

# **Decolonial Literary Practice in Lesotho: The Work of Ba re e ne re Literature Festival**

**By Lineo Segoete**

## **Abstract (250 words)**

This article seeks to explore the historical construction of literary infrastructure established in and connected to Lesotho. Building on an analysis of Sesotho language orthography by Dr. Litšepiso Matlosa, we recall the colonial genesis of written Sesotho in the 19th century by Swiss-French Christian missionaries. This missionary influence has been instrumental in shaping literary culture in Lesotho and as a result, Lesotho's written Sesotho remains embedded with orthographic inconsistency that stemmed from missionary misperceptions of the language's phonology.

In Sesotho oral tradition, a storyteller begins their tale by uttering the words, "Ba re e ne e re...", to which their audience responds, "Qoi!". Through such a call and response, these parties enter into dialogue. Through the ensuing dialogues, the Ba re e ne re Literature Festival has since served as a creative outlet and knowledge exchange for Basotho. Responding to the needs of Lesotho's literary landscape, we have expanded our reach through additional creative interventions rooted in decolonial theory including; critical writing workshops, spelling bees, short story publishing and an innovative Sesotho dictionary project. Furthermore, engaging in arts education research in conversation with peers within the network Another Roadmap School has greatly deepened and informed our creative practice. I will argue that through reflexive praxis, the Ba re e ne re Literature Festival aims to unlink literary culture in Lesotho from colonial institutions and practices by cultivating a generation of storytellers, readers and cultural players who are in control of their narratives and further enhance the literary infrastructure in Lesotho.