of solidarity with a cause one identified with. In the case of the early black press, newspapers such as *Koranta ea Becoana* traded on linguistic, ethnic, and totemic allegiances. Granted, the readers who understood English had options of reading *The Star* or *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, but they would have missed out on news, opinion, and advertisements that spoke directly to their being. A newspaper, therefore, was more than a news commodity; it convened a people with common ties and in solidarity.

The promiscuous layout resulted in the indiscriminate dispersal of content in columns, especially in 1901. By 1902, a clear demarcation of stories was achieved, and the use of images and graphics was introduced.

Koranta made great strides in the form of journalism. It had accumulated so much momentum that had it not faced crippling financial problems, it could possibly have been exemplary to its peers. It was headed by an ambitious and intrepid editor with big plans and dreams and a world view that was unmatched. Although he had not travelled overseas, he was well read and exposed to ideas as expressed by European and American thinkers. This momentum was lost when Plaatje moved to Kimberley and resumed his journalism with *Tsala ea Becoana*. It was as if he had pressed the reset button and started to build from the ground up. In time, the use of images increased and became more sophisticated in the later years of *Tsala ea Becoana* and *Tsala ea Batho*.

Tsala ea Becoana pioneered business news coverage for black readers when it dedicated a column to market prices titled *Tlhoatlhoa tsa Mebaraka*. Here, black businesses and merchants

could engage with the market for their produce, ranging from dairy, eggs, grains, flour and vegetables to wood, salt, poultry, and livestock. On a weekly basis, the newspaper updated businesses on the fluctuations in prices in the main centres of Johannesburg, Krugersdorp, Potchefstroom, and Klerksdorp.

Space seemed to be a big issue in the 1910s because Plaatje also came under tremendous pressure to increase his offering. Here, two different approaches can be observed. While Plaatje increased the columns from five to eight, this amounted to another form of condensing information.

While his contemporary, Mahatma Gandhi of *Indian Opinion*, experimented with ‘an anti-commodity, copyright-free, slow-motion newspaper’ (Hofmeyr, 2013, p. 4), Plaatje thrived in the opposite direction. However, in the *Tsala ea Batho*’s latter years of 1914 and 1915, he changed gears. This might have been the work of the stand-in editor, believed to be his wife, Elizabeth, and his brother-in-law, Isaiah Bud-M’belle. Be that as it may, the change in tempo before Plaatje sailed to England as part of the SANNC deputation can be noticed.

The move of *Tsala ea Becoana* from being printed in King William’s Town to Kimberley allowed readers in the big cities of Kimberley, Bloemfontein, Klerksdorp, Johannesburg, and Pretoria to access the paper on Saturday, the day of publication, thanks to the speedy delivery by train. *Tsala ea Becoana* traded on immediacy, indicating progress from the days of *Koranta*, its predecessor, which would take days to reach readers depending on where they were. This immediacy of news transformed journalism, which had, in the past, rendered newspapers as no more than a journal because breaking news and announcements of deaths and births reached readers days, if not weeks, later, by which time they were old news. The same-day mass consumption, or even a day later, was revolutionary for the early black press, especially for such far-flung towns removed from the big centres.

Plaatje adapted Western journalistic models to create a hybrid form that prioritised African agency. This in turn made his newspapers functional platforms for resistance rather than just news outlets.

13.3 *Language*

As a pioneer of the black press in South Africa, Sol Plaatje wrestled with a several challenges. First, the idea of a Setswana newspaper-reading public may not have been a new invention, as literate Batswana were already reading newspapers produced by missionaries, as noted earlier. What Plaatje had to confront was serialising the language from the perspective of a native Morolong speaker, along with making value judgments about what went into the newspaper, what constituted the content that would resonate and be of interest to a modern, literate Morolong. It became obvious that the newspaper would be a vehicle to register protest against a colonial behemoth determined to subjugate African people.

The linguistic style of Plaatje's journalism was a virtuoso fusion of tradition, prose, and rhetorical sophistication that was accessible to a culturally hybrid readership. His multilingualism made it easy for him to translate copy with meticulous precision in up to three languages: Setswana, English, and isiXhosa. He bridged the African oral traditions and Western conventions with the stylistic choices he made. These were influenced by his mission education, self-education, his reading of Victorian literature, and a dedication to engaging a black readership to coalesce against a hostile colonial authority. This is seen in the exchanges that he has with other early black press newspapers and the content that circulates among them.

Bilingualism, or more accurately, trilingualism, and code-switching are the hallmarks of Plaatje's journalism. While he set off to cater for a mission-educated Setswana-speaking readership in 1901, he incorporated English by 1902 to reach a wider audience. In *Koranta ea Becoana*, he employed code-switching. This was more than just pragmatic but a stylistic choice indicative of the dual sensibilities his readers had: they were traditional but embraced colonial and Western systems. When *Tsala ea Batho* was started in 1912, the bilingualism was more pronounced, with isiXhosa joining the mix in a trilingual newspaper offering. This meant an enhanced level of accessibility, as well as linguistic equality in a society that marginalised African languages; however, this might have brought unintended feelings of alienation to traditional Setswana readers.

Plaatje's writing is marked for its simplicity, clarity, and persuasive character. It melded influences from Setswana oral storytelling, the discipline of court conduct from his days as an interpreter, and a formal Victorian cadence, cleaved from the likes of Dickens, especially in the English columns. He presented structured arguments with a polite yet pointed phrasing with tone of moral authority. The use of idioms, expressions, onomatopoeia, and adaptation of

Western words and names to a Setswana form helped to educate and mobilise his audience. This simplicity was accompanied by sharp wit, flair, satire, humour, and metaphors, making for a pleasant, emotive, or vivid reading experience, depending on what the occasion called for. The register and tone were in no way condescending to the reader. His use of language, typical of the early 20th century, was grand and elaborate. Some of the words applied have become obsolete and out of daily use for a modern-day reader. Plaatje's newspaper writing was relatable, compelling, intellectually stimulating, and never off-putting. This indicates a successful adaptation of Western forms for African purposes, and this reinforced its role as a vector for a shared identity and a black public sphere.

There was a dynamic tension to be observed in Plaatje's writing, which stemmed from the blending of Setswana orality, English rationality, and the immediacy of a journalist. This tension made him well-suited for convening a black public sphere. This, and the oscillation between critique and outcry, reflected the stakes of his era, marked by colonial oppression and the erosion of African agency, resistance and adaptation, hope and despair, and tradition and modernity. It was not fully traditional, not completely Western, but a hybrid that gave an empowering voice to Africans using the tools of language, journalism, and literature to confront colonial injustices.

Plaatje's newspapers were not only informative and transformative, but they also thrived on the linguistic style, which was fluid and purposeful. They played an important role as platforms for black dialogue and resistance in the tradition of the early black press using the mother tongue. To borrow from Gal and Woolard, for the first time, the 'linguistic representation' of the mother tongue 'produced not only individualised speakers and hearers as the agents of communication, but also larger, imagined social groupings... publics' (Gal and Woolard, 2001, p. 1) heralded by a one of theirs, a native Setswana speaker, and not a foreign missionary.

13.4 Advertising

This study afforded me the opportunity to examine the advertisements that were a prominent feature in the form Plaatje's newspapers took. This would help in making sense of the impact advertising had on journalism as well as its social history and black sociability.

An inspection of the advertising across the three titles reveals a robust and strategic presence of local merchants and service providers in Mafeking, Kimberley, Bloemfontein, Thaba Ncho,

and Johannesburg, selling goods targeted at the new African society. These were mostly clothing and jewellery, groceries, lodging, cigarettes, as well as eats and drinks. There were manufacturers of carts, agricultural utensils, and implements. In addition, readers could place notices of births, deaths, marriages, and the ‘help me find’ for missing relatives. Institutions of higher learning also booked space along with patent medicines and herbal cures.

While advertising enhanced the reading experience and influenced editorial designs and layout, it also pointed to the socio-political and economic constraints Africans faced in a colonial state at the turn of the 20th century. The papers served a small, literate African readership, and the advertising rates and revenue were insufficient to sustain the viability of the operations.

The early marketing tactics, language, and the collaboration between editorial and advertorial as well as the ethical conundrums early black press editors confronted were tracked and plotted. The advertising material analysed in this study provided glimpses into how black consumerism was shaped. It can be inferred how certain trends became endemic in black consumption patterns. For instance, the premium placed on appearance is observed through a plethora of adverts for Western dress such as blouses, trousers, hats, shoes, and coats, as advertised by clothiers and outfitters in the big cities and towns. Along with accessories such as watches and brooches, this conspicuous consumption seeped into early 20th-century African societies, which Hlonipha Mokoena calls ‘black diamonds’ (Mokoena, 2020, p. 462) the black middle class who obsessed with fashionable items.

The idea of whiteness in advertising could not be overlooked. This refers to how the models and figures used as illustrations often reflected Caucasian features, with a few exceptions, such as Africans, especially in the Dr Williams’ Pills advertorials. By its nature, advertising is aspirational, and when the faces used in the promotional material reflect a certain bias towards a particular race, it then perpetuates certain stereotypes on the black psyche, a topic worth exploring in greater detail elsewhere.

Advertising was a critical part of the newspaper business, alongside sales from agents and subscriptions, but it was constrained, niche, and low in rates. The trading environment was hostile and discriminatory; additionally, the readership was limited, and finances were unstable. However, Plaatje was innovative and enterprising in navigating the unfavourable conditions, securing government notices, and negotiating long-term advertorial deals with medicine manufacturers such as Dr Williams’ Pink Pills and other major businesses, including mine recruiters and those in the fast-moving consumer goods sector. The study of the advertisements

has underscored the difficulty of operating an independent early black press at a time of systemic inequality.

14. Conclusions

Several key conclusions can be drawn about the form, linguistic style, and role in constituting a black public sphere in South Africa of Plaatje's newspapers, as informed by this research effort. Looked at through the theoretical lens and socio-political context of Barnhurst and Nerone and Jürgen Habermas, the editorial approach of Plaatje has been revealed as a pioneering yet constrained endeavour to ameliorate the position, voice, and circumstance of Africans under colonial rule.

14.1 A cocktail of journalistic form

Plaatje's newspapers combined elements of the partisan and Victorian forms with a leaning towards Modernity, as per Barnhurst and Nerone's typology. This is the case in most early black press newspapers operating in a colonial African context. Plaatje adapted Western journalistic models in order to create a hybrid form that suited the black counterpublic sphere and elevated his newspapers as vectors of protest, resistance, and black sociability rather than just sources of news.

14.2 Convening a black public sphere

Following the Habermasian teachings, it can be concluded that Plaatje's newspapers cradled a counterpublic for black South Africans who were excluded and denied many opportunities. This seeded nationalism as exemplified by the rise of the SANNC. The newspapers provided a textual dialogic space for mission-educated elites, labourers, the clergy, and the chiefly families to debate and share their views on the oppressive colonial regime and wage a challenge in response. There was a rational resistance observed through Plaatje's critiques that embodied protest against tyranny. Short of cash and resources, faced with limited numbers of literate people, and crippling colonial barriers, this may not have been Habermas's ideal independent and inclusive public sphere, but it is significant to warrant recognition. It provided a platform towards achieving collective African agency.

14.3 Language as a cultural and political tool

Armed with a complex background of mission education up to standard 3; reading *Mahoko a Becwana* for older men sewing karosses; attending self-improvement classes; reading *Imvo Zabantsundu*; reading varied forms of English literature stretching back to the 16th century including John Milton, William Shakespeare, John Keats, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Charles Dickens (Molema, 2022, p. 4); working in court as an interpreter; typing for war correspondents; and writing his own diary during the Boer War, Plaatje's linguistic style was bound to be dynamic because of this myriad of literary influences throughout his life. Plaatje used his multilingualism to pursue an offering that was trilingual, comprising Setswana, English, and isiXhosa. His writing infused the rich oral traditions of Setswana, and his sophisticated prose indicated his Victorian influences, which engaged the black readers and colonial authorities. Through the written language, Plaatje educated, mobilised, and challenged colonial narratives, ensuring that his newspapers served as a space for the black public sphere.

14.4 Socio-political impact

Plaatje's work through his newspapers agitated and radicalised political thought. On a modest scale, the coverage of political and social issues affecting Africans was amplified to draw attention from interested parties within and outside the borders of South Africa and the Union, fostering solidarity. With the SANNC in its infancy, it was the work of *Tsala ea Batho* along with *Ilanga* and *Abantu-Batho* that mobilised membership and involvement in protest and petition, helping to grow a nationalist activist class. The legacy of Plaatje's journalism is evident in his seminal work, *Native Life in South Africa*, published in 1916, a year after the collapse of his last paper, *Tsala ea Batho*. It can be concluded that, limitations notwithstanding, the newspapers served as catalysts for the black intellectual and political awakening.

14.5 Operations – tenacity, resilience, and chutzpah

Plaatje's journalistic enterprise faced operational challenges that brought him to his knees three times, but he always found a way to continue with his advocacy. This points to his tenacity and commitment. His resilience elevates him as a maverick who has faced significant hurdles and demonstrated adaptability. The news culled from other black newspapers, white papers, and international sources points to how his newspapers were embedded in these networks of information.

In the absence of a wealthy backer or an organisation, the business model of collecting money from agents and subscribers was fraught. It relied on the goodwill of people with no safeguards for the enterprise. A debt collection system was non-existent, and mounting debt often paralysed its operation. Silas Molema could only lose so much money; the same was true for the *Tsala* syndicate, which reflected the economic precarity of the independent early black press. The colonial environment was hostile, and Plaatje had to manoeuvre his way through economic and social hurdles. It can be concluded that the role of the newspapers was critical for the cause to which Plaatje was stridently committed. They were tools of resistance and crucial for identity formation.

14.6 Overarching Conclusion

Sol Plaatje's significance as an eminent South African intellectual and activist is underscored by this study. It has revealed the intricacies of the form of his journalism, his use of language, position and purpose, and how he convened a black public sphere under a colonial dispensation. The partisan-Victorian and modern-leaning form of the newspapers, as well as their bilingual, sometimes trilingual, culturally rich style, enabled rational-critical debate and community-building among Africans who were shunned by mainstream discourse. Persistently strapped for cash and resources, with a limited reach, the newspapers managed to lay a foundation for black political expression. Fusing African traditions with Western instruments, they challenged colonial domination. Plaatje's journalism extended beyond mere information supply but entered a terrain of resistance, protest, and survival.

From an Afrocentric scholarship approach, these publications may be viewed as tools to assert African agency and resistance by facilitating a communal public discourse. They were centres of cultural and intellectual production in the face of a violent system that distorted their history and lived reality. They gave and amplified the African voice instead of being spoken for by missionaries and colonial masters, therefore challenging Eurocentric hegemony. The newspapers served to instil African pride in history and culture, counteracting dislocation, disorientation, and distortion, and locating Africans at the centre of their narratives, as argued by Asante. The black press subverted the colonial ideals that aimed to alienate Africans from their identity as they retold and promoted African histories, offered critiques of missionary narratives, and celebrated black excellence; this was a reclamation of African knowledge systems.

15. Limitations of the study

Data was limited to what existed in the Readex/Newsbank archive. There were archival errors, such as repeated pages in one edition, odd-numbered pages, and missing pages. This may impact data gathering and record keeping.

Data may be incomplete. There are a number of missing issues from 1904 to 1909. A gap also exists from September 1912 at the start of *Tsala ea Batho*; only copies from April 1913 could be found. It is in the minority, estimated at about 80 editions compared to the 283 read. The study overlooked archives such as SOAS and Wits University History Papers or finding reprints and references to Plaatje's papers in other newspapers.

The isiXhosa language writings proved to be a limitation. With my intermediate understanding of the language, I could not provide an authoritative assessment of the articles. It would have taken the services of a translator and added more time and cost to the study.

16. Future research

There is still much to be done and said about the isiXhosa content in *Tsala ea Batho*. Future research could look at how the language was translated as well as used as a tool for culture and politics.

Plaatje's newspapers carry a treasure of untapped writing. Scholars of the Setswana language could embark on a deeper analysis of columns such as Maitisho, Mashejashejane, and Maronopo a Thaba Ncho for historical purposes as well as linguistics.

17. Closing statement

By any stretch of the imagination, the journalism of Sol Plaatje stands as a towering attestation to the power of the written word. It helped to constitute a vigorous black public sphere in South Africa. This was achieved through his shrewd prose, undying commitment to truth and justice, and his magisterial ability to weave narratives that amplified the voices of those cast to the margins of society. Plaatje documented the struggles of his people and carved out a collective consciousness that stood up against the colonial rule meant to subjugate them. His endeavours transcended news reporting but served as an impetus for justice, solidarity, and resistance. It is on this foundation that future generations could reclaim their agency and identity. Plaatje was the harbinger of modernity, and his journalism, in its era and form, was not only a mirror to

society but also a chisel that sculpted the black public sphere into an enduring and purposeful force.

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 Koranta ea Becoana. (1902, December 6). *Koranta ea Becoana*, p. 7.
 Koranta ea Becoana. (1902, December 13). *Koranta ea Becoana*, pp. 6–7.
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 Tsala ea Batho. (1915, July 17). *Tsala ea Batho*, p. 4.
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19. Appendices

Appendix 1 – *Tsala ea Batho* advertising calculations

By rough estimation, in 1915, one edition of *Tsala* of six pages (Tsala, 17 May 1913) would have been approximately calculated as follows. An inch is calculated at about 2.5cm:

The tables below are divided by page number, the name of the advert, the size and its estimated cost:

Page 1

Aberdein & Butt	25cm x 13cm (9.8 x 5.1 inches)	56s (£12-12s-4d)
Dikomerese	8cm x 6.5cm (3.1 x 2.5 inches)	32s (£1 12s)
John Orr & Co.	8cm x 6.5cm (3.1 x 2.5 inches)	22s (£1 2s)
Zittel & Co	14cm x 8cm (5 x 3.1 inches)	32s (£1 12s)
<i>Tsala ea Batho</i>	14cm x 8cm	internal advert (possibly not charged)
		Total: £6-12s-4d)

Table 2:

Page 2

De Beers Consolidated Mines Limited	13cm x 9.5cm (5.1 x 3.7)	35s (£1-12s-3d)
R. Muller Cape Town Pianos Organs	12cm x 15.5cm (4.7 x 6.1 inches)	43s (£2 3s)
Alonzo Medicine Co. Ltd	20cm x 4cm (7.8 x 1.5 inches)	40s (£2)
D. Ross Cycle Dealer	6cm x 4cm (2.3 x 1.5 inches)	16s (12s 4d)

The Newton Printing works	6cm x 4cm	internal advert possibly not charged
		Total: £5-12s-12d

Table 3

Page 3

i-Kaunsile ye sixeko sase Kimberley (City Council of Kimberley)	8.5cm x 10cm (3.3 x 4 inches)	29s (£1 9s)
Lilhelwa ngunobala jikelelewe South African Native National Congress (It is edited by the secretary-general of the South African Native National Congress)	8.5cm x 9cm	internal advert likely not charged
Wood's Great Peppermint Cure	8.5cm x 6cm (3.3 x 2.3 inches)	22s (£1 2s)
Umhlobo Wabantu (Friend of the People)	8.5cm x 9cm	internal advert likely not charged
Miss Barnes	4cm x 3.4cm (1.5 x 1.3 inches)	10s (10s)
707 Carlton Remedies Co.	6cm x 4cm (2.3 x 1.5 inches)	15s (12s 3d)
707 Carlton Remedies Co.	6cm x 4cm (2.3 x 1.5 inches)	15s (12s 3d)
J. Hodgson funeral undertaker	8.5cm x 4cm (3.3 x 1.5 inches)	19s (12s 7d)
Slegg's Headache Cure	4.5cm x 4cm (1.7 x 1.5 inches)	13s (12s 1d)
T.M. Mapikela & Co.	8.5cm x 4cm (3.3 x 1.4 inches)	19s (12s 7d)
Abraham Bros	5.5cm x 4cm (2.1 x 1.5 inches)	14s (12s 2d)

Colonial Seed & Supply	20cm x 15.5cm (7.8 x 6.1 inches)	55s (£2 5s)
M.C. Schrueder	7cm x 4cm (2.7 x 1.5 inches)	17s (12s 5d)
Wanted	6.5cm x 4cm (2.5 x 1.5 inches)	16s (12s 4d)
Peps	15cm x 4cm (5.9 x 1.5 inches)	41s (£2 1s)
		Total: £11-12s-9d

Table 4

Page 4

Nectar Tea	34.5cm x 4cm (13.6 x 1.5 inches)	60s (£3)
Dr Williams' Pills	22.5cm x 4cm (8.8 x 1.5 inches)	41s (£2 1s)
		Total: £5 1s

Table 5

Page 5

Zam-Buk	18.5cm x 4cm (7.2 x 1.5 inches)	35s (£1-12s-3d)
Bile Beans	13.5cm x 4cm (5.3 x 1.5 inches)	27s (£1 7s)
N. Stein	4.5cm x 4cm (1.7 x 1.5 inches)	13s (12s 1d)
Do not delay advertising your business	1.5cm x 4cm	internal advert likely not charged
		Total: £3-11s-4d

Table 6

Premier (Transvaal) Diamond Mining Co Ltd	16.5cm x 7.5cm (6.4 x 3 inches)	37s (£1-12s-5d)
H.A. Oliver & Co.	10.5cm x 8.5cm (4.1 x 3.3 inches)	29s (£1 9s)
W.N. Cooper	11.5cm x 8.5cm (4.5 x 3.3 inches)	31s (£1 11s)
W.M. Cuthbert & Co Ltd	7.5cm x 8.5cm (3 x 3.3 inches)	25s (£1 5s)
Central Shoe Co.	8cm x 8.5cm (3.1 x 3.3 inches)	25s (£1 5s)
Hewson Bros.	11.5cm x 8.5cm (4.5 x 3.3 inches)	31s (£1 11s)
The Colonial Banking & Trust Co of Africa Ltd	7.5cm x 8.5cm (3 x 3.3 inches)	25s (£1 5s)
Walter H. Adams	8cm x 8.5cm (3.1 x 3.3 inches)	25s (£1 5s)
I. Mendelsohn & Co.	10cm x 8cm (4 x 3.1 inches)	28s (£1 8s)
Conning & Co.	8.5cm x 8.5cm (3.3 x 3.3 inches)	26s (£1 6s)
John Henderson	8.5cm x 4cm (3.3 x 2.5 inches)	19s (12s 7d)
		Total: £14-9s-12d

Table 7

Note on the calculations above: The advertising space was measured in centimetres using a ruler. The centimetres were converted to inches using the 'CM to Inches Converter' website. The inches were multiplied by 4s to arrive at the estimated total cost of an advert per edition. The 4s half price was used indiscriminately as a base because most were repeat adverts. The calculation is based on the Carolingian monetary system which was in use in South Africa until 1961 when the decimalisation of the rand was put in place. According to the Carolingian system twenty shillings equalled one pound and twelve pennies amounted to one shilling. Some figures have been rounded off to the nearest number. It must be remembered that advertorials, the likes

of Dr Williams' Pink Pills, Zam-Buk and Bile Beans were likely calculated differently as a long-term campaign and contract, however for the purpose of this exercise they have been calculated based on space occupied.

According to the Currency Management Department at the South African Reserve Bank to make currency conversions one must take into consideration the Decimal Coinage Act No. 61 of 1959. This legislation brought about the decimalisation of the coinage system from 1960 in South Africa (i.e. the Rand as a unit, that has 100 cents that make it up). Prior to this date, for about a century, South Africa used the British coinage system. A shilling is equal to ten cents, a pound is two rands, and so on. For the most part, in the tables of conversions above, these are accommodated: Shillings (s); Pounds (£); Threepence (3d); (a 12d is equivalent to a Shilling).

The challenge is in the 1d, 4d; 7d. These are not directly translatable, given that 4d is a quarter of a shilling (12d = 1 Shilling), perhaps a conversion to shilling can be made before translating to equivalent 10 cent values (or ~3.33 cents). For the most part, this table should suffice.

References

Currency convertor [Currency converter: 1270–2017](#) Accessed on 17 December 2024

*The data used in this currency converter comes from our historical records such as those of the royal household and Exchequer. These documents may record large purchases by government institutions rather than ordinary retail prices, and wages of skilled craftsmen rather than the general level of earnings. Our calculations are intended as a general guide to historical values, not a statement of fact. There are no plans to update the calculator for values beyond 2017.

**After the Norman Conquest in 1066, the pound was divided into twenty shillings or 240 pennies. It remained so until decimalization on 15 February 1971, when the pound was divided up as it is still done today.

Before 1971 money was divided into:

- pounds (£ or l)
- shillings (s. or /-) and
- pennies (d.)

[Understanding old British money - pounds, shillings and pence](#) Accessed on 31 December 2024

Appendix 2 – *Koranta ea Becoana*

To make it easily pronounceable for the reader and to add familiarity, flair and in some cases adulation, the following names assumed a different identity in *Koranta* as they became Tswana-fied, indicating an orientation and disposition:

Queen Victoria – Setori (*Koranta*, 27 April 1901, p. 1)

Cecil John Rhodes – Mokebusa (*Koranta*, 19 April 1902, p. 2)

Prince Edward – Moroa Setori (*Koranta*, 27 April 1901, p. 1) or Ngoana eo Montle Setori (*Koranta*, 16 August 1902, p. 2) (veneratively, Son of Victoria)

Baden Powell – Patana Paulo (*Koranta*, 15 November 1902, p. 6)

JF Flynn – Fleni or Foleni (*Koranta*, 15 November 1902, p. 2) (*Koranta*, 30 November 1903, p. 4)

Louis Abrams – Ma-Leu (*Koranta*, 23 August 1902, p. 2)

Mzilikazi – Motselakatse (Mzilikazi means ‘a great road’ (M’belle, 1903, p. 43) (*Koranta*, 14 September 1901, p. 1)

Godfrey Lagden – Ramabanta (the one who wears or carries belts) (*Koranta*, 21 October 1903, 5)

Mrs R Peach – Ma Molehabangwe (*Koranta*, 18 November 1903, 5)

Minchin – Meshane (*Koranta*, 13 June 1903, 5)

Kruger – Kiriri (*Koranta*, 29 August 1903, p. 7)

Rancho – F.Z.S. Peregrino (*Koranta*, 15 August 1903, p. 4)

Boers – Mashoropo (*Koranta*, 7 September 1901, p. 1)

Germans – Matoistere (*Koranta*, 22 November 1902, p. 6)

Friend of Bloemfontein – Frente oa Bloemfontein (*Koranta*, 25 July 1903, p. 6)

South African Spectator – Leitlho (*Koranta*, 29 August 1903, p. 3)

Some towns and cities were referred to by their African names, but in later editions these were used interchangeably with the names that carried a European origin.

Pretoria – Choane (see above the Serolong context of ‘ts’ and ‘ch’ because elsewhere this name would be Tshwane) (*Koranta*, 15 March 1902, p. 2).

Rhodesia – Ga-Motselakatse (the home of Moselakatse/Mzilikazi) (*Koranta*, 5 April 1902, p. 2)

Lesotho – Leshotho (the first ‘h’ to emphasise a Serolong pronunciation) (*Koranta*, 15 November 1902, p. 4).

Klerksdorp – Matlosana (*Koranta*, 30 November 1903, p. 3)

Lichtenburg – Licobotla (see example above) (*Koranta*, 20 December 1902, p. 8)

Rustenburg – Tlhabane (*Koranta*, 14 September 1901, p. 2)

Vryburg – Fohuli (*Koranta*, 21 September 1901, p. 2)

Potchefstroom - Mooi Refire (*Koranta*, 30 May 1903, p. 4)

Zeerust – Sefatlhane (*Koranta*, 23 September 1903, p. 4)

Kuruman – Kulumane (pronounced as Kudumane) (*Koranta*, 18 November 1903, p. 4)

Tlamma – South West Africa (now Namibia) (*Koranta*, 4 July 1903, p. 4)

Queenstown – Ga Komane (*Koranta*, 3 May 1902, p. 2)

Kimberley – Teemaneng (*Koranta*, 15 August 1903, p. 3)

Dutoitspan – Toispane (*Koranta*, 23 May 1903, p. 3)

Mafikeng – colloquially called Mahika or Lefikeng (*Koranta*, 27 April 1901, p. 1) (*Koranta*, 15 August 1903, p. 4)

Phokoane – unknown (*Koranta*, 6 December 1902, p. 6)

Bogoanku – unknown (*Koranta*, 6 December 1902, p. 6)

Rivers are referred to in their original African names

Noka e Tshetlha – Orange River (*Koranta*, 14 September 1901, p. 2)

Noka e Ncho – Unknown (*Koranta*, 13 December 1902, p. 7)

Noka ea Khaba – Unknown – (*Koranta*, 13 September 1902, p. 4)

Noka ea Boteti – Unknown – (*Koranta*, 4 July 1903, p. 6)

African identities (and European) were also adapted to suit a Serolong orientation, bearing in mind the absence of clicks other letters in Setswana alphabet:

AmaZulu – Manzula (the ‘z’ used was pronounced more like ‘s’) (*Koranta*, 25 October 1902, p. 6)

AmaXhosa – Matebele (*Koranta*, 10 May 1902, p. 2)

AbaThembu – ma-Thepu (*Koranta*, 15 August 1903, p. 4)

Koranna – Bakgothu (*Koranta*, 18 October 1902, 9)

Sotho – Bashotho (*Koranta*, 10 May 1902, p. 2)

Makgoa – English-speaking whites (*Koranta*, 15 June 1901, p. 1)

Maburu – Afrikaans-speaking whites (*Koranta*, 27 April 1901, p. 1)

Ma-Hontoto – Hottentots (*Koranta*, 29 August 1903, p. 3)

The days of the week were used differently to what they have evolved to become to modern Setswana speakers.

Monday – Loantlha or Mantaga (now Mosupologo) (*Koranta*, 4 July 1903, p. 4)

Saturday – Matlhaco (now Lamatlhatso) ‘the missionaries told them to call it... the day of washing’ (M’belle, 1903, p. 13).

Sunday – Shontaga (now Latshipi) (25 April 1903) ‘Day of the Bell’ (M’belle, 1903, p. 13).

References to dates in relation to the month

Instant – of the present month (*Koranta*, 11 April 1903, 5)

Ultimo – of last month (*Koranta*, 2 May 1903, 5)

Proximo – of next month (*Koranta*, 30 September 1903, 5)

The names of the months have remained largely unchanged, except for the replacement of ‘o’ or ‘oe’ with ‘w’.

January – Firikgong (now Ferekgong)

February – Tlhakola (now Tlhakole)

March – Mopitlo (now Mopitlwe)

April – Moranang (now Moranang)

May – Motsheganong (now Motsheganong)

June – Seetebosigo (now Seetebosigo)

July – Phuku (now Phukwi)

August – Phato (now Phatwe)

September – Loetse (now Lwetse)

November – Ngoanatsele (now Ngwanatsele)

December – Selimonthola (now Sedimonthole)

Currencies

Talere – thaler (*Koranta*, 18 July 1903, p. 4)

Shelleng – shilling (*Koranta*, 18 July 1903, p. 4)

In his book, *The Kaffir Scholar Companion*, Isaiah Bud-Mbhele notes that some words were coined by newspapers ‘to facilitate our comprehension of civil, administrative or political government’ (M’belle, 1903, p. xvii). Some examples that emanate from court proceedings or parliamentary processes are:

Hard lebere – hard labour (*Koranta*, 22 November 1902, p. 6)

Opogafa – Tax money (*Koranta*, 21 March 1903, p. 6)

Go emela katlholo – Committed for trial (decision to be made whether the case will be presided over by a judge or a magistrate) (*Koranta*, 4 July 1903, p. 4)

Mashel-Lo – Martial law (*Koranta*, 22 November 1902, p. 4)

Katse eo o mogatla-o-kgojana-di-9 – A punishment of 9 lashings (*Koranta*, 16 May 1903, 5)

A reading of *Koranta* also opens new vistas for language historians and linguists, because it is a repository of popular aphorism, proverbial phrases and expressions of the early 1900s, some of which have disappeared from every day speak or become obsolete. Plaatje reminded us that in the absence of schools and books, the Batswana acquired their vocabulary and its use with purity and correctness from their parents, especially their grandmothers, mothers and aunts (1916, p. 7). In today’s terms, with the proliferation of English and European languages spoken in the homes of Batswana, this has been lost. Here are a few examples, some with translations taken from Plaatje’s *Sechuana Proverbs With Literal Translations and Their European Equivalents* (1916) and others with the inferred or literal meaning as I understood them after reading in context:

O se rekele kolojane kgetsing. – Do not pay for what you have not seen yet (*Koranta*, 25 October 1902, p. 8)

Pelo choeu e ntsha lobelo. – Satisfaction incites bravery (*Koranta*, 25 October 1902, p. 8) translation (Plaatje, 1916, p. 81)

Makopo ga tshedise pitsa (*Koranta*, 25 October 1902, p. 8). – Depending on someone else impoverishes you.

Mafoko a kgotla mantle otlhe (*Koranta*, 25 October 1902, p. 8). – Forensic arguments are all acceptable (Plaatje, 1916, p. 55).

Ga o ka ke wa reka pitse o sa e bona (*Koranta*, 25 October 1902, p. 8). – You won't buy a horse without seeing it.

Palagabedi e sitile palagangoe (*Koranta*, 6 December 1902, p. 3) – Count twice has defeated count once (Plaatje, 1916, p. 81).

Thamaga go tuma di na le beng (*Koranta*, 6 December 1902, p. 6) – Only those speckled cattle who have owners are famous or If we did not flatter ourselves, nobody else could (Plaatje, 1916, 90).

Go tsaea matsaba-tsaba (*Koranta*, 24 January 1903, p. 4). – To collect precious gifts.

Re gelela bo 'mabo likeleli (*Koranta*, 7 March 1903, p. 4). – We cry for their mothers.

O segecoe lehura le sa go choanela (*Koranta*, 4 April 1903, p. 4). – You received what you don't deserve.

O buile a ba a lala nageng (*Koranta*, 25 April 1903, p. 4) – He spoke until nightfall.

Go direga madihidihi (*Koranta*, 16 May 1903, p. 4). – It's bustling.

Ke ao he maluo a boleo (*Koranta*, 16 May 1903, p. 7). – Those are the results of sin.

Ga se tlala tlhaola malata, ke maluo machuisa baliri ka botlhe (*Koranta*, 16 May 1903, p. 7) or
Ga se tlala tlhaoa malata, ke marumo ma-ja-magosana (Plaatje, 1916, 37) – It is not hunger, the
chooser of servants, but spears the slayers of princes (Plaatje, 1916, 37)

MaBeaconsfield a ribame ka mpa ea sebetse ba ribekoa ke maGrahamstown (*Koranta*, 4 July 1903, p. 4). – The people of Beaconsfield have fallen by their stomach after being defeated by the people of Grahamstown

Re sholofela fa ba tla nna nao lintle (*Koranta*, 1 August 1903, p. 4). – We hope that they will have a pleasant visit.

Moenyana o pele bone loa oabo (*Koranta*, 20 December 1902, 9). – A harbinger is the lamp of his friend (Plaatje, 1916, p. 62).

Nama e beta ka lotha, mme more o palangoa ka logotlho (*Koranta*, 11 October 1902, p. 4). – a celebration of a new acquisition.

Thepa jo bo setlhana (*Koranta*, 11 October 1902, p. 4). – women or ladies.

Legoetla la batho ba ba nang le maina (*Koranta*, 16 September 1903, p. 4). – A feast for prominent people.

Tlhale di fedile morutsheng (*Koranta*, 5 September 1903, p. 3). – We ran out of money to complete a project.

Some words were borrowed from Western speech while others have fallen out of use or replaced with new sayings:

Nibi Yara (*Koranta*, 10 January 1903, p. 6) – New Year (now Ngwaga o mosha)

Likemo (*Koranta*, 29 November 1902, p. 4) – Weddings (now Manyalo)

Kude chanse (*Koranta*, 9 May 1903, p. 4) – Good chance

Kgono (*Koranta*, 21 September 1901, p. 1) – Maybe

Leruling ya molema (*Koranta*, 30 May 1903, p. 4) – left shoulder

Okocololeloa (*Koranta*, 13 June 1903, p. 3) – Reduce

Metlobo (*Koranta*, 4 October 1902, p. 7) – Mines

Mathausanta (*Koranta*, 20 June 1903, p. 4) – Thousands

Leotoana je le palangoang (*Koranta*, 15 August 1903, p. 6) – Bicycle

Pelotona/Pelonamagadi (*Koranta*, 27 June 1903, p. 7) – Kindness

Libapanaco (*Koranta*, 27 June 1903, p. 7) – Imitations

Sekgoaripane (*Koranta*, 11 July 1903, p. 4) – A disease that affects the lungs

Maronopo a Lovedale/Thaba Nchu (*Koranta*, 18 July 1903, p. 4) – A gathering/digest of news from Lovedale/Thaba Nchu

Lepphoto-photo ya Victoria (*Koranta*, 1 August 1903, p. 4) – Victoria Falls

Mocoarateu (*Koranta*, 8 August 1903, p. 4) – Conductor

Mekunkuru (*Koranta*, 15 August 1903, p. 4) – Gentlemen

Tshipi e e beiloeng tlhogo eaga King (*Koranta*, 16 May 1903, p. 7) – a coin

Rurifatsa (*Koranta*, 16 September 1903, p. 6) – Confirm

Moteteselo (*Koranta*, 30 September 1903, p. 7) – (St. Vitus Dance)

Some expressions used in sympathy and good wishes:

A marapo a kgosi a lale a ikhutse mo kagishong – May the bones of the king rest in peace
(*Koranta*, 7 March 1903, p. 4)

Fola tlhe – Get well soon (*Koranta*, 4 July 1903, p. 4)

Appendix 3 – *Tsala ea Becoana*

One major distinguishing feature between *Koranta* and *Tsala ea Becoana* is the proliferation of borrowed words in the latter. It would seem that Plaatje abandoned the admirable and noble naturalisation of English words to suit African tongues and chose bastardisation and borrowing that resulted in a hybridity that seemed grotesque, forced and unnatural. The new words seem to follow phonetical construction. This meant a loss of authentic and pure Setswana, that even a reader complained about. This practice allowed for an infestation of borrowed words that were disruptive and began a new corruptive trend. Here are some examples:

Netifi - Native (*Tsala*, 26 November 1910, p. 4)

Bed Hopo – Bad Hope (*Tsala*, 16 July 1910, p. 4)

Rumu – Room (*Tsala*, 23 July 1910, p. 4)

Hae Korto – High Court (*Tsala*, 3 September 1910, p. 4)

Holitei – Holiday (*Tsala*, 3 September 1910, p. 4)

Taon Holo – Town Hall (*Tsala*, 10 September 1910, p. 3)

Difaene – Fines (*Tsala*, 17 September 1910, p. 4)

Kota-tu 7 – Quarter to 7 (*Tsala*, 1 October 1910, p. 1)

Haf-pas 8 – Half past 8 (*Tsala*, 15 October 1910, p. 1)

Dipraese – Prices (*Tsala*, 3 December 1910, p. 3)

Ferse – Verse (*Tsala*, 6 August 1910, p. 3)

Blou-buku – Blou boek (blue book) (*Tsala*, 23 July 1910, p. 4)

Dri Deis – Three days (*Tsala*, 10 September 1910, p. 3)

Diwishenel Kaonsele – Divisional Counsel (*Tsala*, 10 September 1910, p. 3)

Morkene - Morgen (*Tsala*, 24 September 1910, p. 4)

Kisi e turu – Duur kuus (Expensive kiss) (*Tsala*, 1 October 1910, p. 3)

Sepichi – Speech (*Tsala*, 1 October 1910, p. 3)

Resolushene – Resolution (*Tsala*, 29 October 1910, p. 3)

Introjuse – Introduce (*Tsala*, 6 August 1910, p. 3)

Cinematografi – Cinematography (*Tsala*, 27 August 1910, p. 3)

Sepekuleishene – speculation (*Tsala*, 20 August 1910, p. 4)

Twee Rafiri – Twee Rivier (*Tsala*, 27 August 1910, p. 4)

Basekapuo – Bioscope (*Tsala*, 27 August 1910, p. 4)

Disekara – cigars (*Tsala*, 27 August 1910, p. 4)

Naene pense – nine (*Tsala*, 27 August 1910, p. 4)

Sikisipense – six pence (*Tsala*, 27 August 1910, p. 4)

Skotlalane – Scotland (*Tsala*, 27 August 1910, p. 4)

Dichokolete - Chocolates (*Tsala*, 3 December 1910, p. 4)

Maselese – Measles (*Tsala*, 13 August 1910, p. 4)

Mabelete – the wild ones (*Tsala*, 20 August 1910, p. 3)

Arm dieng – Arm ding (Poor thing) (*Tsala*, 8 October 1910, p. 4)

Peinte – Paint (*Tsala*, 12 November 1910, p. 4)

Witmense – White people (*Tsala*, 12 November 1910, p. 4)

Teselbomong – on the disselboom (*Tsala*, 24 December 1910, p. 3)

Boleke Keresemese – Black Christmas (*Tsala*, 14 January 1911, p. 3)

Robben Ailente – Robben Island (*Tsala*, 21 January 1911, p. 3)

Boleke Perile – Black Peril (*Tsala*, 11 February 1911, p. 3)

Deklareishen – Declaration (*Tsala*, 11 February 1911, p. 3)

Kerekerata – Kerkraad (Church council) (*Tsala*, 8 April 1911, p. 4)

Eropleine – Aeroplane (*Tsala*, 3 June 1911, p. 3)

Reisise (Kola-Thamo) (*Tsala*, 3 June 1911, p. 3)

Yunifomo – Uniform (*Tsala*, 5 August 1911, p. 3)

Ticha – Teacher (*Tsala*, 12 August 1911, p. 3)

Lekchara - Lecturer (*Tsala*, 12 August 1911, p. 3)

Shedulu – Schedule (*Tsala*, 2 December 1911, p. 2)

Demeche – Damage (*Tsala*, 16 December 1911, p. 4)

Strata meite – Straatmeid (*Tsala*, 13 January 1912, p. 2)

Konkrasi – Congress (*Tsala*, 10 February 1912, p. 3)

Deputeshone – Deputation (*Tsala*, 9 March 1912, p. 3)

Jajarega – jajarig (too forward) (*Tsala*, 30 March 1912, p. 2)

Koterele Miting – Quarterly meeting (*Tsala*, 20 April 1912, p. 2)

Atoni - Attorney (*Tsala*, 4 May 1912, p. 3)

Tesmecheng – Test match (*Tsala*, 8 June 1912, p. 2)

Semarete – Smart (*Tsala*, 1 June 1912, p. 3)

Diktakrafa – Dictagraph (*Tsala*, 25 May 1912, p. 3)

Places

Jimistone – Germiston (*Tsala*, 7 January 1911, p. 3)

Jermane Iseta Afrika – German East Africa (*Tsala*, 9 July 1910, p. 1)

Orenche Frei Stata – Orange Free State (*Tsala*, 14 January 1911, p. 3)

Ostralia – Australia (*Tsala*, 13 April 1912, p. 2)

Kimbili – Kimberley (*Tsala*, 30 March 1912, p. 2)

Days of the week

Mantaga – Maandag (Monday) (*Tsala*, 1 October 1910, p. 1)

Dinstaga – Dinsdag (Afrikaans for Tuesday) (*Tsala*, 1 October 1910, p. 1)

Satertaga – Saterdag (Saturday) (*Tsala*, 1 October 1910, p. 1)

Not all was lost as some words were Setswana-fied, as it was seen in *Koranta*. Here, the difference was that an attempt was made to make the sound natural to a Setswana speaker, for example, the letter Z is not used in Setswana or any kind of clicks. Examples follow:

Tuba-ka-loseka – Tuberculosis (*Tsala*, 23 July 1910, p. 4)

Soasiland – Swaziland (*Tsala*, 13 August 1910, p. 2)

Ketshebaye – Cetshwayo (*Tsala*, 29 October 1910, p. 3)

Kresejana – Christiana (*Tsala*, 27 August 1910, p. 4)

De Bere – De Beers (*Tsala*, 23 July 1910, p. 4)

Grafornete – Graaf Reniet (*Tsala*, 15 October 1910, p. 4)

Jogome – Joachim (*Tsala*, 10 December 1910, p. 3)

Pokistroomo – Potchefstroom (*Tsala*, 18 March 1911, p. 3)

Marago a phelehu – Ramsbottom (*Tsala*, 11 February 1911, p. 2)

Metsiabela – Warmbaths, now Bela Bela (*Tsala*, 4 March 1911, p. 3)

Tlamma – Damaraland, now Namibia (*Tsala*, 29 April 1911, p. 4)

Ho Felte – Hoeveld (Highveld) (*Tsala*, 10 June 1911, p. 3)

Seme Lobese – Sam Lewis (*Tsala*, 7 October 1911, p. 3)

Koos Larei – Koos de la Rey (*Tsala*, 23 December 1911, p. 2)

Mabeiwonoro – Bywooners (*Tsala*, 14 October 1911, p. 3)

Litapoleng – Bensonvale (*Tsala*, 2 March 1912, p. 3)

Van Saile – Van Zyl (*Tsala*, 20 April 1912, p. 2)

Lehontoto – a Hottentot (*Tsala*, 20 April 1912, p. 2)

Tsala ea Becoana also had a sizeable number of idioms, proverbs and expressions that were used to communicate importance, severity or frivolity of matters.

Go lemala ga namane ke go thoba (*Tsala*, 23 July 1910, p. 3) – Let a calf (a child) once break out of the fold and the weakness will become its habit (Plaatje, 1916, p. 40)

Lo re go bona rona (*Tsala*, 9 July 1910, p. 3) – As you see us (to express shock and alarm).

Fa balala ba shoa ga go bonale mochochonono, mme eare motlhang dikgosana di shoang, magodimo a tuke – seane sa sekgoa (*Tsala*, 16 July 1910, p. 3) – When commoners die mochochonono would not appear, but when royalties dies, the heavens go up in flames

Shuping go a boeloa, sebopelelong ke gone go sa boeloeng (*Tsala*, 23 July 1910, p. 4) – You may return to the ruins but not to the womb (Plaatje, 1916, p. 89)

Shago la moeng le beoa ke mongoa legae (*Tsala*, 20 August 1910, p. 3) – The visitor's seat is placed (on the chair) by the owner of the house (Plaatje, 1916, p. 88)

Makgoa a mashweu, macwa metsing (*Tsala*, 12 November 1910, p. 3) – White people who came out of the water.

Ba tshela banyalani leshooa (*Tsala*, 3 September 1910, p. 4) – They showered the bridal couple with

Go se kgole ya tlhako sepe e kgaogileng (*Tsala*, 3 December 1910, p. 3) – No incidents to report

Ga se batho ke tlang lo boneng (*Tsala*, 12 November 1910, p. 4) – It's not people, it's come and see (multitudes of people).

Sechoara ke nca pedi ga se thata (*Tsala*, 22 April 1911, p. 3) – That which is seized by two dogs is never too strong (Plaatje, 1916, p. 86)

Lesang modikologa (*Tsala*, 29 July 1911, p. 3) – Stop going around in circles/delaying.

Bo maja polaelo ke lona (*Tsala*, 29 July 1911, p. 3) – Ye of little faith.

Nko di aboga – no translation (*Tsala*, 29 July 1911, p. 3)

Kgomo e tsamma, e nkgoe, e koebu – no translation (*Tsala*, 15 July 1911, p. 3)

Sechoaroa ke Nca-pedi ga se thata (*Tsala*, 15 July 1911, p. 3) – That which is seized by two dogs is never too strong or Many hands make light work (Plaatje, 1916, p. 86)

Nonyane tsa ‘r-r-ru’, batho; eare tlhaka lo shela di rure di ee mo go lole’ (*Tsala*, 15 July 1911, p. 3) – People are like birds of the air, when the bulrush burns they usually flee and make for another one (Plaatje, 1916, p. 76)

Dibaga di tloga baapari di ea bafololeding (*Tsala*, 19 August 1911, p. 3) – Necklaces depart from their wearers and go to the workers (Plaatje, 1916, p. 27)

Maburu bo choeu mpapetla marakalala letsibogong – no translation (*Tsala*, 26 August 1911, p. 3)

Mabogo a mantsi ke a rata tirong, dikgobeng ga ke a rate (*Tsala* 26 August 1911, p. 3) – Many hands I like at work, but I do not like them at meals (Plaatje, 1916, p. 54)

Moratho oa Noka e Tshetlha – no translation (*Tsala*, 4 November 1911, p. 3)

Thamo di koenneng – the powerful (*Tsala*, 2 December 1911, p. 2)

Fa ele selekanyo se o lekanyang ka shone le wena se tla go lekanyetsa. (*Tsala*, 16 December 1911, p. 4) – What goes around comes around.

Makgoba ke baroa mmidibidi-a-tlhaga ba ba senang bo morafe (*Tsala*, 9 March 1912, p. 2) – The bushman is a son of the meadow, having no relatives he owes no nephew’s duties to any uncle (approximate) (Plaatje, 1916, p. 67).

Makgoa a etsa bororogore joa nche, eo go teng oatle a fitlhe nko mo moshaoeng (*Tsala*, 9 March 1912, p. 2) – The whites practice what the ostrich does, sticking its head in the sand.

Ga se goo lobelo, goo marapo a thata (*Tsala*, 6 April 1912, p. 2) – Not to the swift (the race is) but to the most enduring (Plaatje, 1916, 37).

Le makgoa a tle a itshase sebilo (*Tsala*, 20 April 1912, p. 2) White people apply melanin or darken their faces.

Manenekoanyane a lefatshe jeno (Parlamente ea Bashoto) (*Tsala*, 27 April 1912, p. 2)

Ea coa ka bobi joa segokgo (also see ‘choba la mogodu’ elsewhere) (*Tsala*, 27 April 1912, p. 3) – By the skin of your teeth

Fa koloi e oela mo seretseng e tla bo e le molato oa bone. (*Tsala*, 11 May 1912, p. 2) When things fail it would be their fault.

Ba ba re direlang gau sa lonaka – those who are betraying us (*Tsala*, 11 May 1912, p. 2)

Fa go riana mo tlhareng se se metsi go tla reng ka se se omileng? – what’s to be said in a desperate situation (*Tsala*, 18 May 1912, p. 3)

Go sa choeroe sa nca le phiri – there is discord or disagreement (*Tsala*, 18 May 1912, p. 3)

Phokojane eo o diretsenyane oa phethakapejana (*Tsala*, 25 May 1912, p. 2) The sprightly, muddy fox.

Sephaphatinyaneng se se senang maretologo – no translation (*Tsala*, 11 May 1912, p. 2)

Moria ke sebina-se-pele sa poloka-baeti – no translation (*Tsala*, 11 May 1912, p. 2)

Fa o bona selecoanyana sa monna se ntse se coecoena-coecoena maboanyana – no translation (*Tsala*, 25 May 1912, p. 3)

Tsala ea Becoana measured Setswana up against other languages, an attempt almost at locating it in the universe of linguistics. For example, in a small article it sought to show the differences in language, tongue in cheek by noting that *Imvo Zabantsundu* said the surname of the new SA premier Botha meant ‘to greet’ in isiXhosa whereas in Setswana it meant ‘to lie down’ or ‘chew cud of the cow’ reported and in Sesotho it meant ‘to stir up’ (*Tsala*, 23 July 1910, p. 2)

Mamphokoro (Sechuanan), Ikhwahla (Zulu), Igxagxa (Xosa), Kgoatlhe (Sesutu) – Derogatory terms for white (*Tsala*, 22 July 1911, p. 2)

Original Setswana terms

Naledi ea setlhodi – Halley’s comet (*Tsala*, 30 July 1910, p. 3)

Members of a committee (Maloko a Komiti) – Rasetulo (Chairman), Moroasetulo (Vice Chairman), Tlhangoe (Secretary) (*Tsala*, 3 December 1910, p. 3)

Di iaie - Fools (*Tsala*, 4 March 1911, p. 4)

Tlhangoe wa tlotlo – honourable secretary (*Tsala*, 13 January 1912, p. 2)

Tlhangoe eo o koalelanang – corresponding secretary (*Tsala*, 13 January 1912, p. 2)

Bolo ea mphai – tennis (*Tsala*, 19 November 1910, p. 4)

Bogasautu – no translation (*Tsala*, 9 July 1910, p. 1)

Seperuperu – animal body part (*Tsala*, 9 July 1910, p. 1)

Thosola – Syphilis (*Tsala*, 21 January 1911, p. 3)

Kgogonoka – a duck (*Tsala*, 6 May 1911, p. 3)

Tlhare sa mosetara koa Libanono – the cedar of Lebanon (*Tsala*, 27 May 1911, p. 3)

Sefoka-bolea – Snow (*Tsala*, 8 July 1911, p. 4)

Sekgotla-maru – aeroplane (*Tsala*, 19 August 1911, p. 4)

Batlabami – Squatters (*Tsala*, 17 February 1912, p. 2)

[Banna ba] thamo di thata – hard working men (*Tsala*, 6 April 1912, p. 2)

Tsietsi e Ncho/Tsietsi e Choeu – Black peril/White peril (*Tsala*, 20 April 1912, p. 2)

Thaba ya serame – iceberg (*Tsala*, 27 April 1912, p. 2)

Chuchumakgala – a train (*Tsala*, 11 May 1912, p. 3)

The phraseology in Black Peril reports: ‘go tlobelela’ (to grab) (*Tsala*, 18 February 1911, p. 3), ‘go ira tse di sa irioeng’ (to do that which is not done) and ‘bo tira dilo’ (the doers of things) (*Tsala*, 11 February 1911, p. 2).

Notes

Punctilious – meticulous, diligent (*Tsala*, 3 December 1910, p. 2)

Rara avis – unusual or extraordinary person or thing; rarity (*Tsala*, 2 October 1910, p. 2)

“Everything was in apple-order” (*Tsala*, 10 December 1910, p. 2)

Omar Kha’yam: In what O Lord have I offended thee – act of contrition (*Tsala*, 17 December 1910, p. 2)

Pusillanimity (*Tsala*, 24 June 1911, p. 2)

Appendix 4 – *Tsala ea Batho*

Some of the sayings in *Tsala ea Batho* indicating hybridity or borrowed influences:

Jopo – a job (*Tsala*, 19 April 1913, p. 3)

Chiki – cheeky (*Tsala*, 13 December 1913, p. 7)

Chenchioa – changed (*Tsala*, 10 May 1913, p. 4)

Potere – Potter (*Tsala*, 13 December 1913, p. 7)

Kufutu - unknown (*Tsala*, 13 December 1913, p. 7)

Dipiche – Speeches (*Tsala*, 22 November 1913, p. 5)

Faeфе, sikisi, eite, naene, tene – five, six, eight, nine, ten (*Tsala*, 1 November 1913, p. 7)

Putting – pudding (*Tsala*, 17 May 1913, p. 5)

Massawatete - unknown (*Tsala*, 17 May 1913, p. 5)

Tlafiri – clavier (*Tsala*, 17 May 1913, p. 5)

Kersferese – Kersfees (Christmas) (*Tsala*, 11 October 1913, p. 6)

Introjuse – introduce (*Tsala*, 17 May 1913, p. 5)

Kramofono – Gramophone (*Tsala*, 17 May 1913, p. 5)

Dibesega – unknown (*Tsala*, 17 May 1913, p. 5)

Mochato – a wedding, rooted in Nguni word umshado (instead of kemo or nyalo) (*Tsala*, 18 October 1913, p. 4)

Kgoedi ea Setemere – the month of September (*Tsala*, 18 October 1913, p. 4)

Iri – hour, rooted in Afrikaans word uur (instead of ura) (*Tsala*, 11 October 1913, p. 6)

Neitifi Lende Ekete – Natives Land Act (*Tsala*, 23 August 1913, p. 3)

Stareng – (in The Star newspaper) (*Tsala*, 16 August 1913, p. 3)

Akorto – accord (*Tsala*, 14 June 1913, p. 4)

14 deis – 14 days (*Tsala*, 28 June 1913, p. 3)

Stopo – stop (*Tsala*, 12 July 1903, p. 2)

Sese-mane – six months (*Tsala*, 26 July 1913, p. 5)

Sekohekara – scotch cart (*Tsala*, 25 April 1914, p. 2)

Idioms and proverbs

A chologa fela jaka pula ea maebana (*Tsala*, 19 April 1913, p. 3) – Flowing like a peaceful rain

Go rarabolola menoto ea dikoko (*Tsala*, 26 April 1913, p. 7) – To decipher chicken scratch writing

O tlhoile tlalo je lencho fela jaka more (*Tsala*, 19 July 1913, p. 3) – He hates the black skin like it was medication

Disela mmapa ga di batlane (*Tsala*, 19 July 1913, p. 3) – Those who pick (wild berries) in the same wood do not love each other (Plaatje, 1916, p. 29)

Manong a ja ka ditshika (*Tsala*, 19 July 1913, p. 3) – Vultures eat with their blood relations (Plaatje, 1916, p. 57)

Nca ngoe le ngoe ena le motsi oa eone (*Tsala*, 19 July 1913, p. 3) – Every dog has its day.

Bana ba kgori monokana o sele. [tshika e ea baneng ea kgaoga] (*Tsala*, 21 June 1913, p. 4) – The offspring of the bastard are members of no man, when family relationship extends to the children it ceases (Plaatje, 1916, p. 4)

Fa go na le ditlhong, ke tsa bashotli eseng bashotloa (*Tsala*, 14 June 1913, p. 4) – If there is any embarrassment, it is on the part of those inflicting suffering and not those who suffer

Marota a sirasirana (*Tsala*, 4 October 1913, p. 7) – Hill tops hide one another from view (Plaatje, 1916, p. 58)

E mashi ga e itsale. (*Tsala*, 4 October 1913, p. 3) – A good milch-cow does not always bear itself (i.e. bear a calf that grows to be a good milk yielder) (Plaatje, 1916, 32)

Nche o santse a tsentse lofetlho (*Tsala*, 11 October 1913, p. 4) – The ostrich is handling the turn-stick (things are topsy-turvy) (Plaatje, 1916, p. 73)

Ese leburu e le tsie (*Tsala*, 20 December 1913, p. 7) – It was not a Boer, it was a swarm of locusts (to signify the overwhelming number of Boers present).

Re mo nakeng tsa kgokong (*Tsala*, 13 December 1913, p. 6) – We are in the horns of the blue wildebeest (We are in trouble)

A motho o tseoa ke noka re le teng (*Tsala*, 13 December 1913, p. 6) – Is a person going to be swept away by the river while we are present (A call to act).

Moea kgotla ga bolaoe (*Tsala*, 6 December 1913, p. 7) – The plaintiff is not to be laughed out of court (Plaatje, 1916, p. 62)

Mpeng ga go boeloe, maruping go a boeloa (*Tsala*, 6 December 1913, p. 7) – To the womb there is no return, but to the ruins (a deserted home) there may be a return or The mill will never grind with the water that is past (*Tsala*, 1916, p. 71).

Ba ila bojaloa fela jaka Mocoana a ila boloi (*Tsala*, 29 November 1913, p. 6) – They detest alcohol like a Motswana detests witchcraft.

Maitshegeleco a bone a mareledi (*Tsala*, 15 November 1913, p. 6) – The basis of their claims is slippery.

Motho oa thadi re mmona a tsamaea fela, ga go tsamae motho ke letlalo fela. (*Tsala*, 18 October 1913, p. 4) – We see an alcoholic by his walk, it is not a human being, it's just skin moving.

Re bucoetse ko teng jaka legapu (*Tsala*, 25 October 1913, p. 6) – We are ripe inside like the watermelon.

Figures of speech/onomatopoeia

Bii! Ke jeo le ile!! Loa reng he Bancho!!! (*Tsala*, 3 May 1913, p. 3)

A ntse a itsabara-tsabara le jone (*Tsala*, 19 July 1913, p. 3)

Bi! Bi! (*Tsala*, 30 August 1913, p. 6)

Kgaa! (*Tsala*, 18 October 1913, p. 4)

Go utloala bo tsiri-tsiri le bo coerecoerecoere mo melacoaneng, mo megobeng, mo dibataolong, mo dikhutsaneng, pula, pula, pula, pula (*Tsala*, 18 October 1913, p. 4)

Original Setswana names/expressions

Piano – tinkane (*Tsala*, 21 June 1913, p. 5)

Segatsetsa – refrigerator (*Tsala*, 12 July 1913, p. 2)

Ga Nkoane – KaNgwane (*Tsala*, 13 December 1913, p. 6)

Thadi - alcohol (*Tsala*, 18 October 1913, p. 4)

Molelo oa badimo o gotoeng bojaloa – the fire of the gods called alcohol (*Tsala*, 24 May 1913, p. 4)

Telegrama tsa loapi tse di senang thudi (Diphatsa tsa loatle) (*Tsala*, 18 October 1913, p. 7)

Invented Setswana names

Jarafantene – Jagersfontein (*Tsala*, 13 December 1913, p. 7)

Beaconsfili - Beaconsfiled (*Tsala*, 13 December 1913, p. 7)

General Krisijane (De Wet) – General Christiaan De Wet (*Tsala*, 6 December 1913, p. 6)

Herisemeto – Harrismith (*Tsala*, 25 October 1913, p. 6)

Mphefu – Mphephu (*Tsala*, 15 November 1913, p. 5)

Sauru – Sauer (*Tsala*, 15 November 1913, p. 5)

Thaba e Ncho – Monte Negro (*Tsala*, 30 August 1913, p. 6)

Titaniki – Titanic (*Tsala*, 4 October 1913, p. 7)

Lofdele – Lovedale (*Tsala*, 7 June 1913, p. 4)

Tau-o-noa-hela – Town hall (*Tsala*, 23 August 1913, p. 3)

Appendix 5

Mine	Sesuto name	Xosa & Zulu name	Compound manager	Native name
Aurora West United G.M. Co. Ltd	Sibinyane	Sibinyane	J.L. Blaine	Madubula
Banjes Cons. Mine, Ltd	Ha Ebachani	Ebantsheni	T.H.C. Garner	Umhlaba
Brakpan Mines, Ltd.	Brakpan	Blakpani	V.T. Harrison	Mashiqela
City Deep, Ltd.	Ha Siti Deep	Majondolo	P.T. Alexander	Bobo
Cons. Langlaagte Mines, Ltd.	Krisisi	Ekisis	W.S. Taft	Mafuta
Crown Mines Ltd, comprising:				Chief Compound Overseer:
Crown Deep	Mafenstere	Mafestile	C.E. Howe	Nqondela
Crown Reef	Ha Mafopoka	Mavumbuka	E. Kukard	Kukat
Robinson Central Deep	Ha Robinson Centrale	Pikinini Komponi	T.G. Cochrane	Madolo

Langlaagte Deep & No.12 Shaft	Pikinini Kimbili	Pikinini Kimbali	J.W. Lawrance	Ntshindana
South Rand	South Rand	South Rand	J.W. Blockley	Maboya
Cons. Main Reef Mines & Estate Ltd.	Maboya	Maboya	G. Wood	Skokian
Durban Roodepoort G.M. Co. Ltd	Mtonono	Mtonono	T.E. Thompson	Mehlwana
Durban Roodepoort Deep Ltd	Ha Mohlati	Mhlati		
East Rand Prop. Mines, Ltd., comprising				
Angelo	Nyoni Mhlophe	Nyoni Mhlophe	G. Blair Hook	Sigumba
Cason	Bobo	Bobo	A.P. Norton	Mataman
Driefontein	Matamane	Matamane	S.R. Haines	Mbaula
Hercules & Angelo Deep	Mzikinya	Mzikinya	(Compound closed)	
New Comet	Komete	Komete	G.F. Tripp	Beka-Beka
Blue Sky	(Closed down)			
Ferreira Deep, Ltd., comprising				
Ferreira Deep Limited	Fashfash	Fasifasi	E.Weaver	Longone
Ferreira M. Co. Ltd	Bobo	Bobo	do	Do
Geldenuis Deep Ltd., comprising				
Geldenuis Deep	Ha Mateketo	Mkonywana	A.S. Edmunds	Mahlabangwana
Jumpers Deep	Jomposo Deep	Bobo	D.W. Robertson	Nkomiyahlaba

Glencairn Main Reef G.M. Co. Ltd	Makause	Makausi	G.S. Lishman	Mangangamela
Geduld. Prop. Mines, Ltd	Geduld	Geduld	L.W. Jenner	Mazitulele
Ginsberg G.M. Co., Ltd	Madoda	Madoda	H.P. Gaze	Mpandhlana
Govt. G.M. Areas (Modder.) Cons., Ltd	Inkosi	Inkosi	J.P. Crosbie	Mgoni
Knight Central, Limited	Ha Mfitshane	Mfitshane	E. Trollip	Sompungana
Knight's Deep Limited, comprising				
Knight's Deep (East Section)	Tandabantu	Tandabantu	J.B. Moseley	Ntshindana
Simmer & Jack East (West Section)	Mtongwana	Mtongwana	R.H. Smith	Mazitulele
Meyer & Charlton G.M. Co., Ltd	Mahleko	Mahleku	G.D. Clarence	Matafeni
May Consolidated G.M. Co., Ltd	Ha Stanyole	Kwa Stanyule	E.E. Currin	Ntakezulu
Modderfontein "B" Gold Mines, Limited	Mangaca	Mangaca	A.H.G. Pigg	Maspigg
Main Reef West, Ltd	Maboya Deeps	Maboya Deeps	J.W. Blockley	Maboya
Modder. Deep Levels	Mpondweni	Mpondweni	R.J. Judd	M'pondweni

New Goch Gold Mines, Ltd	George Goch	George Goch (Kwa Mafuta)	R.E. Lagerwall	Bobo
New Kleinfontein G.M. Co., Ltd	Mpohlo	Mpohlo	J.K. Hirst	Maqaqa
New Modderfontein G.M. Co., Ltd	Mohlate	Mhlati	T. Duff	Dlovu
New Primrose G.M. Co., Ltd	Plimlose	Sinqaunqau	R. Bodley	Bobbe
New United Main Reef G.M. Co., Ltd	Mashangana	Mashangana	E. Hurford	Umguni
Nourse Mines, Ltd	Madonela	Madonela	C.Y. Brabant	Masenengane
Princess Estate & G.M. Co., Limited	Mazambane	Mazambane	H.F. Ottoway	Mfitshane
Robinson G.M. Co., Ltd	Ha Robinson e Moholo	Kwelomi	M.C.H. Bradbury	Madevu
Roodepoort United Main Reef G.M. Co., Limited	Ha Goodwin or Mohlepula	Kwa Goodwin (Mhleputa)	G.A. Langton	Nganencane
Robinson Deep G.M. Co., Ltd	Ngonyama	Ngonyama	G. St. Leger. Devenish	Longone
Rose Deep Limited, comprising				
Glen Deep	Nyosana	Nyosana	F. Crosbie	Mangqukelu
Rose Deep	Rose Deep	Losi Deep	do	”
Simmer & Jack Prop. Mines Ltd	David (Simeren Jeke.)	Dambuza	CW Smith	Dambuza

Sub-Nigel Limited	Dipi	Dipi	G.E. Rawlinson	Malunguza
Simmer Deep, Limited	Susane	Susane	E.M. Pearse	Susane
Springs Mines, Limited	Nkotshane (Springs)	Nkotshane (Springs)	E.W. Granger	Mazinyo Mbila
Van Ryn Gold Mines Estate, Ltd	Tomase (Van Ryn)	Mas Thomase	H. Owen	Unyesa
Van Ryn Deep, Limited	Masambane	Masambane	N.J. Crosby	Longone
Village Deep, Limited	Vinishi	Madonela	C.J. Buchanan	Mkomiyahlaba
Vogelstruis Estate and Gold Mines, Ltd	Mafastel Roodepoort	Mafestile Roodepoort	D.W. Swan	Mahewu
Village Main Reef G.M. Co. Limited	Ha Mapokomela	Mabukumela	E.S. Palframan	Umhlekezi
Witwatersrand G.M. Co, Ltd	Ha Mafutha	Mafuta	H.I. Mills	Miliis
Wolhuter G.M. Co., Limited	Duma	Duma	E.G. McEwan	Matweni
Witwatersrand Deep, Limited	Masikinke	Makingi	R.A. Keell	Mabalana or Mqwangeni
West Rand Consolidated Mines, Limited	Ha Mfichane	Mfitshane (Mboma)	D.B. Russell	Sebenyana

Table 2: Native Recruiting Corporation Ltd. advertisement from 13 February 1914, showing a list of names of mines and the managers in charge under the headlines: Mine, Sesuto name, Xosa & Zulu name, Compound Manager and Native Name (*Tsala*, 13 February 1914, p. 1).

Appendix 6

Turnitin Originality Report

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