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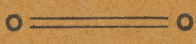
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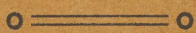


Justinus Sechefo:

## The twelve Lunar Months among the Basuto.

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The twelve

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## The twelve Lunar Months among the Basuto.

By **Justinus Sechefo**, St. Michael, Maseru, Basutoland<sup>1</sup>.

The peculiarity of humour in which the Basuto abound in naming and giving ludicrous representations and nicknames, is specially notable, remarkable and admirable. In this way they have fancifully named out not merely people, nations, animals, but also the months of the year; and in that same spirit of humour they have not spared even themselves.

Very naturally, one would think that in signifying itself a nation would be apt graphically to call or counterfeit something magnificent, valiant or commanding. But in that sense of humour and desire for what is droll, they have represented even their own nationality and constitution by the emblem of a base representation; hence the title of which they so proudly entitle themselves: — *Bana ba tseha ea nku*, lit. "Sons of the *tseha* of the sheep".

The *tseha* is the only important loindress-wear worn in the front part of the body by the men<sup>2</sup>, and which is made from the tanned hide of the (*nku*) sheep. In this way it is obvious they have taken a peculiar delight in divulging even their most private moral weakness from a laughing point of view.

In this article my intention is to explain about the comical names of the twelve months of the year among the Basuto, and to show briefly where the months vary from the ever consistent calculation of the Calendar months.

The Basutos have a peculiarly but quaint way of reckoning their twelve months of the year. More or less they keep or purely reckon their time by the seasons of the year (their changes), by animals (their birth time), by plants (their annuality or growth), by the stars, such as the Pleiads (their position, time of rising and setting), but more especially by the moon itself.

A full month consists of that space of time from the beginning of the evening when the new moon is to be seen in the west — in that thin and hooked form, whereby it always appears to be shaped — to the last day of its appearance in the heavens; and moreover includes two more days when the moon cannot be seen at all in the heavens; that is, when neither the

<sup>1</sup> The author, a convert to Catholicism, is himself of the tribe of Basutomen; the article has been written by himself, and only a few omissions have been made *brevitatis causa*.

P. H. Hoffmeier, O. M. I., St. Michael, Basutoland.

<sup>2</sup> As I hope to deal with the clothing question in the near future, the *tseha* also, as an article of dress, shall have to be dealt with.

old nor the new moon can possibly be visible to the naked eye. The first of these two days is called or said by them that the moon *e ile mefela*, lit. "is gone into the darks" and the second; *e tlakoa ke litsoene*, lit. "is being greeted by the apes".

Thus with these two days included, a full month is completed. After these days the new moon will be plainly visible to everybody and therefore on this account they begin on this day to count a new month. Little regard is paid as to counting the number of days in any month, since the bulky moon itself fills up the deficiency.

The literal meaning that the moon *e ile mefela*, "gone into the darks", is that, whereas on this date, it cannot possibly be seen by them, it needs therefore must be deepened somehow or other in the dark. And that the moon *e tlakoa ke litsoene*, "greeted by the apes", comes from the belief that although still on this day the moon is not yet visible to men: it is believed that the apes themselves, when seated on mountain peaks, alone can see, from these their heights, in a faint way the moon appearing dimly above the horizon; thus greeting as it were (before men can) the new moon, its birth and reappearance.

The names of the months, of course, are also twelve in number, but as a matter of fact varying with those of the Calendar year; for *Phato* (August), the eighth month of the Calendar year, stands the first with the Basutos.

The following list gives the names of the twelve months in Sesuto and in English:

1. <i>Phato</i>	August	7. <i>Tlhakola</i>	February
2. <i>Loetse</i>	September	8. <i>Tlhakubele</i>	March
3. <i>Mphalane</i>	October	9. <i>'Mesa</i>	April
4. <i>Pulungoana</i>	November	10. <i>Motseanong</i>	May
5. <i>Tsitoe</i>	December	11. <i>Phupjoane</i>	June
6. <i>Pherekhong</i>	January	12. <i>Phupu</i>	July.

### I. Month: *Phato* (August).

As I have already mentioned before, *Phato* (August), the eighth month of the Calendar year, counts the first in the Basuto year or *selemo*<sup>1</sup>.

It is most remarkable to note the greeting words or phrases whereby this first month is being greeted. The advent or approach of any other of the following months is always welcomed or hailed by a few or more words of praise, signifying and foreshowing how the particular month apparently appears to be.

For the month of *Phato* (August) the following is the greeting:

*Phato ea makoatle*

*Ea pulula-maliba*

*Ea moshanyana se llele ho lisa*

*Khoeli tsa hao tsa ho lisa li sa tla*

*Ho sa tla bo Phupu le Motseanonyana.*

<sup>1</sup> This word has three meanings or significations, viz. spring, ploughtime and year.

The hardy, tough, and blunt words from the above phrase, are somewhat too difficult to be accurately forced into English translation; however the near translation will read thus:

“The sturdy outrageous *Phato* (August)  
Bubbling, puffing and whiffing the deep,  
Shepherd-boy pines not anxiously,  
For the going out a-herding.  
Your months (time) for a-herding still come  
There still come July and May”.

From the above phraseology one can guess what a bold, dull and harsh month *Phato* (August) appears to be, how awkward and unfit it would seem for the first month of the year, contrasting so admirably with the South African January. At this time the dams, rivulets, brooks and rivers, as well as all waters in the fields are in-drifted with dead leaves, and straw of all kinds from near and far. The waters are dashed and bestrewn all over with thick dust. Heaps of black scum are floating on the surface of the beating and splashing foam of the waters against the brink of brooks. These waters are quite foul from the black soot of the late burnt up grass, blown in by the whiffing wind, from the surrounding fields, which grass has been expressly burnt up to start the new year afresh. Bitter and bleak winds are blowing and puffing all about. There is scarcely anything mild throughout the month, but its rude, unruly violence and moroseness. The shepherd-boy is warned of his most ugly time for the pastoral cares of his herds and flocks. The time over which he undoubtedly laments and cries bitterly 'mid this unpleasant time, let him expect better months for the herding; such months as July (last) and May to come. In other words and truer sense: this warning applies to younger boys, who are naturally eager and anxious to go out a-herding, and are warned against their attempting to do so during this month but to wait for warmer times to come.

Note also that this is the time to inoculate and sprinkle cattle with medicinal charms, and as a rule to vaccinate people in general, in order to end well the old and start the new year afresh.

Plants in general also begin, in or about now, attempting to spring up from the ground, or wake as it were from its long winter sleep. The tiller (*molemj*), now-a-days ploughman, has now his time mature for tilling the soil and sowing his seeds. These seeds are the *mabele* (kaffir-corn) and the *poone* (maize) which were in the early days the only grains, and chief means of Mosuto subsistence, excepting a few vegetables such as the *mokopu* (marrow), *linaoa* (beans), *lehapu* (melon) and the *ntsoe* (sugar-cane).

## II. Month: *Loetse* (September).

Next comes *Loetse* (September), the second month of the year, and is welcomed in the following manner:

*Loetse 'a noto<sup>1</sup> 'a 'bo hloea<sup>2</sup>*  
*Ra-setla<sup>3</sup> ka Loetse selata-mafi*  
*Re bona 'm'a lihlofa a lusa<sup>4</sup>*  
*Balisa ba tala ba nko ntso.*

The rather perplexing translation can be given in this way:

“The hammered<sup>1</sup> September of the whey<sup>2</sup>.  
 (when) The up-goer<sup>3</sup> in September  
 Goes only for milk sake,  
 Seeing the rich milk-cow teat-swelling<sup>4</sup>;  
 The shepherds of the green are blacknosed.”

From the above verse one can gather nothing but the joy and good cheer, of the careful hardy shepherd, who did not spare himself, nor mind the rough weather during the last severe month of *Phato*. He was shrewd enough and early to go to more fertile mountain cattle posts wherein his cattle had been well attended, and are now in a more lively and good condition. To go to these cattle parts he went up to the mountains, far from home, to seek and get for himself better and richer pastures, where nothing disturbs the fields, since those spots are not inhabited. There he fixed up a temporary hut of branches for himself, and a stone kraal for his property, and in this way he remains sole proprietor of the little estate.

By now he has already a supply of milk, as well as some thick milk (represented as hammered) in this his mountain hut. To insult the late comer viz. the shepherd who only leaves his home now, it is said, he only comes up (now in September) for the sake of having milk, and not for the good of his herd. The early-comer has now the pleasure of witnessing one by one of his herd bringing forth their young. Indeed they had been well looked after during the recent rough month.

Now as regards the name *Loetse* it has its derivation from the word *Loetsa* (i. e. to anoint wounds with fat; to syringe the ear), and so *Loetse* means “anointer”. The cattle, grass, plants and fields in general, are all being syringed and anointed throughout with the sweet (oil) fat of tenderness. They are all soft, flexible and tender. They have changed their dull appearance, and robe with which they were clothed, during the preceding month. They are now rising and have risen up. Cattle are giving their young for the start. Hillsides and warmer sunny-places are to be found enlivened up, though with yet small tufts, but of green herbage. The grass that has been burnt up during past month has now freely peeped above the ground. Then this new grass with acclamations of joy is spoken of as:

*Joang bo meno a lintjana.*

“The grass is showing pup-teeth.”

<sup>1</sup> *Noto*, “thick milk” (as hammer).

<sup>2</sup> *Hloea*, “whey” (as already having thick milk).

<sup>3</sup> *Ra-setla*, “up-goer” (late shepherd to go to mountain cattle-posts).

<sup>4</sup> *Lusa*, “teat-swelling” (about to calf, calving).

That is from the similarity of the darting blades jutting out in a way resembling the teeth of a pup-dog.

Now comes the statement in the verse that "the shepherds of the green (grass) are blacknosed". This term signifies that shepherds in this month, when out feeding their herds on the green just darting out, are face blackened from the soot of the late burnt up grass, blown about by the wind, or when at their usual gambols they toss one another on the ground. The cattle themselves, too, bear good testimony of the fact. They are, too, well black-nosed from the same soot while grazing and pulling up the green herbage.

The shepherds themselves give another truer remark to the fact that the present month is the "anointer". Up till now, they were dull, cold and foul. They never could have any free exercise, either in running, bathing or swimming. But, on the contrary, they are now brisk, and once more fresh, and are having a plentiful supply of milk, they begin now to cast off this dulness and peevishness. They are commonly to be found washing themselves with the warm fresh milk. This is a common practice with them, and this washing renders the skin fine and clean.

Finally the month of *Loetse*, the word or name so judiciously expresses itself, viz. by its tenderness to plants, humanity to animals, and pity to the land.

In concluding the description I must say that the hardy month of *Phato* (August) has truly been syringed, anointed, and sweetened by the present *Loetse* (anointer) anointing the land as it were by the sweet oil of delicacy and smiling verdure.

### III. Month: *Mphalane* (October).

The third month comes with the name of *Mphalane* (October) and is briefly greeted thus:

*Mphalane* 'a *leshoma*.

"October of the *leshoma*-plant".

The *leshoma* is an annual plant with a large round bulb. From 7 to 15 inches would be the circumference. This plant is known to doctors as medicinal. The bulky bulb is closely covered and wrapped all over, to the centre, with very thin coverings. When dry, these coverings are as soft, fine and even shining as silk. To peel off one by one these very thin rinds, one would take a considerably long time of the day to do but one big bulb.

This plant unmistakably begins to vegetate and annually to shoot forth its broad ears at this time of the season. The steady, stout, and corpulent shepherd now goes romancing about, and mounted on his prancing fat calf, goes about from one cattle post to another visiting his companions. At different places and times, he sees the *leshoma*-plant just popping up its ears. The keen-eyed doctor, who is a true herbalist, but an uncultivating horticulturist in that wide Garden of Nature, is also forcibly struck by this

plant darting out. In the same way will be affected the instinctly far-seeing hunter when beholding this plant thus reviving; they are all warned that the present is the month of "*Mphalane ea leshoma*".

So that in cases of the *likhang* "contradictions" about the months, which are but too common, nearly in every *khotla* (lit. squatting-place for men; court of justice), the question arises as to how the *leshoma*-plant at this time appears to be. The *leshoma*-plant will settle the trouble by the condition, and manner in which it bears. In any case, should it be found shooted out, or in double ears, then the whole question will be peaceably decided, that the month is the true loyal *Mphalane ea leshoma*.

Another derivation of the name *Mphalane* originates from the word *liphalana* (lit. glitters). Since it has now got warm enough, and owing to the hot sunbeams during the day, the *liphalana*, glitterings of its warmth, are to be seen, when casting ones eyes over far and wide plains. The fields are sparkling and glittering as if it were oceans of water gently moved by the soft breezes, and thus dancing under the brilliant sun.

Moreover, another reference is that in the former times of true Basuto proper, this was the commencement and right time to transact the rites of "girls circumcision" (*Lebollo la bale*). The elderly women who are about to perform this high office will now go about the village blowing the *liphalana* pipes or flutes made from the stalks of the *mabele* (native corn). This performance notifies to their neighbours round about the vicinity, and to the public in general, that these operators are in due course to execute their most important and momentous ceremony. A ceremony too well attended and kept with ardent fervour and delight by all the women (who in every case must be those who before underwent the rites and performances of circumcision themselves). So they all flock and gather happily, and without prejudice to the nearest rivulet of running water, the particular place for the execution; clad in the best of their ochred sheep and ox skins. This formal exploit and ceremony may be kept at least for three days. The men can only attend at the beer drinking and slaughtering of animals, that is on the last day of the feast.

I regret to say this awful and condemnable custom is still persistingly adhered to, by not a few even to the present day.

#### IV. Month: *Pulungoana* (November).

Next comes *Pulungoana* (November) which is the fourth month of the year. It is concisely termed thus:

*Pulungoana 'a tsoetsoana.*  
"November of the young gnu."

The word *Pulungoana* is the diminutive of the word *pulumo* (lit. gnu), thus *pulungoana* = "young gnu". *Tsoetsoana* which means a young "*tsephe*" or "springbuck", has in the sense above the same meaning i. e. "young gnu" or "young springbuck".

At this time the female gnus begin to bring forth young: *pulungoanas*.



The shepherd, but more especially the hunter, on his far pursuits of the chase, descends along the *maluti* vales that the grassy pastures are now and then, here and there, interspersed with what from a distance appears to him as dots or heaps of animal dung. On his coming near these dotted spots, and closely viewing the same, he discerns this to be nothing but the afterbirths of the female breeding gnu: clear proof that the animals are thus producing their young *pulungoanas*.

A *maluti* differs from a mountain in that *maluti* is, or are, whole ranges of very high, even highest mountains, but which are overgrown with green grass from foot to summit, while what is called *thaba*, ordinary "mountain", is generally a huge bulk of bare rock elevated at some certain height above the general surface of the land. Formerly these *malutis* were considered uninhabitable, they being deemed too cold, frozen, and severe for the people, and particularly for the cultivation of crops. They were only intended as grazing pastures for horses, cattle, sheep, and goats. Even then this was only during the summer time, a time which shepherds could enjoy and pass away quite happily in their *maluti* transitory domicile, free from the disadvantages of the cold, both for themselves and their property. These dwellings were to be quitted and deserted when winter came, and flocks and herds taken back again to their respective kraals. The *malutis* would then remain alone, and empty, but covered with deep lasting snow. However now-a-days, these *malutis* are nearly everywhere inhabited by people. The soil is rich, and land in the least capable of cultivation is tilled, wherever the plough can go uninterrupted, though I regret to say, roughly and without care. Kraals and huts are erected nearly wherever an agreeable spot can be found. European square houses, tastefully built up of polished stone, and built up to plumb and square, are now commonly to be seen, in not a few of these *maluti* kraals. Many herds have no longer the necessity of having to be sent up and down, to and from these *malutis*; since the owners are now resident in them. The stock in general do thrive so, admirably in quantity and quality.

What extensively large droves of cattle and horses, flocks of sheep and goats abound in these *malutis*!

The prevailing soil for cultivation is dark black and clotty. Wool and mohair are plentiful. The wheat (*koro*) and maize (*poone*) crops thrive exceedingly well, while the *mabele* (kaffir-corn) in most places, so far, thrives only on a very small scale.

But to return to our narrative. In those early days, even hunters themselves (to say nothing about the shepherds), were not the sole landlords of these extensive *maluti* ranges. The *Moroa* (Bushman) himself was the monarch, who wrongly considered his rights there should be none to dispute. He traversed up and down, every spot of these most wearisome and steep *malutis*, in quest of plunder. There he displayed his skill and dexterity in hunting and chasing wild animals, especially the same *pulumo* (gnu) which when chased will not leave her young behind. So the young *pulungoana* getting tired of the chase, easier would be his stratagem in killing the mother gnu. In the very remotest and concealed parts, the *Moroa* (Bushman),

ingeniously and with acuteness, discovered large and extensive caves where-in he hidingly lived, obscure and exclusively, far from the sight of his deadly foe, the *Mosuto*. In those he devoured his plunders and spoils of his chase.

Up to this day in these caves are still plainly to be seen so many of his marvellous paintings on the bare rock. Nearly in all cases the paint is red, and is so firmly attached, and stuck to the solid rock, without fading, decaying or rubbing off. These paintings chiefly comprise the picture of the Bushman himself, seen with rather slender longish legs, a running man of the chase with his bow and poisoned arrow. He is also seen to be in pursuit of divers kinds of animals, but particularly the *pulumo* (gnu), *khama* (animal of the deer kind), *phoffu* (elk), and the *matsa* (antelopes).

The Bushman is a marvellously swift runner. Even in these pictures he is seen running parallel with most of these animals, and in many cases almost grasping his spoil or booty by the tail.

When fiercely or too long pursued, the *pulumo* may attack the pursuer, by violently rushing against his steed, and goading with his horns the rider down to the ground. It is, however, an honourable deed to kill one, either with the bullet or assegai, the latter showing more bravery and intrepidity.

But to kill what is called *sebata* (wild animal), such as the lion, tiger, leopard etc., is more honourable, and most heroic. The killer takes the skin as well as the flesh of the animal to the chief under whose immediate subjection or jurisdiction he is placed. This chief will promptly escort him and his glorious gain to the Great Chief, and there to exhibit his treasure viz. the skin and venison; this act is called *ho hapella* (a free giving to some one above you, after some hazardous gain).

The flesh is to be cooked in the *khotla* (court) and is eaten by men and boys, and is prepared by way of enchantment for making them brave like the particular beast of prey. The skin remains with the chief. It is his most befitting property, since he himself in "great matters" is called the *sebata*, and himself alone has the right to make use of, and adorn himself with, the skins of the *sebata*.

The killer after meriting a favourable address from the chief and applause from his men, will on the expiration of a few days be allowed to return to his home, driving an ox, the gift from the chief. This exploit of the king (as well as of any one to whom it may fall) is called *ho hlapisa* and is a great token of esteem, and future good fortune and luck to the recipient.

#### V. Month: *Tsitoe* (December).

*Tsitoe* (December) now follows as the fifth month of the year. The name speaks for itself, and therefore unlike unto other months, hardly has any title of praise-worthiness to itself, save that it is the true:

*Tsitoe!*

"Grasshopper!" (tiny).

However by some it is titled as *Tsitoe ea sehlohonono*. At this time the *tsitoe* is flitting about the green fields, and under the shady branches of the

woods. This *tsitoe* had been known and seen from time to time by the tiller, when tilling up his ground during the past months of *Loetse*, *Mphalane* and *Pulungoana*. At this time it was still under the ground, and only in the form of a chrysalis or pupa. But by now this worm has been hatched out, and has vested itself with flying wings. It is of the size of the queen bee, and rather similar in appearance. It now emits a fizzing, and twittering-like noise, all over the fields; fluttering and sweetly hissing all about with long soft hurrahs! unceasingly crying out:

*Tsitoe! Tsitoe!! Tsitoe!!!*

This is how the month so advantageously wins to itself the name *Tsitoe*, that is from the never ceasing noise of this insect, all day long.

Now the *sehlohonono* itself is another insect not much unlike the *tsitoe*. It could rightly be termed as a forerunner to the *Tsitoe*. It precedes the *tsitoe*, and begins also hissing about the fields previous to the *tsitoe*. Its noise is by no means equal in comparison in sweetness to that of the *Tsitoe*. The *tsitoe* comes shortly after the *sehlohonono* has notified to the public that ere long will be the "month of *Tsitoe*". Then the *tsitoe* alone is now to be heard, and the sooth sayer *sehlohonono* for ever silenced. It all at once quickly and briskly every day increases to fuller tones in its hissing until the next Month of *Pherekhong* (January), after which the noisy flirting *tsitoe* then dies.

#### VI. Month: *Pherekhong* (January).

*Pherekhong* (January) only steps in as the sixth month of the year. The root of this name seems to have leaked in from the Sechoana language.

*Phera* in Sechoana or *Fera* in Sesuto, means to "interjoin sticks", or "put up rafters to a house". The word "*khong*" is a Sechoana word for sticks or wood. Thus *Pherekhong*, but which accurately speaking should have been "*Pherakhong*", has this meaning: to "interjoin sticks".

The complimentary words for the month are the following:

*"Pherekhong ea maphephe*

*Koela-koela.*

*Ea naoa . . . . tata-molebo.*

*Tala ho feta ea mabele*

*Ho kokobela ea joang."*

The following is the English interpretation thereof:

*"Pherekhong* of the *maphephe*,

Of the mildew.

Of the bean . . . . fetching marrow shoots.

The greenness of the *mabele* increases

That of the grass decreases".

What else can one grasp from the lines above, but merriment and relish for the approaching autumnal fruits!

Basuto black beans are about ready, and soon will be fit for picking up. The fresh mildew can be plucked and eaten, either cooked or as it is. The pumpkin, though not yet ready for eating, still the shoots thereof are promising. The ploughed up fields are all green with the *mabele* crop. The greenness of the *mabele* crop entirely surpasses that of the field grass. The grass itself, through maturity, more or less shows yellowness, begins to decay, and slightly loses its former greenness.

*Maphephe* are watchers' huts in gardens (*lephephe* is the sing. numb). These temporary summer-huts are built up of planted sticks interjoined together, and covered with a thatch of weeds or grass. Such a hut serves for the *motsosi* or bird scarer, as a shelter either from the rain or from the heat of the sun during the hottest part of the day. The *motsosi* (birdscarer) prepares for himself this hut beforehand; and it is to be of service to him during the ensuing month, when the *mabele* crop will have formed small grains. At that time as well as during the other following two months, the fields will be thronged and full of troublesome birds pecking and picking off from the husk the grain in the ears of the *mabele* crop. This crop grows up to some eight or even more feet in height. In this prearranged hut will the birdscarer take his shelter from the sun during midday, the time when presumably the birds may require a nap, and shelter under some shady thicket of brambles or a bush. The birds will then make another rush, and fierce attack on the field, resuming their destructive natural task towards the evening when it gets cooler. These exterminating birds are many, but chiefly are: *ihaha* (wren), *serobebe* (sparrow), *molepe* (black and red long tailed), *lepau* (black heavy long-feathered), *leebe* (pigeon), *thaha-khuba* (red wren), *leholi* (starling) etc. These birds are so destructive, that entire fields would be totally demolished were not many of the birdscarers stationed in every *mabele*-field.

The mild though heavy rains are also noted to fall in torrents at this time.

The chasing or scaring away of these noxious birds (which as I have already mentioned will begin by the next month) is performed in a very conspicuous manner. A medium-sized boy or girl, a woman or a man, performs the task of a *motsosi*. First a *sefika* is to be erected in the centre of the *tsimo* (garden) or it is put up on some convenient spot for the bird-scarer, enabling him to have a full view over whole of his field. A *sefika* is elevated or raised-up ground either of stone or earth, but generally of built sod. The bird-scarer stands on top of this mound, and shouts out to the particular bird or birds that have alighted on top of the *mabele* ears. He repeatedly calls aloud to the bird or birds in question, by their respective names; that is, such names as has been given above. He does so until the bird departs. Should this mode of scaring take no effect on the greedy, molesting bird; then a second method is put in force. He blows a strong piercing whistle to the bird, and still calling it out by the particular name or names according to the sort of each bird. The bird or birds will at once fly off, and with fright scatter away from the field. Another usual and common way of scaring is that of the *tsoibila*. *Tsoibila* is a slender though solid stick, rather flexible from centre to top, where it terminates in a point. It may

measure from 5 to 7 feet long. The birdscarer will occasionally supply his stick by putting a small lump of the *letsopa* (pot-clay) firmly pressing it on the point of this stick. Then holding the stronger end of the stick tightly in his hand; forcibly throws the round ball of clay, at the bird, or birds, alighted on the different parts of his field. This clay ball is of great power and efficacy, should the bird-scarer happen to hit right, at the mischievous bird, resulting with its unexpected but sudden tragical death. The bullet thus thrown at these birds will disperse the whole company; or at least according to the most approved and ancient criterion or test on hunting I ought to say a flight of doves, or swallows, a building of rooks, a bevy of quails, a muster of peacocks, a herd of deer, of cranes or wrens, and a skulk of foxes.

These acts trifling as they would seem, yet are so effective, that when incessantly practised, saves one the enormous and unnecessary obligation of continually toiling up and down the field, to get rid of these marauding birds.

In this way this Month is reputedly called *Pherekhong* and cannot be mistaken by the style and manner of which the crop of the *mabele* shows, and tells, by its present state and growth. Its growth, at this time, announces to all that it is now high time to "interjoin sticks", that is to put up the *maphephe*-huts.

Thus finally *Pherekhong*, the word expressively elucidates itself when it says:

*"Pherekhong ea maphephe,  
Pherekhong, the interjoining of sticks".*



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### VII. Month: *Tlhakola* (February).

Now comes *Tlhakola* or *Hlakola* the seventh month of the year. This month is applauded in this manner:

*Tlhakola molula.*

The word *tlhakola* is the same as *hlakola* and means "to wipe off". This word signifies what the sense means.

*Tlhakola molula.*

"Wiping off the *molula*".

The *molula* is that state in which the *mabele* crop is, during the past month of *Pherekhong* (interjoining sticks) viz. the same state and reason of which the *motsosi* is obliged to put up the *maphephe* huts. This *molula* is when the *mabele* crop could as well be said to have blossomed, and its tiny grains still completely enveloped in the husk. In other words, I can say the *molula* means when only the green but impregnated husks are to be seen and not the grain.

This *Tlhakola* or "Wiping off" signifies the wiping off of these husks, wiped off, as if it were by the grain now giving itself strength to burst open the crust of these husks. This "wiping off" is being accomplished during this month. The green grains are now to be seen above the husks; from whence the month has been amply rewarded by the weighty name *Tlhakola molula* "wiper of husks".

The closely-watching birds, ever vigilant, are all aware of this mystery. In abundance and great numbers they scatter themselves about the fields of the *mabele* crop, to do the most destructive havoc, if not constantly and rigidly challenged.

The most irksome task of scaring birds now begins; and for the intended purpose the *maphephe* huts (the description of which has been given before) are really serviceable.

This, as well as the two following months, is the busiest and hardest time for the *motsosi* (birdscarer). He needs to be in his *mabele* field at about the last cock-crowing in the morning, to be at his post beforehand; that is before the birds are on the wing. His first engagement, as he gets into his field, is to light the fire. When lit he will at all times keep on supplying his fire with dry and green weeds. The green weed is intentionally intended to make more smoke. These will fumigate, so that the watchful birds, seeing

the field with the smoke, quite naturally conceive to themselves the danger that is awaiting them from the *motsosi*.

In this way the *motsosi* is kept all day on the alert, closely watching with open eyes and shouting with open mouth, that the birds too may not "wipe off" his well-acquired crop. A matter they bravely encounter and dare to risk with their lives, doing great devastation, should the *motsosi* unfortunately be "worth trash", as not to be a painstaking one.

Another reason of which, by good hap, the Month has also been called *Tlhakola molula*, originates from a field-grass also called *molula*.

This *molula* is a tall-growing grass, about 4 feet in height. By the shepherds this grass is used to plait their own hats. Quite white and brilliant-like is the little tiny stem; and so will be the new hat. The crown of the original mosuto hat was commonly round and low; while the brim was rather broad. But the very primitive mosuto hat was one without the brim at all. By the men this *molula*-grass is used to plait strong and beautiful baskets, for their wives' domestic purposes. Every woman can hardly tell the inconveniences of having none at all, and the conveniences, of having a good basket.

But this is not all the benefits received from this grass. In times of famine, which were but too common in earlier days, this grass supported and supplied the famished country, with the food it yields. Its tiny seeds are eaten in famine times.

In this month the *molula*-grass is in full ear, and its tiny grains getting ripe. In appearance, the grain very much resembles the carrot seed; though still thinner. This grass is reaped by the knife (now sickle), and spread out in the sun to dry. When dry it is thrashed out, by means of beating it with a long thin stick. The tiny seed husk, and chaff, are separated by the winnowing, done by the women. To winnow any article, two baskets are in use. The one holds in the stuff to be winnowed, and the other remains on the ground to receive the grain as the wind separates it from the husk and chaff, while the woman is performing the winnowing. This process of winnowing, in all cases, is done entirely by the women.

By another name this *molula*-grass, from its resemblance to the *moseeka*-grass, is known by the name *moseeka*; especially the seed when thrashed out for eating. This *moseeka*-grass has the same qualities and succour in famine times. Note therefore the name *moseeka* as applied to the wheat crop. Wheat is also commonly called *moseeka*, from the fact of its ripening early, like unto this *moseeka*-grass, or *molula*-grass.

When the *sesiu*, (or granary), in former times, would be empty, only the *moseeka*-grass rendered the required relief. Now-a-days, when such would be the case, the wheat crop takes the place of the old *moseeka*.

*Pherekhong* (January), and part of *Tlhakola* (February), are the months of starvation or famine. At that time all crops in general are of course pleasing to the eye, but too green for any use. In any other times of the year there can scarcely be any starvation. Hence the term alluding to those two months, and more especially referring to *Pherekhong*.



The common sarcastic term alleges and declares:

*Ha khoho e e-nya mohloa.*

“When the hen evacuates dog-grass.”

This term applies only to this certain period of time, in *Pherekhong*, and beginning of *Tlhakola*. By simply using the above term, one referring means to designate the hard times of starvation, or famine, during these two months. At this time the dogs-grass is in full green. The hen quite naturally picks it up for food. Indeed, there is nothing else for the exhausted poulterer to give to his poultry, since his grain storage is spent out. What else can the hen evacuate, than the green dog-grass!

However, this famine-relieving grain (*moseeka*) when prepared for food, in eating is so very unpalatable, the taste so clammy and slimy, that to chew sets one's teeth on edge.

### VIII. Month: *Tlhakubele* (March).

After the month *Tlhakola* comes that of *Tlhakubele* or *Hlakubele*.

The word is frank and plain and therefore unlike others; the month needs no qualifications of any kind or species. The meaning is quite rigidly significant to the truest sense of the word. The word *tlhaku* or *hlaku* means “grain”; and the word *'bele* abbreviation of the word *mabele* (kaffir-corn). Conjoining these two words together, we have the evident and plain meaning of the name

*Tlhakubele*

“*Mabele* in grains”.

This is the eighth month of the Basuto year. The crystal beams of the hot burning sun beating so strongly against the well exposed grains, jutting out from the husk, admissibly allows the month justly and truly to boast that, indeed, the “*mabele* are in grains”.

The sighing autumn winds may, from time to time, strike down some of the weaker *mabele* to the ground. The economical and painstaking woman picks these up, and after cutting short the long stalks, to about a foot and a half from the ears, she will then plant these short rootless stalks with the ears into the ground. In this state they are left to remain for a certain length of time, whilst the seeds in the ears are actually ripening more than before.

Bye-and-bye, she carefully pulls them up, gathers them, and thrashes the and thrashes grains out. After so doing the grains have to be steeped in water for a few days, taken out for a day, and then thrown into an earthen-ware pot, to swell up, and take roots in the usual way (which I do not here intend to explain) of heating, fermenting, and drying ripe *mabele* for malt-liquor.

This particular (fallen-down) *mabele* is of no small importance. It is called *senkhoana* or *Ho loma senkhoana* i. e. to bite (eat) the *senkhoana*.

*Senkhoana* is bread made from the grains of the *mabele*. The bright green grains of *mabele* in the field are also called *senkhoana*, of which the green-bread thus made from it is indeed so tasty, though so very heavy in

weight; and as the saying goes: *Bo ea le 'metso* i. e. "it goes well with the throat"; as it goes well with all kinds of milk, raw, boiled or sour.

But this particular *senkhoana* which I am explaining (that is from the fallen down *mabele*), is important that it is to be made and converted into a "special *joala*" (strong beer). This *joala* is to be freely given to the parents (if alive) of the owner of the *mabele* field, from whence the grain came, or (if dead) to the very immediate nearest of kin. A sign of enjoyment and gratification to, and for, the aged to bite (eat) the *senkhoana* in drink; same way as the young have the pleasure of "biting" it in the eating.

### IX. Month: 'Mesa (April).

'Mesa the ninth month of the year, whose congratulations commend it as:

'Mesa *tseleng*.

"Kindling fire by the road side".

The month earns to itself the name from the following words:

*Besa*, to kindle the fire, and,

*Besa* to roast.

Both these two meanings are the foundation of the name 'Mesa.

The following is the explanation of the reason as to how the month has been entitled 'Mesa from the first word *besa* "to kindle fire".

Owing to the *phokana-hlohoana* i. e. "the first cold" (frozen and cold dew of the mornings towards winter time) that has now begun to fall, so likewise the mornings are getting rather chilly.

As the *motsosi* (bird-scarer) goes along the road as usual, on his way to his garden at early dawn, he perceives that the foot-path is wet, and the grass tipped with drops of freezing dew. This dew is so chilly, and acutely penetrating, that his toe-ends and finger-tips would be half benumbed with the cold, before he can get at his post. This cold dew is called the *phokana-hlohoana*. The result is that he is constrained to "kindle a fire by the road side", to chafe his frozen hands, and warm his chill bare-feet. Indeed different fires are being kindled by the road sides by many of the bird-scarers who are, at this time of the morning, on their way to their gardens, for the purpose of scaring.

At this time, too, each *motsosi* has the *sekhono* of fire in his hand. A *sekhono* is the tooaneplant tightly interwoven together, in order to catch and preserve the fire, and is used as tinder. He has this on hand for immediate use, when urgently required.

The second signification from the next word *besa* "to roast" means the roasting of the fresh ripe mealies, and as the term says:

*Batsosi ba e besetsa ruri*,

"The bird-scarers roast it wholly and openly",

that is without fear.

It is worth the care, to mention that a little before now, when fresh ripe mealies were few, and only beginning to ripen, those lucky few, who, so early as then, had them in their gardens were not at liberty and freedom to roast them openly. At that time it was to be cooked or roasted in a hidden manner and place, far from being exposed to the eyes of anybody or even those of the next door neighbours, who may unfortunately still have their mealie-crop far behind. Occasionally, such a happy man, coming back from his garden, brings with him some fresh mealies, securely concealed under his blankets. After having carefully and covertly cooked and eaten them, the mealie-cobs and leaves are secretly hidden away, all for the sake of the *baloi* (evil-doers) who might envy this good luck, and cause some malignant harm to the fortunate man. Those whose crops unhappily are still far behind, are apt maliciously to envy the former's lot and do unto this fortunate man some evil.

But now at this time, since the fresh mealies are all ripe and too common everywhere, the bird-scarers can with freedom "roast it wholly, openly and without fear".

The pinch of famine that was, or could have ever been felt before, is now past and gone. At every hearth or cooking-place is the "free roasting of the mealies".

Another sense issuing from this same word *besa* (to roast) springs from the manner in which this roasting is now being carried out. The roaster is no longer particular about his mealies. It is no longer a novelty to him. He is so "careless" about his roasting. He neglects his mealies on the ashes. He even forgets all about it, while it is roasting on the fire. The roasted mealies thus neglected, of course get wholly burnt up and consumed on the fire. This roaster with contempt is spoken of in the following manner:

*O besetsa poone ruri.*

"Roasts his mealies too long".

Again, more than that when the mealies are well roasted, young boys and girls in mirth and pleasure, are noted by their sweet untainted mad-cap gambol, about the fields. They are known to pelt each other with the roasted mealies. A common exercise with them after the *phokana-hlohoana* has dried up.

The reasons just given and explained may seem to some as trifling, or containing little sense. But whereas they purely originate from unlearned people, and are traditionally handed down from one generation to another, they consequently seem and appear to be valuable, respectable, and maintainable, as a kind of *multum in parvo*, revealing "much" sensible ideas "in little" words.

Now for instance, the bright and jolly young *motsosi* up to the present went out early at dawn and before the break of day to his post, in frolicsome pranks skipping and bolting about, freely and energetically. Nothing on earth ever hindered him from going rapidly forward. But now it appears that he is sensitive, and is easily affected by the keen cold. This cold has

the effect of detaining, and of constraining him to seek for aid. He finds this aid, therefore, by beginning to "kindle the fire".

In the same way it is, with the "roasting of the mealies". The impressible susceptibility of the negligence, arises from the tendency to admit the fact that the mealies are now but too common everywhere.

So comically, has the month been granted the name '*Mesa*, and qualifications of '*Mesa tseleng*; whereas fires are for this expedient, sentimental, and particular reason "kindled by the road side."

### X. Month: *Motseanong* (May).

The tenth month comes in the name of *Motseanong*. Quite evidently it has no term either of qualification nor of compliment. The name so precisely discloses the whole secret of the sense:

*Motsea* means "a laugher". *Nong* sechoana as old sesuto word means "a bird".

Therefore the name *Motseanong* plainly means "bird-laugher".

At this time of the year the *mabele* crop is fully ripe, and consequently the now ripened *mabele* seems to laugh at the birds. Indeed the *mabele* has had bad and bitter times, to contend against the birds. Very happily now the grain is ripe, and too hard for the bird to peck out from the husk. The birds may alight on the *mabele* as much as they please, but there is no fear. The exultant bird-scarer is freed from his sollicitous cares.

As a matter of fact, almost or rather in every case a laugher when laughing, seems to show out his teeth. So it is the case with the joyous *mabele* crop. The hardy grain, so closely and firmly attached to the gum of the husk, but juttet out, shows as if it were teeth to laugh at the bird. The grain seems to laugh and mock at the bird as much as to say: "You can no longer do me any harm". And this is how the month has been so beneficially prized and rewarded by the fitting name of *Motseanong*, or bird-laugher.

At this time the *mabele* crop is quite thoroughly ripe, fit for reaping and consumption. But as a general rule and admitted principle, the *mabele* crop must wait for its reaping till after the crop has been frost-bitten. The reason for so doing may seem rather strange, but is, all the same, valid as well as rational.

As an undeniable truth, the *mabele* itself is the chief-medium of food for the Mosuto proper; and, as he says, "he eats it and drinks it". Good and substantial bread is made from it. Drinks of all kinds require more or less of it.

The *mochahlama*, a very sweet beer, is made from this *mabele*. So is the *leting* (light beer) as well as the *joala* (strong beer). This *joala* is very strong both as a food as well as an intoxicant, after a good quantity has been taken. This drink is not merely taken as a beverage, but also as food. Its qualities are as substantial to a Mosuto, as ordinary food. He can go a very long journey without naturally feeling himself empty, after having taken

some good draughts of it. Like any other article the *joala* taken moderately is good, but taken to excess injurious.

In earlier times only a few of the grown up men were known, and even were allowed, to take their seat, side by side, with the honourable and few renowned "old drinkers". This happy and respected group stayed alone in some snug quite quarter, either in the *khotla* (court), or in a hut. They were not to be molested, or in any way interfered with, by any of the "non-drinkers".

No young man could be known to taste, or even to have the least relish, for this substantial and fiery water. Children, young men, and men, were fed with bread and milk. Those who had the slightest desire for drinking, were satisfied by taking the sweet *mochahlama*. The *joala* itself was well used. Unfortunately however, latterly, this good use has been vilified and abused; inasmuch as the grog-blossomed young men are no longer to be counted with the fingers, but by numbers to a hundred.

But now, to turn back to our story, viz. that of the reaping of the *mabele* crop, the remark should be made, that, thus, the *mabele* being all for all, to the Mosuto, he needs to be very particular regarding its reaping.

In the first place, he therefore believes that he must wait, and delay its reaping until his crop has been frost-bitten. This will enable him to have a clear discernment among his grain. As it is the case with all crops in general: some do get ripe before, some after, and others behind. To make a clear distinction in the reaping of the *mabele* before they have been frost-bitten, would be a very painstaking task.

Then after the frost-biting, the stalks and ears of the *mabele* completely dry up. This drying up saves the unnecessary trouble of spreading and drying the grain in the sun before storing it up in the *sesiu* (a large granary basket). This basket holds from 5 to 8 or more skin-bags of *mabele*. A *basuto* skin-bag holds more than the ordinary English mind. The frostbitten grain is then hardened to its very centre, strongly compact, and still continues to abide in its size, but full-blown magnitude. This is the proper and pure *mabele* of the first-class.

The next class of the *mabele* is that which is called the *talane*. This *talane* is also solid and compact, but unsatisfactorily saturated. The grains are rather not too well replete. It might as well be called half ripe, and has less substance in it than the former. This discernment can only be accurately done by the perspicacity of a very careful woman. This is the *mabele* of the second class. This class is only used for making good tasty bread, and very palatable porridge. This pap has a savoury taste, and, like unto the porridge made from the *mabele* of the first class, is strongly recommended by women in confinement. However in any case, it is of no use at all as regards the sowing.

A third class separation is that of the *pulitsane*. This *pulitsane* also before the frost-biting, seemed as if the ears had some grains in them; but after all, they are now easily discerned as to be empty, but only husks containing no grain. The *pulitsane* is the grainless ears of the *mabele* crop. This class of the *mabele* is only used as food for cattle, but more especially for horses.

It is wholesome for horses, though not so beneficial as the ears of the *mabele* of the first class.

There is also a fourth class of the *mabele* and it is that of the *phori* (mildew). The mildew of the ripened *mabele* is called *phori* and *sekokotane* in its green state; and the mildew of the *poone* (maize) is called *sekokotane* in both cases.

Generally, the one side of the *mabele* ear has the *phori* (mildew) and the other has the ripe grain; and this is the *phori* proper. This class, also, has to be separated, thrashed out by the women, and winnowed in the usual way. Immediately these ripe grains are obtained and separated from the mildew, they are steeped water for the beer-making. This class of *mabele* also cannot be used for seed, as it still contains more or less mildew.

Needless to say that all these separatings and discernments are being entirely and purely conducted by the provident woman. Now to have uncontemplatively, and thoughtlessly, mixed up all these classes of the *mabele* together would count as a great pity; and would mean in the first place, to have grievously abused the food as well as the drink, likewise the seed for the ensuing spring.

Now this is the harvest time throughout, and fast we are gliding into the middle of winter.

Every woman with basket and sickle is busy reaping, assisted by a daughter, niece, or grand-daughter. The men, too, assist in the reaping. To reap this crop, only the ears or tops are plucked; and all classes of the *mabele* are plucked at the same time, without any distinction or reserve, packed into the basket as often and as much as required, and carried to the barn-floor. This barn-floor is generally situated in the centre or corner of the garden; and is the final place where all the separatings are to be executed.

Note therefore, that, whereas the crop is purely and thoroughly ripe, and as the ears are being tightly pressed into the basket (for safety sake), some grains are easily shaken off the ears, and drop into the basket. It will be the same thing again, when these ears are being thrown down in the barn-floor, from the basket; some, and not only a few grains are wont to come off the husk, and drop down to the floor.

These very particular dropping grains, thus freely shaken off the ears, into the basket, as well as in the barn-floor (before the actual thrashing has taken place) are of the greatest importance. They are considered as a liberal gift from the *balimo* (gods), who generously cause this dropping down of the grains. These sacred grains are always to be kept and heaped aside in the barn-floor, until the general thrashing and ingathering has taken place. They are to be ingathered separate by from the rest of the *mabele* of field; and should it come to pass, that they are insufficient for the quantity required, there shall be added to them some more of the pure *mabele* (of the first class) from the *sesiu* (grain large basket). With this additional *mabele* to the former and principal grains, the jocular woman is entrusted to brew a distinct and special *joala* (strong beer) called the *leoa* (falling or dropping).

This *joala* is known by the name *joala ba leoa* (beer of the *leoa*). It is exclusively appropriated for, and gratuitously to be gratefully given to, the *balimo* (gods) who are the supposed givers of the rich harvest. They must therefore in return be rendered back the "same gift" such as has been received from them, as a solemn token of thanksgiving, on their own behalf and names, but in the visible person of some living parent or substitute. Those generous but unseen givers are thanked with respect, gravity, and deep feelings of emotion, earnestly and without levity. With unfeigned honesty and sincerity, the "given-giver" on presenting the genuine drink to the present parent (substitute of the gods) liberally ejaculates:

*Pha-balimo re ya nae* (Sechoana)  
or, *Pha-balimo re ja le eena* (Sesuto).

The former expression which is from the sechoana dialect seems to have been the original and of common usage; whilst the latter, sesuto, at present is also commonly expressed.

*Pha-balimo* — an offer to the gods, as well as, an offerer (one who offers to the gods).

Hence the ejaculatory and fervent expression means:

- 1st "An offer to the gods we partake".
- 2nd "An offerer (who offers) to the gods we partake with him".

Both these senses actually apply, since in the first place: This offer offered up to the gods has to be liberally partaken with those who are present. Secondly: The offerer himself partakes this offering with the giver.

This *joala* (beer) of the *leoa* is the singular gift to the *balimo* (gods). The gods are one's deceased ancestors. A large earthenware pot full of this *joala* is designedly set aside in a nook or recess in the hut, and in the name of the intended god (in every case gods). It remains unstrained out; that is the husks of malt in it still remain unsifted. This *joala* is substantial, wholly, pure, untouched, and consequently inviolate.

Latter on, when it will be visionarily imagined, or believed, that the gods have had their satisfaction, and have drunk up the beer, it will therefore be strained out, and those ardent devotionalists who are present will "beg" this *joala* from the gods. It will be drunk up by them, one and all, liberally and freely, and must be wholly consumed on the same day. After having gained their satisfaction, as well as highly respected the gods, an enthusiastic formal thanksgiving is made to the particular deceased (gods), after which all may depart to their respective homes.

### XI. Month: *Phupjoane* (June).

*Phupjoane* is the month preceding the last, and it is the eleventh month of the twelve lunar months of the basuto year. The name is derived from the word *zupuha* (swelling underground); *phupjoane*, diminutive of the word *phupu*, means "beginning to swell".

This *Phupjoane* or "beginning to swell" refers to the bulb called *Senyarela-balemi* (looking slyly at the tiller). This bulb is so called from its beginning early to swell underground: as may be ascertained or discovered out by the early tiller.

The *boleme* or newly breaking up of land must in all cases be done much earlier than ordinary ploughing of fields. But because in former days, the tilling itself had to be done with the pick or hoe, the tiller was therefore necessitated to begin much earlier to break up his new *boleme*, for tillage.

For another reason he has to begin early so as to allow enough time for the turf to rot before he puts in his seeds.

The early tiller in going out to till his land is struck with surprise, on finding this bulb swelling up underground, and full of little life in it, as if it would "slyly peep" above the surface to see whether the tiller was coming, or considered it fit time to begin his tilling. The tiller seeing this bulb thus lively swelling up, deliberately considers it as a good time for the breaking up of his land for tillage; whereas sooner or later the seed also in like manner, would likely begin to swell up.

On the evening as he comes back from his laborious work, he relates the story to his fellow-citizens in the neighbourhood, as they are all seated in the *khotla*. He relates it in a humorous way tending to the ready compliance of the seed, were it even before long, to be put into the ground.

The story is listened with great interest, and with the usual contradictions; consequently there arises an endless wager. The next-day the tiller will bring home with him the bulb betted for, in order to receive the benefits of the bet.

No man could ever be deemed a true man who did not frequently visit the *khotla* and spend there a lengthy space of time. Indeed, more than that, he may be censured by some blunt words, or even by some of the terms such as: "he is no man", "no Mosuto", and above all, "he is jealous" (of his wife). A few more cold adjectives may also be added to some or other reproach to make it more keen. But the last named term is the most abusive that can be applied to the particular person in question. The term is reproachful as well as aggravating.

This month is well known to shepherds because at that time *Ho phungoa matobo kapa maboella* (opening of the *matobo* or *maboella*). These *matobo* or *maboella* are pasture grounds kept for winter, that is, certain spots of land exclusively set aside, where herds and flocks are strictly forbidden to graze upon during all the summer time; but will be for their own good in winter.

*Ho beha matobo* (the closing or setting aside of the *matobo*) begins to take place from the month of *Tsitoe* (December). The person acting as an overseer over the *matobo* is to be exceptionally chosen in the *khotla*, by the chief himself. Usually, headmen of the different kraals superintend the *maboella*. This person, acting for, and in the name of the chief, is not to be in any way interfered with, regarding his responsibility over the *maboella*. He is at full liberty to soundly beat any shepherd-boy whom he may in any way find interfering with his flocks, in his little possession of land.



Usually these selected spots for the *matobo* or *maboella* are such as contain in them some grass of importance, such as, the *lehlaka* (reeds), *gokoa* (long thatch-grass), *mohlomo* (thin thatching), *moli* (for making ropes), *loli* (rushes) for ropes, hats, baskets etc., or *moru* (little bush of trees for huts and fuel).

Now regarding the breaking up of the ground for tillage, this may therefore be done two months previous to the sowing; for we are now in the middle of our winter, when it is very cold and snowy. In this way the life-impregnated bulb seems to invite the tiller to hasten his tilling.

## XII. Month: *Phuphu* (July).

Ultimately and last of all totters the aged *Phuphu*. It is a year or the twelfth month of this Lunar year, from the time we began fostering the first born viz. the "outrageous *Phato*" (August). Therefore, being so dull and peevish with the ice and frost, this month is mute, without compliment jocular words of praise.

*Phupu* means *Fupuha* or "bulging out" not merely of bulbs underground, but of the stems of some hardy plants.

The stems and leaves of some of the earlier plants, such as the *shoeshoe*, *qeeqoe*, *sehalahala* or *leholo*, are noted when found in a sheltered side, to be expanding, enlarging and bulging. The *shoeshoe* may at times even be found with new blossoms.

The *shoeshoe* is that herb out of whose leaves the only loin-dress for young girls is composed, and made solely from its fibres. These fibres are woven into long thin threads, and are to form a shredded fringed girdle, worn as a covering for grown-up girls, from waist, say about 5½ inches in length downwards, and reaches far high above the knees. This dress complete is called the *thethana* formerly *tulu*, and comprises the sole dress for young girls. For still younger girls this dress is considered valuable in case of fire-accident — which is common to children. Long dresses are easily liable to catch fire, owing to childish heedlessness, and mischief. The women too when picking up this herb, may also know and tell what month it is.

Lastly, therefore, because this bulging of the earlier plants is noted and visible everywhere, consequently for this reason all combines to prove that the present is truly the month of *Phupu*,

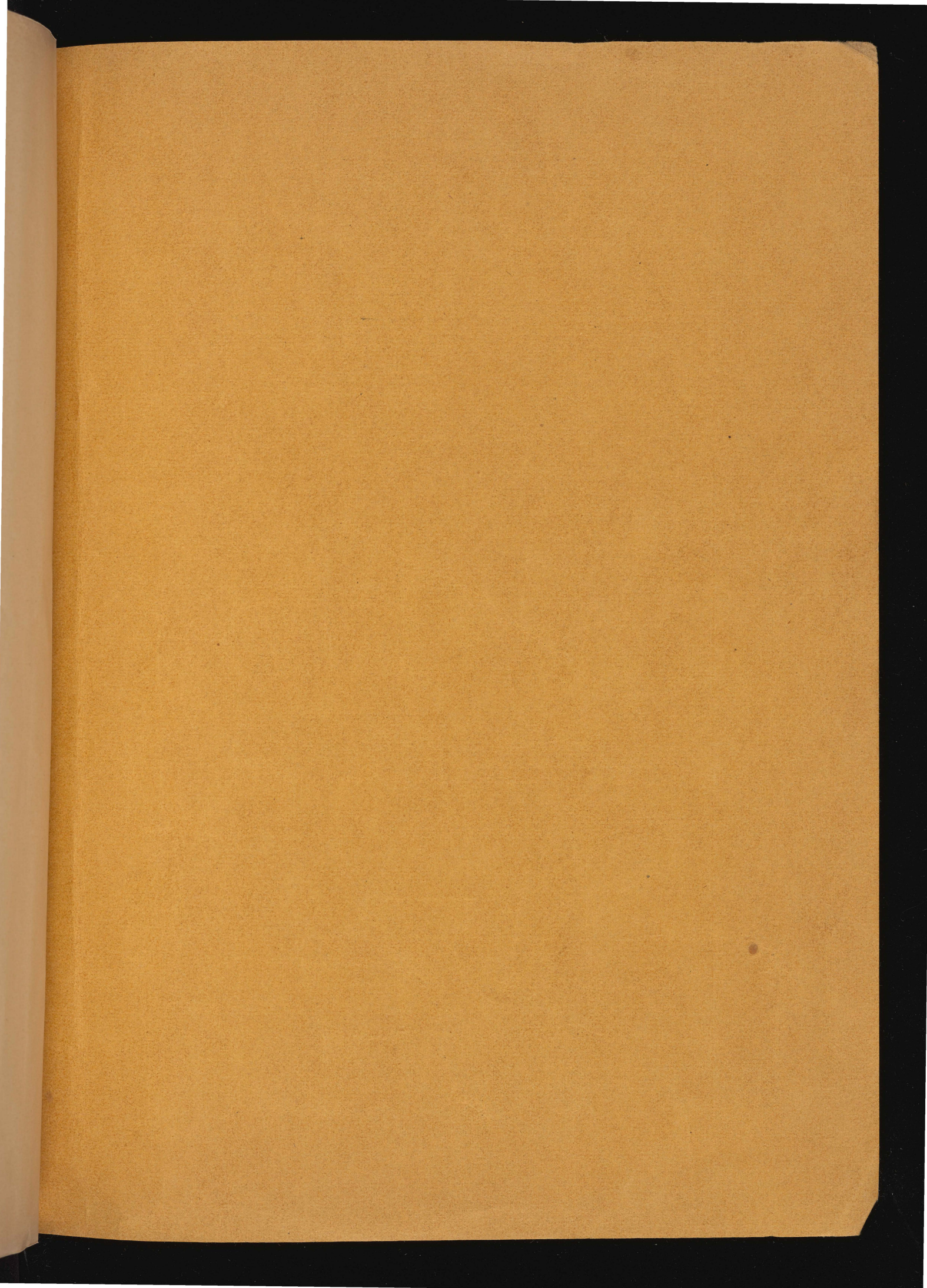
"Bulging of plants".

Bulging out towards the termination of the Old year, as if preparing to wake again afresh, when later they will brandish their freedom with their leaves, of green hue, after they have greeted their New Year the "Sturdy outrageous *Phato*" (August), which is the

"Reciprocal *Basuto* Happy New Year".



1254



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