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# L.T. Marole: A Forgotten Pioneer in Tshivenda Lexicography\*

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**Abstract:** L.T. Marole is a pioneer in Tshivenda lexicography. He is especially known for the compilation of word lists and phrase books. Through his production of these lexicographic works, Marole has preserved some Tshivenda terminology which is now regarded as obsolete; for example, terminology regarding names of animals, parts of the body, kinship relations and sicknesses. This type of terminology could be useful to the present younger generation. Readers may learn much about Tshivenda culture from Marole's works. However, his works have not received recognition from Vhavana dictionary users and compilers. The public is largely unaware of his works. This article aims at making the public aware of Marole's contribution to the development of Tshivenda lexicography, emphasising that this contribution should not be ignored as being insignificant.

**Keywords:** LEXICOGRAPHY, TRANSLATING DICTIONARY, BILINGUAL DICTIONARY, LINGUISTICS, TERMINOLOGY, LEXICAL ENTRY, EQUIVALENT, TRANSLATOR, CULTURE, KINSHIP TERMS, ORTHOGRAPHY, CONTEXT, DATABASE, DIALECT

**Opsomming:** L.T. Marole: 'n Vergete pionier in Tshivendaleksikografie.

L.T. Marole is 'n baanbreker op die gebied van Tshivendaleksikografie. Hy is veral bekend vir die samestelling van woordelyste en taalgidse. Deur sy produksie van hierdie leksikografiese werke, het Marole sekere Tshivendaterme wat nou as verouderd beskou word, bewaar; byvoorbeeld, terminologie betreffende die name van diere, liggaamsdele, verwantskapsbetrekkinge en siektes. Hierdie soort terminologie sou nuttig kon wees vir die huidige jonger geslag. Lesers kan baie omtrent die Tshivendakultuur uit Marole se werke leer. Sy werke het egter nie erkenning gekry van Vhavenda woordeboekgebruikers en -samestellers nie. Die publiek is grootliks onbewus van sy werke. Hierdie artikel beoog om die publiek bewus te maak van Marole se bydrae tot die ontwikkeling van Tshivendaleksikografie deur te beklemtoon dat hierdie bydrae nie as onbelangrik geïgnoreer behoort te word nie.

**Slutelwoorde:** LEKSIKOGRAFIE, VERTALENDE WOORDEBOEK, TWEETALIGE WOORDEBOEK, LINGUISTIEK, TERMINOLOGIE, LEKSIKALE INSKRYWING, EKWIVALENT, VERTALER, KULTUUR, VERWANTSKAPSTERME, ORTOGRAFIE, KONTEKS, DATABASIS, DIALEK

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## Introduction

Since spoken Tshivenda was reduced to writing by the Berlin missionaries in the late nineteenth century, little has been achieved in the field of Tshivenda lexicography. Mawela (1999: 151) writes: 'At present there are only a few dictionaries, all of them translating dictionaries ...' The basic aim of a translating dictionary is to coordinate lexical units of one language with those units of another language which are equivalent in their lexical meaning (Zgusta 1971). At the time of the writing of these word lists and phrase books, the main need of missionaries, students and other foreign speakers was to learn Tshivenda. This is emphasised by Wentzel and Muloiwa (1982) in their preface comment on the purpose of their *Improved Trilingual Dictionary*:

The original edition of the Trilingual Dictionary was the result of the need to provide those students who follow the Special Course in Venda with a practical list. After publication it was found, however, that the interest in and need for such a work was much wider than anticipated and that the basic need pointed towards a small practical dictionary.

The special course referred to is directed mainly at speakers of Tshivenda as a second language. Translational dictionaries are important in the development of languages, especially the indigenous languages of the Republic of South Africa, as these languages come into contact with different cultures. As a result of the increase in international interaction, more and more people are beginning to realize that bilingual dictionaries have become necessary economically, intellectually and culturally (Al-Kasimi 1983).

Mathivha (1972: 104) has this to say about the development of Tshivenda lexicography:

The development of dictionaries in the Venda language was started by Rev. E. Gottschling between 1897 and 1903 by making a collection of words written on ruled pages. This dictionary, however, has never been published.

The first linguists who made a contribution to Tshivenda lexicography were Th. and P. Schwelnus who published Tshivenda–German word lists in 1904 and 1918, the first dealing with Tshivenda verbs only. However, it was not before 1932 that L.T. Marole's first English–Tshivenda phrase book was published, followed in 1936 by an English–Tshivenda word list, co-compiled with F.J. de Gama. Shortly afterwards, in 1937, N.J. van Warmelo's Tshivenda–English dictionary appeared. In 1954, the third edition of Marole and De Gama's English–Tshivenda vocabulary was published. This was followed in 1955 by Marole's two phrase books in English–Tshivenda and Afrikaans–Tshivenda. In 1958, under the editorship of Van Warmelo, a Tshivenda terminology for school use appeared. A Tshivenda terminology and spelling list was published in 1962 by the then Department of Bantu Education. The years 1976 and 1982 saw the publication of the first and revised editions of P.J. Wentzel and T.W.

Muloiwa's trilingual dictionary: Tshivenda–Afrikaans–English. A revised Tshivenda terminology and orthography by the later Department of Education and Training appeared in 1980. Other Tshivenda dictionaries published during the nineteen-eighties were those by M.C. Neluvhalani (1987) and N.J. van Warmelo (1989). One of K.B. Harthorne's dictionaries of basic English which appeared in 1984 contains an English–Tshivenda word list. Only in 2006, the Tshivenda National Lexicography Unit published its *Thalusamaipfi*. Recently the Department of Arts and Culture has also produced a few terminology lists for specific subjects. Although some of these lexicographers were linguists, many of them had not been trained lexicographers. They became involved in lexicography out of interest. As can be seen from this summary of Tshivenda lexicographic publications, L.T. Marole was a pioneering lexicographer of Tshivenda. The aim of this article is therefore to highlight Marole's contribution to the development of Tshivenda lexicography as it has not received the recognition it deserves.

### **L.T. Marole's contribution to Tshivenda lexicography**

L.T. Marole was the first Muvenda to publish a lexicographic work in Tshivenda. Up to 1955, four lexicographic works had been produced by Marole, i.e. *Phrase Book for English and Venda* (1932), *English–Tshivenda Vocabulary* (1936) which he co-compiled with F.J. de Gama and of which the third edition *English–Venda Vocabulary* appeared in 1954, *Phindulano: English–Venda Phrase Book* (1955) and *Afrikaans–Venda Vocabulary and Phrase Book* (1955). Though the date of publication of *Phindulano* does not appear in the book, according to Mathivha (1972), it was published in 1955 because it is claimed that it was published a year after *English–Venda Vocabulary*. Prof. D. Ziervogel received it as a complimentary copy in 1956. These lexicographic books are small in size but very valuable to foreign speakers who want to learn Tshivenda, and also to Vhavenda who intend to learn English and Afrikaans. They serve as a database of Tshivenda terminology. Marole's work is important because it preserves Tshivenda terminology not regularly used by the Vhavenda today. But although Marole has preserved the Tshivenda vocabulary and pioneered Tshivenda lexicography, he is hardly mentioned by Vhavenda lexicographers in their discussions of lexicographic matters. Dictionary users hardly use his works in their daily reference to dictionaries because they are unknown and unavailable. Even students of lexicography rarely mention his works in their research. Efforts should be made to make these lexicographic works available and familiar to the public again.

Marole was encouraged by the Berlin missionaries to write the *Phrase Book for English and Venda* which was meant for foreign language speakers, especially missionaries who wanted to learn Tshivenda at that time. Entries in the translational dictionary are arranged according to themes, i.e. parts of the body, wild animals, domestic animals, prepositions, seasons of the year, relation-

ships, sickness, housework, and interrogative pronouns. Grouping lexical entries according to themes is an effective way of teaching foreigners the language as learners are able to concentrate on one aspect of the language at a time.

At present, this type of dictionary could be useful to Vhavenda youth, especially those who live in urban areas and know little about Tshivenda names of animals, both wild and domestic; kinship relations in Tshivenda; Tshivenda names for various diseases, names of different types of housework and Tshivenda names for different parts of the body. Mathivha (1972: 105) says that the inclusion of names of plants and insects is a very important contribution to Tshivenda since some of these plants and animals are gradually disappearing. In the following paragraphs, a few examples illustrating the importance of Marole's lexicographic works in the preservation of Tshivenda terminology are given and discussed.

Few young Vhavenda know what the Tshivenda equivalent for **mouth** is. If one asks a Muvenda youth to provide the Tshivenda word for **mouth**, one may receive the answer *mulomo*. According to Marole (1932: 3), the Tshivenda equivalent of **mouth** is *hanwani*, and **lips** are *milomo*. One can speak of *mulomo wa n̄tha*, referring to the upper lip, and *mulomo wa fhasi*, referring to the lower lip. Again, modern young Vhavenda refer to both leg and foot as *mulenzhe*. Marole differentiates between these two parts of the body as *mulenzhe* and *lunayo* respectively. The names of animals such as **leopard**, **tiger** and **tiger-cat/serval** are confusing to many Vhavenda. However, Marole differentiates between them. In Tshivenda, according to Marole (1932), a leopard is *nngwe*, a tiger is *lugwen̄tofu*, and a tigercat/serval is *didingwe*. Young Vhavenda are not confused by the English terminology, being well aware of the corresponding English names. Few Vhavenda know what **breakfast** is in Tshivenda. A possible answer they might give is a phrase such as *zwiliwa zwa matsheloni* (morning food). Marole provides *vhuragane* as the Tshivenda equivalent of **breakfast**. When terms such as **queen** are to be translated, it is difficult to find an equivalent in Tshivenda. Sometimes translators may go to the extent of translating by explanation, whereas Marole provides an equivalent to **queen**, *Vhomakhadzi*. This is not an ordinary *makhadzi* (aunt). The honorific prefix *Vho-* indicates that it is a *makhadzi* possessing power.

In addition to enabling users of these lists to find the Tshivenda terms for the above-mentioned concepts, they will also learn about the culture of the Vhavenda. In Tshivenda culture, **brother** is denoted by two words, i.e. *murathu* and *mukomana*. Marole is able to distinguish between these by indicating that **younger brother** is *murathu*, and **elder brother** *mukomana*. If one asks a child how he/she is related to his/her brother, one may be surprised to learn that the child will answer **uncle**. Vhavenda children do not fully understand what the concepts **aunt**, **uncle**, **cousin**, etc. mean in Tshivenda. They attach English meanings to these terms, which in many instances are different from those in Tshivenda. Marole has successfully dealt with kinship relations in Tshivenda in

his lexicographic works which could be of great assistance in solving relational problems.

Some of the entries are illustrated by phrases at the end of a particular theme. Learners are shown how to use the entry words in sentences. For example (Marole 1932: 12):

My father is seriously ill. *Khotsi yanga ulwala nga maanḁa.*  
 What with? *Uvhulawa ngani?*  
 With coughing and headache. *Ndi mphigela na fhoho.*

In the list of the entries covering sicknesses, the equivalents of **coughing** and **headache** are provided as *uhotola* and *fhoho i a rema* respectively. In some cases, word-divisions are incorrect. For example, the sentence *Khotsi yanga ulwala nga maanḁa* should read *Khotsi anga u lwala nga maanḁa*. This is supported by Mathivha (1972: 106) who says: 'The Venda used in this book does not conform to the accepted Venda orthography and word-division.' However, a learner learns how to use the entries in sentences. One of the most important characteristics which helps dictionary users to understand lexical items is context. Dictionaries provide example sentences or phrases to illustrate meaning, grammar or usage. According to Cowie (1989: 57), illustrative examples may serve one or more of the following purposes: to supplement information in a definition; to show the entry word in context; to distinguish one meaning from another; to illustrate grammatical patterns; to show other typical collocations; and to indicate appropriate registers or stylistic levels.

*Phindulano: English–Venda Phrase Book* consists of two parts, i.e. a translation of phrases and a bilingual glossary. The translation section includes themes such as salutation, walking and riding, correspondence, weather conditions, buying and selling, hunger and thirst, getting up in the morning, coming home to sleep, about Vhaventḁa, going to the chief's place, idioms, teaching, etc. From these, learners not only acquire the meaning of different phrases in Tshiventḁa, but they also learn about the life of the Vhaventḁa. For example (Marole 1955: 16):

*In former times, how did the Bawenda produce light, when they had no candles nor lamps?* Nḁa kale kaleni Vhaventḁa vhovha vha tshi vho netshela nga mini unga makhandela na malamba vhovha vhasina?

*They used dry tambookies grass for light.* Vha shumisa hatsi ha madadasenga uita luvhone.

A dictionary user learns how the Vhaventḁa of the past used to make light in their houses. As in the *Phrase Book for English and Venda*, entries in the bilingual glossary are arranged according to themes, e.g. wild animals, birds and domestic animals. *Phindulano: English–Venda Phrase Book* could be of great help to Vhaventḁa youth who wish to acquire the correct vocabulary regarding the names of wild animals, birds and domestic animals.

The *English–Venda Vocabulary* is Marole's greatest contribution to the development of Tshivenda lexicography. This dictionary was co-compiled with F.J. de Gama. Unlike Marole's other lexicographic works, which are translational in nature, this dictionary provides parts of speech in its main entries. The following are some of the entries found in the dictionary (Marole 1954: 4):

- Adversary** (n.) swina, muhanedzi  
**Adversity** (n.) tsiku, vhushayi, vhuṭungu  
**Advice** (n.) ngeletshedzo  
**Advise** (v.) u eletshedza  
**Advocate** (n.) muimeleli, muambeli

The letters *n.* and *v.* indicate noun and verb respectively. Dictionary users are therefore in a position to learn the parts of speech of the lexical entries. In some instances, multiple equivalents have been provided for one entry as illustrated by the following examples (Marole 1954: 13, 15 and 18 respectively):

- Dear** (adj.) tshiduraho, (n.) mufunwa  
**Delegate** (v.) uruma, (n.) muḍinda  
**Elect** (v.) ukhetha, (n.) mukhethwa

The provision of multiple equivalents is of great assistance to dictionary users in discriminating between various meanings of words.

Tshivenda consists of more than one dialect, with Tshiphani as the standard dialect. Almost all dialects are catered for in Marole and De Gama's dictionary. A dictionary should not concentrate on standard language only; all dialects of the language should be included. For example (Marole 1954: 63):

- Sugar-cane** (n.) mphwe, mwovha

**Sugar-cane** is *mphwe* in Tshiphani, whereas in the dialect Tshiilafuri it is known as *mwovha*. Unlike Marole's other lexicographic works, these entries are not arranged according to themes, but alphabetically, following the style employed in modern lexicography.

Marole not only produced lexicographic works for English speakers who wanted to learn Tshivenda: Afrikaans-speaking users have also been catered for. In 1955, he produced *Afrikaans–Venda: Vocabulary and Phrase Book*. This contribution consists of two parts, i.e. a translation of phrases and a bilingual glossary. The entries have been arranged alphabetically. Days of the week, months of the year, and numbers are also included. Regarding numbers, he has used the traditional method of counting which is presently used by uneducated people living in rural villages. The following is an example of numbers as provided by Marole (1955: 11):

- 6    **ses**    Nṭhanu na nthihi  
7    **sewe**    Nṭhanu na mbili

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8	<b>ag</b>	Nṭhanu na ntharu
9	<b>nege</b>	Nṭhanu na ṛa
11	<b>elf</b>	Fumi na nthihi

According to educated people, *ses*, *sewe*, *ag*, *nege* and *elf* are known in Tshivenda as *rathi*, *sumbe*, *malo*, *ṭahe* and *fumithihi* respectively. The modern method of counting, which seems to be economical regarding space and time, is not used by ordinary Vhavaṇḁ because it is difficult to understand. For example, *rathi* (*ses*) is a coined numeral derived from the verb stem *-ratha*, similar to Sesotho sa Leboa *tshela*, both of which means *step over*. When one counts using the fingers, one will count the number *six* by stepping over to the other hand. However, the traditional way of counting is not economical, but simpler to understand. For example, counting the number *ses* (*six*), one would say *five and one* (*nṭhanu na nthihi*) as shown in the examples given above. Vhavaṇḁ youth should be exposed to this type of counting rather than using the coined expressions.

### Conclusion

Marole's lexicographic work is not perfect. There are many errors in spelling and word-division. However, Marole's lexicographic products should not simply be forgotten as they are valuable both for modern lexicographers as well as learners of Tshivenda. Lexicographers should use works such as these as sources when compiling their dictionaries. Learners, especially the youth, will be exposed to quality vocabulary which is presently being neglected in favour of borrowings from other languages such as English.

N.J. van Warmelo's dictionary, *Tshivenda-English Dictionary*, published in 1937, was revised with the help of W.M.D. Phophi and published as *Venda Dictionary: Tshivenda-English* in 1989. Wentzel and Muloiwa's dictionary, *Trilingual Elementary Dictionary: Venda-Afrikaans-English*, published in 1972, was revised by the authors and published as *Improved Trilingual Dictionary: Venda-Afrikaans-English* in 1982. It may be possible to revise Marole's lexicographic works in a similar manner in order to preserve them and encourage their use by the greater public.

Marole's works could further form a base from which different types of dictionaries could be produced, for example, a dictionary of parts of the body, a dictionary of animals (both domestic and wild), a dictionary of idioms, a dictionary for tourists, etc. Dictionaries of this nature could prove useful for the youth as well.

It is therefore strongly recommended that an initiative is taken in revising Marole's lexicographic works. Marole never received any financial support from the government or any other private organization, yet he produced excellent work which is an asset to the Tshivenda language.

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