

T.J. Kriel (original compiler), D.J. Prinsloo and B.P. Sathekge (compilers — revised edition). *Popular Northern Sotho Dictionary*. 1997. 335 pp. ISBN 1 86890 001 0. Cape Town: Pharos. Price R37,95.

Preface

The compilers of this new edition have successfully highlighted the important additions to the last edition of the dictionary. It is important to inform prospective users about new information. It is also a marketing strategy to announce the contents of a new product in both the preface and at the back of the cover page, as is the case with this dictionary. This information includes:

- 3 000 new words added
- extensively revised new edition
- look up words directly — no knowledge of grammatical rules presupposed
- revised spelling

With the inclusion of new commonly used words, a few less commonly used ones have been dropped, for example kaffir-corn (lebele, mabele(thoro)), kaffir-tree (mmale, mokhungwane), and Afrika-Gare (Central Africa).

Another important addition is the explanatory notes in the preface on the use of the verbs *thuše*, *thušê* with the negative formatives *ga/sa/se*. This information provides a good guide to second language learners on the usage of the given words.

The use of the circumflex on the low vowels is another major innovation by the compilers. The circumflex serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it assists the dictionary user with the correct pronunciation of words, and secondly, it reduces ambiguity in homonyms, for example: *seroto* (basket, measure, yield, price), and *serôtô* (industrious person, diligent person). The compilers should have highlighted this in the preface.

Structure

The dictionary has a simple structure. The headword appears in bold print. Entries are stem-based and are arranged in alphabetic order, which allows direct look-up. The stem-base arrangement is extremely user-friendly, since no knowledge of grammatical rules is presupposed.

Omissions

The compilers have omitted one important convention, *viz.* that of specifying the target user of the dictionary. This information normally appears in the

preface. It immediately helps the prospective user to decide whether or not the dictionary will provide the information he/she is looking for.

Another omission is the translation equivalent of the word *ramelamo* on page 134.

Inconsistencies

It is important for compilers to maintain consistency throughout in the treatment of lemmas and the presentation of information. This helps to build confidence in the dictionary user concerning the reliability of the information provided in the dictionary. Any deviations which may compromise consistency should be explained in the front matter.

In this dictionary the use of the locative suffix *-ng* and the verbal relative suffix *-go* is inconsistent. The suffix *-ng* has been used with nouns like *monyakong* (in the doorway), *mminong* (in the song/dance), *pelong* (in the heart), but not with *letamo* (dam), *leswafo* (lung), *kgara* (chest, breast), etc.

Likewise, the suffix *-go* has been used with verbs like *mphilego* (who gave me), *ngwadilego* (who is writing/drawing), *kgethago* (who chooses/ elects/picks), but not with *biditše* (has called, named), *ngwala* (write/draw), *bêrêka* (to work), etc.

In the above instances no explanation is given for choosing certain words and excluding similar others that can be used with these suffixes.

The inclusion of *who* in the translation equivalents of words with the suffix *-go* above is not clear. There exists no relationship between *who* and *-go*.

Conclusion

On the whole, this is a good, user-friendly dictionary which contains current words. It could be used by everyone — young and adult, learners and translators — who have an interest in the understanding and use of both Northern Sotho and English.

It is portable and will fit into one's pocket, which is particularly useful for those travelling and for quick reference.

The spelling used conforms to the rules as laid down in the last edition of the *Northern Sotho Terminology and Orthography* of 1988.

Kwena J. Mashamaite
Department of Northern Sotho
University of the North
Private Bag X1106
Sovenga
Republic of South Africa