

BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Dissertation

**“WISDOM DOES NOT LIVE IN ONE HOUSE”: COMPILING ENVIRONMENTAL  
KNOWLEDGE IN LESOTHO, SOUTHERN AFRICA, C.1880-1965**

By

**CHRISTOPHER R. CONZ**

B.S., University of Hartford, 1999  
M.Ed., University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2004  
M.A., Boston University, 2013

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

2017

ProQuest Number:10267447

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10267447

Published by ProQuest LLC (2017). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

© Copyright by  
CHRISTOPHER R. CONZ  
2017

Approved by

First Reader

---

James C. McCann, Ph.D.  
Professor of History

Second Reader

---

Diana Wylie, Ph.D.  
Professor of History

Third Reader

---

Joanna Davidson, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Anthropology

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This dissertation was possible only because of others to whom I owe tremendous gratitude. A Fulbright Student Grant and a Graduate Research Abroad Fellowship from Boston University funded my research in 2014-2015. My two homes at Boston University, the Department of History and the African Studies Center and Library, provided me with the intellectual space for sharing my work with graduate students and faculty. My advisor James McCann offered his insight on African environmental history as well as the moral support necessary for seeing this project to completion. Diana Wylie steered me through the labyrinths of southern African studies, encouraging me to pose new questions.

To help strengthen the transnational dimensions of this work, Sarah Phillips guided me in studies of American agricultural and environmental history. Anthropologist Joanna Davidson gave pertinent advice for my fieldwork and writing. Peter Quella of the African Studies Center, with his expertise on Lesotho's language and culture, provided both logistical and academic support. As a mentor and friend, Adam Kuper commented on drafts and nudged me along. John Gay gave generously of his time and of his deep knowledge of Lesotho. As colleagues, John Aerni-Flessner and Sam Severson discussed the depths of Lesotho's past with me. There were many others who commented on drafts, especially those in HI 900 at BU, the Walter Rodney Seminar at BU, the North Eastern Workshops on Southern Africa, the Workshop on the History of Environment, Agriculture, Technology, and Science, and the African Environments & their Populations workshop at Georgetown University.

In the archive and university settings in Lesotho I enjoyed strong support. At the Morija Museum & Archives, Stephen Gill provided consultation, expertise, and friendship. David Ambrose, the sage of all things Lesotho, gave his time generously at his home in Ladybrand. At the National University of Lesotho, Motlatsi Thabane of the Department of Historical Studies encouraged me in my research interests. In the Department of African Languages and Literature, Lehlohonolo Phafoli and Madira Thetso instructed me in Sesotho language. 'Me Madira welcomed me into her home and answered my many questions. At the NUL archives Sekhonyana Molapo was most helpful. At Our Lady's House in Roma, the resident brothers and sisters treated me as family, making my time there comfortable, even in winter. Emmanuel Ntsekhe spoke of agriculture with his keen humor. Father Abel Phohlo shared his knowledge of history and culture, also assisting with translations. Soka Sechele, a friend and fellow teacher, helped with translating and transcribing my oral interviews.

For my rural fieldwork, I am indebted to the people of Ha Makhaola, where I lived as a Peace Corps Volunteer and where I did research for this project. The village residents, along with my former colleagues at Tsoelike Secondary School, taught me important lessons. Special thanks to Mokhafisi Kena, who was an exceptional friend, mentor, and oral historian until his death in 2016. Kena's family, too, welcomed me in Lesotho and in South Africa. Maletepata Makhaola provided a glimpse into the world of chiefs. While visiting in 2012 I asked her permission to live in the village again for research. She responded simply: *ke haeno* (it's your home).

Lebuajoang Lerotholi, Clement Shata, and Tumisang Khalala, in various ways, taught me about the lives of Basotho farmers and workers. Phoka Mohapi helped me to sharpen my interview questions into local Sesotho. I thank all my interviewees for sharing their time and stories with me. I am most grateful to the Ramatseka family with whom I lived as a Peace Corps Volunteer and again as a researcher. 'Me Mapoloko Ramatseka, the mother of the house, opened my eyes to Basotho women's lives. Her daughters Maleshoane and Matseliso looked after me like a brother. Sadly, Maleshoane passed away during my research in 2015 and 'Me Mapoloko died shortly after I returned to Boston. *Robalang ka khotso bo-'me, ke lebohile.*

Finally, no project that requires such time, energy, and persistence would be possible without support from family. My mother Patricia Conz has continued to give her unwavering support for all that I do in life. My two big brothers have also encouraged me along this path. The intellectual and moral support from my brother Brian Conz, a cultural geographer, has been essential. Indeed, the work ethic and life wisdom that we learned from our late father guides me always. Undoubtedly, I owe the most gratitude to my wife and best friend, Christina Balch, for all of her patience, love, and listening during this process. *Kea leboha mokopu oa ka!*

All of these people have contributed immensely to this dissertation, yet they bear no responsibility for its weaknesses. Any shortcomings belong to me alone.

**“WISDOM DOES NOT LIVE IN ONE HOUSE”: COMPILING ENVIRONMENTAL  
KNOWLEDGE IN LESOTHO, SOUTHERN AFRICA, C.1880-1965**

**CHRISTOPHER R. CONZ**

Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2017

Major Professor: James C. McCann, Professor of History

**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation reconstructs a history of the greater Qacha’s Nek district of Lesotho, southern Africa from 1880 when farmers first settled the area, until 1965 on the eve of independence from Great Britain. This place-based study speaks to broader questions. How have people incorporated new and often foreign ideas into existing beliefs and practices? How did a person’s social position affect how they interacted with new ideas? How have people applied knowledge to make and remake environments such as in gardens and fields? This study is based on field research in Lesotho, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. The author examined archival materials including colonial records, agricultural reports and surveys, national council proceedings, and vernacular newspapers. During four months of rural fieldwork in Lesotho the author collected oral histories, took photographs, and participated in village life.

The approach focuses on colonial government interventions into agriculture and pastoralism. These interventions serve as sites for examining historical changes in how Basotho people engaged with the non-human world. In so doing, the study makes three main interventions. First, the claims are situated within scholarly



conversations about local knowledge, science, and environment under colonialism. Second, the stories of chiefs, farmers, and government employees told here extend the literature on Lesotho's political and economic history by highlighting the nuance of local politics, ecology, and agency. Finally, to contribute to the environmental historiography on Africa and rural places in general, the study probes the interplay of culture and nature. To do this, it narrates how people deployed eclectic knowledge to build, rebuild, and redefine environments.

The dissertation argues that the compilation of environmental knowledge must be understood as a historical process that encapsulates the meanings that people have imbued the landscape with, for example, by building homesteads, along with how people have understood the landscape as a system of resources to be used economically for subsistence and market purposes. These aspects of knowing are part of a single process that has unfolded, and continues to unfold, along a temporal trajectory that has varied across different social groups, such as men and women and chiefs and commoners.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
ABSTRACT .....	vii
LIST OF MAPS & FIGURES .....	xii
ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiv
GLOSSARY OF SELECTED SESOTHO WORDS .....	xvi
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Origins of the Project .....	1
Scholarly Contributions .....	4
Methodology, Organization, and Sources.....	16
1. SETTLING THE MALOTI: ECOLOGY, POLITICS, AND THE MAKING OF QACHA'S NEK, 1870s-1895 .....	22
1.1 - Introduction.....	22
1.2 - An Environmental Overview of the Maloti .....	31
1.3 - Cultural Interface amongst Baroa, Baphuthi, and 'Basotho' .....	44
1.4 - Cultural Institutions of the New Highlanders .....	58
1.5 - The Making of Qacha's Nek: Pioneers, Politics, and Colonialism.....	68
1.6 - Conclusion .....	96
2. FIGHTING RINDERPEST: CHIEFS, BORDER FENCES, AND SHIFTING VETERINARY KNOWLEDGE, 1896-1902 .....	98
2.1 - Introduction.....	98
2.2 - The Politics of Prevention on the Eve of Rinderpest .....	103
2.3 - Confronting Rinderpest and the Messiness of Knowledge Circulation .....	137
2.4 - Conclusion .....	152

3. URGING THE PEOPLE TO CLEAN UP THEIR COUNTRY: PEOPLE, SHEEP, AND PSOROPTES, C. 1900-1930s .....	154
3.1 - Introduction.....	154
3.2 - Sheep, Culture, and History .....	158
3.3 - The Political Ecology of Wool in Lesotho .....	168
3.4 - Eliminating Psoroptes in South Africa and Lesotho .....	175
3.5 - Knowledge and Work in Eradicating Burweed .....	192
3.6 - Conclusion .....	205
4. ORIGINS AND PATHWAYS OF LESOTHO'S AGRICULTURAL DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMS, C. 1924-1960 .....	208
4.1 - Introduction.....	208
4.2 - Lesotho, South Africa, and Agricultural Knowledge in the Early 1900s .....	213
4.3 - Priorities and Approaches in Demonstration Work .....	231
4.4 - Participants and Pathways in Knowledge Circulation .....	244
4.5 - Conclusion .....	260
5. RETHINKING SOIL CONSERVATION IN COLONIAL LESOTHO, C. 1903-1956 .....	261
5.1 - Introduction.....	261
5.2 - Soil Science and Conservation: An International Overview .....	266
5.3 - Soil and Erosion in Early-Twentieth Century Basutoland.....	279
5.4 - Crisis, Collecting Data, and Conservation Planning, 1932-1936.....	293
5.5 - New Conservation Work Begins, 1935-1941 .....	304
5.6 - Conservation Reforms in the Highlands, 1942-1956 .....	316
5.7 - Conclusion .....	337

6. MAKING A LIVING FROM THE LAND: THE POSSIBILITIES OF PLACE, C. 1950-1965 .....	339
6.1 - Introduction.....	339
6.2 - The Pilot Project.....	346
6.3 – Progressive Farmers in Lesotho .....	362
6.4 - An alternative path for Basotho farmers?.....	382
6.5 - People, Place, and Development Prospects in the Maloti .....	396
6.6 - Conclusion .....	410
EPILOGUE .....	412
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	420
CURRICULUM VITAE .....	460

## LIST OF MAPS & FIGURES

Map 1	Southern Africa.....	5
Map 2	Lesotho-Political.....	7
Map 3	Lesotho-Physical.....	9
Map 4	Greater Qacha's Nek district.....	11
1.1	Sehonghong Rock Shelter.....	23
1.2	Sehonghong River.....	24
1.3	Sehonghong Church.....	26
1.4	Moshoeshoe's Lineage of Chiefs.....	51
1.5	Melikane Rock Shelter Paintings.....	55
1.6	Paramount Chief Lerotholi and others.....	95
2.1	Moshoeshoe's Lineage of Chiefs.....	112
2.2	Chief Makhaola's House.....	120
2.3	Site of original Qacha's Nek border gate.....	123
3.1	Tsoelike Dipping Station.....	161
3.2	Merino Sheep.....	165
3.3	Model Dipping Tank, 1914.....	182
3.4	Xanthium spinosum; Hlabahlabane; Burweed.....	194
4.1	Home Garden, Ha Makhaola.....	234
4.2	Sekoting (fields), Ha Makhaola.....	248
4.3	Advertisement: Ox-Drawn Planter.....	249
5.1	Leseling Village.....	289

5.2	Constructing a contour bank, 1936.....	307
5.3	Contour Plowing, Ha Makhaola.....	311
5.4	Site of Senatla's Village.....	334
6.1	Ntate Mochinti Jane with his tree nursery.....	343
6.2	Pilot Project Bulletin, 1956.....	356
6.3	Makalo Mokhotsoa.....	367
6.4	Progressive farmer presentation, 1960.....	370
6.5	Wool Shed, Sehlabathebe.....	400
6.6	Wool Classers, Sehlabathebe.....	403
6.7	Dip Tank Areas and Ecological Zones, 1960.....	408

## **ABBREVIATIONS<sup>1</sup>**

AC	Assistant Commissioner
AIA	Agricultural Improvement Area
ANC	African National Congress
BCP	Basutoland Congress Party
BHA	Basutoland Homemakers Association
BNC	Basutoland National Council
BNP	Basotho National Party
BPA	Basutoland Progressive Association
CAC	Council on Agriculture and Animal Health
CDWF	Colonial Development and Welfare Fund
DC	District Council
DLAS	Director of Livestock and Agricultural Services
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GS	Government Secretary of Basutoland
HC	British High Commissioner in southern Africa
LHWP	Lesotho Highlands Water Project
LLB	Lekhotla la Bafo (Council of the Commoners)
LNA	Lesotho National Archives
MMA	Morija Museum and Archives
NUL	National University of Lesotho Archives

---

<sup>1</sup> A full list of abbreviations for archives and source files can be found in the bibliography.

OFS	Orange Free State
OMI	Oblates of Mary Immaculate
PC	Paramount Chief of Basutoland
PEMS	Paris Evangelical Missionary Society
PVS	Principal Veterinary Surgeon
RC	Resident Commissioner of Basutoland
RCM	Roman Catholic Mission
SAB	South African National Archives, Pretoria
TNA	National Archives of the United Kingdom
TVA	Tennessee Valley Authority
WHP	Wits Historical Papers, University of Witwatersrand



## GLOSSARY OF SELECTED SESOTHO WORDS<sup>2</sup>

bale	female initiation rite
batsoelopele	progressive people
bohlale	wisdom, knowledge, learning
bohali	bridewealth, dowry
borena	chieftainship
hlabahlabane	Xanthium spinosum, burweed
hlonepho	respect
khekhe, pl. makhekhe	diviner
khomo, pl. likhomo	cattle
leboella, pl. maboella	reserved grazing area
lebollo	male circumcision, initiation rite
lekhoekhoe	sheep scab
lekhotla	court, council
lerole	dust, dust storm
letsema, pl. matsema	tribute labor, group work in exchange for cash or kind
mafisa	animals put in care of a person who shares produce with owner
masimo	agricultural fields
'me (mme)	mother, title for female of adult age

---

<sup>2</sup> This glossary shows the meanings of these words as I have used them in this study and has been done with reference to A. Mabile and H. Dieterlen, *Southern Sotho-English Dictionary*, revised by R.A. Paroz (Moriya: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1993).

mofo, pl. bafo	commoner, chiefs' subject
molele, pl. melele	wanderer; moniker of person from Qacha's Nek district
molemi, pl. balemi	farmer
molilo	dung and clay plaster
molisana, pl. balisana	shepherd, herd boy
morena, pl. marena	chief
morui, pl. barui	wealthy person
Mosotho, pl. Basotho	person from Lesotho
ngaka, pl. lingaka	doctor
ntate	father, title for male of adult age
pitso, pl. lipitso	public meeting of all adult males
seahlolo	sharecropping
sechaba	community, nation
sehalahala	<i>Chrysocoma tenuifolia</i> , bitter karoo
sekiri, pl. likiri	wool shed
sekoti	hollow, depression; sekoting – place with a hollow
Sesotho	language and culture of the Basotho
temo	agriculture
thite	unplowed/virgin lands
tsoelopele	progress

## INTRODUCTION

### Origins of the Project

In January 2008 I arrived in Ha Makhaola village, also known as Auplaas, in the mountainous Qacha's Nek district of Lesotho<sup>1</sup> to teach English at Tsoelike Secondary School. Like many fellow Peace Corps Volunteers, I settled into a temporary home with a host family in this village of some 400 people. In addition to my family and my students and colleagues at the school, I met other Basotho, many of whom have contributed to this dissertation directly as interviewees and indirectly as my friends and teachers. Some taught me the Sesotho language. Others taught me how to plow with oxen. Still others shared their stories of the past as well as their hopes and fears in the present. These interactions took place in a physical setting that drew me in from the beginning. Lesotho's mountains, rivers, and valleys impress the visitor, if far less than they shape the lives of the people who live there.

My research questions were born from these experiences. During my two years as a volunteer, and during subsequent research trips, I have visited with my friend Ntate Lebuajoang Lerotholi often. He is in his fifties and lives in a one room house that he built himself. His ex-wife and his two sons live elsewhere in Lesotho while his mother lives a stone's throw away. Over the years he has been a soldier, a gold miner, a taxi owner and operator, and a farmer. Everyone knows Lebuajoang's place for its tangle of greenery and other objects that surround the house: peach

---

<sup>1</sup> In this dissertation I use *Basutoland* and *Lesotho* interchangeably, although the former usually refers to the British protectorate before independence in 1966. *Basotho* are the people from Lesotho, *Mosotho* is singular. *Sesotho* is the language and culture of the Basotho.

trees, spinach, chard, squash, tomatoes, dried out roots and bulbs, beehives, chickens, tools, and seemingly random junk.

Like many of his neighbors, Lebuajoang is poor in the material sense yet he possesses a wealth of environmental knowledge. It is the diverse sources and applications of his knowledge that have piqued my interest the most. Two examples will illustrate the point. On one visit, noticing that he had just pruned his peach trees, I asked him where he learned his method. With his typical enthusiasm, my friend turned to dig through some belongings before producing an old secondary school agriculture book. The pages were dog-eared with hand-written annotations surrounding the instructional drawings of the trees. When I asked about the beehives that he houses in a stack of boxes, Lebuajoang says that he heard on an agricultural radio broadcast that the government was buying honey from local beekeepers, especially from people raising bees in the mountains where the nectars were supposedly the purest. To start his nests, he says that local shepherds led him to hives on a rocky slope below the village. My friend had heard, too, that bee venom could ease the pain caused by arthritis. So, he and his bees had been doctoring his arthritis-stricken mother by stinging the pain out of her aging joints.

Lebuajoang is just one person, and as many of his neighbors know, a rather eccentric one. But the truth is, even in the small place of Ha Makhaola, people know very different things. My host mother had several peach trees, for instance, but knew nothing about pruning them, yet she knew all about raising pigs. What Lebuajoang knows and what his neighbors know, beg important questions. *Who* has

access to *which* types of knowledge? How do people apply this knowledge to making and remaking the environments within which they live, such as gardens, fields, and pastures? To answer these questions, I believe, is to examine an environmental historical process by which people compile knowledge. How, then, did knowledge circulate in a given historical context and along what channels did it flow? To what extent did one's social and political position dictate the terms by which he interacted with new ideas? And not least, how have particular circulations of knowledge contributed to collapsing, or to accentuating, social and economic inequalities amongst people?

To understand Lebuajoang and his neighbors as both parts and products of a historical process calls for a close study of the places that they call home. As a mesh of natural and cultural features these places were also parts and products of this process. In this dissertation I reconstruct a cultural and environmental history of the greater Qacha's Nek district from the time it was initially settled by mixed farmers around 1880 until the eve of Lesotho's independence in 1965. In many ways, as I will make clear, the changes that occurred in this period were linked to historical tensions and developments happening not only in other colonial territories in Africa, but in rural places more broadly. In this story, older beliefs and practices overlapped, and sometimes collided with newer ones. Local and non-local political leaders and experts asserted their influence over people, urging them to think or do things in certain ways. Not least, what people expected from their governments, perhaps as much as what they expected from their environment, shifted over time.

I argue that we must understand the compilation of environmental knowledge over time as a process that encapsulates the meanings that people imbue the landscape with, for example, by building homesteads, along with how people understand the landscape as a system of resources to be used economically for subsistence and market purposes. In other words, these two aspects of knowing cannot be separated from one another. Instead, they are part of a single process that has unfolded, and continues to unfold, along non-linear historical trajectories that vary across social groups. Some important social distinctions in this history are those between female and male, chiefs and commoners, literate and illiterate, highlander and lowlander, and between those with different family backgrounds.

### **Scholarly Contributions**

My work contributes to at least three bodies of literature. I address these literatures throughout the dissertation, but a brief outline will help frame the project while defining several key terms. First, what is environmental knowledge? For the people who permanently settled Qacha's Nek in the late 1800s and their descendants, agriculture and livestock rearing have been at the center of their interactions with the non-human world. But people also collected plants for various purposes, selected appropriate village sites, quarried stone and clay for erecting shelters, and adapted to severe weather. People also named their villages as they did landscape features. They established spaces for burying their dead and for

educating their children. Therefore, I am concerned with the broader environmental knowledge as opposed to, for example, agricultural knowledge more specifically.



**Map 1**  
Southern Africa  
Credit: One Stop Map, February 18, 2017

I do not claim this study to be an exhaustive archaeology of either Basotho knowledge systems or the European-based techniques and technologies that have had such profound impact on Lesotho's people and landscapes. V.Y. Mudimbe, an

important scholar of African philosophy, has argued that we must understand scientific knowledge in the context of the political projects in which it circulated.<sup>2</sup> This was true in Lesotho, to varying extents, throughout its colonial history, including during the twentieth century when the discourses and programs associated with “development” intensified. That is, Europeans sought to develop natives through transfers of specific knowledge.<sup>3</sup> In this way, I contextualize the ways people compiled their stock of knowledge by discussing some of the roots of, for example, state soil conservation along with the ways Basotho had worked soil prior to the colonial interventions. I have chosen the word “compile” instead of the more commonly used “produce” to reflect the historical, expansive, and practical aspects of the process.<sup>4</sup> Producing new knowledge out of old and new intellectual materials, from my perspective, is part of the compilation process by which people amass those materials and apply them to pursue various opportunities on the land.

This part of my argument extends the findings of a rich and growing literature. Lesotho’s history offers a focused case for understanding what David Gordon and Shepard Krech, borrowing from the earlier work of Richard White, have called “the middle ground.” This middle ground is both a theoretical and tangible

---

<sup>2</sup> V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 16.

<sup>3</sup> On this point, see, for example, Elizabeth Croll and David Parkin, eds., *Bush Base: Forest Farm: Culture, Environment, and Development* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> See Fredrik Barth, “An Anthropology of Knowledge,” *Current Anthropology* 43, no. 1 (2002): 1-18. Barth argues that knowledge always has three faces that mutually determine one another: a corpus of assertions and ideas about aspects of the world; a range of symbols, gestures, and actions; and a series of social relations within which knowledge is employed and transmitted.



space where “the boundaries between indigenous and nonindigenous knowledges” fall apart and where the origins of “specific ideas become difficult to trace.”<sup>5</sup>



**Map 2**  
 Modern Lesotho – Political  
 Credit: Mappery.com, February 18, 2017

<sup>5</sup> David Gordon and Shepard Krech III, “Introduction: Indigenous Knowledge and the Environment,” in *Indigenous Knowledge and the Environment in Africa and North America*, eds. Gordon and Krech (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012), 13; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); See also, Arun Agrawal, “Dismantling the Divide Between Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge,” *Development and Change* 26, no. 3 (1995): 413-39.

Furthermore, Gordon and Krech argue that “European conquest and colonialism brought together people with distinct ideas of the world and different technical expertise to create new forms of knowledge.” Indeed, “even if the landscapes of power were highly uneven, exchanges between colonized and colonizers produced knowledge.”<sup>6</sup> Looking closely at the ways colonial regimes produced knowledge about African environments (eg. grassland ecology), as Helen Tilley has shown, can also offer a new lens for seeing contributions of Africans in making knowledge that was at once scientific and local.<sup>7</sup>

The middle ground, as I will show, was the cultural reality for the Basotho who first settled the mountains. By probing this middle ground, we gain a fuller appreciation of how people remade their environments into places that fit their constantly changing cultural, political, and economic aspirations.<sup>8</sup> How people conceptualized this process within their own terms was evident in a 1947 national council debate about soil conservation and irrigation. For one Mosotho councilor it boiled down to a Sesotho proverb: *bohlale ha bo hahe tlung e le ngoe* – wisdom does not live in one house. In his view, it made perfect sense to adopt irrigation methods that might help Basotho farmers, let alone that the technology in question was something to be borrowed from Afrikaner farmers, who had been bitter adversaries

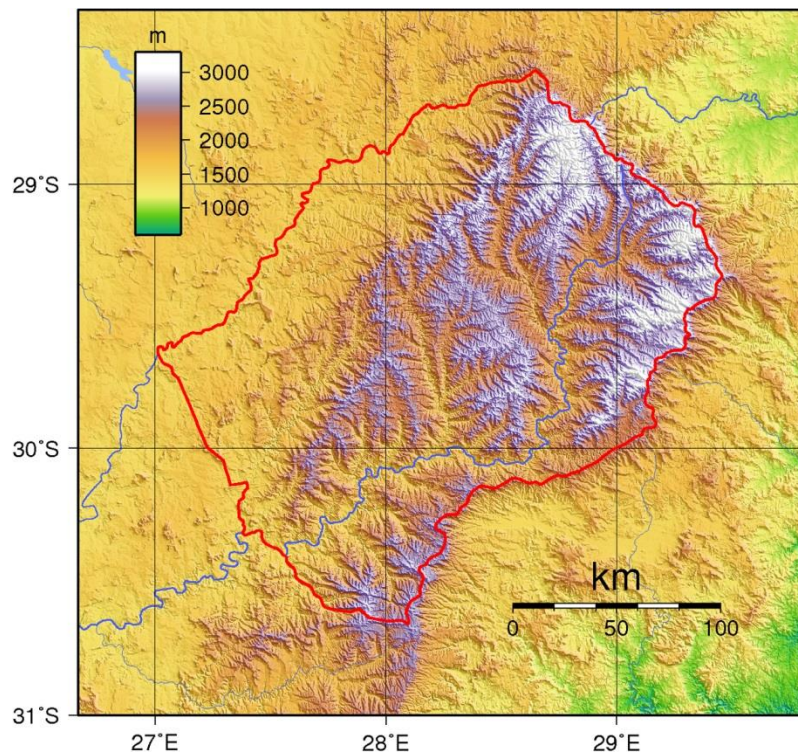
---

<sup>6</sup> Gordon and Krech, “Introduction,” 13.

<sup>7</sup> Helen Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1870-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> On culture, environment, and place-making see Clifford Geertz, “The Wet and the Dry: Traditional Irrigation in Bali and Morocco,” *Human Ecology* 1 (1972): 23-39; Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); Maurice Bloch, “People into Places: Zafimaniry Concepts of Clarity,” in *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space*, eds. Eric Hirsch and Michael O’Hanlon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 425-34.

of the Basotho in several conflicts, past and present.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, my analysis draws on several key works to explain that when people remade environments by deploying diverse beliefs, practices, and technologies, they also remade themselves as individuals, as Basotho, and as land managers.<sup>10</sup>



**Map 3**  
Lesotho - Physical  
Credit: Mappery.com, February 18, 2017

As a second scholarly intervention, I examine questions of environmental knowledge as a way to complicate established narratives of Lesotho's political and economic history. In an article about an important anti-colonial movement in the

<sup>9</sup> *Proceedings of the Basutoland National Council, 42<sup>nd</sup> Session, 1946, Vol. I*, 49-50; 'Makali Mokitimi, *The Voice of the People: Proverbs of the Basotho* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 1997), 22.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Tamara Giles-Vernick, *Cutting the Vines of the Past: Environmental Histories of the Central African Rain Forest* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 2002); Marsha Weisiger, *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009).

twentieth century, Reuben Mekenye has recently affirmed that Lesotho experienced imperialism on two overlapping fronts: as a British protectorate and as the object of South Africa's ambitions for land, labor, and water.<sup>11</sup> For Mekenye, and other scholars of Lesotho before him, all political, agrarian, ecological, economic, and cultural changes must be seen first and foremost as resulting from these imperial entanglements.<sup>12</sup> Mekenye's work builds on an earlier generation of scholarship that explains the roots of regional rural poverty as a function of the southern African political economy and the unequal social and spatial relations between capitalist cores and peripheries that it fostered, especially those between whites and blacks.<sup>13</sup>

Generally speaking, I take these important and persuasive arguments as my point of departure. These approaches cannot, however, adequately explain how rural social divisions were created and maintained at the local level, and how certain types of environmental knowledge featured in these relations. Furthermore, these approaches narrow the theoretical space for understanding human agency under colonialism. Basotho chiefs and government agricultural employees, for

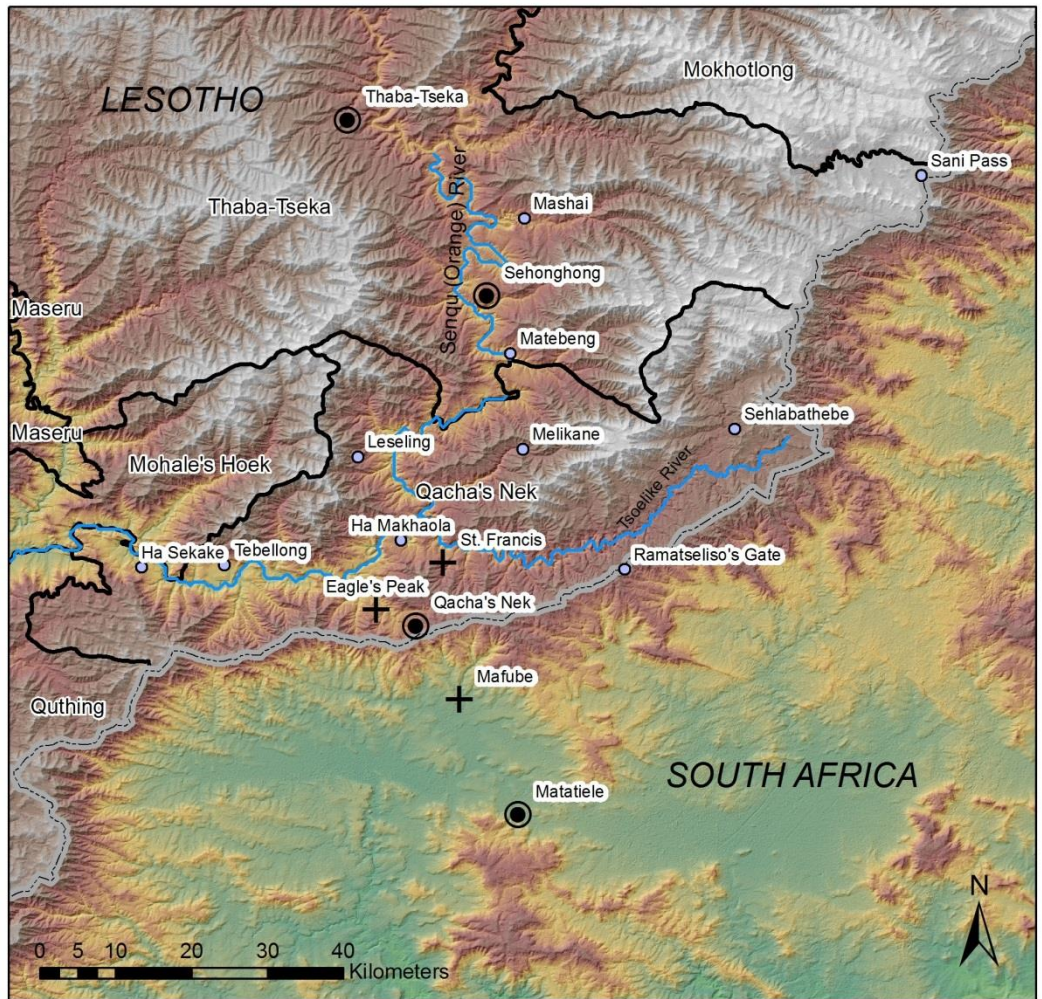
---

<sup>11</sup> Reuben Mekenye, "Re-Examination of the Lekhotla La Bafo's Challenge to Imperialism in Lesotho, 1919-1966," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 2, no. 10 (2012): 77-91.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, L.B.B.J. Machobane, *Government and Change in Lesotho, 1800-1966: A Study of Political Institutions* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> For instance, Colin Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979); Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone, eds., *Industrialization and Social Change in South Africa: African class formation, culture, and consciousness, 1870-1930* (London: Longman, 1982); William Beinart et al., eds. *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa 1850-1930* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986).





- |   |         |  |                  |   |
|---|---------|--|------------------|---|
| + | Mission |  | Country boundary | <b>Elevation (Meters)</b><br><br>High : 3489<br>Low : 288 |
| ⊙ | Town    |  | Districts        |   |
| ○ | Village |  | Rivers           |   |

**Map 4**  
 Greater Qacha's Nek District  
 Credit: Created by author using ArcGIS on February 21, 2017  
 with assistance from Paulo Arevalo Orduz of the Boston  
 University Department of Earth and Environment.

instance, were far more active in shaping political ecologies than has been previously recognized.<sup>14</sup> These were by no means monolithic groups. But their perspectives and actions, especially with regard to agricultural and veterinary policies, I will argue, mattered significantly for how communities interacted with the colonial government.

Deborah Johnston has explained that the agricultural policies of the newly independent government of Lesotho succeeded only in maintaining “the existing rural social structure, preserving the power of the chiefs and other rural elites.” This is true enough, but Johnston does not acknowledge that inequality in terms of land and livestock ownership, and in terms of knowledge, was rooted in a much deeper past.<sup>15</sup> As I will show, especially in chapters two through five, the years between 1895 and 1932 were critical for increasing social stratification, and access to knowledge was an important part of this process.

Colin Murray, in his important book on the links between changing family structures, poverty, and migrant labor, does not discuss knowledge as an important variable. Rather, the focus of Murray and others was to understand how migrant earnings circulated within rural households and communities, and how these industrial laborers navigated the developmental cycle in which they invested earnings in their rural homesteads, especially cattle, as a retirement from industrial labor. As a key theoretical point, these scholars showed that rural Africans operated

---

<sup>14</sup> For example, Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Deborah Johnston, “The State and Development: An Analysis of Agricultural Policy in Lesotho, 1970-1993,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22, no. 1 (1996): 119-37.

within a single economy, rather than a dual system in which capitalist and so-called primitive modes of production remained separate.<sup>16</sup> But it was assumed, more or less, that people knew the same things about how to produce for markets, how to conserve soils, and how to diversify production of subsistence items. In this same vein, studies that attempt to pinpoint the drivers of agrarian change in world history have largely focused on variations in land regimes (eg. private or common property), types of production (eg. capitalist or subsistence), labor inputs, and technical inputs. To this list I would add specialized knowledge, which, of course, has links to all of the preceding variables.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, this dissertation contributes to historical studies of cultural and ecological change, especially in mountain areas. Challenging the received wisdom about African environments and people, as numerous scholars have shown, is crucial to understanding change over the long term and to validating African land use practices. Historically embedded misrepresentations and narratives of deforestation, soil erosion, and desertification, and the assumed roles of Africans in facilitating these processes through so-called primitive practices, have led to failed policies and increased marginalization in both colonial and post-colonial contexts.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Colin Murray, *Families Divided: the impact of migrant labour in Lesotho* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981); Andrew Spiegel, "Rural Differentiation and the Diffusion of Migrant Labour Remittances in Lesotho," in *Black Villagers in an Industrial Society: Anthropological Perspectives in Labour Migration in South Africa*, ed. Philip Mayer (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1980), 109-68.

<sup>17</sup> For example, Ellen Hillbom and Patrick Svensson, eds. *Agricultural Transformation in a Global History Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2013), 5-7.

<sup>18</sup> For example, Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History* (London: James Currey, 1977); David Anderson and Richard Grove, eds., *Conservation in Africa: People, Policies, and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Melissa Leach and

Indeed, the work done by these scholars to deconstruct these narratives has been an important intellectual, practical, and political exercise in that it has, among other things, helped drive conservation and development policy in new directions.

But I believe that these challenges to the received wisdom on, for example, the observations and prescriptions made by ecologists surveying African landscapes in the 1930s, have also distorted valuable historical materials. These sources tell us much about the challenges faced by African land users. Furthermore, seeing colonialism as the primary disruptor of Basotho relationships with the non-human world, I argue, denies these same people historical agency. For instance, people took up the ox-drawn plow to open more fields because they believed it was in their interests. Pursuing this opportunity, in turn, exposed more soil to erosive forces. Indeed, the larger colonial and capitalist structures are important features of this process, but we need to better understand the interplay between local action and the structural constraints of history if we are to grasp ecological changes and the role of humans in facilitating those changes.

Rather than characterizing human-environment relations in Africa as either destructive (declinist) or improving (inclinist), I apply Emmanuel Kreike's proposal for seeing humans as "architects of nature." As architects, people employed

---

Robin Mearns, eds., *The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996); James Fairhead and Melissa Leach, *Misreading the African Landscape: Society and Ecology in a Forest-Savanna Mosaic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); James Gibling, *The Politics of Environmental Control in Northeastern Tanzania, 1840-1940* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); James McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800-1990* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999); Kate Showers, *Imperial Gullies: Soil Erosion and Conservation in Lesotho* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005).



knowledge, technology (including animals and plants), and labor to continuously build and rebuild “environmental infrastructure,” which people manipulated in order to support material and cultural aspirations.<sup>19</sup> To develop this framework in my writing, I borrow analytical tools from Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, who have posited that “modes of resource use” encompass not only the hardware of markets and government policies, but also the software of social organization, land tenure, and numerous other practices and beliefs.<sup>20</sup> For example, when analyzing an interaction between livestock managers and European veterinarians during an 1890s cattle plague, I consider how the political purposes of veterinary policy interlocked with Basotho conceptions of cattle to shape outcomes.

In the early 1900s, Qacha’s Nek was a recently settled frontier space, yet it was already linked to an international web of technology, politics, culture, markets, and not least, knowledge. Being *in the mountains* has had important effects on Qacha’s Nek’s history. Not only has the altitude, ecology, and climate shaped this history, but there have also been significant cultural, political, and economic dimensions to the ways people in the surrounding lowlands related to mountain environments and to the people who have lived there.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Emmanuel Kreike, *Environmental Infrastructure in African History: Examining the Myth of Natural Resource Management in Namibia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 21.

<sup>20</sup> Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 10-12; See also, Gregory Maddox et al., eds., *Custodians of the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1996).

<sup>21</sup> My inquiries into beliefs and practices by people in mountain areas as well as perspectives about mountain areas draw on, among others, Thomas Spear, *Mountain Farmers: Moral Economies of Land and Agricultural Development in Arusha and Meru* (London: James Currey, 1997); James Scott, *The Art*

By reconstructing a history that spans nearly 100 years in this mountain area, I illustrate the subtle changes in the ways people have shaped the non-human world, for instance, by cultivating non-native plants in new types of productive spaces like home gardens. Perhaps more importantly, the longer term view conveys changes in the institutions – or regulatory communities – that govern the relationships between humans and environment.<sup>22</sup> In narrating these changes across this period, I draw on several key works about other places that have experienced these changes under colonialism.<sup>23</sup> Whether before, during or after colonialism, the ways that regulatory communities have served to create or destroy conservation beliefs and practices in the past, speak to current challenges of environmental change in the present.

### **Methodology, Organization, and Sources**

Just as this project began with me asking my Basotho friends seemingly mundane questions, my approach to research and writing has taken a similar path.

---

*of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> On regulatory communities, see Arun Agrawal, *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> For example, Nancy Jacobs, *Environment, Power, and Injustice: A South African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Jacob Tropp, *Natures of Colonial Change: Environmental Relations in the Making of the Transkei* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006); David Anderson, *Eroding the Commons: The Politics of Ecology in Baringo, Kenya 1890-1963* (London: James Currey, 2002); Christopher Conte, *Highland Sanctuary: Environmental History in Tanzania's Usambara Mountains* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004); Elias Mandala, *Work and Control in a Peasant Economy: A history of the lower Tchiri Valley in Malawi, 1859-1960* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); James Webb, *Tropical Pioneers: Human Agency and Ecological Change in the Highlands of Sri Lanka, 1800-1900* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002).

My goal has been to write history as narrative. As Nancy Jacobs and Andrew Bank have written in a recent volume about the micro-politics of knowledge production in southern African history, to write history as narrative is to include dense historical detail, to people the past with personality, and to use the “seemingly obscure, whether of sources or characters, as a way of shedding light on broader social and political themes.”<sup>24</sup> My task, as I see it, has been to find and examine sources and to reconstruct stories from those sources that speak to my research questions in ways that scientific analysis cannot.

My questions about how people compile knowledge have multiple dimensions. I have made a choice, however, to focus on government interventions into rural lives and ecologies with full recognition that other institutions have also featured prominently in these processes. Christian missions, for one, facilitated cultural and ecological changes. I do discuss this aspect of missionization in conjunction with the government programs. I have organized the chapters in a way that is chronological and thematic. With the exception of chapter 1, each chapter examines a government intervention, or series of interventions, that address issues that had implications for changes in environmental knowledge. The intervention – its policies, debates, and applications – becomes the historical site for probing my questions. The chronologies necessarily overlap and the evidentiary base for each

---

<sup>24</sup> Nancy Jacobs and Andrew Bank, “Introduction: The Micro-Politics of Knowledge Production in Southern Africa,” *Kronos: Southern African Histories, Special Issue* 41 (November 2015): 17.

chapter differs substantially, depending on what documents were generated by the program and what has been archived for researchers.

Government records held by the Lesotho National Archives (LNA), the National University of Lesotho Archives (NUL), the National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA), and the South African National Archives in Pretoria (SAB) provide rich text from which to extract narratives. There are, however, large gaps in the archival record in all places. For example, LNA's holdings are useful for the period between 1890 and 1933, and then contain only scattered records from the 1940s and 50s. I have consulted a wide variety of files in these repositories such as personal papers, government circulars, telegraph and letter correspondences, drafts of veterinary and agricultural reports, and police records. There are, of course, other pertinent files that will have to await my next phase of research for this project.

During one year of research in Lesotho, South Africa, and the United Kingdom I collected archival materials in conjunction with rural fieldwork. Some important print sources include Sesotho language newspapers, missionary accounts, and contemporary ecological and agricultural surveys. Other important published sources include annual colonial and agricultural reports. For the period after 1908, the minutes of the annual proceedings of the Basutoland National Council (BNC) proved to be an exceptional source for understanding the national conversations about the practices and policies pertaining to agriculture, livestock, and soil erosion among other topics. While considering the Basotho voices in the BNC, in the newspapers, and those hidden in agricultural reports and surveys, we are still left

with an imbalance of European perspective, even though selected Europeans drew on decades of experience in Basutoland in their reporting.

To add personal stories of cultural change to the archival evidence, I conducted over thirty formal interviews. My former host family in Ha Makhaola, and I would say, the community as a whole, welcomed me back during a four month research stay in the village. I sought interviews from a small cross section of Basotho, generally over the age of seventy: men and women, educated and uneducated, well-off and poor, Catholics and Protestants. Interviewees were friends, acquaintances, relatives of friends, grandparents of former students, and others who I simply approached to ask if they might speak with me about the past. I obtained written consent from interviewees and recorded all but a few of these conversations. Eighteen of these were conducted in English, while thirteen were in Sesotho. Apart from one Sesotho interview where I had a research assistant present, I conducted these on my own, and then later had an assistant help me with transcribing them into English. The idea was not to collect objective truths, though some interviewees helped to clarify certain historical events or changes. Rather, I use these voices to populate my narrative with people's subjective experiences and memories of the past, and not least, with perspectives on places.<sup>25</sup>

My own close engagement with the Tsoelike area of Qacha's Nek as a place has informed my writing. As important as the interviews are, my many informal

---

<sup>25</sup> An important model for my thinking on oral histories is David Cohen, Stephan Miescher, and Luise White, "Introduction: Voices, Words, and African History," in *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History*, eds. Luise White et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 1-27.

conversations with the Basotho whom I have met in the villages and fields, and at the cattle posts or river crossings, and on the bus or on long treks, have provided me with insight for thinking through the primary sources. There were those people, too, who took me to their fields for plowing and harvesting, or on walks to tell micro-histories of the village. All the while, I documented these invaluable experiences in my field notes and in my photographs, some of which I have presented in this study as evidence. In this way, I believe, Lesotho's cultural landscapes are my best sources.

My choice to conduct fieldwork in the same village where I lived and taught as a Peace Corps Volunteer was not an uncomplicated one. Undoubtedly, my social network in Ha Makhaola (which I do believe to be diverse in terms of socio-economic strata, linguistic abilities, religion, and education) influenced which people I interviewed and who I spent time with. But like all of my sources, I have tried to understand the full context of people's recollections, both in terms of where a person comes from historically and how their comments are shaped by contemporary realities. For example, in answering my questions about earlier agricultural programs, some interviewees expressed a broad nostalgia for a past when the government provided better services, when young people worked harder, and when more men worked in the mines. These are important human expressions which I consider when using these sources.<sup>26</sup> I recognize, too, that I am also an actor in reconstructing these narratives by choosing which questions to ask, which photos

---

<sup>26</sup> See Robert M. Ahearne, "Development and Progress as Historical Phenomena in Tanzania: 'Maendeleo? We Had That in the Past,'" *African Studies Review* 59, no. 1 (2016): 77-96.

to take, and which places to visit. As someone who has returned to the village several times, I am, on some level, also seen as a community member. Villagers associate me with my host family, the Ramatsekas, with my closest friends, and with Tsoelike Secondary School.

As many scholars who have done this type of work know, it is not possible, nor desirable in my view, to be just a researcher. My relationship with this community, especially with the Ramatseka family, has entailed responsibilities on all sides, which can quickly complicate matters. To the best of my ability, I have tried to pursue this project as a scholar who honors the integrity of our academic endeavor while doing justice to the people and places of whom this history is about. Whether in my role as a researcher, teacher, friend, or brother, I am aware of my privileged social position and all the powers that it entails. In some small way, I hope that my work is an appropriate tribute to this place and to the people who have lived there, both now and in the past.

# 1. SETTLING THE MALOTI: ECOLOGY, POLITICS, AND THE MAKING OF QACHA'S NEK, 1870s-1895

## 1.1 - Introduction

The Sehonghong area of the upper Senqu River Valley offers a hiker a journey through the ecological and cultural history of the Maloti Mountains of Lesotho. This research project, especially this chapter, is anchored in the sites, smells, sounds, and conversations that I experienced on one such journey.<sup>1</sup>

The Sehonghong rock shelter sits at the base of the river valley of the same name near its junction with the Senqu (Orange) River. Faded paintings in red and white adorn the sandstone wall of the deep overhang. The paintings feature scenes of people hunting eland with bows and arrows. Another scene shows humans driving cattle. These images date from the mid-1800s when the *Baroa*, as Sesotho speakers called these non-farming people inhabited the area.<sup>2</sup> Archaeological excavations on the Sehonghong shelter's floor have revealed evidence of human activity from 57,000 years ago. Among the material remains, fragments of ostrich

---

<sup>1</sup> I made these observations on 17 December 2014, which I recorded by journal and photographs.

<sup>2</sup> For Europeans, the *Baroa* were known as 'Bushmen,' which in the nineteenth century was a classification of economy, more than of race. The term *San* has been used by scholars to designate a cluster of ethno-linguistic groups, rather than economic classifications. See, for example, Sam Challis, "Creolisation on the Nineteenth-century Frontiers of Southern Africa: A Case Study of the AmaTola 'Bushmen' in the Maloti-Drakensberg," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38, no. 2 (2012): 268; Together these terms have a long history of debate in scholarship and politics in southern Africa. Although 'Bushmen' carries negative historical connotations, the term remains common amongst Basotho. See also, John Wright, *Bushman Raiders of the Drakensberg, 1840-1870: A study of their conflict with stock-keeping peoples in Natal* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1971), 3-7. I use the Sotho term *Baroa* most often because Sotho speakers are at the center of my narrative. But, I will also use *Baroa*, *San*, and *Bushmen* interchangeably.



eggshells and ornamental marine shells attest to the complex cultural history of the region and to longstanding links between the Maloti and the surrounding lowlands.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 1.1**  
Sehonghong Rock Shelter, Thaba-Tseka, Lesotho  
Photo by author, December 2014

The last Baroa to occupy this cave were killed or driven off by the agropastoralist Basotho who were themselves seeking new living space in the Maloti in the 1870s.<sup>4</sup> Adjacent to the paintings, I saw names written in white paint: “Edward and Esther Putsoane, July 1913,” and many more Christianized Bantu names too. Viewed one way, these name-tags desecrate a heritage site. Viewed another way, the

---

<sup>3</sup> This does not imply that the nineteenth century inhabitants were direct descendants of the ancient cave dwellers. The paintings are likely from San groups who sought sanctuary in the mountains as both Europeans and Bantu farmers encroached on their living space in surrounding areas in the nineteenth century. See Peter Mitchell, “Making History at Sehonghong: Soai and the last Bushman occupants of his shelter,” *Southern African Humanities* 22 (September 2010): 149-70.

<sup>4</sup> A key source for discussing the settlement of the Maloti is Tiisetso Pitso and Stephen Gill of the Morija Museum and Archives (Hereafter MMA), a translation of the “1909 Court on Settlement in the mountains,” *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, October 1909.

writing shows people leaving their mark in what various groups across time have viewed as an extraordinary place. Sheep droppings covered the floor, and ashes from a shepherd's fire were visible near the wall. Gentle rain began falling outside, mixing with cultivated earth and grass to emit an earthy smell.

The eland and the Baroa hunters are long gone, but more people and animals live in the Maloti now than ever before. From the cave entrance, I looked straight down the Sehonghong Valley towards the Senqu. Passing a cluster of non-native poplar trees, I greeted a teenage boy who watched his thirty sheep and goats drink from the river. The bells around their necks rang softly, echoing off the valley walls. It was December 17th and the austral summer had arrived. Farmers had recently sown maize in small fields along the boulder strewn valley floor. Some plots had



**Figure 1.2**

Sehonghong River

Note: The rock shelter is in the background, while the junction with the Senqu River is behind the photographer.

Photo by author, December 2014

rows of seedlings three inches high while others, nothing yet. Some fields were harrowed smooth. Others had deep, uneven furrows. Grass strips separated fields with contour banks built on the slopes. I crossed an iron bridge built for pedestrians and livestock that was elevated to withstand the seasonal fluctuations in the river. Across the river, I ascended out of the valley along a bridle path that followed carefully engineered switchbacks. I chatted with two women who were carrying clean laundry up from the river.

Once atop the steep bluffs that hem in the river, the Senqu Valley stretches wide at Sehonghong. Cultivated fields extend out to the bases of mountains that frame the valley. Looking through my binoculars I saw several villages scattered along the contour where fields meet steep mountains. Two men who accompanied a pair of oxen dragging a tire-as-sledge with a plow on it told me that they had just sown maize. They said that although it was late in the year to plow, they hoped that the current rains would make it worthwhile. Above distant villages, I spied livestock, which appeared as white and brown specs, grazing along the grassy slopes.

A short walk to the north on the main gravel road brought me to the Sehonghong parish of the Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC). Once at the Church, three buildings caught my attention. First, the original church that builders had constructed with dressed basalt stones and small sunken windows. Second, I saw a fenced-in compound of similar architecture where a young woman came out to greet me. She told me that reverend Jobo Moteane had lived there. Moteane was the first Mosotho minister of the Paris Evangelical Mission Society (PEMS), and he set

up this mission station there in 1893.<sup>5</sup> Two peach trees bent in the stiff breeze while several types of greens grew in a small garden patch. Across the street from the residence, I circled a third building: a newer church built from stucco and sandstone with large windows. A lone eucalyptus tree stood beside the church, a giant standing on the mostly treeless grassland. It was a short walk back to the small, windswept town. I fetched up at the one place I knew I could find accommodation from a previous visit there in 2008: the police station.



**Figure 1.3**  
The Old and the New, Sehonghong, Lesotho  
Evangelical Church  
Photo by author, December 2014

My walking tour of Sehonghong highlights historical changes that occurred between the 1870s and 1895. The tour also foreshadows the long term shifts in

---

<sup>5</sup> M.N. Moteane, "Nalane ea Moruti Jobo Moteane, 1848-1942," in *Mekolokotoane Kerekeng ea Evangeli Lesotho: Jubilee Highlights, 1833-2008*, eds. Stephen Gill et al. (Moriya: Morija Museum & Archives, 2009), 73-82.

culture, politics, and ecology that I examine in this dissertation. In covering this initial period, this introductory chapter serves three overlapping purposes. First, I reconstruct how over the course of just twenty years, the Sehonghong area went from being a mountain grassland inhabited by a few people who hunted and gathered most of their food to an area marked by permanent agro-pastoral villages with a protestant mission. Members of a military expedition in 1873 reported no cultivation in these parts, no villages, no livestock, but only eland, reedbuck, and stories of Bushmen and cave paintings.<sup>6</sup>

By the time Jobo Moteane established his church in 1893, many chiefs with direct lineage links to the expanding Basotho nation and some from non-Sotho groups, lived in villages along the Senqu and its tributaries. Wheat, maize, and sorghum grew in cultivated fields, signifying the new knowledge being applied to the landscape. Cattle, sheep, and goats grazed where eland had recently roamed. Meanwhile, the British colonial government of Basutoland established a district called Qacha's Nek in 1888 which encompassed the Sehonghong area. The new authority inaugurated new forms of political ecology in the mountains by applying new regulations on the relationships between people, animals, and land. This period, then, constituted a political, cultural, and not least, an ecological revolution in the Maloti. Ecological revolutions, as Carolyn Merchant has described for colonial

---

<sup>6</sup> Joseph M. Orpen, "A glimpse into the mythology of the Maluti Bushmen," *Cape Monthly Magazine* 9, no. 49 (1874): 1-13; MMA, Ronald S. Webb, transcription, "The Diary of Inspector James Murray Grant, Frontier Armed and Mounted Police," 1873-74; See also, Peter Mitchell and Sam Challis, "A 'first' glimpse into the Maloti Mountains: the Diary of James Murray Grant's expedition of 1873-74," *Southern African Humanities* 20 (December 2008): 399-461.

New England, arise “from changes, tensions, and contradictions that develop between a society’s mode of production and its ecology.”<sup>7</sup> New environmental knowledge, too, drives these changes.

Second, I use the available primary materials in conjunction with later sources to establish the ecological and geographic context of Qacha’s Nek as it was in the late nineteenth century. The plants, animals, soils, weather, and altitude of the area form the foundation on which people have made multiple layers of history. Moreover, these characteristics, in relation to the surrounding lowland areas, distinguish the Maloti in important ways that I will develop throughout this dissertation. Viewed from colonial and missionary eyes, the Maloti was an open space to be experienced and imagined for its natural beauty and grandeur as well as to be used for its economic potential. And not least, it was a frontier to be mapped for military and policing purposes. A map of Basutoland from 1868 labeled the area around present day Qacha’s Nek only as “Very wild and little known country – inhabited by Bushmen.” An 1880 map simplified this label to “very rugged country.”<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, agro-pastoral Africans saw this country as seasonal grazing and hunting grounds in the 1870s and as a potential refuge in time of war. For the Baroa, it was home, and by the late 1800s, a refuge in which to hide.

---

<sup>7</sup> Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 3.

<sup>8</sup> National Archives of the United Kingdom (Hereafter TNA), MPG 1/934, Sketch of Basutoland, 1868; Colonial Office (CO) 700/BASUTOLAND 1, Map of Basutoland and Adjacent Territories, 1880, Compiled by Horse guards and the Intelligence Department.

Through the 1900s and even today, there has been a strong geographic and cultural bias against the highlands –the Maloti – and against the people who have lived there. Like many upland regions from Southeast Asia to Central America, people from the centers of political power in the valleys and urban areas, and other outsiders have viewed mountain areas like the Maloti as the back-o-beyond, a place where people lagged behind in education, technology, culture, and politics. In this view, it was (and still is) a place where people believed in rumors and superstition, while resisting science, reason, and progress.<sup>9</sup>

The famous Mosotho writer Thomas Mofolo perpetuated similar cultural and ecological discourses in his 1910 Sesotho novel called *Pitseng*. In his story, Pitseng was a place in the Maloti that existed in opposition to Lesotho proper, which was then experiencing progress and education; while “in Pitseng it was still a time of black darkness of the Sesotho ways of old.” In Mofolo’s novel, Pitseng was both a land of comfort and a land of suffering. It was “a land of rain but also a land of fearful drought...of abundance of livestock...but also of heart-rending poverty.”<sup>10</sup> A blend of myth and reality, these discourses still circulate today, if in more subtle ways. When I tell urban Basotho and South Africans that I have spent most of my time in Lesotho in Qacha’s Nek, they often say: “Wow, how is that?” I aim to dispel these myths,

---

<sup>9</sup> My analysis of this upland region as distinct from surrounding lowlands draws on Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*; Jon Mathieu, “Long-Term History of Mountains: Southeast Asia and South America Compared,” *Environmental History* 18 (April 2013): 557-75. For examples of this perspective, see Grant’s Diary reproduced in Mitchell and Challis, “First Glimpse,” 419, 432; *Basutoland Annual Colonial Report 1894-95* (London: HMSO, 1896) (Hereafter CAR), 6; Allan Pim, *Report on the Financial and Economic Position of Basutoland* (London: HMSO, 1935), 20-22; “Eagles Peak High School,” *Molelets’i oa Basotho*, 29 January 1951.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Mofolo, *Pitseng: The Search for True Love*, trans. Daniel Kunene (Morija: MMA, 1910/2013), 10.

which are predicated on geographic and cultural essentialism, by situating highlanders in a long term history where they interacted with eclectic ideas and technologies over the course of a century.

Lastly, I will briefly describe several key cultural institutions that influenced, and were influenced by, the historical process of environmental knowledge compilation. For example, the ways local Africans educated their youth, regulated grazing spaces, and organized agricultural labor were all in flux in the late-nineteenth century Maloti as they continued to be throughout the twentieth century. Because the cultural practices of Baroa and Bantu (Nguni, Sephuthi, and Sesotho-speakers) overlapped in complex, and to some extent, unknowable ways during this period, it is difficult to parse out any essential practices that might be called Sesotho. Reconstructing the settlement process along with its cultural overlapping provides place-based historical context for subsequent chapters while setting up my main arguments. Sesotho culture, and the Basotho identity associated with it, must be seen as a historically fluid body of knowledge and practices that derived from various sources and experiences. Furthermore, this cultural field continued to be shaped and reshaped by myriad forces of history such as cross-cultural interface (eg. intermarrying), conflict, colonial governance, Christian missionaries, ecological variables, and regional politics and economy.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> See Norman Etherington, *The Great Treks: The Transformation of Southern Africa, 1815-1854* (Edinburgh: Pearson Education, 2001), 344-45; Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, Consciousness in South Africa, Vol. 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 28-29.



## 1.2 - An Environmental Overview of the Maloti

The mountain region covers approximately three quarters of Lesotho's total area of 11,583 square miles. This fraction encompasses the area from the eastern edge of the Drakensberg Escarpment to the western edge of the foothills.<sup>12</sup> The lowlands, foothills, and mountains comprise the three main ecological zones of Lesotho. My research focuses on the southeastern portion of this area, in what became modern Qacha's Nek district, and to some extent, parts of Thaba Tseka and Mokhotlong too (See Maps 2-4). The mountain areas can be further divided into at least three ecological sub-zones, which are distinguished by characteristics that have affected human settlement and land use patterns of the region. The characteristics of these zones – temperatures, frost periods, precipitation, soil types, and vegetation – did not determine economic and cultural possibilities, but certainly modified what humans could achieve, especially in agriculture. The three sub-zones with corresponding altitudes are: montane (1500m-2000m), sub-alpine (2000-3000m), and alpine (over 3000m).<sup>13</sup>

Most agro-pastoral people settled in the lower two zones, especially the montane which is largely composed of the Senqu River Valley and the lower parts of its tributary streams.<sup>14</sup> Each zone has geologic history that created local variations in topography, hydrography, and soil and rock types. Because my work targets

---

<sup>12</sup> R. Staples and W. Hudson, *An Ecological Survey of the Mountain Areas of Basutoland* (Maseru: Government Printers, 1938), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Stefan Grab and David Nash, "Documentary evidence of climate variability during cold seasons in Lesotho, southern Africa, 1833-1900," *Climate Dynamics* 34 (2010): 473-99.

<sup>14</sup> TNA, War Office (WO) 33/501, M.C. Dobson, *Military Report on Basutoland, Vol. 1* (London, 1910).

human environmental knowledge and land uses from the 1870s, I will focus on three aspects of the environment that the first agro-pastoralist settlers moved into: climate, flora, and fauna.<sup>15</sup> The variation and distribution of soils, too, play key roles in this history, roles which I will examine in chapter five.

Mountain climate in temperate Lesotho has generally followed a bi-modal schedule of rainy and dry periods while still bringing four distinct seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter.<sup>16</sup> The mountains support numerous micro-environments between, and within the three ecological sub-zones that affect human activities, but some general patterns are sufficient here. The austral spring begins in late August when temperatures begin to warm and some light rain may fall. By late November, daily thunderstorms drop heavy rain that is often accompanied by lightning, and by hail so powerful that it has been known to kill lambs. Cool weather fronts from the highveld of South Africa move eastwards and meet with the warmer Indian Ocean air near the Drakensberg Escarpment to produce dense mist-belts and heavy rainfalls, especially in the higher elevations. The Senqu Valley, however, receives comparatively less rain on average.<sup>17</sup>

Afternoon rains intensify in December through February and the high summer sun brings hotter daytime temperatures. Evening temperatures remain cool. Rains slow down while temperatures cool off in the autumn months of March,

---

<sup>15</sup> On geology, see Gordon M. Stockley, *Report on the Geology of Basutoland* (Moriya: Morija Printing, 1947).

<sup>16</sup> McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land*, 15-17, 147.

<sup>17</sup> B. Sekoli, "Climate and Climate Change," in *State of the Environment in Lesotho*, ed. Q. K. Chakela (Maseru: National Environment Secretariat, 1999), 117-20; Staples and Hudson, *Ecological Survey*, 6-8.

April, and May. Frost, especially in the sub-alpine and alpine zones may occur at any time during the year, but the chances increase substantially in May. May ushers in the cold, dry winter months where temperatures drop well below freezing and the wind blows incessantly.<sup>18</sup> Winter precipitation, however, does occur sometimes as snow, which has ranged from a dusting to extreme weather events when heavy snow blanketed the landscape.<sup>19</sup> Such was the case in 1902 when two feet of snow fell, bringing temperatures to 0° Fahrenheit. Livestock, indigenous trees, and several herders perished as a result of this deep winter freeze. *Lehloa le Leholo* (the Great Snow), as the event became known to Basotho, marked the arctic extreme on the Maloti climate continuum.<sup>20</sup>

Weather conditions affected the ways people conceptualized the mountains, as well as affecting how they permanently settled the region around 1880. Although historical climate data are scarce, documentary evidence and recent scholarship provide some sense of the aforementioned seasonal patterns, while showing some variation in those patterns. King Moshoeshe, the patriarch of the Basotho nation, traveled into the northeastern Maloti with the missionary Thomas Arbousset in February of 1840. In his written narrative of the journey, Arbousset noted that on one day when cresting a mountain pass “the water was coming from the sky in big

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> For example, snow fell in May of 1877, and abundant snow and severe cold resulted in livestock losses in 1881. 1884-1887 brought successive severe winters with snow falling as early as April. See Nash and Grab, “Documentary Evidence of Climate Variability,” 480.

<sup>20</sup> CAR 1902-03, p. 44; René Ellenberger, quoted in Robert Germond, *Chronicles of Basutoland: A Running commentary on the events of the years 1830-1902 by the French protestant missionaries in Southern Africa* (Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1967), 51, 58.

drops...producing a noise like drainpipes” when falling on the crops in the valley below.<sup>21</sup> A trader and traveler in 1864, Thomas Leask complained of slow progress, especially at river crossings. Leask wrote in his diary for December 7, 1864: “More rain! Rain every day! Rain without end!”<sup>22</sup> A British military expedition in December 1873 to capture the fugitive Hlubi leader Langalibalele, commanded by Joseph Orpen and James Grant, took frequent shelter from the downpours yet perspired as they rode on horses in the mid-day summer heat.<sup>23</sup>

With the warm and well-watered summer having been the preferred travel season, we have fewer accounts of winter weather. This fact testifies to the conventional wisdom of both Africans and Europeans of the time: the mountains were best avoided in the winter. Drought (Sesotho: *komello*),<sup>24</sup> too, has played an important part in Lesotho’s environmental history. How much or how little rain fell at specific times of the year could hinder seasonal pasture regeneration, which in turn affected both wild and domestic animal nutrition. Drought, and fear of drought, also shaped crop cycles and the lives of the farmers that depended on grain harvests.<sup>25</sup> Human knowledge for identifying and manipulating natural resources,

---

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Arbousset, *Missionary Excursion into the Blue Mountains: an account of King Moshoeshoe’s Expedition from Thaba Bosiu to the sources of the Malibamatšo River in the year 1840*, eds., trans. David Ambrose and Albert Brutsch (Morija: MMA, 1991), 59.

<sup>22</sup> The University of Witwatersrand Historical Papers (Hereafter WHP), Box A1078, Thomas Leask, Leaves from an old diary, South Africa 1862-1880, p. 51.

<sup>23</sup> Grant’s Diary reproduced in Mitchell and Challis, “First Glimpse,” 431-36.

<sup>24</sup> Sesotho words will be placed in italics unless used repeatedly. Parentheses following a Sesotho word will indicate a translation and a Sesotho word in italics after an English word the same. Unless otherwise noted, all Sesotho words and translations have been done by the author in consultation with Mabile and Dieterlen, *Southern Sotho-English Dictionary*.

<sup>25</sup> On the impact of drought in the nineteenth century, see Elizabeth Eldredge, *A South African Kingdom: The pursuit of security in nineteenth-century Lesotho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

whether for subsistence production or market purposes, has been intricately linked to patterns of rainfall now as in the past.

Considering the contemporary agricultural capabilities and the geographic inaccessibility of the Maloti, winters proved inhospitable to agro-pastoral people in the 1870s. The indigenous staple grain, sorghum, required nine months of frost-free growing time. African farmers knew that other than in protected valleys, the mountain altitudes and temperatures prevented sorghum production.<sup>26</sup> But by 1880 Basotho farmers' agricultural repertoire had expanded. People had begun cultivating maize in the Mohokare (Caledon) River Valley sometime early in the nineteenth century and wheat had also gained some traction since being introduced by missionaries in the 1830s.<sup>27</sup>

Both of these crops, in addition to domesticated animals, provided farmers with new biological resources for sustaining four-season settlements above an altitude of 2000 meters. Livestock herders had driven herds of cattle, horses, and flocks of sheep and goats into the high pastures during summer as part of seasonal transhumance patterns. Boys and young men would leave their villages at lower elevations in early summer, driving the animals to remote posts where they would graze the rich grasses until the cold arrived in May and the grasses went dormant. It

---

Press, 1993), 79-81; For impact of drought in the twentieth century, see Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, 80-81.

<sup>26</sup> Edouard Jacottet, quoted in Germond, *Chronicles*, 429; R. U. Sayce, "An Ethno-Geographical Essay on Basutoland," *The Geographical Teacher* 12, no. 4 (1924): 270-73; Staples and Hudson, *Ecological Survey*, 19-22.

<sup>27</sup> Arbousset, *Missionary Excursion*, 59, 75; Marshall Clarke, "Unexplored Basutoland," *Proceedings of the Geographical Society* X (1888): 519; See also Clarke, quoted in Germond, *Chronicles*, 421.

was then time to return home to help with the harvest and prepare the livestock for wintering in the village areas.<sup>28</sup> But in the 1870s, evidence suggests that few herders had reached the upper Senqu Valley of the Sehonghong area. Apart from fearing the harsh and often unpredictable mountain weather, agro-pastoral Africans feared the Baroa, who had managed to eke out a year-round living. The Baroa, like sedentary people, knew that the weather also affected the vegetation in important ways.<sup>29</sup>

Varieties of grasses were many, but several species stand out because they have provided forage for the wild and domestic animals on which humans depended for food. Land users and observers in Lesotho have debated the extent to which the vegetation cover in the mountains has changed since at least the late nineteenth century. Historical sources reveal only snapshots of what these grasslands looked like in the 1870s, much less their scientific ecological composition. The central questions of these debates may be summarized: to what extent have native grasses been displaced by small, unpalatable bushes both native and non-native since the first agro-pastoral people settled the area? How much soil erosion had already occurred by the late nineteenth century and how did this process proceed through the twentieth century?<sup>30</sup> These debates have shaped myriad agricultural and

---

<sup>28</sup> Eugène Casalis, *The Basutos; or, Twenty-Three Years in South Africa* (London: James Nisbet, 1861), 153-54; Azariele Sekese, *Mekhoa ea Basotho* (Moriija: Moriija Printing, 1970), 104-05.

<sup>29</sup> Orpen, "A glimpse"; Webb, "Grant's Diary." These sources of the 1873 expedition do not indicate cattle posts, but only some tracks of cattle, probably from Langalibalele's party. The first posts seem to have been set up from the northern chiefs Jonathan and Joel Molapo between 1868 and 1870. See MMA, "Court on Settlement."

<sup>30</sup> In naming the grasses and trees, I have used their Sesotho names, with the scientific/common names in parentheses. Eg. *Sesotho* (scientific/common). See for example: CAR 1894-94, pp. 11-12; W. Willcocks, "Report on Irrigation in South Africa," *South African Pamphlets* 2, no. 34 (1901); Nathan Sekhesa, "Makhulo a Felile," *Leselinyana*, 3 October 1912; South African National Archives, Pretoria

livestock policies that have featured in Lesotho's past. By setting a rough ecological baseline, and then examining how humans, ideas, and technology interacted with the natural world in this place, I will comment on these ecological changes through historical narrative. That is, I reconstruct stories of people and their environments rather than quantifying change through scientific analysis.

Travelers in the Maloti and early settlers circa 1880 probably encountered two main grass types. According to the authors of *An Ecological Survey of the Mountain Areas of Basutoland*, in 1936 *seboku* (*Themeda triandra*/redgrass) occupied 56% of the Maloti. As trained ecologists, the surveyors believed that this grass was typical of undisturbed areas, though they also acknowledged that Baroa had used fire for managing seasonal grasses to attract game. Livestock preferred *seboku* to other mountain grasses, a fact well-known to African herders. Exemplifying the important interaction of topography, latitudinal position, and sun, *seboku* typically grew at altitudes up to 2700m on north facing slopes, but only to 2100m on south facing slopes. A second type, *letsiri* (*Festuca caprina*) occupied about 31% of the Maloti in 1936. It was less palatable to livestock, except for the new leaves, and was the common grass cover of the higher plateaus above 3000m.<sup>31</sup>

Staples and Hudson also identified a third species. Their unnamed Basotho guides, who helped lead the two surveyors through the mountains, knew the small

---

(Hereafter SAB), Native Affairs Department (NTS) Vol. 10163, Ref. 52/419, Russell Thornton, "Report on Pastoral and Agricultural Conditions in Basutoland," 11 August 1931; Pim, *Financial and Economic*, 45-47; Staples and Hudson, *An Ecological Survey*, 14-20; For a historical soil analysis, see Showers, *Imperial Gullies*.

<sup>31</sup> Staples and Hudson, *Ecological Survey*, 11-14; See also, David Ambrose et al., eds., *Biological Diversity in Lesotho: A Country Study* (Maseru: National Environmental Secretariat, 2000), 9-11.

shrub as *sehalahala* (*Chrysocoma tenuifolia*). The ecologists believed that *sehalahala*, which was native to southern Africa and a member of the aster family, had displaced other grasses primarily because of overgrazing. Known to white South African farmers as bitter karoo, or *bitterbos* in Afrikaans, livestock would not touch this small bush. The surveyors claimed that it covered 13% of the Maloti in 1936. Staples and Hudson completed this work in a period when ecological science adhered to notions of equilibrium within ecosystems. Moreover, the pair worked within an imperial political apparatus that was then emphasizing the erosive effects of the grazing practices of Basotho and other African groups.<sup>32</sup>

Basutoland was recovering from a terrible drought in 1932-33, which probably affected the vegetative cover of the rangelands in 1936. *Sehalahala* thrived during drought. Still, these findings provide an important historical illustration of the ways the grasslands had changed in the previous fifty years. Although the extent of these changes was unclear, primary accounts of observations from the 1870s through the early 1900s corroborate, more or less, that vegetative cover was less bushy in the early years of agro-pastoral settlements. To be sure, climate variation across the years of these accounts mattered, as did the colonial political-economy in which people farmed and reared livestock, but a general increase in *sehalahala* seems reasonably accurate.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.; Donald Worster, "The Ecology of Order and Chaos," *Environmental History Review* 14, no. 1/2 (1990): 2-3; On ecology and British imperialism, see Peder Anker, *Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire, 1895-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> Thomas P. Kennan, "Discovery and Exploration of Basutoland: Notes on a Journey in 1888," *Lesotho: Basutoland Notes and Records* 4 (1959): 43-45; Dobson noted much good grazing in 1909,



Along with grasses, several indigenous tree species grew in the valleys of the mostly treeless Maloti landscape. French Protestant missionaries, especially the builder François Maeder cursed the dearth of timber in the areas around their first mission station at Morija after 1833. He cried that there was “every reason to justify the description of this whole area as sterile country, as neither trees nor shrubs are anywhere to be seen except on the banks” of the rivers.<sup>34</sup> Maeder’s forested home in Germany certainly tinted the lens through which he viewed the Maloti. His frustration also owed to his daunting task of building a church from timber in Lesotho. But he correctly pointed out that most prominent native species of trees in Lesotho grew almost exclusively in valleys. *Mohloare* (*Olea africana*/wild olive), *Moluoane* (*Salix mucronata*/Cape willow), *Molutu* (*Celtis africana*/stinkwood), and *Cheche* (*Leucosidea sericea*/oldwood) among other trees, shrubs, and flowering plants grew in clusters along watercourses where their roots could tap the perennial moisture under the rocky ground.<sup>35</sup>

These four species were, and still are, important trees for ecological, economic, and cultural reasons in Lesotho. Missionaries prioritized wood as an essential natural resource. Baroa had used wood for tools, fuel, and weapons, but had made little ecological impact on trees in the Maloti by 1880. Agro-pastoral

---

but he also mentions *sehalahala* being present on the route between the colonial administrative camps at Qacha’s Nek and Mokhotlong, *Military Report, Vol. II*, 116-22; Sayce, “Ethno-Geographical Essay,” 276-79.

<sup>34</sup> François Maeder, quoted in Germond, *Chronicles*, 54.

<sup>35</sup> On how European landscapes informed missionary perspectives of African environments, see Patrick Harries, “Under Alpine Eyes: Constructing Landscape and Society in Late Pre-Colonial South-East Africa,” *Paideuma* 43 (1997): 171-91; Ambrose et al., *Biological Diversity*, 18-24.

African practices of the time seem to have conserved these trees, to some extent, to be used sparingly as fuelwood, as building material, or as medicine trees. This last use was the case with a large *molutu* that Chief Masupha (Moshoeshoe's third son) revered for its spiritual and symbolic power until his death in 1899. Masupha's *molutu* tree measured over ten feet in circumference and was sixty feet high.<sup>36</sup> Numerous species of aloe (*lekhala*), too, thrived especially on northern facing, sun drenched mountain slopes. African architecture of the time used mostly grass, reeds, clay, stone, and cow dung plaster (*molilo*). But by the late 1800s, more Basotho families were building homes that used wood. Europeans struggled to adapt in the tree-poor landscape; and the indigenous pockets of forest suffered under the axe, especially around mission stations. Responding to their own destructive practice, missionaries engaged in afforestation in the lowlands as early as the 1860s.<sup>37</sup>

A similar forest history unfolded in the highlands, if delayed by several decades. Crossing the Senqu River near Sehonghong in December 1873, James Grant noted that the river was "fringed with willows," this while reporting no villages or even cattle posts.<sup>38</sup> Jobo Moteane and Sir Marshall-Clarke both suggested that at least some change was under way when they passed through the same area in October 1887. Marshall-Clarke noted that upon leaving Lelingoana's village – which was not yet ten years old – there were "willows and reeds in abundance." He then lamented, however, that "formerly all the mountain streams were lined with

---

<sup>36</sup> Germond, *Chronicles*, 57.

<sup>37</sup> Casalis, *The Basutos*, 125-28; Jean Preen, quoted in Germond, *Chronicles*, 56.

<sup>38</sup> Webb, "Grant's Diary," 18 December 1873.

willows.” In the 1880s some travelers believed, mistakenly, that the Maloti had been previously forested. Nonetheless, Clarke would have seen stumps that resulted from new settlers cutting firewood and building material for survival in the higher, colder mountain environments.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to trees, various reeds (*mahlaka*) played important parts in both mountain ecology and African culture. On his journey in 1887 to the source of the Senqu near the escarpment, Moteane noted that there were “no trees or even reeds, just tall grass.” But upon descending several hundred meters down the watershed they “reached an area with beautiful willow trees together with reeds, contrasting with the bareness upstream.”<sup>40</sup> In addition to their ecological purpose of cradling the headwaters of rivers and streams, reed beds had provided tools for Baroa and materials for building homes and homestead enclosures for agro-pastoral settlers. Reeds had cosmological significance too. Basotho believed that their ancestors had emerged from an area of wetland reed beds known as *Ntsuana-tsatsi*, located to the north of modern-day Lesotho. Despite conservation practices, which changed over time, within the Maloti many reed beds and wetlands disappeared as new settlers established villages, put their animals out to pasture, and tilled dark soils on bottom lands where reeds once thrived.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Clarke, “Unexplored Basutoland,” 519.

<sup>40</sup> David Ambrose and Pelesa Sekoli, eds., trans., “Jobo Moteane's account of a journey through the Lesotho Highlands 100 years ago,” *Mehloli* 2, no. 4 (1990): 12-14.

<sup>41</sup> Daniel F. Ellenberger, *History of the Basuto: Ancient and Modern*, trans. J.C. Macgregor (London: Caxton Publishing, 1912), 70-73; Arbousset, *Missionary Excursion*, 72-73; M. Mokhothu and T.C. Ts'ehlo, “Water Resources and Water Use,” in Chakela, ed., *State of the Environment*, 134-35.

New settlers brought new knowledge to bear on trees, reeds, and grasses of the Maloti which altered local ecology. These alterations, however, do not necessarily imply a historical trajectory of decline where population growth meant ecological deterioration. On the contrary, the 1880s and subsequent periods offer stories of humans interacting and changing their environments in complex, non-linear ways.<sup>42</sup> For instance, Basotho developed sophisticated rotational grazing systems to conserve grass, reeds, and trees as population increased. Also, those associated with early missions in the region, began planting new species to mitigate the perceived dearth of wood resources in the face of increased settlement after 1880.<sup>43</sup> The non-native poplars and the giant eucalyptus that I observed in Sehonghong were propagated by humans who applied their local knowledge of place and new cultivars to shape the mountain environment for their own purposes. The outcomes, like the knowledge underpinning the actions, were imperfect. Eucalyptus, for example, provided fuel wood, shade, and building material, but has long since been recognized for its desiccating impact on ground water.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, apart from flora, the changes in the animal populations of the Maloti and subsequent effects on vegetation may have had the most dramatic ecological impact of all. Baroa hunted eland, red hartebeest, and an array of smaller game such as the *pela* (*Procavia capensis*/rock dassie) before and while the agro-pastoralists

---

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Melissa Leach and Robin Mearns, "Challenging Received Wisdom in Africa," in *The Lie of the Land*, 1-33; Spear, *Mountain Farmers*.

<sup>43</sup> *Report and Evidence of Commission on Native Laws and Customs of the Basutos* (Cape Town: Government Printers, 1873), 51-52; Staples and Hudson, *Ecological Survey*, 25.

<sup>44</sup> N. Maile, "Indigenous Forests, Trees, Shrubs, and Afforestation," in Chakela, ed., *State of the Environment*, 82.

were encroaching on their mountain homes.<sup>45</sup> Lions, hippopotamuses, leopards, and crocodiles once lived in the Maloti, but were long gone by 1880. On Thomas Arbousset and Moshoeshoe's journey in 1847, they encountered a frightened lion which they tried to kill, unsuccessfully. This was among the last recorded lion sightings in the area, though smaller felines such as the caracal were sighted in later years. For canines, the *phokojoe* (*Canis mesomelas*/black-backed jackal) prowled the mountains when the first settlers came and continued to do so into the twentieth century, posing a threat to small livestock.<sup>46</sup>

Humans asserted power over animals in various ways. Different cultures of hunting permeated all three major groupings of people who affected the ecology of the Maloti around 1880: Baroa, Agro-Pastoral Africans, and Europeans. Nehemiah Moshoeshoe and his fellow scouts, including a San man named Qing, spotted large eland spoors (trails) for the Grant-Orpen expedition of late 1873, though the expedition struggled to bag significant game.<sup>47</sup> In 1888, the British administrator T.P. Kennan, relying on the expertise of several Basotho guides, hunted eland, red hartebeest and reedbuck.<sup>48</sup> Numerous bird species, too, populated the uplands, some of which took on important cultural meanings. Baroa fished the deep pools of rivers like the Tsoelike and Senqu for aquatic edibles.<sup>49</sup> Some hunting continued into the twentieth century, indeed Basotho still hunt rock dassies, hares, river otters,

---

<sup>45</sup> Wright, *Bushmen Raiders*, 4-10.

<sup>46</sup> Arbousset, *Missionary Excursion*, 113-22, 127-28.

<sup>47</sup> Grant's Diary, reproduced in Mitchell and Challis, "First Glimpse," 434-38.

<sup>48</sup> Kennan, "Discovery and Exploration," 43-45.

<sup>49</sup> Patricia Vinnicombe, "A Fishing-Scene from the Tsoelike River, South-Eastern Basutoland," *The South African Archaeological Bulletin* 15, no. 57 (1960): 15-19.

and birds, while also dropping the occasional fishing line in the rivers. But agro-pastoral communities severely limited the habitat for wild animals by the mid-1890s when they plowed vast acreages and grazed their animals in remote valleys and atop distant peaks. The ecological revolution in the Maloti occurred concurrently with, and because of, the interface between diverse human groups.

### **1.3 - Cultural Interface amongst Baroa, Baphuthi, and 'Basotho'**

The life of Qing, the San man who guided Orpen and Grant's 1873 military expedition, illustrates important aspects of the frontier process that lies at the base of modern environmental history in Qacha's Nek. Igor Kopytoff has argued that a process where different cultures and polities have interacted with one another across a specific landscape, "has been repeated again and again in African culture history, giving African societies and their political culture a frontier cast."<sup>50</sup> In this section, I focus on the cultural side of this interface. My main concern in this process of what Charles Van Onselen has called "cultural osmosis" is how knowledge for understanding and using natural resources moved between people from different social backgrounds.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Igor Kopytoff, "Introduction: The Internal African Frontier," in *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, ed. Kopytoff (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987), 7.

<sup>51</sup> Charles Van Onselen, "Race and Class in the South African Countryside: Cultural Osmosis and Social Relations in the Sharecropping Economy of the South Western Transvaal, 1900-1950," *The American Historical Review* 95, no. 1 (1990): 99-123.

The frontier experience in eastern Lesotho bore similarities to other places in Africa and beyond. Comparing North America and South Africa, historians have defined the frontier as a “zone of interpenetration between two previously distinct societies.” One society was “indigenous to the region, or at least had occupied it for many generations, the other was intrusive.” The frontier “opened” when the first representatives of the intrusive society arrived; it “closed” when a single authority had established political control over the zone.<sup>52</sup> This holds true, to some extent, for eastern Lesotho. Indeed, it holds true for Lesotho as a whole which formed when a conglomeration of chieftainships sought protection under the Sotho Chief Moshoeshoe (d. 1870) in the wake of the regional instability during the *lifiqane* of the 1820s.<sup>53</sup> Although the two societies, Bantu and San, had long been in contact prior to meeting in the Maloti, the years between the 1870s and 1895 encompassed a rapid process where a frontier opened when Bantu first moved into San-occupied highlands, and closed when the political descendants of Moshoeshoe established hegemony over the region by designating it a district and placing an official district, or ward chief there in 1895.

So how does Qing fit in? The leader of the 1873 military expedition Joseph Orpen needed a guide who knew the Maloti, especially the upper Senqu Valley. Orpen also sought someone to educate him on San rock art, a subject in which he had become interested. Orpen had heard of Qing, who was a son of Soai. Soai was

---

<sup>52</sup> Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, eds., *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 7.

<sup>53</sup> Peter Sanders, *Moshoeshoe: Chief of the Sotho* (London: Heinemann, 1975), 32-45.

the San leader who was killed by Basotho around 1870 at his stronghold, the Sehonghong rock shelter. Soai was thought to have been the last San leader in the Maloti, and his son Qing had escaped that same fate. Qing was working as “a hunter in the employ of Nqasha [Qacha],” a Mophuthi chief when Orpen hired him. During the expedition, according to Orpen, Qing “proved a diligent and useful guide, and became a favorite, he and his clever little mare, with which he dashed and doubled among the stones like a rabbit when his passion for hunting occasionally led him astray.”<sup>54</sup>

Qing was a San man living in an increasingly Bantu world in the 1870s, but he still possessed the deep environmental knowledge that undergirded Baroa lifeways. These same lifeways influenced what Bantu settlers knew and learned about living in the Maloti. “The people of the eland,” as these San identified themselves, focused their aesthetic, moral, and intellectual speculations on the eland, in addition to using this animal for material sustenance. Plants, animals, fish, and the landscape itself, especially rock shelters, provided the resource base from which people obtained food, clothing, shelter, and medicine.<sup>55</sup> Men hunted eland and other game using bows and arrows that were tipped with poison from processed tree bark. Often, hunters would draft animals into corners of cliffs where they could shoot them, or trap them in pits lined with sharpened stakes. Men also harvested honey from bees’

---

<sup>54</sup> Orpen, “A Glimpse,” 2; See also, Mark McGranaghan et al., “Joseph Millerd Orpen’s ‘A Glimpse into the Mythology of the Maluti Bushmen’: a contextual introduction and republished text,” *Southern African Humanities* 25 (November 2013): 137-66.

<sup>55</sup> Patricia Vinnicombe, *People of the Eland: rock paintings of the Drakensberg Bushmen as a reflection of their life and thought* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1976).



nests, often following the greater honeyguide, a bird that had assisted many African groups in this pursuit by signaling a nest's location through its intricate calls.<sup>56</sup> Men also fished in the rivers using hooks made of wood or ivory, and baited with meat. The fishermen fastened the hooks to thread made from eland sinew. In winter, when water levels were low, fishermen speared fish as they gathered in small pools. Women, perhaps the bearers of the greatest botanical knowledge, collected locusts, gathered fruits and seeds, and dug up roots and bulbs to provide nourishment and medicine.<sup>57</sup>

The stock of Baroa environmental knowledge, with which Qing was intimately familiar, permeated Bantu lifeways far beyond food. In the winter, Baroa hunkered into the many sandstone overhangs of the Maloti, like the one at Sehonghong. In warmer months they built circular huts made of tree branches, and topped with thatch grass.<sup>58</sup> Baroa also crafted musical instruments, developed techniques for smoking dagga (marijuana), and deployed a sophisticated herbal pharmacology. Bushman painting traditions, too, show a refined environmental knowledge by which people gathered materials and prepared paint from blood and

---

<sup>56</sup> Marion W. How, *The Mountain Bushmen of Basutoland* (Pretoria: Van Schaik Ltd., 1962), 43-47; On honeyguides in Africa, see Nancy Jacobs, *Birders of Africa: History of a Network* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 1-6.

<sup>57</sup> How, *Mountain Bushmen*; Patricia Vinnicombe, "Basotho Oral Knowledge: The last Bushmen inhabitants of the Mashai District, Lesotho," in *The Eland's People: New Perspectives in the Rock Art of the Maloti-Drakensberg Bushmen, Essays in Memory of Patricia Vinnicombe*, eds. Peter Mitchell and Benjamin Smith (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009), 173-82; Ellenberger, *History*, 8-9.

<sup>58</sup> Ellenberger, *History*, 10.

earth, while simultaneously illustrating their cosmology and leaving artistic evidence of their lives.<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps language was the most important influence of the San on Sesotho culture. It was certainly the most audible. For example, the “Q” sound in Sesotho signifies a click and was integrated during a prolonged historical interaction between Sotho-speakers and San, which we still know relatively little about. San words and names of people mark the Maloti landscape today.<sup>60</sup> As the types of cultural mixing and environmental knowledge become clearer, it must be stressed that the Maloti San’s demise came through tense confrontation in the nineteenth century. As encroachment threatened the Baroa’s natural resource base, they adapted by raiding horses and cattle from adjacent areas, and hiding in more secluded locations. These actions, especially the livestock raiding, drew reprisals from both Bantu and European settlers.<sup>61</sup>

But Bantu relations with the San differed across groups. Qacha, Qing’s employer prior to the 1873 expedition, and from whom the district would take its name, was a son of Moorosi, the great chief of the Baphuthi. The Baphuthi spoke Sephuthi, the distinctive language which had derived from their Nguni origins to the east of the Drakensberg. The Baphuthi had migrated their way through the

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., How, *The Mountain Bushmen*, 26-35; On knowledge exchange, see Vinnicombe, *People of the Eland*; Pieter Jolly, “Symbiotic Interaction between Black Farmers and South-Eastern San: Implications for Southern African Rock Art Studies, Ethnographic Analogy, and Hunter-Gatherer Cultural Identity,” *Current Anthropology* 37 (April 1996): 277-305.

<sup>60</sup> Ellenberger, *History*, 6-7, 11; See also, Alan Barnard, *Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa: A Comparative Ethnography of the Khoisan peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 25, 90-91. The so-called mountain bushmen were !Wi- speakers which was a heterogeneous and geographically scattered cluster. “People of the Eland” is an anglicized translation of N//ng.

<sup>61</sup> Wright, *Bushman Raiders*, 166-72.

nineteenth century, navigating the turbulent political terrain between their ancestral home on the banks of the Tugela River and the Caledon Valley to the west. By the 1840s, under the leadership of Moorosi, they had become politically subordinate, owing allegiance to Moshoeshe. But Chief Moorosi and his followers sought some autonomy by settling to the south of the Senqu River in what became Quthing district.<sup>62</sup>

The Baphuthi had close links to the Baroa. Some contemporaries believed that Moorosi himself had San blood. He married at least two San wives and had several children by them. A young son of Moorosi named Mapote later recalled that his half-brothers had taught him the art of rock painting. Bushmen who lived under Moorosi's protection were considered equal to Baphuthi with regard to the laws against killing. The two groups hunted eland together and traded horses. Certainly, they also exchanged the environmental knowledge that came along with traveling and hunting in a vernacular landscape: animal behavior, edible plants, weather, and orientation. Moorosi's sons were the first Bantu to establish villages in the sparsely populated upper Senqu catchment. Foremost among them, Qacha had arrived sometime before December 1873.<sup>63</sup>

But migration soon quickened following Moorosi's War. Moorosi and his followers, Baroa among them, fought against the Cape Colonial forces and their Basotho auxiliaries in 1879. Cape authorities had threatened to annex Quthing and

---

<sup>62</sup> Ellenberger, *History*, 21-30, 159-64; George M. Theal, *Basutoland Records*, quoted in Germond, *Chronicles*, 330-32; See also, Peter Sanders, *'Throwing Down White Man': Cape Rule and Misrule in Colonial Lesotho, 1871-1884* (Moriya: MMA, 2010), 64-65.

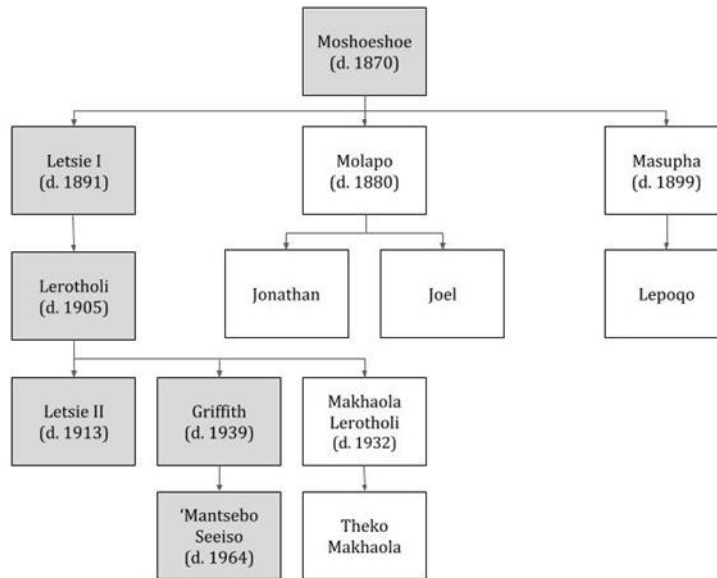
<sup>63</sup> How, *Mountain Bushmen*, 31-33; Wright, *Bushmen Raiders*, 175.

arrested Doda, Moorosi's eldest son, for stealing a horse. Moorosi then organized his son's escape, bringing the tensions to a head. The old chief, then in his eighties, fought to the death from atop his mountain fortress above the Senqu—a mountain which still bears his name. Moorosi's captors beheaded him and mutilated his body. Following this defeat, Baphuthi refugees sought security in remote valleys to the east and north of Mt. Moorosi. Small communities of Sephuthi speakers still live in these places, where they speak their unfortunately fading language (in addition to Sesotho) amid the hegemony of a Basotho polity. Although Moorosi himself had been subordinate to Moshoeshoe since 1868, following the war in 1879 Baphuthi chiefs lost more autonomy as Basotho chiefs, too, migrated into the mountains, extending the political rule of Letsie, Moshoeshoe's successor and eldest son.<sup>64</sup>

The first Basotho to push into, but not settle, the Maloti frontier seemed to have been the Molapos (See Figure 1.4). Molapo was the second son of Moshoeshoe who controlled the Leribe district in the north of Basutoland until his death in 1880. His sons Jonathan and Joel served as his strongest foot soldiers and would succeed their father. The Boers of the Orange Free State (OFS), descendants of Dutch settlers, had defeated the Basotho militarily in 1868, which pushed some of Molapo's villages

---

<sup>64</sup> Sanders, *Throwing Down*, 64-81; Machobane, *Government and Change*, 51-52; Jobo Moteane, reproduced in Ambrose and Brutsch, trans., Part V, *Mehloli* 3, no. 1 (1991): 7; Jacottet, quoted in Germond, *Chronicles*, 428. Touring the mountains in 1893 Jacottet mistakenly thought that Baphuthi settlers had reached Sehonghong by 1865. But based on evidence from the Orpen/Grant trek in 1873, there were no permanent villages there before then.



**Figure 1.4**  
 Moshoeshoe's Lineage (selected) with  
 paramount chiefs highlighted in gray.  
 Source: created by author in consultation with  
 Rosenberg et al., *Historical Dictionary of Lesotho*.

south across the newly hardened border at the Caledon River. In this context, Molapo obtained permission from his elder brother Letsie – who would succeed Moshoeshoe in 1870 as king – for permission to extend his grazing territory deeper into the mountains. Molapo took this to mean that he now had jurisdiction all the way into the Senqu Valley to Sehonghong. To survey these interests Jonathan then scouted the area for prospective cattle posts.<sup>65</sup>

Local Baroa undoubtedly took notice of Jonathan's reconnaissance excursions. By 1871 San groups in the Maloti had been raiding the livestock of

<sup>65</sup> MMA, "1909 Court on Settlement in the mountains," pp. 5-7; Wright, *Bushman Raiders*, 167-68.

owners in Natal, East Griqualand, and Lesotho for many years.<sup>66</sup> And so it seems probable that they raided down into Molapo's area. Evidence suggests that Jonathan and Joel Molapo led several reprisal missions. On one such mission the Basotho killed Soai and several of his followers. There are conflicting stories of the lethal raid. One story has it that Soai was shot as he tried to hide underwater while breathing through a protruding reed. Another story says that he was killed as he gathered honey on a cliff in the Sehonghong Valley.<sup>67</sup>

However he met his end, the death of Soai around 1871 was a decisive moment. Two years later the Orpen and Grant expedition passed through a seemingly uninhabited Senqu Valley near Sehonghong. But by 1878 a Sotho chief called Tlhakanelo had established a village there. Remaining Baroa refugees fled or were absorbed into Baphuthi or Basotho villages in surrounding areas, often as herders, or hunters as in Qing's case. Some small groups of San were said to be living in the precipitous Tsoelike River Gorge as late as 1886, but by then the era of Sotho dominance had dawned in the Maloti.<sup>68</sup> Both Qing and his master, Qacha, would soon find themselves subject to the rule of Moshoeshoe's Bakoena successors and their British colonial counterparts, both of which were headquartered in the lowlands to the west.

---

<sup>66</sup> Wright, *Bushman Raiders*, 168-80, 196-201.

<sup>67</sup> On the story of Soai being killed in a river pool, see S.S. Dornan, "Notes on the Bushmen of Basutoland," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 18 (1909): 437-50; Azariele Sekese: "Baroa," *Leselinyana*, 7 March 1912; "Tsa Baroa," *Leselinyana*, 4 July 1912; On the honey-gathering narrative, see Liselo Rankoli, quoted in Vinnicombe, "Basotho Oral Knowledge," 172; How, *Mountain Bushmen*, 16; For a summary of these sources, see Mitchell, "Making History at Sehonghong," 156-59.

<sup>68</sup> Webb, "Grant's Diary"; MMA, "1909 Court on Settlement of the Mountains," pp. 5-8; Jacottet, quoted in Germond, *Chronicles*, 429; Vinnicombe, "A Fishing-Scene," 4-9.

But what do we really know about this historical interface and how do we know it? This knowledge has its own story too, and the story merits comment. Although written evidence of the varied interactions between Baroa, Baphuthi, Basotho, and Nguni in the Maloti is limited, archaeologists have examined written and oral evidence alongside rock art and material remains to shed light on this frontier process. Scholars, however, have disagreed on methods and findings. Methods in so-called Bushmen Studies have proceeded through several phases. Each phase was embedded in contemporary South African politics, in which diverse groups' claims to land and political legitimacy have changed over time. Generally speaking, researchers and hobbyists of the antiquarian mold, which dates back to the 1800s, peered through a Eurocentric lens to focus on painting techniques, classification, and chronology. By the 1960s, an empirical approach captured the field. Taking this approach, researchers carefully mapped and quantified sites, often tracing the paintings to preserve them and to enable further study.<sup>69</sup>

Patricia Vinnicombe, a founding scholar in this field, created meticulous stencils for the Maloti rock art sites, which culminated in her landmark book, *People of the Eland* in 1976. Vinnicombe's work led to a new approach in which scholars sought to understand the religious symbolism in the paintings by using ethnographic analogy.<sup>70</sup> Researchers read the rich ethnographic material gathered from San groups in the Kalahari Desert in order to interpret what was happening in

---

<sup>69</sup> Barnard, *Hunters and Herders*, 90-93; J. David Lewis-Williams, "The Evolution of Theory, Method and Technique in Southern African Rock Art Research," *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 13, no. 4 (2006): 343-77.

<sup>70</sup> Vinnicombe, *People of the Eland*, 135-43.

the Maloti cave painting scenes. Using this method David Lewis-Williams, among others, argued that most painting scenes could not be viewed literally. Rather, the paintings represented experiences from ceremonial trance dances where spirit animals and ancestors interacted with living people and the natural world, especially rain.<sup>71</sup> Most recently, Pieter Jolly, Sam Challis, and others have argued that the paintings show a more hybrid, or creole culture than has previously been recognized in the literature. In this view, elements of Sotho, San, and Nguni beliefs and practices reveal a historical cultural overlapping amongst agro-pastoral and hunter-gathering peoples.<sup>72</sup>

For my study, several postulates from this literature will help us to understand how new agro-pastoral settlers in the Maloti compiled and applied environmental knowledge from the 1870s onwards. First, to some extent, the relationship between Bantu and Baroa was symbiotic. Despite unequal power relations and conflict between the groups, paintings show that hybridity, not exclusivity, was normative. As Jolly argues, the scenes depicted in the Melikane shelter contain elements of Basotho, Baphuthi, and Baroa male initiation rites (See Figure 1.5). For example, artists painted therianthropic (part human, part animal) figures which probably represented San people who adopted the ceremonial dress of Bantu initiation participants. Or, these bent over figures with human legs and

---

<sup>71</sup> For example, J. David Lewis-Williams, *Believing and Seeing: Symbolic Meanings in Southern San Rock Paintings* (London: Academic Press, 1981).

<sup>72</sup> Jolly, "Symbiotic Interaction;" Pieter Jolly, "The San Rock Painting from 'The Upper Cave at Mangolong,' Lesotho," *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 61, no. 183 (2006): 68-75; Sam Challis et al., "Rain Snakes from the Senqu River: new light on Qing's commentary on San rock art from Sehonghong, Lesotho," *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* 48, no. 3 (2013): 1-24.



arms and antelope heads may represent Bantu speakers wearing masks and participating in San ceremonies.<sup>73</sup>



**Figure 1.5**

Scene from Melikane Shelter, Qacha's Nek  
Note: Image comes from a tracing made in 1873.  
Source: P. Vinnicombe, *People of the Eland*, 315.

Either way, knowledge traveled in multiple directions, if along particular social contours. In these social relations Baphuthi exercised some political power over Baroa, and Basotho asserted power over both Baphuthi and Baroa. Furthermore, as the rock art research has shown, economic categories such as hunter-gatherer and agro-pastoral fall apart when considering this historical interface. San people rode horses and herded some cattle when wild game became scarce. Baphuthi and Basotho collected wild plants and hunted, not only in times of want, but alongside their farming and herding practices. In fact, some of the “Bushmen raiders,” as John Wright has shown, were composed of both Bantu and

---

<sup>73</sup> Jolly, “Symbiotic Interaction,” 71-73.

Baroa men.<sup>74</sup> These blurred categories, in the economic and cultural senses, form an important part of the historical process of environmental knowledge compilation.

The Basotho also identified with the Baroa's reverence for rain. Rain connected human economic needs to cosmology. Both groups believed in the power of the supernatural to bring rain, especially in dry years, which were common in southern Africa. Baroa and Basotho beliefs about rain overlapped with one another. According to climate research there were at least five years during the 1870s considered "very dry" or "relatively dry," including several summer droughts.<sup>75</sup> Adequate and timely rain was essential for supporting palatable grass, wild game, livestock, and crops. These ecological conditions suggest that the 1870s were heightened years for people seeking new knowledge about rain and rainmaking. At Sehonghong, the paintings show an eland as a "rain animal," which San people believed could bring rain when it was killed. A nearby shelter depicts a snake in a similar way. Whether the slaughter typically occurred subconsciously during a dream or trance, or during an actual hunt, is uncertain.<sup>76</sup>

Among the Basotho, too, animals were important in this regard. Clan lineages identified themselves by animal totems. The Bakoena were the people of the crocodile. The Bataung were the people of the lion. The Bafokeng, were people of the hare, and so on. Basotho believed that certain animals forewarned of certain events.

---

<sup>74</sup> Jolly, "San Rock Painting," 68-70; Wright, *Bushman Raiders*, 200-01.

<sup>75</sup> David Nash and Stefan Grab, "A Sky of brass and burning winds: documentary evidence of rainfall variability in the Kingdom of Lesotho, Southern Africa, 1824-1900," *Climate Change* 101 (2010): 625.

<sup>76</sup> Peter Mitchell, *The Archaeology of Southern Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 202-03; Challis et al., "Rain Snakes."

For instance, when the *masianoke* (*Scopus umbretta*/hammerkop) appears by a stream near the village, lightening was bound to strike. Furthermore, people in these clans used several rain-making techniques that intersected with Baroa and Nguni practices. Hired by prominent chiefs, Basotho rainmakers (*baroka*) mixed herbs and water to form a broth that was supposed to encourage rain. Another method was a rite called *molutsoane*. On an appointed day parties of men skulked up along nearby rivers, killing every wild animal that they came across. They disemboweled the animals and tossed the stomachs into the river before dancing their way back to their chief's court. The clouds, participants believed, would open up shortly thereafter. Regardless of effectiveness, the work of *baroka* and the *molutsoane* rite were both rooted in a common environmental concern of Baroa and Basotho, and likely emerged from cultural interactions across time.<sup>77</sup>

In sum, Baroa and Basotho exchanged extensive knowledge of plants, climate, and geography through this interface. Qing's life exemplified this interface. We know too that Basotho and Baphuthi both revered Baroa for their vast knowledge of botanical medicines and for their spiritual power.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, it is difficult to sort through these syncretic cultural tapestries. But this discussion, and the archaeological literature that has informed it, has demonstrated that Basotho were compiling new environmental knowledge through a dynamic social process. In this process they interacted with the remaining Baroa of the Maloti as they tested a

---

<sup>77</sup> Justinus Sechefo, *Customs and Superstitions in Basutoland* (Roma: National University of Lesotho, 1960), 16-17, 29; Ellenberger, *History*, 252-55; Hugh Ashton, *The Basuto* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 12-17, 115, 132, 212; Jacobs, *Birders of Africa*, 42-43.

<sup>78</sup> Ellenberger, *History*, 6, 261-63; Vinnicombe, "Basotho Oral Knowledge," 165-82.

different landscape that placed new demands on their livelihood practices. These practices, and the fluid nature of the knowledge that underpinned them, also intersected with several cultural institutions, which were also in constant flux.

#### **1.4 - Cultural Institutions of the New Highlanders**

In this section I outline several key Basotho institutions as they have related to human relationships with natural resources. All of these institutions changed from the 1870s to the 1960s and I will address these changes in various parts of this dissertation. The following descriptions of *borena* (chieftainship), *mafisa* (livestock loans), *leboella* (reserved grazing/spare-veld), *letsema* (tribute/collective labor), and *lebollo/bale* (male/female initiation) serve as introductions only. Other key institutions, such as marriage, land tenure, and law will be touched upon here as well and developed more fully in subsequent chapters.

The main social distinction in Basotho society in 1880 was between chiefs (pl., *marena*/sing., *morena*) and commoners, or subjects (pl., *bafo*/sing., *mofo*). Chiefs derived their power from the support of their followers. For Basotho, a chief was a chief by the people – *Morena ke morena ka batho*. Chiefs had duties to their followers such as allocating rights to arable fields to every married man; regulating use of pastures and residential sites; administering justice through courts; and not least, providing sustenance for destitute villagers. Commoners followed chiefs on their own free will, and in theory, could migrate to another village in cases of

mistreatment or neglect. Many families did switch allegiance between chiefs through a practice known as “turning the door of the hut.” Chiefs used cattle as socio-political tools to maintain power over their subjects, to expand their influence, and to provide for the poor.<sup>79</sup>

*Mafisa* was a key institution for meeting these objectives. From at least the 1820s onwards, Moshoeshoe and other Sotho chiefs in the Caledon River Valley allocated the cattle that they had captured in war and in raiding parties to attract followers.<sup>80</sup> Chiefs would loan cattle to destitute men for them to look after. Caretakers milked the cows to feed their families, they processed the manure into fuel (*lisu*), they harnessed the oxen for draught and transport power, they earned an occasional calf as reward, and they sometimes slaughtered an ailing animal for food. In this way, chiefs distributed livestock to many different clients who grazed them across more verdant pastures, and thereby fostered biological reproduction of cattle. This was achieved while claiming the loyalty of the client. By the late 1800s, *mafisa* was entrenched in Sesotho culture and the lenders (patrons) were no longer just chiefs.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> *Report of Proceedings of the Basutoland National Council, 1908, and Correspondence as to Affairs of Basutoland* (London: HMSO, 1908), 5; MMA, “Basutoland Native Laws of Lerotholi as amended by the National Council,” October 1922; Stimela Jingoos, *A Chief is a Chief by the People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 171-75; Ian Hamnett, *Chieftainship and Legitimacy: An anthropological study of executive law in Lesotho* (London: Routledge, 1975), 67; Casalis, *The Basutos*, 214-15; Sekhese, *Mekhoa*, 57-68.

<sup>80</sup> Ellenberger, *History*, 115, 196.

<sup>81</sup> Sekhese, *Mekhoa*, 70; Casalis, *The Basutos*, 155; Eldredge, *South African Kingdom*, 34-37; See also, Hoyt Alverson, “Arable Agriculture in Botswana: Some contributions of the traditional social formation,” *Rural Africana* 4 (Spring 1979): 33-47.

Commoners, sometimes former *mafisa* beneficiaries, had accumulated livestock by bartering, breeding, and loaning. This enabled them to establish their own clientele. This redistribution practice extended chiefs' power over people, but also enabled some commoners to grow their own herds. As a historical concept, *mafisa* undergirded a variety of arrangements for assuring basic subsistence of rural Basotho. In some ways, *mafisa* became a metaphor for the responsibilities of chiefs to their followers, especially in times of hunger. 'Cattle' could mean clothing, grain, or other necessities.<sup>82</sup> The extent to which the system ever harmonized rural social relations remains uncertain, but the ways in which these obligations have been carried out or neglected over time have had implications for social inequality, ecological change, and access to arable fields.<sup>83</sup>

By 1880 the colonial government and the Basotho chieftainship were working to standardize the Sesotho land tenure system. Because Sesotho tenure was based, at least to some extent, on communal rights to land and pasture, the system clashed with liberal European beliefs that free-hold tenure was an essential prerequisite for capitalist growth. This debate has continued into the twenty-first

---

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Mokhafisi Kena, Ha Makhaola, 10 December 2015.

<sup>83</sup> In this way, *mafisa* and *borena* fit into the larger debates about moral economy in pre-colonial, pre-capitalist societies around the world. James Scott argued that indigenous political systems based on moral principles (as opposed to market principles) guided relations between chiefs and commoners, and between patrons and clients, guaranteeing a basic subsistence for all villagers. See Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Resistance in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976); Samuel Popkin counter-argued that pre-colonial political structures fostered social inequality through exploitation and accumulation before colonial capitalism took hold. See Popkin, *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979).

century.<sup>84</sup> Theoretically, the king (a title to be explained further) held all the land in Lesotho on behalf of the people. Local chiefs administered arable fields and residential sites to commoners on the king's behalf. Chiefs allocated usufruct rites to three fields for each married man to be planted and rotated with, ideally, maize, sorghum, and wheat. However, population growth, plowing of steep slopes, soil exhaustion and erosion, and not least, the changing political economy all contributed to making this ideal increasingly rare by the early twentieth century.<sup>85</sup>

From plowing season through harvest, these fields were the exclusive property of the owner. Once the harvest was complete, the chief declared the fields open for common grazing until farmers began plowing again the following spring. Apart from the arable fields and residential sites, Basutoland consisted mostly of common pasture that was available for all Basotho to use for grazing as well as for gathering food, medicine, and building material. Mission stations and government properties received special allocations from local chiefs and from the king. But the government and chiefs sought to fix the tenure system during a time of rapid economic and demographic change. By the 1880s, an increased national livestock herd that grazed extensively had combined with the surge in plowed acreage, and

---

<sup>84</sup> Vernon Sheddick, *Land Tenure in Basutoland* (London: HMSO, 1954); On recent debates, see for example, Steven Turner and M. Adams, "Integrating Land Tenure Issues into Lesotho's Food Security Policy, *Report for Lesotho Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security* 3, no. 3 (February 2005).

<sup>85</sup> Murray, *Families Divided*, 71-72.

the spread of new villages to place new pressure on pastures and fields, which were by then constrained within political boundaries as they had never been before.<sup>86</sup>

Basotho chiefs and commoners understood that livestock rearing caused ecological changes in the grassland. So, they developed a practice known as *leboella* (reserved grazing) to conserve these resources. Although its origins are not entirely clear, Basotho land managers seem to have practiced *leboella* widely by 1873. *Leboella* integrated political authority with deep knowledge of weather, vegetation, human needs, and animal husbandry. Extending from April through August, people accessed three distinct types of spare-veld. A designated caretaker called the *mobei oa leboella*, enforced this custom on the chief's behalf.<sup>87</sup> All spare-veld was marked off by stone beacons. The first type was bush, or forest, where people were permitted to collect select wood for fuel and building purposes during the first cold months of the year. The second type included rocky slopes where thatch grass grew, such as *mohlomo*, used in roofing.<sup>88</sup>

The last type consisted of hearty grasses that remained green into the winter. These areas contained the richest soil, usually near the cultivated bottom lands. Following the maize and sorghum harvests in May or June, and then thatch gathering, the winter pasture cycle began when the chief declared the *maboella* open. Milking cows entered first to graze the best grasses, followed by other bovines

---

<sup>86</sup> Motlatsi Thabane, "Who Owns the Land in Lesotho? Land Disputes and the Politics of Land Ownership in Lesotho," Research Report. Roma, Lesotho: Institute of Southern African Studies, 1998; Patrick Duncan, *Sotho Laws and Customs* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1960), 86-90.

<sup>87</sup> *Commission on Native Laws and Customs of the Basutos*, p. 51; Eldredge, *South African Kingdom*, 61.

<sup>88</sup> Staples and Hudson, *Ecological Survey*, 24.



and equines with the sheep coming last. People gathered silage from the harvest as winter livestock feed before animals devoured the remaining stalks. Select pasture and fields were then set aflame in August to hasten regeneration and bolster soil fertility ahead of the first rains in September or October.<sup>89</sup> Reflecting their social distinction, chiefs might enjoy year-round privilege to *maboella* as well as special domain over select trees, such as the wild olive, a tree known for its virtually smokeless burning properties and numerous other uses.<sup>90</sup>

As they shaped the landscape through their animals, people also altered their environments through work. *Letsema* served as a cultural mechanism for amplifying these affects by mobilizing and concentrating labor. Like Africa in general, the historical human to land ratio in the region that became Basutoland was low.<sup>91</sup> Comparatively well-off people, especially chiefs, had accumulated wealth more in terms of people and livestock than in land. Chiefs' capacity to manipulate the natural resources of the mountains, especially the grass and arable lands, relied on their ability to accumulate livestock and people, or at least access to people's labor. Breaking open virgin fields was arduous work whether using ox-drawn plows or hoes. As part of their duty to their chiefs, all men were required to work the *masimo a lira* of the chiefs. These were fields set aside for village purposes: to provision soldiers, to accommodate visitors, and to feed the destitute. Men worked collectively, plunging their mattocks into the soil in unison while singing songs.

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 24-26.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>91</sup> McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land*, 19-20.

Participants received food and beer for their labor, but the respectful tribute to one's chief was the deeper motivation.<sup>92</sup>

By the 1880s, commoners, missionaries, and the colonial government criticized *letsema*, claiming that many chiefs were abusing the practice by calling out men to work other fields apart from the *masimo a lira*. Some chiefs were selling the produce rather than using it for the designated community purposes. Farmers who aspired to market production complained that the demands of *letsema* left too little time and energy to cultivate their own crops.<sup>93</sup> *Letsema* changed over time, and the term came to mean any form of collective labor done for a common good. Of course, whether or not the labor served a common good, or whether it exploited certain social groups (eg. women), remained contestable. The colonial government embraced the general concept of duty to chief and community into the twentieth century for eliminating noxious weeds by digging, for building roads, and for building soil conservation works. *Letsema*, as originally defined, was abolished in 1950, but Basotho have continued to use the term.<sup>94</sup> According to several interviewees, small work parties for weeding or harvesting on private fields are still called *matsema* (pl.). Government sponsored work gangs, in which people plant

---

<sup>92</sup> Casalis, *The Basutos*, 162-63; MMA, "Basutoland Native Laws," October 1922; Eldredge, *South African Kingdom*, 37-39.

<sup>93</sup> MMA, "Basutoland Native Laws."

<sup>94</sup> CAR 1893-94, p. 13; Lesotho National Archives (Hereafter LNA), S3/1/9/3, Paramount Chief (PC) Griffith to Resident Commissioner (RC), 8 August 1917; *Proceedings of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Basutoland National Council* (Hereafter BNC) for 1946, Vol. 3, 443-45; *BNC, 43<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1947, Vol. 2*, 540; See also, Marc Epprecht, *'This Matter of Women is Getting Very Bad': Gender, Development and Politics in Colonial Lesotho* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KZN Press, 2000), 106.

trees, dig weeds, or build rural roads for wages, may also be called *matsema*.<sup>95</sup> As a means for interacting with the environment, the concept has remained important, though the personal motivations for one's labor have changed immensely.

Finally, Basotho boys and girls became men and women through the initiation experience. At *lebollo* for boys and *bale* for girls, young people acquired new knowledge that had been passed down for generations. In addition to being circumcised (boys), the knowledge learned at initiation had both theoretical and practical dimensions. Initiates learned about Basotho culture and history: who the ancestors were and what they had endured; where and what Basotho had originated from; and how to understand the links between their daily lives, plants and animals, the elements, and the supernatural. They also learned how to care for their spouses and children, how to build and maintain households, how to ride horses and use weapons, and how to raise crops and livestock. Initiates of the same age cohort, under the tutelage of professional teachers (*mesuoue*) would go to the mountains or a secluded river gorge where they constructed the initiation lodge (*mophato*) from local materials. Over the course of several months, participants recited praise poems that linked them to their ancestors (*balimo*) and to the secrets of the *mophato*, which supposedly, the uninitiated could never know.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Maletapata Makhaola, Ha Makhaola, 8 December 2014; Interview with Mapoloko Ramatseka, Ha Makhaola, 2 June 2015; Interview with Marapeli Raselepe, Ha Makhaola, 25 December 2014.

<sup>96</sup> Casalis, *The Basutos*, 261-67; *Commission on Native Laws and Customs*, 39-55; *BNC, 43<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1947*, 675-80; Sechefo, *Customs and Superstitions*, 17; Ashton, *The Basuto*, 46-57.

The experience was arduous. The work of building, gathering fuel wood, butchering animals for food, and enduring harsh elements formed central components of *lebollo* aimed at strengthening boys into men. In essence, the sine qua non of *lebollo* and *bale* was to prepare initiates for the hardships of life. Male initiation culminated with each boy reciting an originally composed praise poem (*lengae*), in which they chronicled their tribulations and connections to their ancestors. Initiates swore to protect the secrets and lessons conferred at *lebollo* from the un-initiated, and they formed bonds within their cohort that endured throughout their lives.<sup>97</sup>

By the 1870s many Basotho parents were already choosing not to send their children to initiation schools. Protestant missionaries, and after their arrival in Lesotho in 1862, Catholics too, demonized *lebollo* along with *bohali* (bride wealth: transfer of cattle from groom's family to bride's family), and *sethepu* (polygamy) as the three primary obstacles to civilization for Basotho. For missionaries and many converts too, *lebollo* conflicted with the formal schooling offered by the missions and government. Initiates often left school in September or October to go to the *mophato*, not returning until the following year. Others, like Chief Jobo who was a Christian and younger brother of Moshoeshoe, argued that *lebollo* fostered crime and disrespect by teaching boys martial skills and encouraging them to acquire cattle and wives at all costs to express their true masculinity. Chief Mofoka, among

---

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., My own personal correspondence with several male initiates between 2009 and 2015 have confirmed that many of these aspects of initiation continue today, while other parts have changed.

others at an 1873 government commission on Basotho laws and customs, seemed indifferent to whether lebollo was abolished or not. Despite its detractors, for many Basotho lebollo has remained a powerful institution for reproducing knowledge and Basotho identity.<sup>98</sup> Christian and government schools appeared in Qacha's Nek around 1893, accelerating only in the 1920s when the Catholics expanded their presence in the mountains. These new schools offered opportunities for acquiring new knowledge, such as literacy. Sometimes the new knowledge overlapped with the old. Such was the case with lessons about agriculture. But mission schools never provided an alternative to the specialized knowledge and secrets taught at initiation.

Lebollo and the other institutions discussed here changed across time and space. Initiation practices adapted, to some extent, to accommodate the growing desire amongst Basotho to send their children to mission schools. As for *leboella*, local ecological and social realities dictated the extent to which people enforced and obeyed grazing regulations, perhaps more than did national government policies. Nor was leboella unchanging when chiefs and colonial officials discussed the practice in 1873. For example, King Letsie (Moshoeshoe's eldest son and successor) explained that the leboella practices regarding trees only emerged from collaborations between Moshoeshoe and his missionary friends at Morija.<sup>99</sup> Perhaps most importantly for discussing the changes in political-ecology and its impact on

---

<sup>98</sup> Casalis, *The Basutos*, 261-67; *Commission on Native Laws and Customs*, 39-55; Sekhese, *Mekhoa*, 20-24; Francois Laydevant, *The Rites of Initiation in Lesotho* (Roma: NUL, 1971); Interview with Mochinti Jane, Motalaneng, 18 May 2015; Interview with George Mohlapiso, Ha Manteko, 29 May 2015.

<sup>99</sup> *Commission on Native Laws and Customs*, 51-52.

environmental knowledge, relations between chiefs and commoners were constantly shifting when the first migrants established their villages in the Maloti.

### **1.5 - The Making of Qacha's Nek: Pioneers, Politics, and Colonialism**

Politics in Basutoland from 1872 to 1884 shaped how, when, and where people settled in the Maloti. The dynamics of this political process, in turn, affected how people interacted with various types of environmental knowledge. This politics of settlement depended on individual chiefs' relationships with the ruling lineage and with the Basutoland government as a whole which was then based in the lowland district of Thaba Bosiu. During the initial settlement years, and for many years to come, Lesotho as a place and polity meant the lowlands, which contrasted in many ways to the Maloti. From 1872 to 1884, Basutoland was under Cape Colonial Rule. The ways in which the Cape administration differed from the previous arrangement where Basutoland was administered as a British territory directly from London ultimately fostered resentment on the part of Basotho, especially the chiefs. Resentment culminated in the Gun Wars (1880-81), which proved to be a key historical event that quickened migration into eastern Lesotho.

A broad outline of Lesotho's early history will help situate the migrations around the time of the Gun Wars. Born circa 1786, King Moshoeshe hailed from the Bakoena (crocodile) clan. He came of age in the first decades of the 1800s near modern day Butha-Buthe district where he learned from his uncle, a renowned sage

called Mohlomi.<sup>100</sup> During the upheavals of the *lifaqane* in the 1820s, when family-based chieftainships in southern Africa migrated, built alliances, or dissolved entirely, Moshoeshoe established his mountain fortress at Thaba Bosiu. It was there that various chiefs encountered him. He fought with some and raided livestock from others. Still others came in peace to request his protection. The young chief adeptly expanded his influence, too, by marrying daughters of various clans, and dispensing patronage through *mafisa* and by allocating rights to land.<sup>101</sup> By the time the first Paris Evangelical Missionaries (PEMS) visited him in 1833, Moshoeshoe had gained substantial influence in the region between the Caledon and Orange Rivers. He wielded authority, to varying degrees, in his relations with other chieftainships such as the Bataung, Batlokoa, and Baphuthi.<sup>102</sup> It was out of this period that the modern identity *Basotho* was born, with Bakoena leadership as the parents. But the Basotho chieftainship was concentrated then in the lowland and foothill areas, with very limited influence in the mountain areas.<sup>103</sup>

The mid-1800s brought renewed threats to the Basotho, this time from Europeans. Moshoeshoe and his followers successfully repelled a military invasion by the Orange Free State (OFS) in 1858 in what became known as Senekal's War. The Boers had coveted the rich farmland between modern day Bloemfontein and

---

<sup>100</sup> Leonard Thompson, *Survival in Two Worlds: Moshoeshoe of Lesotho, 1786-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1-10; Sanders, *Moshoeshoe*, 10-18. Ellenberger, *History*, 90-97.

<sup>101</sup> Thompson, *Survival*, 40-60. For example, Moshoeshoe's first wife was from the Bafokeng clan, his second wife was of the Bahlakoana clan, etc. He married over 100 wives. Sanders, *Moshoeshoe*, 12.

<sup>102</sup> Machobane, *Government and Change*, 5-13; Eldredge, *South African Kingdom*, 31-41.

<sup>103</sup> Scott Rosenberg, *Promises of Moshoeshoe: Culture, Nationalism and Identity in Lesotho* (Roma, Lesotho: Institute of Southern African Studies, 2008).

the Maloti foothills. From 1865 to 1868, the Boers and Basotho fought again in Seqiti's War, and this time Moshoeshe was forced to sign the Treaty of Thaba Bosiu in 1866, or *Khotso ea Mabele* (Peace of the Sorghum) as the Basotho knew it. Had it been implemented entirely, the treaty would have eliminated all but the foothill and mountain areas from Moshoeshe's control. But the politically savvy chief saw no end to conflict with the OFS in sight, so he sought British protection instead. The British, too, saw an opportunity: to drive a geographic wedge between their colony in Natal and the Boers in the OFS, who resented the British imperial reach.<sup>104</sup>

So it was. Basutoland became a British protectorate in March of 1868. Moshoeshe's statecraft had sharpened during several decades of turbulence and had also benefited from his close relationship to the PEMS missionaries who had established themselves at Morija in 1833. But his deal with the British at the Convention of Aliwal North in 1869 still ceded two-thirds of Lesotho's most arable land to the OFS. The geographic borders of Basutoland, *de jure*, were fixed by 1870. Under British protection the Basotho chiefs retained most of their duties such as allocating land, administering justice in courts (*lekhotla*), and regulating land use. But the loss of land and newly constrained borders combined with population growth from natural fertility and immigration to put pressure on scarce arable lands and grazing pasture. Together, these historical forces began pushing the Basotho eastwards, and so too did a new administrative structure.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> Eldredge, *South African Kingdom*, 48-57; Sanders, *Moshoeshe*, 295.

<sup>105</sup> Sanders, *Throwing Down*, 11-17.



The original arrangement struck by Moshoeshoe in 1869 changed when the Cape Colony assumed direct fiscal responsibility for Basutoland in November 1871. Political power now emanated from Cape Town instead of London. Instead of the chiefs holding their own courts, as they had in the past, Cape magistrates took command of legal matters. Magistrates adjudicated in each of the five districts in 1880. A clerk assisted each magistrate, and they were supported by a contingent of the Basutoland Native Police Force, which had been established in October 1872. The Cape administration also continued collecting the hut-tax, which began in 1870 to levy a fixed rate on all married men. To collect the tax in rural areas meant expanding the colonial bureaucracy. The hut tax financed administrative costs, but also facilitated the flow of African labor to South African mines and white-owned farms in the Cape, Natal, and the OFS.<sup>106</sup>

The mineral revolutions in southern Africa and the subsequent migrant labor system have had profound economic, social, cultural, and environmental effects on Lesotho's history, as is true for much of the region. The effects of this system on knowledge, agriculture, and ecological change will be discussed throughout this study. But the political economy approach to historical changes has been well researched elsewhere and will not form a central part of this study.<sup>107</sup> After

---

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 30-35, 44-48; Motlatsi Thabane, "Aspects of Colonial Economy and Society, 1868-1966," in *Essays on Aspects of the Political Economy of Lesotho, 1500-2000*, eds. Thabane and Neville Pule (Roma: NUL, 2002), 110-12.

<sup>107</sup> For example, Bundy, *The Rise and Fall*; Marks and Rathbone, eds., *Industrialization and Social Change in South Africa*; William Beinart, *The Political Economy of Pondoland 1860-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Randall Packard, *White Plague, Black Labor: Tuberculosis and the Political Economy of Health and Disease in South Africa* (Los Angeles: University of California Press,

prospectors discovered diamonds in Kimberley (1867) and gold (1884) on the Witwatersrand (modern Johannesburg), Basotho seized opportunities by working at the mines, transporting goods, and producing grain for the burgeoning markets. Basotho farmers had readily adopted ox-drawn plows from the French missionaries along with wheat and other crops, applying these new technologies to reap profits by opening up virgin grassland on unprecedented scales. With larger plowed tracts, more people sought living space in the uplands. Cheap grain from overseas and high duties on Basotho goods, however, had virtually eliminated Basotho exports by 1890, a shift which further encouraged migrant labor. Over the course of the twentieth century, mostly male laborers worked in South Africa on temporary contracts. The migrant system began during Cape rule, and complicated the relationship between new wage earners, Cape authorities, and chiefs.<sup>108</sup>

With their authority severely checked, chiefs resented Cape Colonial rule. In contrast, for some commoners Cape rule offered respite from what they viewed as the growing abuses by chiefs, some of whom were using letsema labor to extract market surpluses from their fields and extorting excessive taxes from migrant wage earners. But there was one issue that brought many Basotho together in their opposition to Cape Colonial rule: guns. When the Colonial government in Cape Town

---

1989); Belinda Bozzoli and Mmantho Nkotswe, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy, and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1983* (London: James Currey, 1991); Eddy Maloka, *Basotho and the Mines: A Social History of Labour Migrancy in Lesotho and South Africa, c. 1890-1940* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2004); Judy Kimble, ed. by Helen Kimble, *Migrant Labour and Colonial Rule in Basutoland, 1890-1930* (Grahamstown: Rhodes University Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1999); Murray, *Families Divided*.

<sup>108</sup> Eldredge, *South African Kingdom*, 159-66, 184-89; Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, 28-29.

applied the Peace Preservation Act of 1878 to Basutoland, which required all Africans to turn in their firearms, many Basotho refused. In the wake of the humiliating defeat by the Boers in 1869, Basotho men had been buying up guns with their migrant earnings. For opponents of the Act, disarmament threatened not only their personal and national security, but their right to own a technology that symbolized power, prestige, and masculinity for men of all ethnicities in nineteenth-century southern Africa.<sup>109</sup>

Resentment of Cape rule aside, Basotho still fought on both sides of the conflict for personal and political reasons. The rebel forces (*Mabelete*) fought the Cape forces and their Basotho loyalists (*Mateketoa*) to a standstill. Masupha, Moshoeshoe's third son, was perhaps the most fervent rebel and he fought along with regiments led by Letsie, and especially, those led by Letsie's son Lerotholi (See Figure 1.4). But the political fissures between Moshoeshoe's sons, which had opened up after the sovereign's death in 1870, deepened during the Gun War. Molapo's son Jonathan supported the Cape against his brothers. Like other loyalists, Jonathan believed that the outcome was a foregone conclusion and that after the Cape victory the administration would bolster his aspirations to expand his own chieftainship in northern Lesotho. Apart from Bakoena participants, the Batlokoa chief Lelingoana had fought alongside Basotho rebels in a theatre outside of Basutoland just south of Qacha's Nek in Matatiele.<sup>110</sup> As a reward, Letsie granted Lelingoana the right to

---

<sup>109</sup> Sanders, *Throwing Down*, 30-35, 44-48.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-100, 117-21, 182.

settle near the confluence of the Khubelu and Senqu Rivers in modern day Mokhotlong district. Several loyalist chiefs too, seeking security from rebel reprisals which had been frequent before and during the war, also migrated to the uplands.<sup>111</sup>

Whether begun by loyalists, rebels, or other migrants, most villages in the Maloti began as seasonal cattle posts. Travelers called these villages accordingly, for example, Tlhakanelo's Kraal. This designation continued well past a time when Maloti villages were composed of multiple households of men, women, and children living under one chief.<sup>112</sup> Basotho, and indeed many Bantu-speaking Africans besides, built their villages around a central cattle kraal. Anthropologist Adam Kuper has shown that this pattern has deep historical roots and really only began to change in the nineteenth century. Missionary sketches from Thaba Bosiu around 1840 corroborate this spatial dimension of Basotho villages. Villages, in this way, were spatial manifestations of a social and political hierarchy where chiefs presided over commoners, and cattle served important economic, cosmological, and social purposes. From each village, stockowners or chiefs' sons established new posts in higher pastures. Many of these posts, too, became new villages or hamlets.<sup>113</sup>

People migrated to these new villages from the lowlands or South Africa, or from other highland villages to seek fields, pasture, and residential plots. Sometimes

---

<sup>111</sup> Moteane, reproduced in Ambrose and Brutsch, trans., Part III, *Mehloli* 2, no. 2 (1990): 10-12; Jacottet quoted in Germond, *Chronicles*, 429-30.

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, Grant's Diary reproduced in Mitchell and Challis, "First Glimpse," 416, 422; TNA, WO 33/501, Dobson, *Military Report*, Vol. 1, 113-15.

<sup>113</sup> Adam Kuper, *Wives for Cattle: bridewealth and marriage in southern Africa* (London: Routledge, 1982), 141-45; See also, Thomas Huffman, "The Central Cattle Pattern and interpreting the past," *Southern African Humanities* 13 (December 2001): 20; Arbousset, *Missionary Excursion*, 48-49.

people sought to “turn the door of the hut,” by finding a more accommodating and equitable chief. In their formative stage, cattle posts were akin to small satellites of a chief’s village. Chiefs and larger stock owners, by reason of the number of animals that they owned, asserted the most authority over the mountain posts. Eventually, a chief would designate a headman (*ramotse*) to oversee the satellite as more people and animals moved permanently to the area. Many of the headmen sought their own semi-autonomous villages too, where they could allocate fields and dispense patronage (*mafisa*) of their own.<sup>114</sup>

In 1881 Lelingoana and his followers joined the few chiefs who had recently established villages in the Maloti. Chief Tlhakanelo, the son of one of Letsie’s councilors, had built his village at Sehonghong around 1878, just a short hike from where the San leader Soai was killed seven years before. Two sons of Maluke, who was a nephew of Moshoeshoe, settled further down the Senqu, near a place called Matsaile.<sup>115</sup> There were several others too. The most senior and important member of the Koena lineage who settled in these years was Chief Sekake. Sekake was a descendant of Moshoeshoe’s younger brother Mohale. But age group aside, the exact

---

<sup>114</sup> MMA, “1909 Court on settlement in the mountains,” pp. 7-15; Sekese, *Mekhoa*, 57; G.I. Jones, “Chiefly Succession in Basutoland,” in *Succession to High Office*, ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 57-61; Tim Quinlan, “Marena a Lesotho: Chiefs, Politics, and Culture in Lesotho,” PhD diss., University of Cape Town, 1994, pp. 96-100; Adam Kuper, “The Social Structure of the Sotho-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa, Part I,” *Journal of the International African Institute* 45, no. 1 (1975): 67-81.

<sup>115</sup> Clarke, “Unexplored Basutoland”; Jacottet, quoted in Germond, *Chronicles*, 428-30.

hierarchy of chiefs – who was subordinate to who – was still being ironed out in the early 1900s.<sup>116</sup>

The frontier was not only closing politically, but ecologically too. Irrespective of clan origins, chiefs intended to reproduce a cultural and social order that was based on their authority over commoners and on their control of natural resources. This order was based, too, on extensive livestock grazing and grain production. From the perspective of the Maloti grasses and soils, these early settlers were ecological pioneers who applied knowledge and technology to a landscape that had not known these modes before.<sup>117</sup> From the settler perspective, the Maloti offered both challenges and opportunities. The challenges were in testing the limits of the new environments in which they found themselves, and adapting their technological toolkits to fit the setting. The opportunity, as many saw it, was to live in peace, and to cultivate and graze virgin lands at a time when fields and pasture were scarce in the lowlands.<sup>118</sup>

But what did Sekake, Lelingoana, Tlhakanelo and other pioneers know about the Maloti environment when they established these new villages? What technological and cultural materials did they carry that enabled them to identify and use natural resources in certain ways? We know that Africans migrated to the Maloti for reasons often beyond their control. Furthermore, as Kate Showers as pointed

---

<sup>116</sup> Kennan, "Discovery and Exploration," 42-43; LNA, S3/5/9/1, PC Lerotholi to RC, 8 August 1903.

<sup>117</sup> See Webb, *Tropical Pioneers*, 35-52; Stephen Dovers, "Commonalities and Contrasts, pasts and presents: An Australian view," in *South Africa's Environmental History: Cases and Comparisons*, eds. Dover et al. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 228-32; Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, 311-12.

<sup>118</sup> Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, 28.

out, we know to some extent that during the nineteenth century Sesotho land use systems “had shifted from grassland ecosystem (herding stock, hunting wildlife, and gathering wild plants) augmented by small, rotated agricultural fields, to larger, more permanently cultivated fields” with more intensive grazing.<sup>119</sup> But we need to know, too, how people came to adopt certain practices in order to understand knowledge systems as unbounded, and constantly in flux.

Although detailed narratives of individual settlers are scarce in both written and oral record, we can probe these questions to illustrate the human-ecological dimensions of settlement. For starters, settlers knew their annual lunar cycles (*likhoeli* – moons – months) according to the cultural nuance of agro-ecology in Lesotho.<sup>120</sup> Sesotho names for months show ways that Basotho marked time: by the changes of each season; by birth times of wild and domestic animals; by growth cycles of plants and crops; by the position of stars such as the Pleiades; and by the phases of the moon. A brief sampling of these names will illustrate this point.<sup>121</sup>

The Basotho calendar began with *Phato* (August). According to an early twentieth century Mosotho scholar, the meager waters of dams, rivulets, and rivers of *Phato* were “dashed and bestrewn all over with dust...these waters are quite foul from the black soot of the late burnt up grass,” blown from the surrounding fields and pastures, which has been burnt to promote new grass. *Phato* was still a dark,

---

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>120</sup> Justinus Sechefo, “The Twelve Lunar Months among the Basuto,” *Anthropos* 4, no. 4 (1909): 931-41; Sechefo, “The Twelve Lunar Months (Concluded),” *Anthropos* 5, no. 1 (1910): 71-81; See also, Sekhese, *Mekhoa*, 80-83; Casalis, *The Basutos*, 165-66.

<sup>121</sup> Sechefo, “Twelve Lunar Months,” (1909): 931.

chilly, and dry month “when the shepherds pined for new grass” so that they could take the animals out to graze. The ploughmen started to prepare their seeds as the ground began to warm. The warming and rains prepared the soils and grasses. *Pulungoana* (November, 4<sup>th</sup> moon) translates as “young gnu” and marks the month when these animals are born. This was also the second month for plowing maize, and especially sorghum.<sup>122</sup>

Specific moons signified the ways settlers understood the intersections of seasonality, agro-ecology, and human labor. *Thlakola* (February, 7<sup>th</sup> moon), like some other months, got its name from a specific phase of the sorghum (*mabele*) growth cycle. The verb *hlakola* means to wipe off. *Hlakola* referred to when the husk of the sorghum head peeled back, or wiped off, exposing the tender, immature grains. Farmers responded by sending young boys and girls to the fields to scare off the numerous birds who eagerly devoured the sumptuous grains. The *batsosi* (bird scarers) lit fires to deter the birds with smoke, they shouted at the birds by their Sesotho names, and they pelted them with clay pellets and slingshots.<sup>123</sup> Later in the sorghum cycle, *Motseanong* (May, 10<sup>th</sup> moon) translates roughly as “bird laughter” and signified a time where the sorghum grains have ripened and hardened enough where birds were unable to eat them. The laughter, in this case, was the sorghum head that now displayed shiny white grains that resembled the human teeth of a person laughing. Safe from the predations of birds, the crop laughed at the

---

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 932-33.

<sup>123</sup> Sechefo, “Twelve Lunar Months,” (1910): 71-72.



frustrated birds. In *Motseanong* people reaped the hardened white grains and proceeded with a flurry of cutting, hauling, sorting, processing, and not least, eating food and drinking beer that marked the harvest season.<sup>124</sup>

These lunar names reveal what people knew about seasonality, but they also suggest some ecological variations that people encountered at the higher elevations of the Maloti. People understood seasonal changes by shifts in temperature and precipitation, by emergence of new plants and by the behaviors of animals. They also identified time-specific anthropogenic landscape characteristics such as the settling of fire residues on water and on fields. But the Sesotho lunar calendar still rotated primarily around the agro-ecology of sorghum, which itself required nine months of frost-free weather, whereas maize required only six months.<sup>125</sup>

Early migrants to the upper Senqu Valley and surrounding uplands quickly found that their agricultural cycles needed tweaking. Even at the upper limits of the montane ecological zone (2000m), which included most of the Senqu Valley where early settlements began, frost threatened in most months.<sup>126</sup> This was especially true in 1881 and again between 1884 and 1887 when frosts and snowfall occurred in April: a pivotal month for sorghum to mature. Also, much of the upper Senqu, including the Sehonghong area received less rain on average than did some of the surrounding areas from which the settlers came.<sup>127</sup>

---

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 76-79.

<sup>125</sup> Sayce, "Ethno-Geographical Essay," 270.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 268-70; Staples and Hudson, *Ecological Survey*, 6-9.

<sup>127</sup> Grab and Nash, "Documentary Evidence," 480; Sekoli, "Climate Change," in Chakela, ed., *State of the Environment*, 117-20.

Fortunately for these pioneers, their agricultural toolkits held much more than sorghum. When Marshall Clarke and Jobo Moteane visited Lelingoana in December 1887 Clarke asked the Batlokoa chief how his crops were doing. Lelingoana's reply is instructive: "wheat is very good, together with maize, sweet-reed, potatoes, beans and pumpkins." But, the chief said, "there is no sorghum, because as soon as May comes, it is damaged by frost. As for oats, they do well. Barley is the one we haven't planted yet."<sup>128</sup> There are several key points here. First, the Batlokoa were later cited as being among the most "traditional people" in Basutoland, resisting political and cultural change.<sup>129</sup> Far from backward, Lelingoana seems here to have been eager to engage new possibilities in his new home. He knew that sorghum could no longer be the reliable staple that it had been in lower areas, and so did other settlers. New environments required, and stimulated, new knowledge production. Farmers had grown sweet reed and pumpkins for many years, but not as staple foods. Maize and beans had been widely cultivated since at least the early 1800s. But wheat and potatoes, especially the priority that Lelingoana gave to wheat, represent a historical compilation of knowledge that made permanent mountain settlement possible in 1880.<sup>130</sup>

The Basotho's acquisition of new crops facilitated long term cultural and ecological changes. Among the first missionaries to Lesotho in 1833, Eugene Casalis

---

<sup>128</sup> Moteane, reproduced in Ambrose and Brutsch, trans., Part III, *Mehloli 2*, no. 2 (1990): 10.

<sup>129</sup> TNA, WO 33/501, Dobson, *Military Report, Vol. 1*, 113-15; MMA, "1909 Court on Settlement," 5; See also, Ashton, *The Basuto*, ix. When Ashton did his ethnographic fieldwork in 1935-36 he worked with the Batlokoa, because they were "generally recognized by the Basuto to be the closest living exponents of the old Basuto culture."

<sup>130</sup> Casalis, *The Basutos*, 107-11, 168-69.

played an important role in circulating biological, technological, and intellectual resources between northwestern Europe and southern Africa. Wheat agriculture had a deep history in Europe that was closely tethered to the plow. Prior to the PEMS missionaries, Basotho cultivated mostly with a hand-held hoes that resembled digging mattocks.<sup>131</sup> Women performed much of the labor from tilling to weeding, as well as all food processing and preparation, while both sexes and children too, harvested. But use of the single share ox-drawn plow, once it spread widely in the 1860s, inaugurated male control over the initial parts of the annual agricultural cycle. In addition to the shift in the gender of production, plows enabled highlanders to open up larger fields with less labor; a capability that reduced grazing lands substantially and exposed more soils to the erosive forces of wind, water, gravity, and hooves.<sup>132</sup>

Although figures are scarce for how many people used plows in the mountains in 1880, census data for 1875 and 1911 strongly suggest that all of the settler chiefs and some of their followers had access to ox-drawn plows. Other farmers used hand-held hoes well into the 1900s. But whether using plows or hoes, sowers broadcasted seed before tilling it into the soil until row planting became more common in the 1920s. In other words, settlers already had the knowledge, technology, and draught power to open up new grasslands in 1880.<sup>133</sup> And they did

---

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.; Arbousset, *Missionary Excursion*, 53.

<sup>132</sup> Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 81; Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, 24-27.

<sup>133</sup> In 1875, about one in five male household heads owned plows across the four administrative districts. See *Results of a Census of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope with an Appendix Shewing Results of the Census of British Basutoland Taken in March, 1875* (Cape Town: Government Printers,

just that. Quicker to mature than sorghum and more tolerant of frost too, wheat could also grow into the winter. By 1906, Captain Dobson, on his military reconnaissance of the mountains, reported that the broad valley at Matebeng just south of Sehonghong was so thickly sown in wheat, that for troops, “it would probably be necessary to camp on cultivated land.”<sup>134</sup>

In addition to wheat and potatoes, Basotho had learned to cultivate other ecologically appropriate crops and to process them in new ways. Lelingoana’s people also grew lentils and peas, which thrived even above 7000ft. He also asked Moteane and Clarke where he could get some barley seed because he had heard that it too did well in the mountains.<sup>135</sup> Thomas Kennan, seeking a site for a new administrative post in September 1888, visited Sekake’s village. Sekake’s mother served the visitor “a loaf of bread which she had made after the English fashion,” probably of locally grown wheat. Kennan also noted that she spoke English well.<sup>136</sup> At Matebeng, in addition to intense cultivation, Dobson found peach trees growing there in 1904. People adopted fruit trees slowly in the mountains, especially peach trees, but they eventually became a staple feature of highland landscapes and seasonal diets.<sup>137</sup>

---

1878), 527, 529. By 1911, about one in four household heads owned plows in Qacha’s Nek. See *Basutoland Census for 1911* (Cape Town: Government Printers, 1912), 6-7, 47. These figures, however, disguise the more extensive use of plows because equipment sharing was a central part of the social process of farming in Lesotho.

<sup>134</sup> TNA, WO 33/501, Dobson, *Military Report, Vol. 2*, 119.

<sup>135</sup> Clarke, “Unexplored”; Staples and Hudson, *Ecological Survey*, 21.

<sup>136</sup> Kennan, “Discovery and Exploration,” 42.

<sup>137</sup> TNA, WO 33/501, Dobson, *Military Report, Vol. 2*, 119. Fruit tree cultivation accelerated in the mountains from the late 1920s.

It is difficult to know exactly how these new cultivars made their way into the agricultural repertoires of highland settlers, but much can be inferred from evidence. Lelingoana had lived below the Drakensberg in East Griqualand where he interacted with farmers of varying backgrounds, African and European. As a war veteran, he understood his natural environment well, and he likely gathered any resources that he could get his hands on before moving into the Maloti. Curiously, a white man called George Thamahanyane, so-named for his reddish skin color, was living with his Motlokoa wife among Lelingoana's people in 1887. He wore clothing made of skins, chain-smoked marijuana, and hunted wild game for his chief.<sup>138</sup> In addition to puzzling contemporary travelers, Thamahanyane's presence, and social position as a hunter, yet a subject of an African chief, shows the surprising ways in which environmental knowledge circulated. Chief Sekake's mother had likely learned her English language and bread baking skills as an early student of PEMS schools while still living in the lowlands, yet she had not converted to Christianity. With regard to peach trees, Casalis and his PEMS colleagues believed they would thrive in Lesotho, and Basotho had planted them since the 1840s.<sup>139</sup>

Migrants arrived in the Maloti with livestock too. Historically, Basotho settlement fitted within what some scholars have termed "the central cattle pattern." In this pattern, settlers situated the kraal at the center of the village which indicated the importance of cattle for conferring social status, kinship, and

---

<sup>138</sup> Moteane in Ambrose and Brutsch, trans., Part IV, *Mehloli* 2, No. 4 (1990): 12.

<sup>139</sup> Casalis, *The Basutos*, 110-11.

cosmology.<sup>140</sup> In marriage customs, a man transferred cattle to his wife's family as bride wealth (*bohali*), a gesture that cemented the bond between the families, including future offspring. In a different part of the life cycle, families of the deceased slaughtered black oxen at funerary feasts. At these feasts, male relatives of the deceased butchered and roasted the beast in specific ways. For example, the grave diggers enjoyed a hind leg, while the elderly got dibs on the pancreas which could be swallowed without much chewing.<sup>141</sup> Eating beef, then and now, was a core part of Sesotho feasts but beef was not typically consumed regularly. Fresh milk and sour milk (*mafi*) provided important protein, especially for children, in the absence of consistent meat. In using bovine resources, medicine and cosmology overlapped. Basotho doctors (*lingaka*) prescribed various concoctions from cow tissue and diviners (*makhekhe*) threw specific combinations of bones to diagnose and prescribe treatments for human and animal ailments.<sup>142</sup>

Of course, cattle also served important material purposes. Oxen pulled plows and threshed crops. They transported products locally and over longer distances too. Craftspeople fashioned clothes, blankets, tools, and cosmetics from all parts of the animal. Accumulating cattle symbolized a man's social status and enabled him to marry multiple wives, or to loan animals out to people in need (*mafisa*), thus acquiring clients and political influence. Women, however, had little control over cattle due to a cultural taboo that forbade them from interacting with bovines. Apart

---

<sup>140</sup> Huffman, "Central Cattle Pattern," 20. See Chapter 2 for more discussion of cattle.

<sup>141</sup> Sechefo, "Popular Superstitions," 5-8; Sekese, *Mekhoa*, 6, 32; Ashton, *The Basuto*, 70-74, 100-03.

<sup>142</sup> M. Nthoana Tau, "Some medical, magical, and edible plants of Lesotho," *Lesotho Notes and Records* 9 (1972): 13-19; Mosebi Damane, "Sotho Medicine," *Lesotho Notes and Records* 10 (1973-74): 48-58.

from being deprived of the right to own cattle (other than in exceptional circumstances) people believed that women should not pass in front of the kraal where cattle lay down because their mixing could cause abortions in pregnant cows.<sup>143</sup> As mentioned, people migrated to the mountains for, among other reasons, to expand their cattle herds by exploiting open grazing space.<sup>144</sup>

With due diligence to the importance of cattle, bovines still represented a relatively small percentage of the domestic animal population that moved to the Maloti permanently after 1878. Sheep and goats were easily the most numerous according to the 1875 census data.<sup>145</sup> Several types of local sheep, including Cape fat-tail and Afrikaner breeds, were already being displaced by woolen merinos in the 1880s, which arrived via South Africa and with government encouragement. Angora goats, too, were making biological advances into the local breeds of goats. Whereas cattle typically needed close protection from the Maloti winter, sheep and goats, especially the local breeds, could withstand the elements and thus, could stay at mountain posts throughout the year. By 1875, Basotho also looked after 15,000 pigs. Pigs did not graze the open veld with the other stock. But pigs did demand new ways of managing productive spaces within villages. Pigs, which carried no gender taboo, also led to new opportunities for women to own and manage livestock.<sup>146</sup>

---

<sup>143</sup> Sechefo, *Customs and Superstitions*, 20.

<sup>144</sup> Interview with Seleso Tsoako, Ha Rooijane, 19 January 2015; Interview with Mpolokeng Putsoane, Ha Makhaola, 20 January 2015.

<sup>145</sup> *CoGH Census for 1875*, p. 529. See Chapter 3 for more discussion of sheep and goats.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

Mountain settlers relied on horses as much as any other animal for traveling to their new homes and for adapting their lifestyles once they arrived. Tlhakanelo, Lelingoana, Sekake, and others would have hauled and dragged plows, tools, guns, blankets, grain stores, and baskets of other belongings to their new homes using horses and oxen. Basotho had successfully bred the squat and sure-footed Basuto Pony to traverse the rocky Maloti paths. Like other southern African groups, including the Baroa, Zulu, and the mixed-blooded Griqua and Kora, the Basotho had developed excellent riding skills which they fine-tuned during prolonged conflicts that spanned some thirty years between the 1850s and 1880s. Strong horses, like cattle, symbolized a person's social standing. As migrants journeyed into the Maloti, chiefs and other men of standing most likely rode atop the finest horses. Small children and elderly men and women probably rode as well. Equines were important for missionaries too, whose advance into the mountains affected the ways Basotho understood the resources discussed above. Horses enabled missionaries to travel widely and to preach to potential converts from an elevated position: elevated in both the physical and social sense.<sup>147</sup>

Jobo Moteane was among the first Basotho ministers ordained by PEMS at Morija in September 1891. Along with Moteane, the PEMS leadership ordained Carlisle Motebang in August 1891. Motebang later established his own mission station called Molumong near Lelingoana's village. But Moteane was the first to the

---

<sup>147</sup> MMA, "Court on Settlement in the Mountains," 10-15; Russell Thornton, *The Basuto Pony* (Morija: Morija Printing, 1938); Sandra Swart, *Riding High: Horses, Humans, and History in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010), 77-85.



mountains. He established his mission at Sehonghong in 1892 where he played an important role in expanding the environmental knowledge of Maloti settlers. Moteane had studied under Edouard Jacottet at Morija. Jacottet perpetuated the notion that the highlands were a world apart. On his 1893 travels, he noted that the Maloti were “a world diverse, sometimes charming, often wild, more rarely imposing, but always interesting, picturesque.”<sup>148</sup> His observations led him to believe that the mountains represented fertile ground for converting heathen souls, yet he also believed that the physical hardships and isolation would be too much for European ministers to bear. So, Jacottet planned for ordained Basotho ministers to extend PEMS’s reach into the Maloti via Mafube Mission Station (est. 1885), which was located below the Drakensberg near Matatiele. From Sehonghong, Moteane traveled the region on horseback where he established thirteen outstations, each with its own church and primary school.<sup>149</sup>

Early PEMS schools and churches in the Maloti emphasized the gospel and literacy but did not offer formal lessons in agriculture. This changed later in the 1900s. But in the 1890s Basotho farmers, doctors, builders, and housekeepers still compiled much environmental knowledge by participating or simply by observing activities at these stations. Mafube set the example for the mission stations in the mountains (See Map 4). It was situated in a fertile valley with excellent farm land

---

<sup>148</sup> Moteane, “Nalane ea Moruti Jobo Moteane, 73-82; Jacottet, quoted in Germond, *Chronicles*, 423-25.

<sup>149</sup> Ambrose and Brutsch, “Moteane: Part V: Introduction,” *Mehlodi* 3, no. 1 (1991): 3; Victor Ellenberger, *Landmarks in the Story of the French Protestant Church in Basutoland, 1833-1933* (Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1933), 28; Tim Couzens, *Murder at Morija: Faith, Mystery, and Tragedy on an African Mission* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 180; Craig Hincks, *Quest for Peace: An Ecumenical History of the Church in Lesotho* (Morija: MMA, 2009), 340-42.

and pastures. At Mafube, African converts sowed their own crops, grazed livestock, and planted peach, apricot, cherry, and quince orchards.<sup>150</sup>

Up at Sehonghong and at its new outstations ministers, teachers, and converts began similar activities, if on a smaller scale. As Jean and John Comaroff have shown, missionaries bundled horticulture, plow agriculture, animal husbandry, and specific ways of organizing productive space into a single civilizing package. Indeed, Eugene Casalis had believed that cultivating wheat and propagating fruit trees, indicated “the dwellings of those of the inhabitants who have taken the first step towards civilization.” The same package included literacy, the Gospel, and a Protestant work ethic. For Protestant missionaries like Moteane and Jacottet, and others like Henri Junod in Mozambique, full-time field husbandry was the ideal expression of this work ethic rather than migrant work in the burgeoning industrial centers of South Africa.<sup>151</sup>

Most Basotho did not buy the whole package. Instead, people compiled knowledge, integrated it into what they already knew, and applied it to achieve their own aims. The agricultural contents of this package differed from older knowledge in many ways, but did not always conflict with the settlers’ intentions. Lelingoana’s fields of new and old crops, as Moteane observed them in 1887, showed that settlers were already intensifying their farming practices through diversified production

---

<sup>150</sup> G. Malahleha, “Mafube PEMS-Church of Scotland-Bantu Presbyterian-Mission Station,” *Mekolokotoane Kerekeng*, 129-34.

<sup>151</sup> Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier, Vol. 2* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1997), 119-22; Casalis, *The Basutos*, 111; Patrick Harries, *Butterflies and Barbarians: Swiss Missionaries and Systems of Knowledge in South-East Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), 46, 59, 221.

with ox-drawn plows. The old chief sowed wheat and oats because they grew well in his new environment, not because he sought to conform to any Protestant ethic. Tlhakanelo, and other people who had direct contact with Moteane and his colleagues in the 1890s, adopted new environmental knowledge more readily than they adopted the Gospel. During his travels in 1887 Moteane reported that mountain dwellers had “no access to education and that there was not a single Christian among them.” Converts were few in the 1890s, but other visible changes were well underway.<sup>152</sup>

Moteane and his colleagues facilitated profound changes in architecture in the Maloti. Most of the settlers probably built *mehlongoafatse* as their first dwellings. As the meaning of the word indicates, builders constructed these small huts close to the ground in the form of a large oval oven. People entered the hut along a narrow passage. Builders mixed mud, clay and cow dung to make plaster (*molilo*), which provided the base, while they pulled reeds and grass together into tight bundles to form the roofs over a few wooden poles. This style worked well for keeping cold and wet out, but poorly for ventilation.<sup>153</sup>

By extension of these changes, the ways people used grassland resources to construct their homes shifted too. As discussed above, missionaries eagerly harvested trees and planted more to satiate their building needs. Basotho began to quarry and shape stone in new ways as they learned to build walls, like the ones that

---

<sup>152</sup> Moteane, reproduced in Ambrose and Brutsch, trans., Part III, *Mehloli* 2, no. 2 (1990): 8-12 & Part V, *Mehloli* 3, no. 1 (1991): 7; Clarke, “Unexplored Basutoland;” Jacottet, quoted in Germond, *Chronicles*, 429.

<sup>153</sup> Jacottet, quoted in Germond, *Chronicles*, 427-28; Casalis, *The Basutos*, 127-28.

enclosed the first Sehonghong church. Roofers began to demand long wooden poles and more thatching grass to build higher and more permanent roofs. Windows, bought at distant trading outlets, became more common by 1900. People adapted their carpentry skills to build a variety of homes. Some huts stayed relatively squat to the ground. Some stayed round as the old *mehlongoafatse* had been and some rectangle, which was a new style after the missionaries. The people who quarried, shaped, and hauled stone, and the people who performed the many tasks of building – perhaps more than did missionary ideas about civilization – drove the changes in Sesotho architecture. These changes placed new demands on natural resources too. New knowledge meant excavating new stone quarries, cutting more willow and olive trees, and harvesting more grass and reeds.<sup>154</sup>

Of course, none of these cultural and ecological shifts occurred independently of the dramatic developments in the regional economy.<sup>155</sup> For many Africans who migrated into Qacha's Nek after 1878, working as farm hands or sharecroppers on white-owned farms in the Orange Free State or East Griqualand seems to have been the most common experience. Settlers who had had these experiences gained invaluable knowledge of the changing world around them both before migrating to the mountains and during their lives as Maloti residents because oscillating labor migrancy became common, but not yet dominant, even from the

---

<sup>154</sup> Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, Plates 6-7.

<sup>155</sup> Murray, *Families Divided*, 10-13; Thabane, "Aspects of Colonial Economy," 110-12.

mountains by around 1892.<sup>156</sup> They conducted commerce across ethnic and racial lines. They plowed, harvested, and stored grain. They learned about new cultivars, animal breeds, and wool growing. They experienced the racial politics of South Africa. Others learned to read and converted to Christianity.<sup>157</sup> All of these experiences contributed to the historical swirl of ideas about economy, politics, religion, and not least, ecological resources.

It was these same economic shifts that led the Basutoland colonial administration to establish Qacha's Nek as an administrative post and as a formal district. In September 1888 people at Chief Mpiti's village greeted the British officer Thomas Kennan excitedly. This was surprising, Kennan thought, especially as one of the objects of his "journey was to establish a station in the mountains to facilitate the means of their paying taxes and obtaining passes to visit territories beyond the borders of Basutoland." Mpiti and forty others accompanied Kennan up the Sejabatho River to where a *nek* (Afrikaans for pass) afforded a grand look down towards the South African town of Matatiele twenty miles distant below the Drakensberg Escarpment, connected then by only a rough bridle track. There were few trees on the site, but that would change in the coming decades. The site also sat on the continental divide where streams falling south led to the Indian Ocean, while

---

<sup>156</sup> CAR 1892-93, p. 45; CAR 1895-96, p. 34; CAR 1899-1900, p. 68. In 1893, 122 of some 1200 passes issued at Qacha's Nek were for work. By 1896, 726 of 3150 passes were for work. In 1896, 425 of 450 work passes from Qacha's Nek were for farm work. Many passes for "other purposes" likely included people looking for work. See also, *Basutoland Census for 1911*.

<sup>157</sup> See Charles Van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine: the Life of Kas Maine, a South African Share Cropper, 1894-1985* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1996); Tim Keegan, *Rural Transformations in Industrializing South Africa: The Southern Highveld to 1914* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986).

water flowing to the north journeyed to the Atlantic via the Senqu. The villagers then led Kennan to a spring nearby and also pointed out a prominent sandstone ridge overlooking the site of the future town of Qacha's Nek. They called the ridge *letloepe*, the cobra's hood. And so it was there that Kennan found his government camp under the shadow of *letloepe*, near where Qing had once hunted in the employ of Chief Qacha, a son of the slain Mophuthi Chief Moorosi.<sup>158</sup>

In November 1892 John Griffith, a sub-inspector in the Basutoland Mounted Police, established the first colonial residence at Qacha's Nek. As the "officer in charge," he took the lead of what became Basutoland's seventh administrative district. In addition to extending the reach of the colonial state through tax collection and regulating travel, Griffith built a police force to patrol the borders for stock theft.<sup>159</sup> When Griffith compiled the first official report for the district in 1894, twenty-seven policemen (mostly Basotho) travelled 1,650 miles on patrols making eight arrests. Stockowners from Natal and East Griqualand had long complained of thieves coming over the porous border. According to Griffith, it was foreigners like the Xhosa-speaking Bathepu more than Basotho, who stole livestock. The new post established new authority over borders between territories as well as over those boundaries between common grazing spaces and private property. But despite exponential increases in police patrols during the 1890s and 1900s, human and

---

<sup>158</sup> Kennan, "Discovery and Exploration," 42-43.

<sup>159</sup> CAR 1892-93, p. 7. Other more established districts had Assistant Commissioners (AC). An AC was posted to Qacha's Nek in 1897.

livestock traffic across the border, regulated or not, continued for social, economic, and ecological reasons.<sup>160</sup>

By 1898 the camp town, which was then linked to Matatiele by a rough, but improved wagon track, included a colonial residence and offices, police stables, and a prison. Also, the administration permitted James Cole, a European from Matatiele, to open one of the first two general trader stations in the district. Cole bought agricultural commodities from Basotho producers and sold (or traded) consumer items to them. By licensing foreign traders, the government advanced the British imperial project by integrating the highlands into the regional economy. Together, these developments in governance and infrastructure aimed to make highland people, as James Scott has argued for upland regions in Southeast Asia, more “auditable contributors to the GNP” as farmers, wool growers, migrant laborers, and tax payers.<sup>161</sup>

As a perceived threat to economic integration, theft seemed to be under control. But the resident commissioner (RC) of Basutoland Godfrey Lagden knew that colonial power could be extended most effectively through chiefs. Perhaps more than theft, officials in Qacha’s Nek also noticed that African immigrants from Natal and the Cape Colony constituted the bulk of new settlers, as opposed to Basotho from the lowlands. Griffith acknowledged that this was due in part to the Glen Grey Act of 1894 which dispossessed many Africans from their farms in South

---

<sup>160</sup> CAR 1893-94, pp. 43-46; CAR 1894-95, p. 39. When measured in terms of men employed and miles traveled, patrols tripled between 1894 and 1895.

<sup>161</sup> CAR 1895-95, p. 33; Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed*, 4.

Africa, and sent them looking for new homes. Officials believed that chiefs in the Maloti failed to report these new immigrants as colonial law dictated. This assertion was probably correct, given that many of these chiefs had social ties to African communities in Natal and the Cape, be they Sotho, Zulu, or Xhosa-speaking.<sup>162</sup>

In seeking to consolidate Bakoena authority through the lineage of his late father Letsie (d. 1891), the new paramount chief Lerotholi agreed to formally place a Koena chief at Qacha's Nek (See Figure 1.6).<sup>163</sup> Of course, there were already Bakoena chiefs in the mountains: Tlhakanelo, Rafolatsane, Mpiti, Sekake, and others. But apparently Lerotholi and Lagden, with eyes on the future, thought that it was time for a younger, stronger chief to take the helm at Qacha's Nek to oversee African police operations, to arbitrate disputes between chiefs, and to regulate what, by 1895, had become a rather tense and ethnically diverse settlement of the mountains.<sup>164</sup> They found their man in Makhaola Lerotholi, the third and some said favorite son of Lerotholi (See Figure 1.4). The confident twenty-five year old chief first arrived in the district sometime in 1893 to build his own village and to take up his role as chief constable. He was not officially placed as district chief until 1904.<sup>165</sup>

---

<sup>162</sup> CAR 1894-95, p. 39; CAR 1895-96, p. 32.

<sup>163</sup> MMA, "Court on settlement in the mountains," p. 14; Interview with Mokhafisi Kena, Ha Makhaola, 10 December 2014.

<sup>164</sup> LNA, S3/5/9/1, PC Lerotholi to RC Lagden, 8 August 1903.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., TNA, DO 119/181, RC Lagden to High Commissioner (HC), 17 March 1897; Z.D. Mangoela, "Makhaola Lerotholi," in *Lithoko tsa Marena a Basotho- Praise Poems of the Basotho Chiefs*, special trans. by Patrick Bereng May 2016 (Moriya: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1921), 199-201; LNA, S3/5/9/1, Assistant Commissioner (AC) to Government Sec. (GS), 16 November 1904.





**Figure 1.6**  
Paramount Chief Lerotholi (sitting) with  
Chief Tlhakanelo (far left) and others.  
Credit: Morija Museum & Archives, La  
Mission du Lessouto Illustres

Arriving in Qacha’s Nek, Makhaola saw that the Senqu Valley “was full of villages” all the way to Lelingoana’s place in the north. This was near the same crossing where Orpen and Qing had passed in 1873, when there was not a single village there. Makhaola would have noticed too that the Tsoelike River (named for its winding course) near where he built his village, was “inhabited almost to its sources” near Sehlabathebe at the southeastern edge of Basutoland. As Jacottet noted in 1893, “there were hundreds of these villages and their number was

increasing every day.”<sup>166</sup> Population growth, together with the chieftain and colonial authorities being present, and not least, a police force, signaled the closing of the frontier and the beginning of modern Qacha’s Nek district.

## **1.6 - Conclusion**

The ways in which Basotho settled the Maloti between the 1870s and 1895 exemplifies an important historical process for understanding the ways humans shape frontier environments. They compile knowledge and apply it in their livelihood pursuits. Followers of Chiefs Lelingoana, Tlhakanelo, and Sekake plowed both new and old crops, reared biologically diverse livestock, and built appropriate housing while pioneering mountain environments that were higher, colder, wetter, and more remote than were the places from which they came. Not coincidentally, their new homes were also farther from the lowland centers of political and economic power; that is, farther from Lesotho proper. They learned as they lived, applying many practices that had developed from experiences on the land, from Baroa (San) knowledge, from missionaries in the lowlands, and from migratory experiences. Through this process, cultural and ecological changes were interconnected with one another.

This settlement process has to a great extent shaped the identity of highlanders in Lesotho, and the perspective of the Maloti in the eyes of others,

---

<sup>166</sup> Jacottet, quoted in Germond, *Chronicles*, 427.

Africans and outsiders alike. Considering the role of verticality – which I define as the cultural and ecological differences of places separated by altitude more than by distance – provides fresh perspective for understanding how rural people have interacted with new ideas, technologies, and political regimes in the past. Examining verticality as a historical process, rather than as an axiom, helps to explode myths which perpetuate the notion that mountain people are essentially stubborn: resisting science, government authority, and market participation among other things. In the following chapter I use the Basotho experience with rinderpest to show that politics, which were underpinned by geographical, cultural, and ecological factors, conditioned how rural people interacted with new knowledge and with government initiatives to circulate that knowledge.

## 2. FIGHTING RINDERPEST: CHIEFS, BORDER FENCES, AND SHIFTING VETERINARY KNOWLEDGE, 1896-1902

### 2.1 - Introduction

Human and animal epidemics continue to shape, and be shaped by, political, social, and ecological currents. One such historical experience in Africa began in 1889 when Italians imported cattle from India to feed imperial troops in their military campaign in Ethiopia. Unbeknownst to the hungry soldiers, their bovine meals carried rinderpest, a highly contagious livestock disease that was caused by a deadly morbillivirus. Rinderpest had afflicted cattle, wild ungulate populations, and to a lesser extent, sheep and goats from East Asia to Europe for more than 2000 years. It, however, only affected humans indirectly. Despite key advances in veterinary science in the 1890s, rinderpest continued to threaten animals in some places until the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the World Organization for Animal Health declared it eradicated in 2011. Rinderpest was the first livestock disease to be eradicated. After smallpox in 1980, it was only the second disease in general to be eradicated. Scientists hailed it as "the greatest veterinary achievement of our time," the culmination of a heroic effort that incorporated science, political power, international cooperation, and monitoring technology.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Peter Roeder et al., "Rinderpest: the veterinary perspective on eradication," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* 3 (2013): 1-12. 'Rinderpest' is German for 'Cattle Plague,' comes from the family of viruses *Paramyxoviridae*. Although rinderpest affected cattle and large wild ungulates, this virus family also has variations that infect small ruminants (*peste de petits ruminants*), and humans (measles) among others.

The African experience in the 1890s was a pivotal moment in the history of rinderpest. From Ethiopia in 1889, the plague cut a swath of death and misery southwards, destroying domestic herds in South Africa and adjacent territories from 1896-1898. Community and government responses varied depending on an array of local circumstances such as politics, geography, and culturally tempered understandings of cattle. The characteristics of the disease and limited knowledge of these characteristics shaped the responses.<sup>2</sup>

Cattle contracted rinderpest through contact with infected animals or animal products, or through contact with infected bodily fluid such as saliva left on a grazed field. The virus could incubate for up to fifteen days. Infected animals suffered from fever, internal ulcers, external lesions, dysentery, and nasal discharges. In the end African and European settler herds alike suffered losses upwards of 90%. Dead cattle meant lost wealth, draught power, transport, food stores, fuel, blankets, and for many African groups, a loss of the central cultural resource used in marriage and funeral transactions, and for numerous other purposes.<sup>3</sup> Extensive scholarship on rinderpest has tried to identify the fundamental changes in African societies stemming from this traumatic experience, and the extent of these changes.

In this chapter I probe new questions in the context of Qacha's Nek district to better understand these changes, while also providing a historical anecdote to current epidemiological challenges for both people and animals. Scholars have

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Clive Spinage, *Cattle Plague: A History* (New York: Springer Science, 2003), introduction.

<sup>3</sup> For a global overview of rinderpest, including a detailed section on Africa in the 1890s, see Spinage, *Cattle Plague*.

examined how rinderpest heightened political tensions in 1890s southern Africa, a period that had already been marked by turbulent industrial transformation, colonial military excursions, drought, and locust invasions. According to Charles Van Onselen, rinderpest did not foment revolution, but it did create political opportunities for resistance, and Lesotho was no exception.<sup>4</sup> Charles Ballard argues that in the Natal Colony the sudden loss of draught power and stored wealth quickened the fall of the Zulu-speaking peasantry by forcing more men into labor contracts in the mines and farms of European-dominated South Africa. Through this process of proletarianization rural homesteads became impoverished on the periphery of the burgeoning capitalist economy.<sup>5</sup>

Further north in German East Africa, in his classic study of ecology and history, Helge Kjekshus asserts that when rinderpest destroyed cattle herds and wild ungulate populations, it also destroyed Africans' system for controlling vegetation growth. In this system, cattle and wild animals grazed grasses and browsed shrubs, which when left unchecked, provided ideal habitat for the trypanosomiasis-carrying tsetse fly. This ecological change, he insists, allowed the return of the tsetse fly and the disease that it transmitted to areas which human and

---

<sup>4</sup> Charles Van Onselen, "Reactions to Rinderpest in Southern Africa, 1896-97," *Journal of African History* 13, no. 3 (1972): 473-88; See also Pule Phoofolo, "Epidemics and Revolutions: The Rinderpest Epidemic in Late Nineteenth-Century Southern Africa," *Past & Present* 138, no. 1 (1993): 112-43.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Ballard, "The Repercussions of Rinderpest: Plague and Peasant Decline in Colonial Natal," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 19, no. 3 (1986): 421-50.

animal agency had previously kept disease free. As his argument goes, rural poverty and political vulnerability increased as a result of these ecological changes.<sup>6</sup>

A new generation of historians of science and medicine has examined veterinary knowledge in a socially and politically charged context where imperial powers like Germany and Great Britain competed for influence. Daniel Gilfoyle has taken the Cape Colony as a case to explore the professional rivalries amongst veterinary experts from Britain, South Africa, and Germany, and how these rivalries shaped the way policy played out in rural communities. In the Cape, state implementation of stamping-out (slaughter), cordoning off by fencing and veterinary policing, and finally, inoculation, hinged on trust between stock owners and officials – a factor that changed during the course of the campaigns.<sup>7</sup>

With respect to Lesotho as a specific case, Pule Phoofolo has revisited questions about the extent to which rinderpest hastened the collapse of the Basotho peasantry. He finds that although Lesotho suffered great losses of cattle and contingent low-production of crops (eg. from lost draught power), and experienced political tensions too, it is unlikely that the plague began any new economic, political, or social trends in the country, but only accelerated processes already underway. This, he argues, owes in part to the extent that people accepted the inoculation campaigns, which limited mortality more than some locales in the

---

<sup>6</sup> Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, 126-32.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Gilfoyle, "Veterinary Research and the African Rinderpest Epizootic: the Cape Colony, 1896-1898," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no.1 (2003): 133-54; For a further development of the competition in veterinary establishments and its effects on policy, see Thadeus Sunseri, "The Entangled History of Sadoka (Rinderpest) and Veterinary Science in Tanzania and the Wider World, 1891-1901," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 89, no. 1 (2015): 92-121.

region.<sup>8</sup> My primary focus here is on this last issue, the changes in veterinary knowledge and the changes in how Basotho understood government interventions. The series of government interventions during rinderpest were important arenas for knowledge circulation, social action, and local politics.

While scholars have explored the etiological pathways of rinderpest – its social, economic, and ecological dimensions – and the ways it opened political possibilities, we know little about how this traumatic experience changed what people knew about livestock and disease. The aforementioned social histories offer insights about how the plague destroyed cattle, which carry great cultural and economic importance, and exacerbated existing political tensions and hastened rural impoverishment. I take this position as my starting point to link the social and political dimensions of the epidemic to the scientific and cultural aspects of the campaigns to fight rinderpest. We must understand veterinary knowledge, with its many facets and fault lines, as a historical process for all social actors: herders, livestock owners, chiefs, colonial administrators, and European veterinary experts. By reconstructing stories of Basotho engagement with the process, I show how people in varied social positions acquired, or did not acquire, new knowledge through a tense political and cultural interaction.

---

<sup>8</sup> Pule Phoofolo, "Face to Face with Famine: The BaSotho and the Rinderpest, 1897-1899," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003): 503-27; In a later work, Phoofolo emphasizes the entanglements of political relationships in the months before rinderpest breaks out in Lesotho in "Ambiguous Interactions: BaSotho-Colonial Relations on the Eve of the Rinderpest Outbreak, 1896," in *African Agency and European Colonialism: Latitudes of Negotiation and Containment*, eds. Femi Kolapo and Kwabena Akurang-Parry (New York: University Press of America, 2007), 83-104.



Veterinary knowledge in 1897 Lesotho was both locally situated and globally constituted. Within two years during the 1890s rinderpest in southern Africa treatment evolved from stamping-out and cordoning to inoculation. Colonial veterinarians drew on historical experiences in Europe, especially the British Rinderpest of 1865-66 where knowledge and its limitations depended on professional rivalries and contemporary debates about germ theory as much as any other factors.<sup>9</sup> Veterinarians then applied this partial expertise to a specific political, cultural, and ecological situation in southern Africa, producing varied outcomes. But when the epidemic initially petered out in 1898 (before a brief resurgence in 1901), it had been the southern African field experience that helped facilitate the successful development and implementation of inoculations as a biomedical response.

## **2.2 - The Politics of Prevention on the Eve of Rinderpest**

In August 1896, the Cape Colonial government convened a rinderpest conference. Government authorities and veterinary officials representing all southern African territories gathered to discuss the urgent situation where cattle plague had already infected areas in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State and was advancing south towards the Orange River and Basutoland.<sup>10</sup> The acting resident commissioner (RC) Godfrey Lagden of Basutoland listened carefully to the

---

<sup>9</sup> Michael Worboys, *Spreading Germs: Disease Theories and Medical Practice in Britain, 1865-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 43-51.

<sup>10</sup> Attendees represented the Cape Colony, Natal, the South African Republic (Transvaal), the Orange Free State (OFS), German West Africa, Basutoland, and the Bechuanaland Protectorate.

policy issues that the veterinarians discussed. Other officials spoke of their previous experiences in the infected areas of Bechuanaland and the Transvaal.<sup>11</sup> Through these dialogs, Lagden increased his own knowledge of rinderpest, which he then applied to policy in Basutoland.

Conference participants focused on how the disease had spread and how to stop it. Duncan Hutcheon, the colonial veterinary surgeon for the Cape Colony and the conference's leading expert on rinderpest, believed that the murrain<sup>12</sup> had moved south via major trade routes on which livestock and animal products, grain, and people constantly traveled. Others believed that certain Africans willfully transmitted the disease by carrying tainted meat to infect the herds of rival chiefs. Attendees devoted less attention, however, to livestock and people moving along un-mapped routes that crossed political and ecological zones, a key feature of rural lifeways and a prime channel for disease transmission. In the arid areas of the western Transvaal and Bechuanaland Africans and Boers both moved animals between pastures and watering holes in coordinated seasonal transhumance patterns.<sup>13</sup> Despite their relative ignorance of these patterns, officials proposed broad solutions to control all animal movements.

---

<sup>11</sup> LNA, S3/1/5/10, *Cape of Good Hope (CoGH), Rinderpest Conference Minutes* (Cape Town: Government Printers, 1896), 3-4.

<sup>12</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary defines *murrain* as a historical term that indicates "any virulent infectious disease of cattle or other livestock, such as anthrax, rinderpest, or redwater." It was commonly used in the late nineteenth century in this way, but could also refer to pestilence or plague affecting humans. I use it in this chapter to echo some of the historical lexicon.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 7; See also, Gary Marquardt, "Water, Wood, and Wild Animal Populations: Seeing the Spread of Rinderpest through the Physical Environment in Bechuanaland, 1896," *South African Historical Journal* 53, no. 1 (2005): 73-98.

But officials also realized that human migration presented another set of challenges. The conference chairman remarked that the "free and promiscuous movement of people" needed to be regulated. He included whites in his assessment, but the chairman claimed that "the natives are more reckless than white people, carrying about articles liable to spread the contagion," such as meat and hides. African doctors, in the chairman's view, posed "a fruitful source of danger" because they carried horns, bones, and skins in their medicine kits.<sup>14</sup> In blaming rinderpest's spread on human ignorance, racial and ethnic divisions in southern Africa featured prominently.

Mr. Crosbie, an English-speaking representative from the Cape Colony pointed out that Boers flocked quickly to neighbors' infected kraals to apply local remedies of carbolic dip and garlic, then returned home to unknowingly infect their own herds.<sup>15</sup> Governments regulated human movements based on these biases, but black Africans bore the most blame. Africans moving from designated infected areas, for example, encountered fumigation stations where inspectors forced them to strip naked and scrub with soap, water, and Jeyes fluid, a potent disinfectant generally used for household cleaning. Inspectors dipped the clothes in a carbolic acid solution for thirty minutes, while the dehumanized people waited, likely shivering in

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 18; For contemporary evidence showing English-speakers' widespread assumptions of the inherent cultural ignorance of Africans and Boers, with regards to animal disease, ecology, and medicine, see the *Cape of Good Hope, Report of the Scab Disease Commission* (Cape Town: Government Printers, 1894); See also, Mordechai Tamarkin, *Volk and Flock: Ecology, Identity, and Politics among Cape Afrikaners in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2009).

the cold. Whites also underwent disinfection, although they typically had access to state-provided special rooms and clean, dry clothes.<sup>16</sup>

Surprisingly, Hutcheon spoke little at this conference about another key feature of veterinary practice: stamping-out. In fact, the policy did not appear on the conference's list of recommendations for southern African governments despite having been tried already. In July 1896 veterinarians in Bechuanaland, with assistance from Cape colonial police, enforced a stamping-out policy in Setlagole Reserve by slaughtering 400 cattle.<sup>17</sup> Officials reluctantly continued slaughtering into August despite local resistance. Hutcheon, nonetheless continued to believe that if "we had the money and the courage to stamp the disease out the moment the infection appeared in a herd of cattle by destroying those animals, there would be no infection to be carried."<sup>18</sup> But other conference participants, like Godfrey Lagden, recognized the political problems of slaughter and helped steer policy in 1896 in another direction, at least temporarily. At the end of the conference, participants unanimously agreed that "the best and most effective mode of stopping the spread of rinderpest" was to erect double wire fences not less than 500 yards apart.<sup>19</sup>

This fencing policy and the knowledge that underpinned it had developed thirty years earlier during the British Rinderpest of 1865-66. The late 1800s were

---

<sup>16</sup> *CoGH Rinderpest Conference*, 22; TNA, Dominions Office (DO) 119/178, telegram, Secretary, Cape Town to RC, Basutoland, October 1896.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*; Gilfoyle, "Veterinary Research," 137.

<sup>18</sup> *CoGH Rinderpest Conference*, 17.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. In theory, the 500 yards would prevent any contact between animals. At the time, it was still unclear how far the virus could spread through the air; See also, Marquardt, "Water, Wood, and Wild Animal Populations."

heady times for medical research in Europe, but veterinary theory and practice in England lagged behind, perhaps owing to it being overshadowed by research on human diseases. As prominent examples the French scientist Louis Pasteur and the German bacteriologist Robert Koch, made important discoveries that formed the basis for modern germ theory. These discoveries had profound implications for veterinary science and immunology more broadly. Despite the British government having established the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in 1844, vets had focused mostly on horses instead of cattle and small stock until the 1860s.<sup>20</sup>

Trained vets in the 1860s were sensitive about their lower professional standing in relation to medical doctors, and they attempted at every chance, to distinguish themselves from "farriers, cow leeches, knowledgeable farmers, and veterinary quacks." This sensitivity, according to Michael Worboys, hardened into stubbornness in 1865-66 when they insisted that strong government enforcement of quarantines and stamping-out of infected cattle were the only effective defenses against rinderpest.<sup>21</sup>

Although veterinarians showed interest in the emerging ideas about the pathology of contagion, they still viewed rinderpest in terms of importation theory. In this theory vets viewed the host animal, not the germ itself, as the carrier and the prime focus of policy to be contained or destroyed. When the cattle plague ended in

---

<sup>20</sup> Koch had publicly demonstrated the bacterial cause of anthrax in 1877. Pasteur had developed a vaccine against anthrax by heating cultures of *Bacillus anthracis*, which conferred immunity when inoculated into susceptible animals. Along with a similar vaccine against the bacterial disease quarter-evil (both diseases were present in contemporary Lesotho), was used extensively in several western European countries by 1890. See Gilfoyle, "Veterinary Research," 139.

<sup>21</sup> Worboys, *Spreading Germs*, 44-57.

England in 1866, the veterinary establishment celebrated victory. Among other attributes, a strong central government had enforced quarantine regulations in a countryside where fenced paddocks and private land holdings were standard—two characteristics of land tenure that were not standard in southern Africa.<sup>22</sup> Experience, the British veterinarians claimed, had shown that this state-led policy was the only effective approach. This same approach went on to inform colonial policy in southern Africa even as Dr. Koch and others made breakthroughs in immunology in European laboratories during the interlude. Duncan Hutcheon, the chief veterinarian at the 1896 rinderpest conference, openly boasted of his knowledge from direct experience in England thirty years before.<sup>23</sup>

Following the conference in August, the Cape Government published several proclamations beginning in October 1896 from which the Basutoland Colonial administration built its policy. These laws prohibited cross-border animal movements and regulated human travel too. Proclamation No. 10 from the high commissioner in Cape Town predated the conference, and had granted the RC in Basutoland (Lagden) extensive powers to create laws restricting grazing or segregating animals to control the plague, whether or not it breached the territory's borders. Furthermore, according to colonial authority, Lagden could demand that stockowners manage or dispose of all liable animals however he saw fit. "Liable" animals meant any bull, ox, cow, heifer, calf, sheep, or goat. Government ordered

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.; Gilfoyle, "Veterinary Research," 135-37; *CoGH Rinderpest Conference*, 14-15.

violators of Proclamation No. 10 to pay £100 in fines or serve up to twelve months in prison.<sup>24</sup>

Two more proclamations in October and November 1896 added regulations. International travelers would have to pass through one of seven certified border posts where fumigation facilities could be prepared by authorities. But only one such post was planned for Qacha's Nek district in Lesotho. Residents, traders, and herders commonly used at least four other crossings in Qacha's Nek. Forcing traffic through one crossing would make rural life difficult where transport was always an arduous task. Enforcing these regulations along the mountain border areas required increased policing. Strict veterinary policing, as Hutcheon insisted, had served England well in the 1860s and would do likewise in southern Africa, an assumption that proved misguided.<sup>25</sup>

The British colonial presence in Basutoland was minimal on the eve of rinderpest. In 1884, the Crown had begun administering the territory after Lesotho rebelled against Cape colonial rule in the Gun Wars (1880-81). The Cape had ruled directly through magistrates to enforce laws (1871-1884), an approach that most Basotho deeply resented. To avoid the same mistake, the British high commissioner in Cape Town placed a resident commissioner in Maseru to oversee a system of parallel administration in which the hierarchy of Basotho chiefs, headed by the paramount chief (PC), conducted the day-to-day business of courts, tax collecting,

---

<sup>24</sup> LNA, S3/1/5/10, Basutoland Proclamation No. 10, 14 May 1896.

<sup>25</sup> LNA, S3/1/5/10, Proclamation No. 16, 13 October 1896; Proc. No. 24, 7 November 1896.

and land regulations.<sup>26</sup> The British presence limited itself to securing the borders and maintaining internal security. The RC worked to achieve these aims with "seven district commissioners, a government secretary, an accountant, and a police officer commanding a Basotho police force numbering 259 men."<sup>27</sup> A new veterinary bureaucracy that included increased policing grew during the rinderpest experience.

Basutoland's national boundaries in 1896, especially in the mountains, were still poorly understood by all parties. The border followed the topographical contour that formed the continental divide along the Drakensberg Escarpment.<sup>28</sup> Rinderpest and government veterinary policies in the late 1890s played important roles in fixing these borders in the political and physical sense. Perhaps more importantly, the boundaries hardened symbolically for Basotho when fences became a key technology used for implementing veterinary policy. Lagden wrote a memorandum to chiefs, which was translated into Sesotho, to explain that if rinderpest approached the territory, the restrictions laid out in the proclamations

---

<sup>26</sup> Machobane, *Government and Change*, 70-75; Sanders, *Throwing Down*, 44-51.

<sup>27</sup> Phoofolo, "Ambiguous Interactions," 84.

<sup>28</sup> TNA, CO 700/BASUTOLAND1-2, Marshall Clarke, The British War Office Map of Basutoland for 1888 shows five border crossings and includes rough contour intervals for topography. This map improved markedly from 1880, when Undersecretary for Native Affairs in the Cape Colony Richard Bright labeled eastern Lesotho simply "Mountain Country." TNA, Foreign Office (FO) 925/7323, Map of Basutoland, 1911. Dobson made the first detailed topographical map based on his extensive surveys for military purposes in 1904-05. This cartographic progression illustrates the colonial effort to enhance policing for veterinary and political reasons. Maps helped make the mountains legible, and thus, more governable. See James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 44-45.



would go into full effect, but “only after consultation with chiefs and councilors in Basutoland.”<sup>29</sup>

Chiefs from around the country joined Paramount Chief Lerotholi, Godfrey Lagden, and other officials at a national *pitso* (public meeting of all adult males) on October 1, 1896. After public discussion, Lerotholi and Lagden seemed to agree on several principles. First, rinderpest posed a serious danger and would likely affect Basutoland soon. Second, protecting Basotho herds from the murrain necessitated fencing and cordons. For Basutoland, this meant creating a five-mile wide stock-free zone from the border to the interior. Implementing these measures required careful policing with help from all chiefs. Third, the Basutoland government should not use foreign guards or police to secure its borders.<sup>30</sup>

These principles, especially the last two, provoked varied responses in 1896 and 1897. Analyzing these responses will illuminate the politics of veterinary knowledge, and how that knowledge circulated amongst and between new regulatory communities, common people, and animals.<sup>31</sup> The powerful Chief Masupha of Berea district protested loudest by articulating two concerns about the cordon. With plowing season approaching in November-December, he asked: “if we remove all animals then how will we plough our fields, how will we live?” The Caledon River formed the boundary between much of northern and western Lesotho and the Orange Free State. Masupha claimed that the river formed a

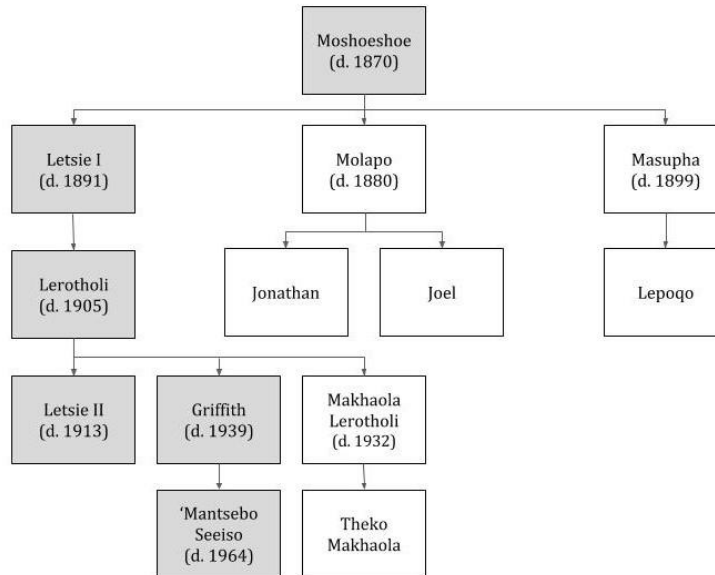
---

<sup>29</sup> LNA, S3/1/5/1, Godfrey Lagden, Suggestions by RC about Rinderpest, September 1896.

<sup>30</sup> TNA, DO 119/178, Lagden to HC in Cape Town, 24 September 1896; Lerotholi to Lagden, 21 September 1896; Rinderpest Agenda Paper, 24 September 1896.

<sup>31</sup> On regulatory communities, see Agrawal, *Environmentality*, 20-24.

sufficient natural barrier against rinderpest, and that apart from closing specific crossings, creating cordons constituted a territorial threat to Lesotho.<sup>32</sup>



**Figure 2.1**  
 Moshoeshoe's Lineage (selected)  
 Paramount Chiefs highlighted in gray  
 Source: created by author in consultation with  
 Rosenberg et al., *Historical Dictionary of Lesotho*.

Masupha's concerns grew from the ecological and labor realities of the agricultural cycle, and from his understanding of Lesotho's political history. In this history, a series of conflicts and treaties from 1843-1872 with the Orange Free State and the British had collapsed Lesotho's northern and western borders incrementally.<sup>33</sup> Masupha was Moshoeshoe's third son (See Figure 2.1), and had fought courageously against Boer incursions in the 1860s and again against the

<sup>32</sup> TNA, DO 119/179, Masupha to PC Lerotholi, 12 October 1896; LNA, S3/1/5/3, Lagden to Lerotholi, 17 October 1896.

<sup>33</sup> Martin Lelimo, *The Question of Lesotho's Conquered Territory: It's time for an answer* (Moriija: MMA, 1998); Eldredge, *South African Kingdom*, 50-53.

Cape Colony in the Gun Wars (1880-82). Basotho, especially in Masupha's home district Berea, saw him as a great chief and a fierce defender of Basotho institutions such as initiation and the chieftainship. He often disagreed with his older brother the Paramount Chief Letsie (d. 1891) on policy matters, and urged his subjects to do the same. So when Masupha's nephew Lerotholi took the helm as paramount chief in 1892, the passionate war veteran Masupha hardened his defiant stance.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, by the end of October in 1896, most Basotho around the country, if reluctantly, had effectively created five-mile cordons free of livestock, apart from a few donkeys and horses.<sup>35</sup>

Rinderpest broke out in Leribe district in October 1896. The cordons and strict quarantining helped localize this outbreak and capped the mortalities at around 300 cattle. There were no reports of rinderpest in Lesotho again until March 1897. But this first outbreak stimulated debate about slaughtering as policy while highlighting Basutoland's political fissures.<sup>36</sup> Paramount Chief Lerotholi wrote Lagden in response to the news of the October 1896 cattle disease, boldly saying that "all these cattle should be killed even though they are a great number, what do you say?" Lagden stood adamantly against this, stressing that slaughtering Basotho stock was politically impossible, "unless you wish to support it with an army." He also believed that slaughtering would encourage people to disperse with infected meat, skins, and other products. Mass slaughter might also cause people to hide

---

<sup>34</sup> On the rivalries between Moshoeshoe's three oldest sons in his first house (Letsie, Molapo, Masupha), see Sanders, *Throwing Down*, 20-25.

<sup>35</sup> TNA, DO 119/179, Lagden to HC, October 1896.

<sup>36</sup> TNA, DO 119/180, RC to PC, 23 November 1896; CO, 119/181, Lagden to HC, 29 March 1897.

their animals in the mountains or elsewhere to avoid government stamping-out measures.<sup>37</sup> Not least, Lagden understood that cattle were the “medium of discipline employed by chiefs in the management of tribal affairs entrusted to them by [colonial] authority.” By this, he meant that chiefs’ control over cattle, which people used to pay fines exacted by chiefs’ courts or borrowed in times of need (*mafisa*), bolstered their political power and prestige amongst commoners. Through this leverage, chiefs also exercised power over what people knew and did not know about cattle, disease, and possible treatments.<sup>38</sup>

The resident commissioner admonished Lerotholi for not forcing Chief Jonathan to enforce the cordon because it was in Jonathan’s area that rinderpest had broken out in October 1896. Chief Jonathan was a son of Molapo. Molapo was a son of Moshoeshoe (d.1870), and had established his chieftainship in the Leribe district. Following his father’s death, Molapo (like his younger brother Masupha) had sought more autonomy from Letsie, who succeeded their father as king (paramount chief). The two junior brothers often resisted colonial policies that Letsie had supported. Molapo had enjoyed great popularity in Leribe and owned substantial cattle herds, which he loaned out to commoners according to the *mafisa* system. *Mafisa* was an institution in which people-in-need could borrow stock to use for draught power

---

<sup>37</sup> CAR 1896-97, p. 8; TNA, DO 119/180, RC to PC, 23 November 1896; Lagden had expressed the “futility of slaughter” several months earlier as well as at the *CoGH Rinderpest Conference*. See for example, DO 119/178, Lagden to HC in Cape Town, 24 September 1896. Some observers suspected that Lerotholi’s encouragement of slaughter could have been a deliberate effort to pit Lagden against his political opponents in the northern districts, or a deliberate effort by Lerotholi to gain favor with Lagden by demonstrating his resolve to fight rinderpest at all costs. See Sanders, *Throwing Down*.

<sup>38</sup> TNA, CO 119/181, Lagden to HC, 29 March 1897.

and milking. Molapo bequeathed this great legacy to his sons when he died in 1880, especially to Jonathan.<sup>39</sup>

Politics and epidemiology overlapped. Lerotholi responded to Lagden's reprimand by lamenting that Jonathan did not recognize him as the nation's legitimate chief. Jonathan had downplayed the rinderpest threat and called Lerotholi a "white blackman" for his perceived alignment with British colonial policies.<sup>40</sup> These chiefly rivalries, especially those between the royal house descended from Letsie on the one hand, and the lineages from the junior sons Molapo and Masupha on the other hand, continued to play out in matters of agricultural and veterinary policy well into the twentieth century – a theme which I will revisit in subsequent chapters.

In November 1896 rinderpest reached the Free State town of Rouxville, near Basutoland's southwestern border. Lagden urged chiefs to be vigilant in protecting the cordons. Meanwhile, the Cape Government had already begun erecting fences along Basutoland's southern border. Lagden told the chiefs that all neighboring governments had "a full right to put up fences if they like" in order "to prevent the removal of cattle from Basutoland."<sup>41</sup> The resident commissioner knew that enforcing veterinary policy in the uplands, perhaps more so than elsewhere in the territory, required support from important chiefs. Working within the parallel administrative system, Paramount Chief Lerotholi had sent his son Makhaola to

---

<sup>39</sup> TNA, DO 119/180, PC to RC, 22 November 1896; RC to PC, 23 November 1896; Sanders, *Throwing Down*, 20-25.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> TNA, DO 119/180, RC to PC, 28 November 1896.

Qacha's Nek to bolster the district's police unit sometime in late 1893. Makhaola served first as a constable to control stock theft and illicit liquor traffic while maintaining the rinderpest cordon, but perhaps more importantly, his presence also consolidated political power for Lerotholi and his colonial allies in the mountains.<sup>42</sup>

When Makhaola arrived in Qacha's Nek, residents were reconfiguring environmental knowledge to meet the demands of ecological and social changes. By the mid-1890s permanent villages, livestock herds, and cattle posts dotted Lesotho's eastern mountains. In 1894 the resident commissioner reported that the "mountains, formerly common pasture, were being largely occupied and cultivated and contain practically no un-allotted spheres."<sup>43</sup> The settlement process produced political and ecological stress that affected the pathways from which people might compile knowledge about rinderpest. Chiefs from various lineages had established villages across the region, generally welcoming Sotho, Zulu, and Xhosa-speaking immigrants from lower, more crowded areas. Immigrants desired grazing space for their livestock, or sought security during and after the Gun Wars (1880-82). Furthermore, land policy in South Africa had dispossessed many Africans, especially after the Glen Grey Act took effect in East Griqualand in 1894. But social relations across ethno-linguistic lines were often fraught within Lesotho too. Basotho and

---

<sup>42</sup> LNA, S3/5/9/1, PC to RC, 8 August 1903; S3/1/5/7, PC to RC, 4 December 1896; Interview with Mokhafisi Kena, 10 December 2014.

<sup>43</sup> CAR 1894-95, p. 6.

colonial authorities, for example, frequently accused the Xhosa-speaking Thembu people of theft and insisted that they were less civilized than the 'native' Basotho.<sup>44</sup>

With respect to ecological changes, farmers of all backgrounds – new arrivals and older families – plowed-up vast acreages of grassland in the 1890s. Cattle herds, along with flocks of merino sheep and angora goats, grazed the mountains in unprecedented numbers.<sup>45</sup> Plow cultivation and year-round grazing intensified ecological pressures in the uplands. Increased human and animal agency in the 1890s coincided with several drought seasons (1894-95, 1896-97) and a destructive locust plague (1895-96), to create ecological conditions that heightened boundary disputes between chiefs.<sup>46</sup> Chiefs, as a primary political duty, sought to provide the best fields, building sites, and grazing space for their subjects. To carry out this duty, chiefs often tried to expand their jurisdictions. Apart from these political duties, chiefs were important arbiters of knowledge for many rural Basotho in the 1890s.<sup>47</sup>

Each chief had a specific relationship to the royal Koena lineage. The nature of each relationship was significant for the ways an individual chief brokered knowledge between government and veterinarians on the one hand, and the stock

---

<sup>44</sup> On the likely effects of the Glen Grey Act, see CAR 1894-95, p. 38; On Nguni-speakers in Lesotho, see, for example, LNA, S7/1/6/1, Sub-Inspector of Basotho Mounted Police to GS, 23 November 1893; CAR 1895-96, pp. 34-35; Sanders uses an 1877 letter from the missionary Rolland to show that Basotho had negative attitudes towards Nguni speakers since earlier in the 1800s, see *Throwing Down*, 27-28.

<sup>45</sup> Grant's Diary, reproduced in Mitchell and Challis, "A first glimpse;" Clarke, "Unexplored Basutoland;" CAR 1894-95, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> CAR 1895-96, pp. 3, 8; CAR 1897-98, p.47.

<sup>47</sup> For example, a dispute between two of the earliest Bakoena chiefs in Qacha's Nek, Sekake and Mpiti, simmered between 1894 and 1905. The chiefs disputed the boundaries of their respective authority over field allocations, grazing rights, and access to building materials such as thatch grass, this in addition to issues about rights of inheritance for their sons. See CAR 1894-95, p.38; CAR 1899-1900, pp. 66-68; LNA, S7/1/6/13, Correspondence between AC Qacha's Nek and PC, May 1905.

keepers under his jurisdiction on the other. In theory, all chiefs residing permanently in the territory in the 1880s, regardless of their lineage and linguistic background, owed allegiance to Letsie, the first son of Moshoeshoe. But each chief's political position also drew on specific history, clan relationships, and his age relative to other chiefs. For example, Letsie had granted space deep in the mountains to the Batlokoa chief Lelingoana as a reward for his military support against the Cape Colony during the Gun Wars.<sup>48</sup>

Other groups had sought living space earlier to reproduce livelihoods based on grazing livestock extensively and farming sorghum, maize, and wheat. Chief Sekake's story presents a contrasting example to that of Lelingoana. He was a descendant of Moshoeshoe's younger brother Mohale and had established one of the earliest Koena villages in Qacha's Nek sometime around 1880. For reasons of both lineage and seniority, Sekake enjoyed a degree of autonomy from the paramount chief that would not have been familiar to Lelingoana and other non-Koena chiefs.<sup>49</sup>

The nuances of chieftainship made for a swirling confluence of rinderpest and local politics in late-nineteenth century Lesotho. Settlement of the mountains occurred during a period when the political supremacy of Moshoeshoe's eldest son Letsie was still in question. In the 1880s and 1890s, opposing factions within Basutoland jostled to configure the political organization of the mountain areas. Paramount Chief Lerotholi and his allies in the colonial government believed that

---

<sup>48</sup> MMA, "1909 Court on Settlement in the mountains."

<sup>49</sup> LNA, S3/5/9/1, PC Lerotholi to RC, 8 August 1903; Interview with Mokhafisi Kena, 10 December 2014; Jones, "Chiefly Succession in Basutoland," 74-76.



the rugged terrain with its deep hidden valleys and well-watered pastures constituted a frontier that required new governance. Prior to 1895, there was no direct descendant of Moshoeshoe's first house permanently residing in the mountains.<sup>50</sup> The absence of a direct descendant created administrative ambiguity with regards to who was responsible for determining appropriate village sites, regulating immigration, allocating fields, and not least, policing against cattle theft and illicit traffic in guns and liquor. Policing began when the government established Qacha's Nek in 1888, a post where Basotho could also obtain passes for working in South Africa. Authorities deemed security "satisfactory" in 1895. But in late-1896 the British, working closely with Lerotholi, believed that enforcing the rinderpest regulations called for direct involvement from the royal house.<sup>51</sup>

The historical arch of Makhaola Lerotholi's political life (c.1893-1932) reveals important aspects of political-ecology in Qacha's Nek. A seemingly passionate anti-colonial warrior in his early days, Makhaola had become an ardent supporter of government veterinary and agricultural initiatives after his father formally placed him as district chief in 1904.<sup>52</sup> He also became a popular chief among his subjects locally, and played a prominent role in national governing bodies. As a prince, Makhaola was known as *molele* (the wanderer). His age mates from initiation school and his subjects too, took this general name for themselves: *melele* (the wanderers), still the nickname of people from Qacha's Nek. He was a

---

<sup>50</sup> MMA, "Court on Settlement in the mountains;" See also, Adolph Mabile, quoted in Germond, *Chronicles*, 416-17; Kennan, "Discovery and Exploration," 38-48.

<sup>51</sup> CAR 1895-96, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> LNA, S3/5/9/1, AC Qacha's Nek to GS, 16 November 1904.



**Figure 2.2**  
“Thaba Bosiu”: Chief Makhaola’s Main House,  
built in 1912.  
Photo by author, January 2015

fierce defender of the chieftaincy. Chief Makhaola married eighteen wives, which he housed in his multi-building sandstone compound in the village that still bears his name. When builders completed it in 1912, commoners, chiefs, and colonial officers all recognized Makhaola’s compound as a substantial architectural achievement for the time, a fitting project where a great chief had assembled labor, skill, and local and non-local building materials. He named the main building after the most important historical site for Basotho: Thaba Bosiu.<sup>53</sup>

Makhaola lived in a time of rapid political and cultural change. Following his death in 1932, his pallbearers carried his casket, draped in a Union Jack, to the top of

---

<sup>53</sup> “Makhaola Lerotholi,” in Mangoaela, *Lithoko*, 199-201; Interview with Mokhafisi Kena, 10 December 2014. The name of the village is Ha Makhaola, meaning “place of Makhaola.”

Thaba Bosiu for a royal burial.<sup>54</sup> To some extent, this funerary episode symbolized his affinity for British culture and ideas about progress, a concept to be discussed in coming chapters. Makhaola's actions in late-1896 and 1897, and those of other chiefs, illustrate the ways in which politics and veterinary knowledge entangled with one another. These entanglements show that chiefly politics could both facilitate and occlude the flow of veterinary knowledge to and from common people.

Makhaola was the oldest son from Lerotholi's third house and was just twenty-five years old when he arrived in Qacha's Nek in 1893. According to the author of his praise poem he was a favorite son: a "darling of his father."<sup>55</sup> When he arrived in Qacha's Nek he was undoubtedly eager to earn respect from chiefs and commoners in the highlands, and from his father too. In the first days of December 1896 Makhaola, with support from several area chiefs, gathered men along the border to stop all traffic going to, and coming from, the Cape Colony. He believed mistakenly that all travelers needed to undergo fumigation at Qacha's Nek. In fact, no fumigation facilities existed yet and people (though not animals) could still move about freely at that time because neither area was infected yet. John Griffith, a sub-inspector in the Basutoland Mounted Police and the head constable in Qacha's Nek, told Makhaola to cease his activities and follow official orders. Makhaola insisted

---

<sup>54</sup> British Pathé, "To sleep with his Forefathers on the summit of Thaba Bosigo- royal funeral of Makhaola Lerotholi," Accessed on 6 March 2016. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIJX-SCf\\_5U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIJX-SCf_5U).

<sup>55</sup> "Makhaola Lerotholi," in Mangoaela, *Lithoko*, 199-201.

that he would follow orders from the paramount chief only, and would continue to enforce the regulations as he understood them.<sup>56</sup>

Although the Cape government lagged behind on the fumigation facilities at Qacha's Nek, they had already begun the fencing project. Men from the Cape had recently installed poles to mark the fence line. Aurthur Bovill, a white South African farmer whose property abutted the Basutoland border, had helped set the poles. Bovill also served as a border guard who was responsible for monitoring the Cape side of the border from Qacha's Nek to Natal. While marking the fence line a few days earlier, Bovill had met Chief Ramatšelisiso near the border twenty miles east of town. Ramatšelisiso had twenty armed men with him, and firmly told Bovill that he had no right to set pickets on the border.<sup>57</sup>

On December 5th a confrontation developed when work crews from the nearby South African town of Matatiele arrived at the Qacha's Nek border to commence building the fence under orders from the Cape Government (See Figure 2.3). It is unclear exactly who joined Makhaola near the main border post at Qacha's Nek, or elsewhere in the district. But Lagden collected several affidavits a few days after the incidents, all of which indicate broad participation by chiefs in the district. The affidavits tell us that armed Basotho taunted the workers, insulted them, and intimidated them physically. The fencing crew had used ox-carts to haul wagons full

---

<sup>56</sup> TNA, DO 119/180, RC to PC, 4 December 1896; LNA, S3/1/5/7, PC to RC, 4 December 1896.

<sup>57</sup> TNA, DO 119/180, A. Bovill affidavit given to Lagden, 14 December 1896.



**Figure 2.3**  
Looking southwards into South Africa from the  
original Qacha's Nek border gate.  
Photo by author, December 2014

of poles and wires, picks, spades, and mauls up to the border to tackle the job.<sup>58</sup> Workers like John Garbutt, a farmer from the nearby Mt. Currie district, probably understood little of the political repercussions of the fence project. Just as the workers began unloading the wagon, a group of mounted, armed men led by Makhaola approached. The Basotho angrily shouted that the workers were trespassing, pointing out precisely where the workers had illegally crossed the Basutoland border, and warning them to back away.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> TNA, DO 119/179, Telegram Correspondence No. 34, 5 December -7 Dec., 1896; LNA, S3/1/5/10, AC to RC, 7 December 1896; WHP, A951, Box C3-D1, File D1, RC to HC, 15 December 1896.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid; See also, TNA, DO 119/180, Affidavit from Garbutt, 15 December 1896; CAR 1896-97, pp. 5-7; Godfrey Lagden, *The Basutos: The Mountaineers & their Country, Vol.2* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1909), 590-93. Several secondary sources have discussed this incident in varying detail, see, for

Tension mounted over the next few days as fencing crews camped just below the border under the protection of a few Cape border guards. Griffith, the British policeman, rode out towards the camp to assess the situation. When Griffith arrived at the border some men stopped him and seized his horse. They eventually let him pass on foot. When Griffith reached the camp he sounded the alarm by dispatching a messenger down to Matatiele to telegraph the capital of Basutoland in Maseru. Many workers broke camp and turned back to Matatiele to avoid further confrontation with the angry highlanders. Despite the remote location, news of the incident spread quickly. In Maseru Lagden read the telegram from the Cape Magistrate at Matatiele that said: "bodies of armed Basuto have occupied the border and threatened the fencing parties in a disrespectful way."<sup>60</sup>

Lagden immediately ordered the paramount chief to "dispatch influential people to ride night and day directly through the mountains to recall the bodies of men on the border." Three brothers of Lerotholi assembled a substantial following of men as they "crossed the mountains with extraordinary speed by changing horses from kraal to kraal." Arriving at Qacha's Nek, they diffused the situation at the border and arranged for a meeting to be held on December 16<sup>th</sup>. The meeting pitted the detachment from Lerotholi, which was aligned with the Basutoland Colonial Government and the Cape Colony against one of the paramount's favorite sons. In

---

example, Van Onselen, "Reactions to Rinderpest;" Phoofolo, "Epidemics and Revolutions;" Phoofolo, "Ambiguous Interactions."

<sup>60</sup> CAR 1896-97, pp. 5-7; TNA, DO 119/180, Lagden to HC in Cape Town, 16 January 1897; Affidavits given to Lagden from: J. T. Griffith, 15 December 1896; A. Bovill, 14 December 1896; Lesuta, 15 December 1896; RooiJan, 9 December 1896; J. Garbutt, 15 December 1896. Additional affidavits are too faded to read.

addition to hindering the fencing work, Griffith alleged that Makhaola had threatened violence on a government officer, an act deemed by Lagden as an “attack on Her Majesty’s government.” Although tensions remained high until a national *pitso* took place the following month, the meeting at Qacha’s Nek had eased the border confrontation and the fence crew returned to work. The government sought to overcome all resistance to the rinderpest controls.<sup>61</sup>

Basutoland’s major chiefs gathered at the *pitso* in Maseru on January 11, 1897 to address the Makhaola incident. Lerotholi and the resident commissioner headed the meeting while other major chiefs including Masupha and Jonathan Molapo also weighed in. Young Makhaola sat in the hot seat as all elder chiefs – especially his uncles and his father – roundly condemned his actions. In their view he had selfishly imperiled the peace of Basutoland and her neighbors. With regards to punishment, Lerotholi argued that imprisoning the young man would only threaten peace further. Lagden acknowledged this danger and proposed instead to employ Makhaola on his native staff in Maseru where “he should endeavor to learn the essentials of discipline and order.” As for the “mountain people who had engaged in riotous proceedings,” Lagden ordered them “to pay 100 head of cattle, though not while the rinderpest regulations prohibited cattle movement.” As Lerotholi was thanking the RC for this decision, Makhaola stood up defiantly with his brothers Letsienyane and Griffith, and with “some wild followers who indulged in a war cry,” mounted horses and rode into the dusk. It was an anxious night in

---

<sup>61</sup> WHP, A951 Box C3 File D1, Lagden to HC, 15 December 1896.

Maseru for everyone. "Jonathan [Molapo] and Masupha slept in their saddles on guard," uncertain of what the young chiefs planned next.<sup>62</sup>

The young "miscreants," as Lagden called them, had gathered a sizeable following that supposedly included a known fugitive Mpondomise chief from East Griqualand, and camped in Mafeteng district.<sup>63</sup> They threatened any messenger from Lerotholi over the next few days, refusing to acknowledge the PC and the colonial government as legitimate authorities. But apparently, Makhaola and the others quickly lost their nerve and turned themselves in, perhaps having weighed the daunting realities of open rebellion in 1897. Rather than serving time under Lagden, Makhaola lived for a brief stint under his father's supervision at the royal compound in Matsieng. Later in 1897 Lerotholi sent Makhaola back to Qacha's Nek to resume his role as constable, a role which included enforcing rinderpest regulations.<sup>64</sup>

There are several possible readings here. One, Makhaola sought autonomy from the political constraints of British colonialism by whatever means possible. Viewed another way, a young chief with little experience sought to carve out his own political space, and was perhaps emboldened by the possibility of one day

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid; CAR 1896-97, pp. 5-7; Lagden, *The Basutos*, 590-93.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. The fugitive was Nhlonhlo, who had been accused of murdering a Cape Magistrate in 1880, and had allegedly been hiding in Lesotho's uplands since then.

<sup>64</sup> Makhaola increased police patrols in Qacha's Nek by December 1897 in response to government fears that the Griqua rebel Le Fleur had infiltrated Basutoland and was seeking support for his fight against the Cape Colony. Makhaola insisted that he had no relationship with Le Fleur. See CAR 1897-98, p. 42. The ceremony at which Makhaola was formally "placed" happened on 9 November 1904. LNA, S3/5/9/1, E. Blythe, AC at Qacha's Nek to GS, 16 November 1904. See also William Beinart, "The Anatomy of a Rural Scare: East Griqualand in the 1890s," in *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: politics and popular movements in the Transkei and Eastern Cape, 1890-1930*, eds. William Beinart and Colin Bundy (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), 46-77.



becoming paramount chief himself. It is possible, too, that he simply did not understand the rinderpest regulations or his role in enforcing them.<sup>65</sup> By looking at the intersections of these readings, especially by exploring the roots of Makhaola's motivations, we gain a sense of how these events affected what people knew about rinderpest, and what they knew about the political and ecological context within which rinderpest might threaten their cattle.

At the original meeting in Qacha's Nek in December 1896 Makhaola had, at first, explained that he was simply upholding his father's orders for enforcing rinderpest regulations. But he expressed several deeper motivations too. He claimed that people in Qacha's Nek viewed the border fence as a precursor of Basutoland's annexation to the Cape Colony, just as had happened in nearby Pondoland a few years earlier. Furthermore, people had heard news that an armed column of Cape soldiers was organizing in Matatiele, preparing to enter Basutoland to begin annexation. The young chief also voiced fears that the Cape Colony and Basutoland governments aimed to open up the mountain areas to mineral prospecting.<sup>66</sup> Lagden dismissed all of these fears as groundless, saying such perspectives were "typical of the native mind which thrived on rumors and superstitions." Indeed, rumor had played an important part in how people acquired knowledge, but these fears were grounded in important realities.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> TNA, DO 119/179, RC to HC, 7 December 1896; DO 119/180, Lagden to HC and Griffith to Lagden, 15 December 1896; CAR 1896-97, pp. 5-7.

<sup>66</sup> CAR 1896-97, pp. 5-7; TNA, DO 119/179, Telegram Correspondence No. 34, December 1896.

<sup>67</sup> TNA, DO 119/180, Lagden to HC, 16 December 1897.

Basotho knew that Cape colonial authorities had built fences just before annexing Pondoland in 1894. Qacha's Nek in 1896 had a growing population of non-Basotho immigrants who brought livestock and consumer goods, as well as news, back and forth across the border from places like Matatiele, Mt. Fletcher, and Pondoland.<sup>68</sup> Fences were foreign to Basotho pastoral practice, apart from reed enclosures at the fronts of family homes and stone livestock kraals. Basotho closely controlled grazing across seasons, in village areas, and at mountain cattle posts, but shepherds (*balisana*), not fences, regulated these practices. Basotho resistance to various state-mandated enclosures whether fencing national borders or altering the communal land tenure system through paddocking, echoed similar reactions across time and space.<sup>69</sup>

Resistance to fences in Lesotho extended beyond Qacha's Nek. In February 1897, a border guard in the Herschel district of the Cape Colony reported that 650 armed Basotho from Quthing district threatened to destroy the border fence there when workers sunk the first posts. Local Basotho chiefs claimed that the report of 650 men was grossly exaggerated and denied that they intended to harm the fences. This response in Quthing, a district that had been temporarily confiscated by the Cape in 1880 following Moorosi's War, suggests that Basotho sought to prevent any

---

<sup>68</sup> TNA, DO 119/179, RC to HC, 7 December 1896; LNA, S3/1/5/10, Telegraph Correspondence between Griffith, RC, and Magistrate at Matatiele, 11 December – 12 December 1896.

<sup>69</sup> See Casalis, *The Basutos*, 125, 153, 158; TNA, WO 33/501, Dobson, *Military Report, Vol. 1*, 111-15; On other reactions to enclosure, see Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*; Fences had previously been erected along the northern border with the Orange Free State to prevent "trespass disputes" and illicit liquor traffic. See CAR 1889-90, p.5.

further territorial encroachment.<sup>70</sup> In both places, men rallied to protect the historical patterns of human and animal migration that linked Lesotho's southern mountains with the territories below the escarpment. For Africans, fences formed physical and symbolic barriers to engaging ecological opportunities as well as preventing other cultural pursuits, such as visiting sites of religious significance, a problem which persists into the twenty-first century.<sup>71</sup>

Fences did, however, offer a possible technical solution for segregating healthy animals from those that were infected with rinderpest, or other communicable diseases. Considering that rinderpest had not infected the area before, few people in Qacha's Nek would have understood its epidemiological characteristics in 1896, much less the English state-based veterinary model being deployed by southern African governments. It was not that this knowledge was necessarily beyond comprehension, but more about a problem of circulation. New agricultural and veterinary information, both about public policy and technical knowledge, typically reached rural people through word of mouth. Travelers and migrant laborers transferred knowledge acquired from experiences in schools,

---

<sup>70</sup> TNA, DO 119/180, Civil Commissioner at Herschel to HC, 5 February 1897.

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, *BNC, 43<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1947, Vol. 2*, 546-50; Anne Mager, "'The People Get Fenced': Gender, Rehabilitation and African Nationalism in the Ciskei and Border region, 1945-1955," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 4 (1992): 761-82. On religious sites, see David Coplan, "Land from the Ancestors: Popular Religious Pilgrimage along the South Africa-Lesotho Border," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 4 (2003): 977-93.

mines, and farms. But more than these migrants, it was chiefs like Makhaola and their political clout that asserted the most control over knowledge flow.<sup>72</sup>

In December 1896 Lesotho's most prominent Christian organization and leader in formal education, the Paris Evangelical Mission (PEMS) had only minimal presence in the region. Two main missions, one at Sehonghong in the upper Senqu Valley and one at Mafube near Matatiele, South Africa, influenced local communities while also operating several nascent outstations.<sup>73</sup> Apart from preaching the gospel and converting souls, these PEMS missions taught reading and writing to Basotho youth. The Catholic Church opened numerous schools in Qacha's Nek only after the 1920s. But in 1896, in addition to the two PEMS missions, there were just two government primary schools in the district. Most highlanders were illiterate in the 1890s.<sup>74</sup> Thus, it is highly unlikely that many people learned from the Sesotho language article published in *Leselinyana la Lesotho* on December 15, 1896 that discussed rinderpest's regional impact, official veterinary policies, and the ongoing efforts to produce an inoculation. As the official newspaper of PEMS, and among the first African language newspapers on the continent, *Leselinyana* circulated widely in the lowlands but scarcely in the mountains in 1896.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Seleso Tsoako, 19 January 2015; Interview with Mokhafisi Kena, 10 December 2014; CAR 1895-96, pp. 34-35; Moteane, reproduced in Ambrose and Brutsch, trans., Part V, *Mehloli* 3, no. 1 (1991): 4-7.

<sup>73</sup> Malahleha, "Mafube PEMS," 129-34.

<sup>74</sup> CAR 1895-96, pp. 34-35; By 1936, with more than 15 schools open in Qacha's Nek, census data shows that 26% of females and 19% of males could read. See *Basutoland Census for 1936*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>75</sup> "Lefu la Likhomo," *Leselinyana*, 15 December 1896.

Given the state of formal education, limited roads, and relative isolation, rumor remained an important channel for knowledge circulation in Qacha's Nek in the 1890s. Rumor, however, usually reflected lived realities.<sup>76</sup> Many Basotho believed that the British had intentionally introduced rinderpest to destroy their herds. Other groups of Africans in the region and many rural Afrikaners too, suspected a British conspiracy. Some Zulu, Xhosa, and Batswana stockowners understood the epidemic as a "white man's disease," introduced to further subdue Africans. In fact, Afrikaners living near Lesotho's borders had told Basotho farmers that the Cape prime minister and mining mogul Cecil Rhodes had intentionally infected herds in Rhodesia, the Transvaal and the OFS, and that Lesotho was next. In this view, Rhodes and the British intended to destroy Africans' primary means of subsistence in order to force them to work in the mines. Indeed, solving the so-called labor problem was a central feature of 1890s politics in South Africa, especially through taxation, but there is little evidence to substantiate claims of a biological conspiracy on such a scale.<sup>77</sup>

These sentiments, which Makhaola seems to have understood well, did reflect a general African reverence for European technology and ingenuity as well as African resistance to incessant colonial political and military incursions. In other words, the same people who had brought railroads and firearm technology could surely devise a biological scheme to destroy African livestock. There were many

---

<sup>76</sup> On the role of rumor in transmitting knowledge, see Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>77</sup> TNA, DO 119/180, Lagden to HC, 16 December 1897; See also, Phoofolo, "Ambiguous Interactions;" Ballard, "Repercussions of Rinderpest."

sources and variations of this belief, some of which circulated widely in rural Lesotho to explain the looming plague. When situated in the context of 1890s southern Africa, these claims seem completely rational.<sup>78</sup> The Basotho experience over the preceding decades – marked by two wars with the Cape Colony, internal succession conflicts, repeated drought, locusts, and increased colonial taxation – typifies the crisis context in which these beliefs flourished.<sup>79</sup>

Colonial plans to further consolidate control over African lands, and to open them up to white settlement and mineral prospecting were very real in December 1896. Makhaola and his followers had expressed particular fears about prospecting.<sup>80</sup> After lucrative diamond and gold findings in South Africa in recent decades, prospectors and their government allies sought access to Basutoland. In 1895 the high commissioner in Cape Town wrote to Lagden, urging him to convince the chiefs to reconsider the laws that prohibited foreign prospecting in the territory. The HC believed mining would offer advantages to “the natives and to the surrounding states...offering a home market for labor and agricultural produce and would bring them into contact with Europeans under more favorable conditions than those conditions obtained” in the South African mines. He suggested that the government could issue limited licenses to European applicants. The resident

---

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, Sean Redding, *Sorcery and Sovereignty: Taxation, Power, and Rebellion in South Africa, 1880-1963* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 60-64; Jacobs, *Environment, Power, and Injustice*, 104.

<sup>79</sup> CAR 1894-95, p. 6; CAR 1895-96, p. 3, 34-35; Eldredge, *South African Kingdom*, 80-81; Germond, *Chronicles*, 471-76; My point that these beliefs were rational when understood in the appropriate historical context, draws on Jeffrey Peires, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-7* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989).

<sup>80</sup> TNA, DO 119/179, Lagden Telegram to HC, 7 December 1896; CAR 1896-97, pp. 5-7.

commissioner of Basutoland met with the chiefs to discuss the matter. The Basotho chiefs essentially said thanks, but no thanks.<sup>81</sup>

Lagden explained to the high commissioner that although prospecting seemed like a good idea for economic development in principle, it would provoke conflict between chiefs and prospectors, and surely end in failure. Basotho chiefs knew well of how South African governments had dispossessed the Xhosa, Zulu, and other groups, and viewed themselves as an “exceptional tribe,” and would jealously “protect their semi-autonomy.” Furthermore, European prospectors had long been gathering along the borders, anxiously awaiting the legal right to dig in Basutoland.<sup>82</sup>

Prospectors’ presence, whether licensed or not, would interfere with an internally fraught situation governing land use. In this situation, chiefs and commoners worked to conserve *maboella* between Christmas and June for their subsistence. Lagden explained that *maboella* already irritated “strangers and transport riders passing through the country whose cattle stray into it.” Additionally, Basotho chiefs carefully regulated, and sometimes disputed land use by European traders and missionaries. These conditions, Lagden argued, were “exceptional and deserved mature consideration.”<sup>83</sup> Chiefs discussed these matters and the prohibitions against foreign mineral prospecting remained in place. But

---

<sup>81</sup> WHP, A951 Box C3-D1, Folder D1, H. Lock to Lagden, 12 January 1896; Lagden to Lock, 3 February 1895.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., Lagden to Lock, 3 February 1895.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid; For a description of *maboella/leboella*, see Chapter 1 and *Report and Evidence of the Commission on Native Laws and Customs*, 51-52.

given a long history of colonial deceit, Makhaola and others had good reason to doubt that European prospecting ambitions simply died in 1895.<sup>84</sup>

Apart from external threats, we must understand Makhaola's actions in 1896-97 and the senior chiefs' responses to his actions as a generational conflict within the Basotho chieftainship. In this instance, evidence suggests that Makhaola's personal ambitions shaped the ways Qacha's Nek residents experienced rinderpest from December 1896 until the murrain had run its course in the district by late 1897; and then during its resurgence in Lesotho in 1901.<sup>85</sup> Basotho social organization was patriarchal, which meant that male seniority largely determined succession rights within families and chieftainship. A man's eldest son enjoyed special rights to his fields, livestock, and other property when the father died.<sup>86</sup>

A chief's eldest son from his first house (senior wife, if he had multiple wives) succeeded his father as chief of a given village or ward (district or sub-district). But succession was often complicated by sudden deaths of heirs, favoritism for specific sons, differing capabilities of each son (eg. education), and personal aspirations of chiefs' sons. For example, some contemporaries believed that Makhaola, who had no formal education, had received Qacha's Nek, which was the largest district by area at that time, because his father Lerotholi favored him over his brothers. Furthermore, as land became scarce in the face of population growth and hardened borders, ward

---

<sup>84</sup> See Sanders, *Throwing Down*, 92-93, 264-65.

<sup>85</sup> CAR 1897-98, pp. 42-44.

<sup>86</sup> Duncan, *Sotho Laws and Customs*, 11-15.



chiefs in Lesotho struggled to place their sons in areas with adequate lands; a process that brought chiefs into direct conflict with one another.<sup>87</sup>

Conflict amongst chiefs in the 1890s grew at the intersection of Basotho cultural practice and colonial politics. Both cultural practice and respective political position conditioned each chief's view of the specter of rinderpest. Young men typically respected elders, but it was also common for them to aspire to prove themselves, if not in battle, than in a comparable show of courage and strength. Basotho boys like Makhaola became men through *lebollo*, circumcision school. Lebollo instructors taught aspects of agriculture and family life, but historically, they also taught martial skills like stick fighting, horse riding, and shooting to the teenage boys. Initiates in the late-nineteenth century emerged from the school eager to engage Sesotho male lifeways: to acquire cattle, to marry and have children, and not least, to experience battle. For these reasons, missionaries and colonial authorities had tried, with mixed success, to eliminate lebollo in Lesotho. By the 1870s the institution had waned in some areas, but during times of crisis, such as the 1890s, Basotho men showed renewed interest in the rite. Initiates held their cohort, or age set, in high regard throughout their lives—perhaps even higher than their elders.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> MMA, Basutoland Native Laws of Lerotholi, 3 October 1922; Duncan, *Sotho Laws and Customs*, 48-50; The paramount chief and principal ward chiefs could "place" a junior son in a specific area, or even place a commoner. This could occur by actually sending the man out to a sparsely populated area or by recognizing him as a village headman if he had already settled there on his own. As more settlements were established in that area, the same chief or his successor could consolidate the territory by placing there a more senior son over the whole area as a sub-chief, or if the area was a large one as a ward chief. See Jones, "Chiefly Succession," 63.

<sup>88</sup> *Report and Evidence of Commission on Native Laws and Customs*, 49-51; Ashton, *The Basuto*, 46-56; Laydevant, *Rites of Initiation in Lesotho*, 7-11.

By the 1890s, all of the senior chiefs had fought in previous wars against the Cape Colony and against the Orange Free State. For Makhaola, *molele* as he was known, and his two brothers who fled the *pitso* in January 1897, the rinderpest regulations represented a threat to territorial sovereignty. But more importantly it offered them a political opportunity to assert themselves as the next generation of Basotho leaders. Like their fathers and grandfathers before them, they tested the resolve of the colonial political dispensation, which included the senior chiefs. But age groups, like lineages, often developed political fissures.<sup>89</sup> For rural people who had limited access to knowledge of the pathology, policy, and potential treatments of rinderpest, these political fissures mattered.

Makhaola's Qacha's Nek subjects and fellow chiefs followed his lead by rejecting the notion that fences could protect them from rinderpest, rallying to the stand-off at the border. But once Makhaola changed his perspective on government interventions following his short-lived insurgency, and carried out the next phases of the campaign against rinderpest, his subjects seemed to take interest in the new veterinary knowledge being deployed in 1897. In so doing, people eventually welcomed inoculation, saving the lives of many cattle. As we will see in a contrasting example, this was not the case with Makhaola's great uncle Masupha, who, in his

---

<sup>89</sup> Special reference here to Jonathan Molapo, Masupha, and Lerotholi's experiences during the Gun War (1880-81) and earlier wars against Europeans. See Sanders, *Throwing Down*, 22-26, 130-32.

politics, urged his subjects to reject inoculations. This political stance resulted in catastrophic losses in cattle.<sup>90</sup>

### **2.3 - Confronting Rinderpest and the Messiness of Knowledge Circulation**

Stories about Lesotho's experience with rinderpest show us how different people responded to government veterinary interventions. These stories improve our understanding of the political and social reasons behind these responses. Each response produced different outcomes. These outcomes, and the processes behind them, speak to the ways Basotho changed how they perceived the colonial state and the state's role in modifying human-environment relations after the 1890s. To understand these processes beyond the political dynamics discussed above we must connect the experiences of local Basotho to the ideas and technologies behind these state-led campaigns.

The German bacteriologist Robert Koch left a deep veterinary imprint on southern Africa. But southern Africa's experience with rinderpest also deeply affected him by pushing his research to the front lines of international veterinary science. Basotho, as I have shown, despised the 1860s British model for containing rinderpest. Basutoland in the 1890s had very different political conditions and cultural conceptions of cattle than those in 1860s Britain, which had enabled the British government to successfully stamp out rinderpest there. These differences

---

<sup>90</sup> The official report from Qacha's Nek showed that 10,600 cattle had been inoculated between September and November 1897, with "very satisfactory results." See CAR 1897-98, pp. 42-44; Phoofofo, "Ambiguous Interactions," 87.

paved the way for Koch and his associates to develop effective inoculations by field experiment, and deploy them in southern Africa.<sup>91</sup> Fencing presented challenges that the southern African veterinary establishment could not entirely grasp. Even when the government erected fences and policed borders, the murrain found its way through to new bovine populations.

Slaughtering cattle posed even greater obstacles for the proponents of the outmoded British veterinary policy. When rinderpest appeared in Lesotho's Mohale's Hoek district in March 1897, the high commissioner asked local officials once again about the possibilities of slaughtering infected animals. District administrators reinforced Lagden's earlier opposition to slaughtering. The commissioner from Leribe believed slaughtering was "absurd given the nature of cattle keeping in Basutoland." Another officer probed further into local circumstances, saying that the chiefs' control over the mafisa system meant that the chiefs would be the most ferocious opponents of stamping out policies; and furthermore, chiefs would easily persuade commoners who needed livestock loans for sustenance that they should resist such measures, which would surely kill healthy livestock and reduce the pool of mafisa animals.<sup>92</sup> In other words, Basotho from across the social spectrum would probably protest.

The assistant commissioner in Qacha's Nek insisted that slaughtering was "altogether impossible and impracticable amongst a native tribe like the Basuto." He

---

<sup>91</sup> Spinage, *Cattle Plague*, 425-31; Gilfoyle, "Veterinary Research," 142-43.

<sup>92</sup> LNA, S3/1/5/8, HC to GS, Maseru, 5 February 1897; GS to DC Leribe, 14 March 1897; AC Berea to GS, 17 March 1897.

added that “apart from any active resistance which would inevitably be offered, such a measure would spread the disease all over the territory” because people would hide animals at remote posts and disperse with infected materials. The commissioner argued that it would be better to continue maintaining the five-mile cordon.<sup>93</sup> These local administrators knew full well that people would not offer seemingly healthy animals up for slaughter, regardless of how much veterinary authorities tried to convince them that killing infected animals could save healthy herds. In sum, the social realities of rinderpest on the ground in Basutoland contradicted what officials in Cape Town and London believed. With these constraints in mind, the Cape had already begun research and development for alternative approaches.

In the 1890s Robert Koch’s work was renown in international health circles. He had developed a serum for inoculating against diphtheria in humans through his intensive laboratory research in Berlin. The Cape government commissioned Koch in January 1897 to join Alexander Edington, the director of the Cape’s Bacteriological Institute, who had been conducting research in Bechuanaland. The team set up controlled experiments at the Kimberley scientific compound to find a prophylactic for rinderpest by following the established research methods from

---

<sup>93</sup> LNA, S3/1/5/8, DC Conracht-Mony, Qacha’s Nek to GS, 23 March 1897.

European laboratories. Koch's research drew on his vast knowledge of bacteriology.<sup>94</sup>

But Koch also incorporated local knowledge. For example, he learned of an older practice used by South African farmers to inoculate sick cattle. To protect cattle from lung-sickness and pleuropneumonia, both of which had infected herds in the recent past, some farmers would soak some sort of fiber in infected bile (gall) and then insert it under a healthy animal's skin. Although the precise origins of the practice were not known, nor the extent of its efficacy, it probably emerged from farmers' perspectives that animal diseases were closely linked to tainted bile; and it may have also been linked to earlier inoculation practices in Europe to treat other livestock diseases. Koch used this knowledge to produce his findings, which he shared publicly on March 22, 1897. He claimed that "by injection of gall taken from rinderpest animals, sound animals may be protected against rinderpest." He considered the inoculation "absolutely proved," at that time.<sup>95</sup>

Knowledge of Koch's bile inoculation traveled fast. On March 23<sup>rd</sup> Lagden proceeded to Mohale's Hoek district where rinderpest had killed 400 cattle. Two veterinary surgeons from the Cape Colony accompanied Lagden. One surgeon, William Robertson had trained at the Pasteur Institute in Paris before coming to the Cape. The other, Harry Armstrong, had qualified at the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in London before arriving at the Cape in October 1896. Both men had

---

<sup>94</sup> Frank Verney, "The Rinderpest in South Africa," *Journal of Comparative Pathology and Therapeutics* 11 (1898): 95-103; Duncan Hutcheon, "Rinderpest in South Africa," *Journal of Comparative Pathology and Therapeutics* 15 (1902): 300-24.

<sup>95</sup> Gilfoyle, "Veterinary Research," 142-43; Spinage, *Cattle Plague*, 425-31.

worked with Koch at the Kimberley station, and then traveled directly to Basutoland to assist the government there. The trio, escorted by several chiefs including Lerotholi, arrived in Mohale's Hoek armed with new knowledge and technology which they aimed to impart – and to some extent test – on Basotho cattle.<sup>96</sup>

Lerotholi appointed his son Letsienyane (who had partnered with Makhaola in resistance just two months earlier) and another chief to organize a camp along the OFS border about twelve miles long. The chiefs marked twelve head of healthy cattle in the camp to be tightly quarantined. Then, “considerable numbers of representative people assembled” near the quarantine camp. Onlookers probably included male stockowners and non-stockowners alike, missionary educated and uneducated, along with women and children who also watched the spectacle. Many more Basotho watched and listened in the nearby infected area where Armstrong and Robertson, working with the chiefs, performed post-mortems on a dozen dead cattle.<sup>97</sup> They explained the pathology of the infection, most likely through a Mosotho translator, which they believed was produced through the respiratory organs, before it became more generalized and later caused lesions on the digestive organs. The virus existed in all bodily secretions, and could incubate for nearly two weeks before manifesting in symptoms. Contamination, the veterinary surgeons emphasized, could take place by direct contact with diseased animals, or indirectly

---

<sup>96</sup> Basutoland hired its own government veterinary surgeon following the rinderpest epidemic. German-born Otto Henning, who had cut his teeth in South Africa during the rinderpest, took up this post. TNA, CO 119/181, Lagden to HC, 29 March 1897; D. Verwoerd, “Robertson, William,” and C. Plug, “Armstrong, Harry,” *Biographical Database of Southern African Science*,” Accessed on 26 February 2016. <http://www.s2a3.org.za/bio>.

<sup>97</sup> TNA, CO 119/181, Lagden to HC, 29 March 1897.

through contact with dung, spittle, bedding, hay, hides, wagons, etc. And finally, the vets said that the virus could only be communicated across relatively short distances.<sup>98</sup>

The surgeons then showed the difference between good and bad gall, and demonstrated their method for extracting the fluid. Following the demonstration, the team of chiefs, vets, and colonial officers returned to the quarantine area with a supply of good gall. Subsequently, the team inoculated six of the twelve picketed cattle with the gall and they left the other six alone. The chiefs and surgeons explained this process by demonstrating to the public. Watching with interest, many stockowners from neighboring pastures – some undoubtedly more suspicious of the government officials than others – clamored for the bile inoculation. The vets explained that the inoculation could only work if the animal had not yet been exposed to the virus. Within a couple of days, roughly 1000 cattle had received inoculations. Everyone anxiously awaited the results.<sup>99</sup>

Lagden wrote the high commissioner in Cape Town in May to share the findings. Three of the inoculated cattle had died while still in the quarantine area. The vets insisted that these animals had been exposed prior to being picketed and inoculated, which was possible given the incubation period. After ten days in the quarantine, the remaining three inoculated cattle, and the six untreated cattle had been placed in “an infected kraal reeking with deadly infective excreta and remains

---

<sup>98</sup> LNA, S3/1/5/10, Duncan Hutcheon, “Rinderpest or Zambesi Cattle Fever,” 16 March 1896.

<sup>99</sup> TNA, CO 119/181, Lagden to HC, 29 March 1897.



of defunct animals.” The six un-inoculated animals promptly died, while the other three survived and were still flourishing fifty-eight days after being subjected to the virulent conditions.<sup>100</sup>

With support from the veterinary surgeons, Basotho in the infected area around Mafeteng and Mohale’s Hoek had inoculated 9000 cattle between March 29<sup>th</sup> and mid-May. Some 800 of those had died, having likely been exposed prior to inoculation. During the same time frame 7000 un-inoculated cattle succumbed to the plague.<sup>101</sup> Through several months of experience the Cape veterinary department learned that “certain galls although physically correct in character and appearance, do still communicate rinderpest to certain cattle.” Duncan Hutcheon then issued revised instructions to Basutoland and other officials for improving methods of gall extraction and inoculation, which refined the process further.<sup>102</sup>

These initial results convinced many Basotho stockowners that the new gall inoculation could save their animals from rinderpest. Reportedly, Basotho had marveled at seeing “salted” (immunized) oxen in infected areas plowing for winter wheat, a task that people knew required great strength to break up crusty soil during the dry months.<sup>103</sup> But this bio-medical solution and the knowledge that underpinned it were not simply heaped onto a blank slate. Rather, Basotho had beliefs and practices regarding livestock and disease, some of which overlapped with the new veterinary science emanating from the government. But some of these

---

<sup>100</sup> TNA, CO 119/181, Lagden to HC, 18 May 1897.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> LNA, S3/1/5/3, Hutcheon, “Directions for Inoculation,” 21 June 1897.

<sup>103</sup> TNA, CO 119/181, Lagden to HC, 18 May 1897.

beliefs and practices rubbed up against the new government mechanisms for transferring this knowledge. These components, and the friction between them, constitute the process by which people compile knowledge. What, then, did Basotho think as they watched government authorities perform this experiment that integrated quarantine, gall extraction, and inoculation?

Onlookers viewed these procedures and the resulting effective treatment through a culturally and historically appropriate lens, but this lens also looked different across African social groups. The available primary sources provide only glimpses of how people reacted, let alone what they thought. But by reading this empirical evidence in the ecological and political context of 1890s Lesotho, and reading it alongside ethnographic and secondary material, we can understand these elements as parts of the larger process.<sup>104</sup>

Ideas about the supernatural blended with knowledge about bovine anatomy and ecology to inform Basotho understandings of disease, and of crisis more broadly. Basotho farmers regularly performed postmortems on deceased animals to examine the stomach contents, to see the color of bile and other fluids, and to look for any organ irregularities. In May 1896 a farmer in Mohale's Hoek conducted a postmortem on an ox that had been inoculated. He found a blanket pin (oversized safety pin) and a sixpence coin in the ox's stomach. Local *lingakas* (doctors)

---

<sup>104</sup> This analysis draws on William Beinart and Karen Brown, *African Local Knowledge & Livestock Health: Diseases and Treatments in South Africa* (London: James Currey, 2013).

interpreted this as evidence of witchcraft that had been deployed on behalf of the government, whose malicious intent was to kill Basotho cattle.<sup>105</sup>

The following month officials reported more allegations of witchcraft, this time in the Quthing district and the adjacent Herschel district of South Africa. In a very different scenario, several cattle belonging to a white farmer who had had his stock inoculated, died suddenly. Again, local doctors understood this as a malicious individual's sorcery deployed through inoculations to settle a score with this farmer. Many people in both places followed the advice of the *lingakas* and refused to inoculate their animals, temporarily bringing the inoculation campaign to a virtual standstill.<sup>106</sup>

Postmortem results could indicate supernatural causation, but farmers often read the results in terms of environmental and nutritional factors. In their recent study, William Beinart and Karen Brown have found that although some South African stockowners attributed tick-borne cattle diseases to supernatural causes, it was far more common for people to understand animal health in terms of seasonality, vegetation, water availability, and other visible phenomena. Basotho in the 1890s had recently undergone several seasons of drought, a locust plague, and poor harvests, all of which negatively affected livestock health.<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>105</sup> TNA, DO 119/181, RC to HC, 18 May 1897; On Basotho and the supernatural as a means to explain illness and environmental circumstances like drought, see Ashton, *The Basuto*, 290, 300-05.

<sup>106</sup> LNA, S3/1/5/3, AC Quthing to RC, 4 June 1897.

<sup>107</sup> Beinart and Brown's research focused primarily on the extent to which people's beliefs and practices had changed during the twentieth century. Evidence for perceptions of rinderpest in 1890s Lesotho, especially in the mountain areas, strongly suggests that witchcraft (*boloi*) was commonly

More animals vied for the finite grazing space in the mountains than ever before. According to some reports, *hlabahlabane* (*Xanthium spinosum*/burweed) and other noxious plants were displacing nutritious grasses like *seboku* (*Themeda triandra*/redgrass), an ecological change that probably affected cattle nutrition adversely.<sup>108</sup> Chiefs and commoners guarded maboella jealously to preserve sustenance for the human and animal populations under their charge. Basotho sought healthy environments and pasture for animals by using maboella and through seasonal transhumance systems, systems which were harder to operate with increasingly constrained borders.<sup>109</sup> These ecological changes and the accusations of witchcraft that were derived from the contents of the animal's stomach tell us – at least to some extent – that stockowners viewed rinderpest through a multi-focal lens which blended environmental, supernatural, and political factors to explain rinderpest.

Basotho stockowners typically did not, however, believe that diseases passed from one animal to the other. Germ theory, that is, contagion through microbes in both human and animal bodies, was a new concept for Basotho as it was for most people throughout the world in the 1890s.<sup>110</sup> Most Basotho veterinary treatments used combinations of medicinal plants to induce vomiting or diarrhea as a way to purge impurities that had been ingested while grazing, whether from noxious

---

seen as a cause of the plague. *African Local Knowledge*, 84-88, 197-200; See also, Redding, *Sorcery and Sovereignty*, 60-64.

<sup>108</sup> CAR 1892-93, p. 10; CAR 1894-95, p.17; Clarke, "Unexplored Basutoland."

<sup>109</sup> WHP, A951 Box C3-D1, Folder D1, Lagden to Lock, 3 February 1895; CAR 1897-98, p.40.

<sup>110</sup> Worboys, *Spreading Germs*, 2-19.

plants, decaying animal matter (eg. bones), or inedible objects like blanket pins. For example, people diagnosed gall sickness (*nyoko*) through “dry nose, lassitude and loss of appetite.” Caretakers treated *nyoko* using a medicine blended from herbs and roots such as *hloenya* (*Dicoma anomala*), *seboka* (*Scilla rigidifolia*), and *lebate* (*Cymbopogon validus*), which induced purging.<sup>111</sup>

These approaches underscore the emphasis that stockowners placed on environmental and nutritional diagnosis and treatment. There is little evidence, however, to suggest that any more than a few Basotho understood pathology in the biological sense, but nor were Basotho particularly stubborn in acquiring new knowledge. Despite Lagden’s assertion that Basotho, especially mountain people, were “naturally suspicious of all innovations,” the 1890s proved to be a critical period for rethinking disease causation and treatment possibilities.<sup>112</sup>

In addition to veterinary treatments, Basotho also engaged new medical knowledge about human health in the 1890s when smallpox appeared in the territory. Smallpox had claimed many lives in Lesotho at least since 1889 when the disease infected areas along the upper Senqu River Valley. Smallpox broke out again in 1895 and 1896. Government medical officers and their trained staff vaccinated more than 32,000 Basotho at mission stations and at government medical

---

<sup>111</sup> On Sesotho veterinary medicine see E. Phillips, “A Contribution to the Flora of the Leribe Plateau and Environs,” *Annals of the South African Museum* 16 (1917); Ashton, *The Basuto*, 140-41, 318-21; Molelekoa Mohapi, *Temo ea Boholo-holo Lesotho* (Moriya: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1956), 70-71; Damane, “Sotho Medicine,” 48-59; In addition to published sources, I derive these statements from consultations during fieldwork. Special thanks to Bokang Lisene of Qacha’s Nek.

<sup>112</sup> Lagden believed that Basotho were more progressive than most other African groups in the region, maintaining that the conservative “characteristics of the Kaffir race predominated.” CAR 1894-95, p. 6.

dispensaries. In Qacha's Nek medical staff vaccinated 900 people in 1896. According to the government medical officer Radford Savage, Basotho had "learned the benefits conferred by successful vaccination" and were "quite willing, if not anxious, to be vaccinated in order to avoid the disease."<sup>113</sup> The fact that the number of vaccinations remained relatively small speaks to the localization of the outbreaks, to the tiny number of medical personnel, and to the limited availability of the lymph needed to produce the vaccine locally. Dispensaries and mission stations, moreover, were inaccessible to many people, especially in the highlands.<sup>114</sup> In other words, who benefitted from vaccination in Qacha's Nek probably had more to do with geographic proximity to dispensaries and missions than to any culturally embedded resistance to new medical knowledge.

This is not to say that many Basotho understood the biological pathology of either rinderpest or smallpox in the 1890s. But evidence of broad voluntary participation suggests that people did understand that both maladies posed major threats to animal and human health, and furthermore, that the government may have successfully intervened. The interventions, as described in Mohales' Hoek in 1897, had shown people about a specific process for diagnosis, treatment, and monitoring. Parts of this process would have been familiar to skilled stock keepers who had distinguished between good and bad gall long ago. When inoculated

---

<sup>113</sup> CAR 1889-90, p.6; CAR 1892-93, p.31; CAR 1894-95, p.8; CAR 1895-96, pp. 34-35.

<sup>114</sup> A small station was set up in Qacha's Nek town to produce the inoculation because the RC "considered it inadvisable to rely on supplies from elsewhere owing to the difficulty and distance of transport." This would have been a similar case with respect to smallpox. See CAR 1897-98, pp. 42-44.

animals continued to thrive amid the diseased and dying herds, previously skeptical people developed trust in new environmental knowledge, and to some extent, they also developed trust in the government as a service provider.

Veterinary knowledge, however efficacious it might have seemed to some people, did not flow free of political obstructions. Berea district's Chief Masupha vehemently opposed government inoculation efforts and asserted his authority by pressuring his subjects to do likewise. His own herds and those of his followers suffered, with cattle fatalities reaching over 100,000 in Berea.<sup>115</sup> While it became clear that the initial method for gall inoculation only temporarily immunized cattle for three to four months, it was also clear that in areas where chiefs urged people to accept gall inoculation, and where inoculation services were available, survival rates were much higher.<sup>116</sup>

Qacha's Nek experienced severe devastation too, but it also offers a geographical contrast to Masupha's district. Rinderpest arrived at Chief Sekake's village in July 1897. It then spread up the Senqu Valley to Chief Lelingoana's place where it eventually died out sometime in November 1897. Cattle mortality was heavy in the many communities that were perched along the rim of the river gorge between Sekake's and Lelingoana's villages.<sup>117</sup> In his annual health report for 1897, the Qacha's Nek medical officer wrote that "the pollution of the fountains (springs) by decomposing cattle carcasses which succumbed to rinderpest, the contamination

---

<sup>115</sup> CAR 1896-97, p.8.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.; TNA, DO 119/181, Lagden to HC, 12 July 1897; Phoofolo, "Face to Face," 522-25.

<sup>117</sup> CAR 1897-98, pp. 42-44.

of the air from the same cause, and the restricted food supply” had all combined to make for an exceptionally unhealthy year.<sup>118</sup> The officer’s reference to the foul air reflected a historically prevalent idea of miasmas (polluted air from swamps, decay, etc.) causing disease rather than pathogens. Indeed, germ theory was relatively new for everyone in the 1890s, not just Makhaola and the Basotho.

Yet the devastation in Makhaola’s district would likely have been worse had there been less government intervention. Many farmers across southern Africa argued later that the government had done too little to convince people that inoculations could actually save cattle.<sup>119</sup> Some Africans even questioned why the inoculation campaigns had not been made compulsory rather than voluntary. In Qacha’s Nek, trained Basotho worked under the auspices of the district commissioner to inoculate 10,600 cattle with bile, a relatively modest number to be sure. There were no reports of people resisting, as people had in Masupha’s district. The nascent veterinary apparatus in Qacha’s Nek had limited capacity, which restricted the reach of the campaigns. District Commissioner Moony admitted that obtaining accurate results of inoculations proved difficult, but he estimated survival rates of “salted” animals at about 70%.<sup>120</sup>

Unfortunately, Lesotho and southern Africa’s experience with rinderpest did not end in 1897. After four years of absence the murrain returned in a less virulent form in August 1901 during the height of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). The

---

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>119</sup> Redding, *Sorcery and Sovereignty*, 65-67; Sunseri, “Entangled History,” 94-96; Phoofolo, “Ambiguous Interactions,” 100-03.

<sup>120</sup> CAR 1897-98, pp. 42-44.



Basutoland veterinary establishment, now under the leadership of Otto Henning, employed Koch's method for bile inoculation once again as its primary weapon against the cattle plague. Henning believed the method was appropriate because Basotho "were acquainted with it [the bile method], had confidence in it," and could carry it out themselves. In addition to the bile method, veterinarians had also developed a blood serum that could be obtained from healthy cattle.<sup>121</sup>

Although the more expensive blood serum did not contain virulent material and thus, did not threaten healthy animals' lives, it featured little in Lesotho's anti-rinderpest campaign of 1901-02 until the very end. Henning believed that the serum, which offered an even shorter immunity period than did the bile injection, could only work where state veterinary policing was highly developed and where transhumance had been curtailed by state regulation or had fallen out of practice. Or, as Henning put it, serum was appropriate only where "trek oxen had already made room for the engine." Despite Henning's apparent frustration with "the careless and indolent natives," some of whom still refused to inoculate their stock, cattle losses were held to a small fraction of those lost in 1897.<sup>122</sup>

Basotho inoculators had in fact played a key role in disseminating this knowledge and convincing people of its efficacy. Perhaps owing to its geographic position in the mountains, or perhaps owing to a shift on matters of policy on the

---

<sup>121</sup> CAR 1901-02, pp. 27-31.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

part of their new chief, Makhaola, Qacha's Nek was the only district where rinderpest did not reappear in 1901.<sup>123</sup>

## **2.4 - Conclusion**

Lesotho's experience with rinderpest from 1896 to 1902 shows how veterinary knowledge has ebbed and flowed in sometimes unexpected ways. The ways people produce and acquire knowledge unfolds along a non-linear historical trajectory that shifts across diverse social and geographic spaces. As the second wave of rinderpest faded, an exchange occurred between Afrikaner war refugees staying in Basutoland and their African hosts. The war had generated a vibrant trade in cattle across borders—a trade that helped spread lung-sickness (pleuropneumonia) to Basotho cattle. Boer refugees, who had been well acquainted with the disease from previous experiences, demonstrated their procedure for inoculation using only “a thick packing needle and small pocket knife.” Reportedly, many Basotho took up the practice.<sup>124</sup>

This subtle example of sharing between historical adversaries demonstrates the social dynamism of knowledge circulation. Compiling knowledge is not about, and cannot be about plotting one system of beliefs against another. Instead, I have tried to highlight the spaces in between by reconstructing stories that show the surprising ways in which knowledge systems rub up against, and overlap with one

---

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> CAR 1901-02, pp. 56-57.

another. This approach also deepens our understanding of how people related to the colonial state in Africa. Politics and personality at the local level can profoundly shape the ways rural people understand new ideas, and the government's role in circulating those ideas.

For most people residing in Qacha's Nek prior to 1896, veterinary knowledge had come from experiences of living and working with animals. It had been passed down from elders, or it had been learned in initiation schools. For a few people, it had been acquired from experiences in South Africa. The encounter with a previously unknown plague – rinderpest – extended this rich pool of knowledge to incorporate new ideas and technologies that emerged as much from a uniquely southern African field experience as it did from European laboratories. Finally, the rinderpest experience exposed mountain dwellers to the colonial state in new ways, complete with its problems and its possibilities for delivering rural services. In the early 1900s, state interventions into rural people's lives and environments would increase, and so too would people's exposure to various streams of knowledge. Chapter 3 examines another veterinary intervention, this time focusing on sheep, to follow this process forward through time.

### 3. URGING THE PEOPLE TO CLEAN UP THEIR COUNTRY: PEOPLE, SHEEP, AND PSOROPTES, C. 1900-1930s

#### 3.1 - Introduction

Hoaba, a Mosotho man in his twenties, began work on a February morning in 1918. As the dip supervisor at Ramatseliso's Gate, a small border village in the Qacha's Nek district, Hoaba dipped sheep and goats that herders brought to the station each day. To prepare the eight-foot wide dip-tank, he filled it with water piped from a stream before stirring in seven packets of Cooper's Dip, a powder of sulfur and arsenic concocted to treat the mite-born skin condition known locally as *lekhoekhoe*, sheep scab. When animals arrived, Hoaba drafted them into an enclosure before dropping them into the tank several at a time.<sup>1</sup>

The sheep stewed in the toxic brew for two minutes, submerged up to their throats. The dipper then dunked their heads under twice using a long pole before the sheep scampered up an exit ramp. They stood for some minutes in the dripping yard, passing through another gate to the drying pen. Finally, the supervisor forced them upslope of the station to graze before they trekked home several miles distant. Hoaba worked this station under the auspices of Mr. Hill, a European trader in the district who owned the store. Hoaba was a local man and illiterate, but he knew his job from repeating the drill in varied conditions.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/3, J. Smith to AC, Qacha's Nek, 5 March 1918; J. Willis to Frank Verney, Principal Veterinary Surgeon (PVS), 7 May 1918; Chaka to AC, 25 February 1918.

<sup>2</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/3, Statement by Hoaba, 26 February 1918.

But this day was different. At noon two herders wearing blankets and gumboots, accompanied by three scrawny dogs arrived with 260 sheep belonging to Chaka, a local stockowner. Hoaba pointed to the dark clouds approaching as he told the two herders, Kabelo and Azariele, that the sheep must not get wet immediately after dipping. The boys shrugged and urged the dipper to get on with the task. Following the procedure, the boys drove the flock five miles back to their grazing post. The next morning they found thirty-one dead sheep scattered about. Casualties among dipped animals in 1918 typically reached one per hundred head, making this case extraordinary.<sup>3</sup>

What had gone wrong and who was to blame? Chaka and his boys performed postmortems and found enflamed tissues. The poison did not discriminate by age, killing lambs, ewes, and wethers (emasculated males). Chaka wrote to the British district commissioner in Qacha's Nek to demand compensation, explaining the story as his herders had told it. He blamed Hoaba, the dipper, for mixing too much Coopers into the tank, saying that the young Mosotho was "incompetent." But the real onus was on Hoaba's boss, the store manager Wilfred, who oversaw dipping at Ramatseliso's Gate. The commissioner sent an inspector to examine the dead sheep and to question all people involved.<sup>4</sup>

When the inspector arrived at Chaka's place three days later, the boys had already butchered the sheep and feasted with others. But the inspector did record

---

<sup>3</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/3, Chaka to AC, 25 February 1918; Wilfred to Chaka, 24 February 1918.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

testimonies from the herders, and from Hoaba, Chaka, and the store manager. Not surprisingly, Wilfred told a different story. He claimed that the herders hurried the sheep back to the post after dipping, ignoring the warning that when dipped sheep overheated, their pores opened, exposing their organs to the toxic treatment. Rain posed a similar threat. In his own testimony, Hoaba said that it must have rained on the animals as they trekked home. The herders, however, insisted that it did not rain. Although Chaka received compensation, it remained unclear which human errors had caused the deaths and to what extent the treatment itself was to blame.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of the possible combinations of mistakes that killed the sheep, this collection of testimony provides a glimpse of a government veterinary intervention as it played out in rural Lesotho in 1918. To understand how people interact with new veterinary knowledge we must understand the social and ecological context in which such interactions took place. The anti-scab campaign in Lesotho (1904-1930s) produced stories that show us how knowledge circulated, and equally important, how knowledge was obstructed. Lesotho's participation in the colonial political economy of wool had accelerated following the rinderpest. The grasslands, people, and animals of Qacha's Nek played key roles in this commercial growth. In the Maloti and in Lesotho as a whole, the growth of the wool industry accentuated socio-economic inequalities that shaped who knew what about scab. But local circumstances beg additional questions too. We must understand who the actors at Ramatseliso's were and how these diverse actors understood sheep,

---

<sup>5</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/3, Wilfred to Chaka, 24 February 1918.

disease, and treatment. Furthermore, we must know how these divergent ideas shaped the planning and implementation of anti-scab campaigns in order to improve our grasp of local responses to new knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

Government interventions, and the underlying environmental and economic knowledge that underpinned them, also demanded intensive human labor to engineer the mountain landscape in both technical and ecological ways. In addition to the anti-scab campaigns that involved building a new infrastructure of dipping stations, wool boosters sought to control grassland ecology by terminating certain plants. *Hlabahlabane* (*Xanthium spinosum*/burweed), as it was known in Sesotho, was floral enemy number one because its burs entangled in wool and mohair, reducing its quality and market value. An eradication campaign began before the turn of the century and remained deeply unpopular with those who performed the work well beyond the timeframe covered in this chapter. In this campaign, older ways of motivating and organizing labor clashed with new meanings of plants and new demands upon mountain grasslands. Chiefs, acting as government agents, called people to dig collectively in *matsema* (work parties).<sup>7</sup> The regulatory work of chiefs and the labor of commoners speak to the ways Basotho compiled environmental knowledge by constructing a landscape with new meanings.

---

<sup>6</sup> My inquiries into shifting knowledge about livestock and parasites draw especially on Weisiger, *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country*; Beinart and Brown, *African Local Knowledge & Livestock Health*.

<sup>7</sup> TNA, CO 646, Proceedings of the Basutoland National Council, Sessional Papers (Hereafter BNC Sessional Papers), 1912, pp. 75-80; On noxious weeds, see Lance Van Sittert, "The Seed Blows about in Every Breeze: Noxious Weed Eradication in the Cape Colony, 1860-1909," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 4 (2000): 655-74.

The Basutoland Chamber of Commerce hoped that the anti-scab and burweed campaigns would help "clean up the country" by engineering the landscape to serve the wool industry.<sup>8</sup> By distinguishing between clean sheep, pastures, and people on the one hand, and the unclean animals and people of the mountain regions on the other, the chamber perpetuated existing myths of cultural and economic backwardness in the Maloti. The anti-scab campaign dovetailed too with government programs to encourage large flocks of woolen merino sheep at the expense of fewer, more ecologically appropriate local sheep. Merino sheep, to some extent, hastened grassland degradation while attracting new parasites. This intervention also formed an early chapter in Lesotho's long history of development programs that have prioritized technical approaches and capitalist interests, often at the expense of common Basotho.<sup>9</sup>

### **3.2 - Sheep, Culture, and History**

Wool production in Lesotho expanded when people settled the eastern mountains after 1880, and alongside a biological transition from indigenous fat-tail (*kalpense*) to non-native merino sheep (*faralane*).<sup>10</sup> Concurrent with this transition,

---

<sup>8</sup> LNA, S3/1/9/2, Basutoland Chamber of Commerce Secretary to Government Secretary (GS), 20 December 1920.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Sandra Wallman, *Take Out Hunger: Two Case Studies of Rural Development in Basutoland* (London: Athlone Press, 1969); James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Showers, *Imperial Gullies*; John Aerni-Flessner, "Development, Politics, and the Centralization of State Power in Lesotho, 1960-1975," *Journal of African History* 55, no. 3 (2014): 401-21.

<sup>10</sup> There was also a shift from older goat breeds to angoras to grow mohair. Goats developed scab from a different mite, *Symbiotes caprae*. The historical record often uses "sheep" to refer to both



the sheep population expanded rapidly in the 1890s, contributing to vegetation change and soil erosion. Not coincidentally, the rise of sheep accelerated after 1897 when rinderpest had devastated cattle. Cattle had been the primary economic and cultural resource for Basotho, but the cattle plague created new space for sheep.<sup>11</sup> The less hearty merino were more susceptible to parasites and sensitive to mountain conditions of high altitude and cold, dry winters. Scab supposedly crossed the border from South Africa to Lesotho via surplus military sheep during the Anglo-Boer War and the Basutoland government first reported *lekhoekhoe* in 1903.<sup>12</sup>

The biological characteristics of scab, and scab's effects on sheep's health and economic value, called for a specific type of intervention. Barely obscured from the naked eye, sheep scab mites (*Psoroptes ovis*) reproduce quickly, colonizing a sheep's body and migrating easily between sheep when in close quarters. *Psoroptes* prick the skin using long sharp mandibles, but do not burrow. They live at the roots of the wool where they cause extreme itching. Topical remedies and scrubbing did not kill *psoroptes*, as was the case too with their larger cousins, ticks. Afflicted animals rubbed vigorously against rocks, posts, and each other. Eventually, wool peeled off in loose patches.<sup>13</sup> In economic terms, scab destroyed sheep's wool, but could also

---

sheep and goats. I use "sheep" in this way. Along with ticks, mites are members of the scientific subclass *acari*. In Sesotho *kalpense*, to my knowledge, refers to all indigenous breeds: Afrikaner, Zulu, Persian, etc. I use fat-tail/*kalpense* in this general sense.

<sup>11</sup> Nathan Sekhesa, "Makhulo a Felile," *Leselinyana*, 3 October 1912; SAB, NTS Vol. 10163, 52/419, Thornton, "Report on Pastoral and Agricultural Conditions;" For a comparative context where sheep facilitated vegetation change, see Elinor Melville, *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> G. Henderson, *A Survey of Our Sheep and Wool Industry* (Moriija: Moriija Printing, 1936), 1-5; Interview with Mokhafisi Kena, 7 January 2015; CAR 1903, p. 36.

<sup>13</sup> *CoGH Report of the Scab Disease Commission*, v-vii.

kill sheep if left untreated. Winter in the Maloti (May-August), when scab was most prevalent, meant frigid temperatures, scarce water, and dormant forage—a potentially deadly constellation of ecological factors. Sheep grew full fleeces during winter and huddled together for warmth, making ideal breeding grounds for *psoroptes*.<sup>14</sup> As scab proliferated, it prompted three decades of debate, policy-making, and interventions, which have marked Lesotho's landscapes with physical sites that hold cultural and historical significance.

A person can see the Tsoelike Store in Qacha's Nek from miles away in any direction. The largely treeless Maloti landscape affords superb views up to pointed vistas, down into deep valleys, and across plateaus like the one where the store sits. It includes a grain mill, storage barns, and a dipping station, which together evoke layers of cultural and environmental history.<sup>15</sup> In conjunction with the limited documentary evidence, visiting historic sites like Tsoelike enrich our sense of place. In this case, the place helps us understand the physical spaces where diverse human actors interacted with animals, with a specific landscape, with new knowledge and technology, and with new insects.

Inside the store the shelves were sparsely stocked, the gasoline-powered mill has rusted over, and the dipping station began crumbling long ago. Located 150 meters downslope from the shop above a small creek, two dip tanks sat side by side with the ruins of the supervisor's quarters just a few paces from the tanks, which

---

<sup>14</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/1, Otto Henning, Basutoland PVS to GS, 20 April 1905; J.D. Bezuidenhout, "A Short History of Sheep Scab," *Journal of the South African Veterinary Association* 82 (2011): 188-89.

<sup>15</sup> I made these observations on 29 November 2014, recorded in my journal and photographs.

date from c. 1920 (See Figure 3.1). Low stone walls, wire fencing, and cobblestone yards, made of locally quarried sandstone surrounded each tank. Wandering through the site, several women greeted me as they washed clothes and blankets in the creek below where the operators used to drain the wastewater from the dips. When I asked the women how long it had been since people dipped sheep there to treat scab, they looked at each other quizzically, then turned to me saying “*hele...khale ntate...khale*” – a long time ago.



**Figure 3.1**  
Tsoelike Dipping Station, Qacha's Nek  
Photo by author, November 2014

Over 200 dipping stations like the ones at Tsoelike and Ramatseliso's Gate dot the rural landscape of Lesotho today. Some serve as meeting places where government veterinary workers inoculate livestock against anthrax, redwater, and other diseases. Others operate as baths during shearing to clean the sheep before

they scurry into woolsheds for “the clip,” as the shearing process is known. Still others lay idle, melding back into the landscape from which they came. In 1932 officials declared that Basutoland was “practically clear of scab.”<sup>16</sup> This stood in stark contrast to 1908 when *psoroptes* affected more than half of all flocks, and colonial officials and chiefs doubted if dipping could succeed. Contemporary and later observers called it a “heroic effort against all odds” and cited it as proof that European veterinary science could triumph over geographic and cultural obstacles, both of which were believed to be formidable in Qacha’s Nek.<sup>17</sup> How, then, did the campaign to eradicate *lekhoekhoe* in Lesotho unfold over these thirty years?

Scab was new in Lesotho in 1903, but sheep had a deeper history. Although difficult to quantify the shift from fat-tail to merino in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the subject is important because *kalpense* did not contract scab. These local sheep grew a kind of hair as opposed to thick merino wool that *psoroptes* preferred. Prior to permanent settlements in Qacha’s Nek which began around 1880, the Basotho had used sheep in varied ways. The fluid movements of people in the 1800s contributed to breed mixing, as did missionaries who reared European livestock, including merino sheep. The Batšueneng chieftainship, as an example of 1800s migrations, fled to the Cape Colony in the 1820s to search for wage-work following defeat in battle. Many Batšueneng, among other people, received pay in

---

<sup>16</sup> CAR 1932, p. 11; See also Pim, *Financial and Economic*, 117-18. Alan Pim reviewed the anti-scab campaign in his 1935 report, but he mistakenly believed that the campaign only began in 1923.

<sup>17</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/1, AC, Maseru to GS, 11 April 1908; S3/1/6/4, PVS to GS, 29 November 1923; Robert Germond, “The Quest: the Population Problem in Basutoland,” Unpublished Manuscript, LNA, 1952.

the form of sheep and goats of various breeds, with which they returned to settle in Basutoland in 1836, complicating the territory's breeding-stock.<sup>18</sup>

Travelers in Basutoland observed sheep during early journeys. Thomas Arbousset, one of the first three missionaries from the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS), saw sheep browsing shrubs in the northeastern Maluti in 1847. When the first Mosotho PEMS minister Jobo Moteane visited the upper Senqu River Valley in late 1887 to find new sites for mission stations in Qacha's Nek, chiefs slaughtered sheep to welcome the esteemed minister.<sup>19</sup>

Apart from hospitality and the more obvious uses as food and clothing, sheep featured in cultural practices that developed from numerous Sotho and Nguni-speaking groups that had settled the mountains. Indeed, the extent of these practices shifted over time in Lesotho, but a brief sample illustrates sheep's meanings and uses prior to, and overlapping with, commercial wool production. Basotho used sheep as currency to pay for grain, blankets, and tools since before 1900. Under Sesotho law a man accused of injuring another would offer a sheep as payment for damages. In this way, Basotho understood sheep and goats as a smaller unit of currency compared with the larger, more valued cattle.<sup>20</sup>

Sheep were used at weddings, funerals, and other feasts too. When a bride arrived at the village of her betrothed, the groom's father would kill a sheep to symbolize her being welcomed into her new family. During the ceremony, the bride

---

<sup>18</sup> Ellenberger, *History*, 156.

<sup>19</sup> Germond, *Chronicles*, 37; Moteane, reproduced in Ambrose and Brutsch, trans., Part V, *Mehloli* 3, no. 1 (1991): 4-7.

<sup>20</sup> Ellenberger, *History*, 269.

and groom sprinkled gall from the sheep's bladder for cleansing. The man would wear the bladder around his wrist to represent his marital commitments. For funerary feasts, a black ox was most important. But people also slaughtered sheep, for example, to symbolize the deceased being welcomed home if he had died away from his village. Families also killed sheep to honor newborn children and nourish nursing mothers. To treat certain illnesses, Basotho doctors (*lingaka*) used sheep liver to make medicines. For warding off evil spirits doctors might order their client to sacrifice a black sheep or goat, which were more common amongst fat-tails than merinos. These beliefs often conflicted with dipping because people feared that the toxic brew could kill or weaken the animals, or pollute them both chemically and spiritually.<sup>21</sup>

Whether people preferred *kalpense* to merino, or vice versa, depended on how the stockowner intended to use the sheep and on how many they owned. *Kalpense*, as mentioned, had adapted to the mountain environments over time. People with fewer sheep generally preferred fat-tails, which required less care and labor, and typically yielded more meat and fat. As one elderly man recalled, "people knew that a handful of merino yielded small wool, so they guarded their *kalpense* carefully." By "guarding," he referred to how people hid their *kalpense* rams from government inspectors during emasculation campaigns to purify sheep for maximum wool growing, a campaign that accelerated in the 1930s. Basotho did

---

<sup>21</sup> Sechefo, *Customs and Superstitions*, 28-29; Ellenberger, *History*, 248; Ashton, *The Basuto*, 30, 74, 134-35.

aspire to own large flocks prior to merino for both cultural and economic purposes, but the possibilities for cash earnings from merino wool represented something new for all people involved and for the ecology of sheep, parasites, and pastures.<sup>22</sup>



**Figure 3.2**

Merino Sheep, near Morija, Lesotho  
Note: the dried shrub is *sehalahala*.  
Photo by author, April 2015

Basotho herding practices highlight key features of the social order within which people were exposed to knowledge in different ways. Stockowners like Chaka employed their sons, nephews, or sons of debtors as shepherds. Accepting pigs and fowls, women had little control over livestock. Hired shepherds like Kabelo and Azariele maintained flocks at remote mountain posts, earning food and perhaps a beast at year's end. Adventures in herding featured prominently in Basotho boyhood. Herders acquired knowledge about the environments in which they

---

<sup>22</sup> Henderson, *Survey*, 1-4; Interview with Mochinti Jane, 18 May 2015.

worked: weather, animals, wild foods and medicinal plants. Many shepherds underwent the Sesotho initiation rite (*lebollo*) to learn about manhood, agriculture, and soldiering. But most *balisana* knew little about government veterinary policy and procedure. Most did not attend schools and were illiterate. According to several men who grew up herding in Qacha's Nek, the Sesotho language government propaganda and newspaper articles on veterinary matters that circulated by 1918, would have been inaccessible to herders. While low in social status in one respect, Basotho also saw *balisana* as "very important people for the country."<sup>23</sup>

Stockowners trusted herders to maintain their livestock by keeping the animals fed, watered, healthy, and shorn. These were not easy tasks in 1900s Qacha's Nek. Until the 1940s when the government built a national network of shearing sheds, herders sheared sheep at their mountain posts, which consisted of squat stone huts surrounded by stone kraals, and were usually perched among crags and peaks to conserve pasture. Whereas fat-tail sheep required little care, merinos had to be shorn whether the wool was to be sold or not because merino wool grew continuously and could overheat, and even suffocate the animals if overgrown to the extreme. *Balisana* then transported the packed wool bales by donkey or horseback to trading stations. For herders, the transition to woolen merinos meant more exhaustive labor.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Mofolo, *Pitseng*, 5-7; Thabo Makoa and Anne-Laure Zwilling, *Shepherd Boy of the Maloti* (Moriya: MMA, 2005), 67-80; J. Ratau, *Molisana oa Mosotho* (Moriya: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1988), 5; Interview with Seleso Tsoako, 19 January 2015; Interview with Mokhafisi Kena, 10 December 2014.

<sup>24</sup> SAB, Governor General (GG) Vol. 1856, 54/681, PVS Report on Basutoland, September 1923; Henderson, *Survey*, 2-5.



In addition to moving sheep between pastures, Basotho herders and stockowners had treated scabby animals by hand with a mixture of carbolic powder and water before the government built dipping facilities. Sometimes they smeared fat or grease over the sores. Alternatively, caretakers used tobacco-based extracts to scrub the sheep. As an environmental control, herders sanitized kraals by burning the manure and thatch. But the biological characteristics of *psoroptes* necessitated a full-body treatment. The invisible mites puzzled sheep farmers, not least, because *psoroptes* could survive for two weeks without their woolen hosts.<sup>25</sup>

Although these topical remedies failed to destroy *psoroptes*, these efforts demonstrated knowledge of scab that compared with sheep cultures elsewhere. Basotho understood *lekhoekhoe* as an environmental problem which threatened sheep's health. In other words, verdant pasture and plentiful water would sustain healthy flocks, whereas drought brought scab. They treated sheep using available resources. Basotho doctors, the local authorities on human and animal health, struggled to understand *lekhoekhoe* in the 1900s. Herders bore the most responsibility. Topical smearing echoed other scab treatments across time and space. Sheep scab had wreaked havoc since biblical times in Europe and the Middle East where herders carried various fats to dress animals. In Britain, the English first introduced legislation in 1798 to control scab by restricting stock movements: a state-led measure that foreshadowed the British experience with rinderpest in

---

<sup>25</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/1, Otto Henning to GS, 26 June 1905; S3/1/6, Extracts from Basutoland National Council's (BNC) discussion on compulsory dipping of sheep, 1909.

1865-66. More recently in Australia, farmers had soothed animals with tobacco extracts and animal fats until Cooper's Dip and essential dipping facilities became available in the 1860s, which helped Australians nearly eliminate *psoroptes* by 1870.<sup>26</sup>

Despite a wealth of accumulated veterinary knowledge, Basotho did not understand lekhoekhoe in the early 1900s any more than their counterparts in South Africa and Australia did when scab first arrived in those places earlier in the nineteenth century. Positively diagnosing scab remains a challenge in modern times—a fact that testifies to the importance of specialized knowledge then and now.<sup>27</sup> According to documentary evidence, *psoroptes* had just arrived in Lesotho, and like with the rinderpest virus in 1896, Basotho had little chance to adapt.

### **3.3 - The Political Ecology of Wool in Lesotho**

In 1905 the British high commissioner in Cape Town governed Lesotho through a resident commissioner (RC) in the capital Maseru. The RC presided over a parallel administration in which the hierarchy of Basotho chiefs, headed by the paramount chief (PC), conducted the daily business of courts, tax collecting, and veterinary regulations.<sup>28</sup> Since rinderpest had arrived in 1896, the British had asserted veterinary authority through a principal veterinary Surgeon (PVS) and a small staff of stock inspectors. The RC also utilized nine district commissioners, a

---

<sup>26</sup> CoGH Report of Scab Commission, v.

<sup>27</sup> Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep, [www.scops.org.uk](http://www.scops.org.uk). Accessed on 29 December 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Machobane, *Government and Change*, 70-75; Sanders, *Throwing Down*, 44-51.

government secretary, and a mostly Basotho police force of 290 men. The police had expanded during rinderpest to maintain cattle-free cordons on Lesotho's borders.<sup>29</sup>

Basotho chiefs had influenced colonial veterinary policy in the 1890s, but their influence grew substantially when the RC Herbert Sloley formed the Basutoland National Council (BNC) in 1903 to advise on matters of law, education, and agriculture. In this advisory body the paramount chief, as the highest Mosotho member of the council, nominated ninety-four members, mostly chiefs. The RC also nominated five special members who represented groups such as the Chamber of Commerce.<sup>30</sup> Paramount Chief Lerotholi (d.1905) had wanted the body to legislate, but instead, the RC retained the authority to revoke membership and dismiss motions. But the RC still took BNC opinions seriously. He knew that programs like dipping and eradicating noxious weeds needed support from the chiefs to succeed. The BNC discussions on these campaigns provide a key primary source for understanding varying perspectives, although market approaches to development usually shaped the BNC's views on sheep policy.<sup>31</sup>

In 1919 Lesotho exported ten million lbs. of wool with 25% of it coming from Qacha's Nek. After the 1870s and 1880s, when some farmers profited by exporting grain to South Africa, Lesotho's food exports fell sharply.<sup>32</sup> Some farmers still exported wheat, but wool and mohair offered the best opportunity for exploiting the mountain grasslands. To encourage wool production, the government introduced

---

<sup>29</sup> Phoofolo, "Ambiguous Interactions," 84.

<sup>30</sup> MMA, Basutoland Council Proclamation 1910, 31 March 1910.

<sup>31</sup> LNA, S3/1/6, BNC discussion on dipping, 1909; CAR 1924, pp.11-13; CAR 1930, p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> CAR 1920-21, p. 3; *Basutoland Census for 1911*, p. 47; Eldredge, *South African Kingdom*, 150-63.

stud rams in 1905, and again in 1910 when the small veterinary staff distributed 286 merino and 140 angora rams to the districts and to traders. In 1912, drought conditions dried out pastures so the government only placed rams in Leribe and Qacha's Nek districts, where rains had enabled good summer grazing. Traders and wealthier stockowners purchased these rams at discounted rates, or paid for ram services, which most Basotho could not afford.<sup>33</sup>

The distribution of livestock in the mountains, the primary means for storing wealth, was highly unequal by 1920. This reality conditioned the experiences of all actors involved in the anti-scab campaigns. According to one traveler in 1921, "a poor man might have 20-30 sheep, an average man 300-500, and a wealthy man as many as 3000."<sup>34</sup> This scale would make Chaka, whose sheep died near Ramatseliso's dip in 1918, an average stockowner, but his employment as an interpreter for the government enhanced his socio-economic status. Other well-off people had accumulated stock through exporting agricultural goods, or from migrant labor earnings, and were often among the first families to settle a given village, and thus enjoyed fertile arable lands, which were already scarce in the mountains by 1910. People at the low end, and those without animals were widows, childless women, disabled people, elderly men, or families who were among the

---

<sup>33</sup> CAR 1905-06, p. 6; CAR 1910-1911, p. 6; CAR 1912-13, p.8; LNA, Qacha's Nek Native Letters Received, M. Posholi to AC, March 1907.

<sup>34</sup> Sayce, "Ethno-Geographical Essay," 276-78.

latest settlers in a village. This last group often had marginal arable lands (if any) and few animals with which to produce commodities such as wool.<sup>35</sup>

Traders in Qacha's Nek linked the montane grasslands, sheep, and herders of Lesotho to coastal ports such as Durban and East London, and they maintained close ties at both ends. Although there were few passable roads that went far beyond Qacha's Nek town, several mountain passes served as border posts where livestock moved back and forth.<sup>36</sup> Herders like Kabelo and Azariele hauled wool from their posts to the traders. In the early 1900s a handful of European-owned traders bought most Basotho wool. Along with Mr. Cole, the first licensed trader in Qacha's Nek, R.E. Hill, the owner of Ramatseliso's store, was the most prominent trader. Hill came from Matatiele, a South African town beneath the Drakensberg Escarpment to the south. Matatiele was linked to Qacha's Nek town by a rough track and to the coast by rail. In 1918 Hill ran six stores in the district.<sup>37</sup> Hill and other traders socialized with colonial officials and missionaries, but sometimes had close relationships with Basotho from the communities in which they operated. Many traders spoke Sesotho, developed friendships with local chiefs and stockowners, and even married Basotho.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/5, Lawrence Wachter to PVS, 16 December 1914; Eldredge, *South African Kingdom*, 191-94.

<sup>36</sup> LNA, S7/1/6/20, Sehlabathebe Police Report, 25 March 1912; SAB, Secretary of Justice (JUS), Vol. 425, 4/424/26, Application for wool trade facilities, 1926-27; "Wool Markets," *Naledi Ea Lesotho*, 25 January 1929.

<sup>37</sup> LNA, S3/26/10/4, Hill to AC, 13 March 1918.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Mokhabi Lesoli, Ha Matlali, 13 January 2015; Interview with Anatolia Peters, Qacha's Nek, 29 May 2015.

The few Basotho with trading licenses, like Caleb Sebatane of Qacha's Nek, faced discriminatory laws that prevented them from buying and selling wool. Sebatane's store operated from 1912 to 1930 when he sold everything including his trading license to pay his debts, which he had accrued by allowing local Basotho to buy goods on credit.<sup>39</sup> Sebatane, like other Basotho traders and hawkers, especially in the mountains, lacked the political voice that white traders exercised through the Basutoland Chamber of Commerce.

The chamber, composed mostly of white traders, espoused a double standard. It denigrated Basotho for not working hard enough to eradicate scab for "their economic well-being." This while ignoring the inequality of stock ownership, and thus, the low incentive for small stockowners to dip their sheep. This commercial sentiment rang clear in 1920 when the chamber's secretary prodded the BNC to escalate efforts to eradicate scab and burweed. He pushed for a compulsory law "urging the people to clean up their country."<sup>40</sup> Despite heavy wool clips in Qacha's Nek, relatively few people benefited from the wool industry. Perhaps the chamber underestimated the extent to which common Basotho understood that their time and labor ought to be compensated monetarily, or in kind, when contributing to market production.

In rural areas, neither traders, nor producers worked in solidarity as interest groups. General traders competed with each other for Basotho business in both

---

<sup>39</sup> LNA, S3/26/10/1, Caleb Sebatane to AC, 10 January 1918; PC to AC, 27 May 1931.

<sup>40</sup> LNA, S3/1/9/2, Chairman BCC to GS, 7 December 1920.

commodity sales, such as wool, but also by selling plows, blankets, and other goods. Basotho tried to play the competition by patronizing the store with the best prices. A stockowner might haul his wool past one trader to get to another that was paying a better price. But the constraints of mountain terrain and transport usually narrowed the producer's choice to the nearest trading outlet. Basotho settled for low prices despite the high quality of the raw product. Traders justified low prices because wool bales were unsorted (long, short, dirty) and transport from the mountains was expensive. Knowledge of wool classing and breed purity, both of which increased the selling price, was thin in the early 1900s. Programs to improve breeding and wool classing began slowly in 1905, but only developed in the uplands in the 1940s.<sup>41</sup>

Domestic and South African wool buyers liked Lesotho's fine wool, but complained about the mixed bales. This fact hardly mattered when demand for wool boomed during WW I. National wool revenues grew, if erratically, until a drought in 1928, and then the global crash in 1929.<sup>42</sup> After 1912 the government suspended its stud program amid concerns by British officials, and by members of the BNC, that the grasslands could not sustain additional small stock without hastening soil erosion. This period coincided with three drought years in 1914, 1919, and 1922, the last of which officials cited as the worst on record. The South African Drought Commission, surveying in the wake of the 1919 drought, found that European and

---

<sup>41</sup> Sayce, "Ethno-Geographical Essay," 285-86; D.S. Uys, *The Lesotho Mohair Industry: History and Evaluation* (Port Elizabeth: Mohair Board, 1971), 57-69.

<sup>42</sup> CAR 1914-15, p.7; CAR 1924, p.7; CAR 1930, p.11.

African practices of extensive grazing and kraaling animals at night, and overstocking had accentuated the drought's economic impact and quickened soil erosion. These findings, which extended to Lesotho, were ironic given the government's promotion of wool, which had intensified ecological pressure on the grasslands by expanding flocks of merino sheep.<sup>43</sup>

The Drought Commission's recommendations hardly slowed Lesotho's wool boosters. In 1928 the national treasury, with support from the BNC, provided £500 to supply traders with merino rams on credit. Traders then offered stud services to stockowners in the area for a fee. At the end of the year the program had only used £329 because traders found that although many people wanted the services, they had no cash with which to pay for the rams. Furthermore, many rams that were sent to mountain traders died quickly because they were poorly acclimatized to the higher altitudes and weather conditions.<sup>44</sup> This government-led initiative to improve stock for wool production catered to those who already had cash to pay for the stud services, while hinting at the approach to rural development that would characterize the twentieth century in Lesotho.

The British never believed that Basutoland could earn high profits for colonial coffers, as was the case, for example, with cocoa in the Gold Coast. But they did hope that a wool export duty, along with wheat sales and the hut-tax on married men, could finance small development projects. But to sustain development, colonial

---

<sup>43</sup> Heinrich S. DuToit, *South Africa Drought Investigation Commission Interim Report* (Cape Town: Government Printers, 1922), 4-7; CAR 1914-15, p.7; CAR 1919-20, p.7; CAR 1922-23, p.12.

<sup>44</sup> CAR 1928, p.21; Henderson, *Survey*, 1-2.



administrators and chiefs both asserted the importance of a robust wool industry. With these revenues they hoped to slowly strengthen local governance, build schools and medical facilities, and construct roads and bridle paths. To carry out these initiatives in the 1900s meant promoting merino sheep production in the mountains, and creating an infrastructure to sustain them—to cleanse them of their parasitic filth, *psoroptes*.<sup>45</sup>

### **3.4 - Eliminating Psoroptes in South Africa and Lesotho**

In 1874, the Cape Colony government passed a Scab Act that emulated the approach used in Australia, especially dipping with Coopers Dip and restricting stock movements. William Cooper & Nephews, from which the dip gets its name, had established a retail outfit in England in 1843 and marketed the product in southern Africa through its branch in East London. Cooper's Dip was an early example of an industrially produced agro-chemical compound, whose full ecological and historical impact has yet to be explored. Although the 1874 Scab Act in the Cape was not compulsory, black and white sheep owners resented the potential toxicity of Cooper's Dip as well as the act's provisions to curtail the transhumant patterns that were typical in the Cape where animals rubbed up against, and even crossed, the Basutoland border to graze the upland pastures in the summer.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> CAR 1904-05, pp. 6-8; CAR 1914-15, p.4; CAR 1926, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> William Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, Livestock, and the Environment 1770-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 130-34, 153-54; LNA, S3/1/6/5, W. Cooper to Basutoland PVS, 26 June 1915.

To advance these regulations the Cape Colony hired Duncan Hutcheon as their new principal veterinary surgeon in 1880 (the same Hutcheon who went on to shape rinderpest policy in the 1890s). Hutcheon, a graduate of the Royal Veterinary College in Edinburgh, took his microscope to the field to show farmers *psoroptes* in action as a way to justify dipping. Farmers observed skeptically, but for many, seeing meant believing. The Scab Commission (1892-94) leveraged two years of field research and farmer testimonies to pass the 1894 Cape Scab Act that made dipping sheep compulsory. As was the case with Australian stockowners, dipping remained unpopular. This was especially true among Afrikaner sheep farmers who were deeply suspicious of bio-medical approaches to scab and of underlying British political motives. By 1900, however, compulsory dipping had largely eliminated scab in the Cape; and South African stockowners, traders, and veterinarians hoped to keep it that way.<sup>47</sup>

Lesotho's first veterinary surgeon, Otto Henning, responded to fears of scabby sheep crossing into South Africa. South African farmers, and especially after 1910, the Union of South Africa government, pressured Basutoland to accelerate dipping. According to this perspective, the Basotho in the mountains needed to dip their flocks to prevent them from mixing with the supposedly clean sheep of the Union. Henning surveyed the national flock in 1905 and found several thousand cases of scab. He realized, however, that local ecological and cultural realities may

---

<sup>47</sup> *CoGH Report of Scab Commission*; LNA, S3/1/6/1, RC to Imperial Secretary, 29 September 1908; See also, Tamarkin, *Volk and Flock*, 17-25.

have skewed his results. Henning reported that stockowners and traders had not yet complained of scabby sheep. He had surveyed in March, near the end of the rainy summer when pasture was still plentiful, which helped animals to put on weight and grow wool: a factor that made the condition less visible. Furthermore, Basotho grazed livestock across open commonage with no paddocks or fences. In stark contrast to later periods when theft became more prevalent, Basotho did not always kraal sheep. Scab flourished when animals were penned closely because *psoroptes* spread via direct contact between animals or from rubbing against the same rocks.<sup>48</sup>

Henning recognized that transhumance worked as a cultural preventative against parasites. As in much of South Africa, people moved animals according to vegetation and weather patterns. Keeping animals fed and watered, and away from warm environments where ticks, mites, and flies lurked, was done by grazing animals extensively in open spaces, and at various altitudes. But as political boundaries hardened and the population expanded in the twentieth century, transhumance became more localized in Lesotho and in the South African reserves, exposing livestock to more health threats and sometimes, new threats.<sup>49</sup> Although Henning believed Lesotho's highlands offered salubrious grazing and ample water, he failed to understand that stock theft was actually increasing by 1905. To protect flocks, owners had begun kraaling animals at mountain posts, especially at night.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/1, Henning to GS, 20 April 1905.

<sup>49</sup> Tim Quinlan, "Grassland Degradation and Livestock Rearing in Lesotho," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21, no. 3 (1995): 491-507.

<sup>50</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/1, Henning to GS, 26 June 1905.

Despite Henning's seemingly broad knowledge, he focused foremost on the biological and technical aspects of the scab problem when he explained the characteristics of *psoroptes* in a 1905 pamphlet. The Sesotho version informed readers how sheep contracted it, how to diagnose it, and how to destroy it by dipping. But most mountain dwellers, especially herders and poorer stockowners, could not read it. Furthermore, dipping facilities did not yet exist within reasonable distances from stock posts. The first dip in Qacha's Nek town opened in late 1908, situated many mountain-miles from some of Lesotho's largest flocks. But BNC members did learn from Henning's pamphlet, and they discussed the details of dipping in their 1908 meeting.<sup>51</sup>

Presiding over all councilors, Paramount Chief Letsie II (r. 1905-1913) argued to expand the dipping infrastructure, which in 1908 consisted of forty-seven stations clustered in the lowlands, around administrative border posts. This nascent infrastructure failed to reach most flocks in the interior. Letsie urged his subordinate chiefs "to take interest not just because of pressure from South Africa...but also to increase your wealth." He continued, "if quality of wool improves so your wealth will grow." His words appealed to the growing sentiment among chiefs, large stockowners, and a small group of commercial farmers that the regional capitalist economy offered opportunities beyond migrant labor on South African farms and mines.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Otto Henning, *Lekhuekhue la Liphoofole* (Moriya: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1906); LNA, S3/1/6/1, AC to GS, 2 April 1908.

<sup>52</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/1, BNC discussion on dipping, 1909; *Report on BNC Proceedings for 1908*, 21-23.

The BNC's discussion in 1908 underscored several interrelated challenges for the anti-scab campaign: ecological, cultural, economic, and political. Examining the intersections between these challenges helps explain how people compiled veterinary knowledge in different ways through this experience. Although most BNC members believed that wool exports could broaden prosperity in Lesotho, and that scab posed a fundamental threat to this opportunity, members disagreed on how to implement the scheme.

Local ecology mattered. Dipping stations required reliable and convenient water supplies, especially during the dry winters. Sheep became weak during the winter when grass was scarce, having gone dormant or been eaten down. In contrast to milking cows, which resided in villages year round and were favored in the leboella grazing system, small stock spent the winter months at the mountain posts in 1918. Temperatures at high altitudes regularly plunged below freezing, causing sheep to huddle for warmth. Their weak bodies and close quarters provided *psoroptes* with an ideal environment. At least to some extent, the practice of keeping small stock at mountain posts year-round was new in the early 1900s when the small-stock population grew exponentially. Formerly, local village pastures and crop residues could sustain smaller flocks during the winter months. Other than major rivers and drainages, most mountain streams dried up in winter. The Maloti boasted many perennial springs, but people used these same springs for drinking and washing. Any of the recommended dips such as Coopers, or concoctions of sulfur

and arsenic would contaminate water, raising both human and veterinary health issues.<sup>53</sup>

To find suitable sites, the government asked local residents. Tanks would have to be no more than seven miles apart to afford flocks reasonable access. More dips sprung up near border posts where shepherds could clean the sheep before driving them into South Africa for sale. Existing trading stations like the one at Ramatseliso's Gate made appropriate sites for the dips. But as the campaign progressed through the 1920s more remote sites were needed too. For these, villagers identified the best springs in addition to where people drew water, and where people washed in order to mark an appropriate location for what Basotho called, in the locative form, *diping*, place of the dip.<sup>54</sup>

Government planners called together local labor to quarry sandstone, paying them small wages to erect the tanks. Stonemasons applied their skills to constructing dip tanks, drying yards, and supervisors' quarters. Although older Basotho architecture used stone, various grasses, and *molilo* (dung plaster), new knowledge of quarrying, cutting, and building spread with the dipping infrastructure. Other materials necessary for the dips like fencing, cement, and pipes arrived by donkey transport. Officials adapted a dip model after 1913, which had been developed on the Potchefstroom Experimental Farm in South Africa (See

---

<sup>53</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/1, Henning to GS, 26 June 1905; Sayce, "Ethno-Geographical Essay," 282-83.

<sup>54</sup> LNA, S3/1/7/7, PVS Verney to GS, 15 August 1923. Despite this site selection process, the pollution of waterways from draining dips must have been substantial. There is a conspicuous absence of documents referring to the ecological pollution or to workers experiencing burns or other ill effects from working with these chemicals.

Figure 3.3).<sup>55</sup> Selecting the sites, importing the materials, and erecting the dips brought together technical expertise learned from the South African experience with scab, local knowledge of place, and Basotho labor and building skills to construct an infrastructure that, weather permitting, could function year round.

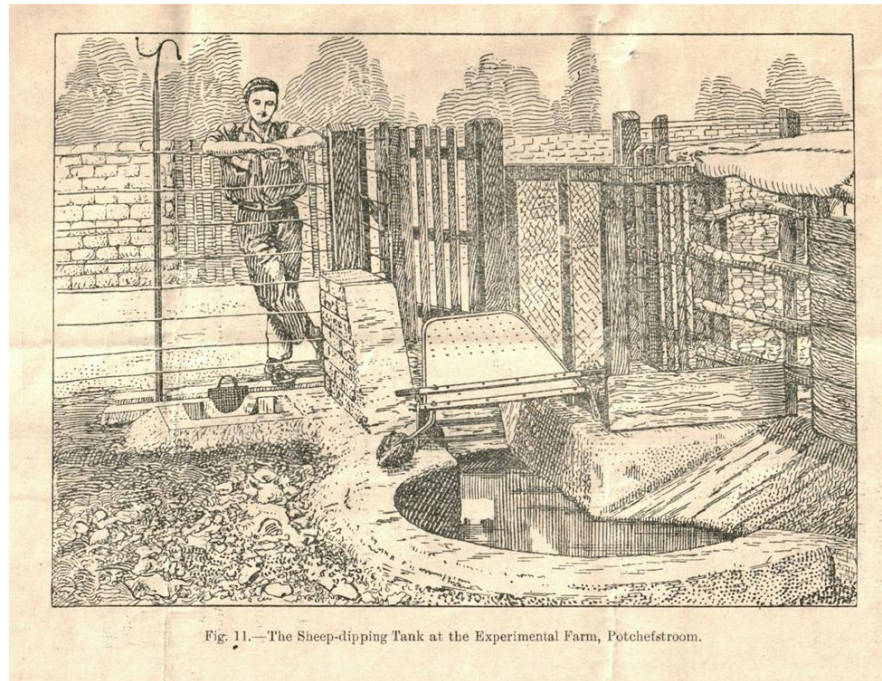
By 1915 five stations operated in Qachas Nek district, dipping sixty thousand sheep annually. These returns were low compared to the overall district population of near 250,000 sheep. Still, only two of the five stations served areas that were not at the border.<sup>56</sup> BNC members, Chief Makhaola foremost among them, had decided in 1909 that erecting stations in the interior would encourage more people to dip their sheep, but building progressed slowly. The scab problem deepened, especially in drought years. Apart from the inconvenience of trekking the animals to the tanks, poverty made people reluctant to patronize dips. Although not compulsory yet, the one-pence per head fee, though reasonable for large stockowners, burdened many people. Some stockowners paid a sheep to a trader in return for the dipping: evidence that suggests a growing desire amongst some stockowners to dip.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/3, B.G. Enslin, *Sheep Dipping Tanks: An Improved Design for a Circular Tank* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1917); S3/1/6/5, *Erection of Sheep Dips*, 1914.

<sup>56</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/5, *Dipping Returns for Qacha's Nek*, March 1915.

<sup>57</sup> LNA, S3/1/6, *Extracts from BNC, 1909*; S3/1/6/5, *Wacher to PVS*, 16 December 1914.



**Figure 3.3**

Model Dipping Tank, Experimental Farm, Potchefstroom  
 Source: B. Enslin, "Sheep Dipping Tanks: An Improved Design," *Agricultural Journal for the Union of South Africa*, March 1914.

Other stockowners feared that the prescribed twice-dipping over two weeks would kill their sheep. Chaka's case is instructive here. Although his loss of thirty-one sheep was exceptional, fatalities were standard. This fact highlighted the dangers of the treatment as well as the need to follow procedures carefully. The procedure brought diverse agents together: sheep, *psoroptes*, stockowners, shepherds, dip supervisors, store managers, veterinary experts, and not least, weather and water. Not unlike the initial distrust of government initiatives to treat cattle during the rinderpest epidemic (1896-1902), news of a few dead animals among the dipped could morph into rumors that dipping killed livestock



intentionally. Complaints of dead animals circulated in Sesotho newspapers and at community meetings while claims for compensation were common across the country.<sup>58</sup> Even after compulsory legislation was passed in 1923, owners could only claim compensation for deaths exceeding two animals per 100-head.<sup>59</sup>

Low turnout at Qacha's Nek's dipping stations was not necessarily about resisting a government scheme, but more about stockowners having poor access and protecting scarce resources. This meant not exhausting sick animals by driving them long distances, especially in the winter. But those who owned large flocks had the cash to dip their sheep and thus, generally learned more about *lekhoekhoe*. These stockowners, many of them chiefs, prospered from wool sales and prioritized their interests through the political process that steered the anti-scab campaigns. Similar to the Basotho experience with rinderpest, political relationships at the local, national, and international levels conditioned how rural people interacted with the campaign in important ways. Whether or not people heeded government advice on veterinary matters often depended as much on one's relationship to the person who introduced them to the measure as it did on any underlying knowledge. Chiefs were central to brokering policy and knowledge between government and commoners, and the characteristics of individual chiefs shaped how government veterinary interventions unfolded.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> "Progressive Association Meeting," *Naledi Ea Lesotho*, 28 August 1925; *LitabaTsa Lekhotla La Sechaba* (BNC) 1925 (Moriya: Morija Printing Works, 1925), 220-25.

<sup>59</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/11, HC's Proclamation No. 18 on Prevention of Scab, August 1923.

<sup>60</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/11, Proc. No. 18; PVS to GS, 22 May 1929; Jingoos, *A Chief is a Chief*, 22-29.

In Qacha's Nek, Chief Makhaola seemed to have gathered broad support for dipping by the 1910s. By 1910 colonial officials believed Makhaola was among the most agriculturally progressive and popular chiefs in Lesotho. As the younger brother of Paramount Chief Letsie II, he exercised substantial influence in the BNC. Subordinate chiefs and commoners knew Makhaola as a great chief, one who provided his people with residential sites, arable fields, common resources (pasture, building materials, fuelwood), and in lean times, food.<sup>61</sup> *Molele*, as Makhaola was known, believed that eliminating scab fit within these duties so he pushed the resident commissioner at the BNC for more dip tanks. Makhaola argued that people in the remote areas of Qacha's Nek wanted to destroy *psoroptes*, and would dip their sheep if they could access a tank in half of a day's trek and dip them for free.<sup>62</sup> In fact, returns from the dip stations increased as the government built more tanks.<sup>63</sup>

But Lesotho's chiefs were a varied lot in terms of their orientations towards the paramount chief, towards their subordinate chiefs and subjects, and towards government veterinary interventions. In the northern districts of Leribe and Berea the most influential chiefs hailed from the houses of Molapo and Masupha, who were Moshoeshoe's second and third sons respectively and thus, not heirs to the paramountcy (See Chaps. 1-2). Friction between Molapo, Masupha, and the house of Letsie (and their descendants) mounted through disputes over succession and land

---

<sup>61</sup> TNA, WO 33/501, Dobson, *Military Report, Vol. 1*, 113-15; LNA, S/172 573I, RC to PC, 12 September 1932; Mangoaela, "Makhaola Lerotholi," 199-201; Interview with Mokhafisi Kena, 10 December 2014.

<sup>62</sup> LNA, S3/1/6, Extracts from BNC, 1909.

<sup>63</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/8, Report of Supervisor's Pay, 13 December 1923.

jurisdiction since before Moshoeshoe died in 1870. This friction often manifested as resistance to paramount-approved measures such as dipping in the first decades of the 1900s. Dip returns in these districts remained comparatively low throughout most of the anti-scab campaigns.<sup>64</sup>

In addition to chieftainship politics, two Basotho political organizations developed in the early 1900s that had important effects on agricultural and veterinary policy into mid-century. First, a group of educated, mostly Protestant Basotho formed the Basutoland Progressive Association (BPA) in 1907, which aimed to advance “important matters relating to the prosperity and progress of all Basotho.” The BPA supported the dipping schemes as they did most government initiatives to promote market production in Lesotho.<sup>65</sup> The ideas and actions of the BPA will be discussed further in chapter four. With respect to dipping, it was the perspectives and actions of a second group, *Lekhotla la Bafo* (Council of the Commoners/LLB), that illuminate a political dimension of dipping beyond, yet not unrelated to, the chieftainship.

Josiel Lefela and his brother Maphutseng formed LLB in 1919. Their politics had several objectives: to achieve sovereignty from British governance; to restore the traditional chieftainship; and to promote schemes that were designed to protect Basotho political, economic, and cultural institutions from colonial subjugation. LLB criticized the British, and Basotho chiefs too, who as salaried employees enforced

---

<sup>64</sup> Sanders, *Throwing Down*, 20-25; MMA, “1909 Court on Settlement of the Mountains.”

<sup>65</sup> MMA, The Constitution of the Basutoland Progressive Association, 28 November 1907; Richard Weisfelder, “Early Voices of Protest in Basutoland: The Progressive Association and Lekhotla la Bafo,” *African Studies Review* 17, no. 2 (1974): 397-409.

government policies.<sup>66</sup> Still, from his seat in the BNC which he had held since 1916, Josiel generally supported programs for veterinary and agricultural improvement, including dipping. It was only when Resident Commissioner Edward Garraway, with support from the BNC passed the Prevention of Scab Act in 1923, which made dipping compulsory throughout Lesotho, that LLB actively opposed dipping. For *Lekhotla la Bafo*, the act compounded economic stress which grew from erratic wool prices and tax increases while placing unreasonable demands on scarce labor at rural homesteads.<sup>67</sup>

The Lefela brothers believed that compulsory dipping unnecessarily meddled in rural lives and ecologies. LLB used explicit, politically-charged language to convince common Basotho of insidious British motives. Speaking to followers in 1928, Josiel Lefela explained that, "of great affliction to the people is the poisonous dip, which kills the sheep and goats of the nation by the thousands."<sup>68</sup> These words echoed an earlier period of Afrikaner resistance to the South African Scab Act (1894) in the Cape. He drew on realistic hazards, represented by a hefty backlog of compensation claims for deceased livestock.<sup>69</sup> But Lefela also exploited the average Mosotho's limited knowledge of scab as a biological phenomenon, its potential treatments, and the role of human error in dipping mishaps. Taking it further,

---

<sup>66</sup> Robert Edgar, *Prophets with Honour: A Documentary History of Lekhotla la Bafo* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1988), 6-10; Weisfelder, "Early Voices of Protest;" Mekenye, "Re-Examination of the Lekhotla La Bafo's Challenge to Imperialism."

<sup>67</sup> Edgar, *Prophets*, 19-22.

<sup>68</sup> LNA, S3/22/2/3, Lekhotla la Bafo Presidential Address, 26 December 1928, cited in Edgar, *Prophets*, 88.

<sup>69</sup> Tamarkin, *Volk and Flock*; LNA S3/1/6/11, Verney to GS, 22 May 1929.

Maphutseng Lefela claimed that South African imperialists sought to "exterminate, through the agency of poisonous dip, the flocks of the nation." His words motivated a small boycott of dips in 1930, despite the steep fines leveled against violators of the Scab Act.<sup>70</sup>

Although strongly political in nature, LLB's concerns were not theirs alone. Frank Verney, the veterinary surgeon in Lesotho from 1908-1934, knew that too many animals died from dipping in 1925. He knew that if it continued, "it would break the Native's confidence in the campaign."<sup>71</sup> Verney's perspective, however, clashed with LLB's views in ways that speak to the importance of political contexts in understanding how knowledge circulates. The BNC, since 1909, had insisted that Basotho men undergo training to supervise the dips themselves. Verney, on the other hand, claimed that Europeans who possessed "higher faculties for such technical work," had better perform the task. They split the difference in that pre-trained Basotho men operated the dips, supervised by a British livestock inspector or a white trader who hosted the dipping facilities.<sup>72</sup> As the scheme progressed it became clear to officials, chiefs, and especially stockowners like Chaka, that dipping required not a European or Mosotho dipper, but a competent one.

---

<sup>70</sup> Maphutseng Lefela, "One oppressor less for Basutoland," *Umsebenzi*, 30 November 1929; M. Lefela, "Passive resistance in Basutoland," *Umsebenzi*, 31 January 1930; Cited in Edgar, *Prophets*, 151, 155; LNA, S3/1/7/7, Draft of Prevention of Scab Act, February 1923. Fines for non-compliance were £10 or six months labor.

<sup>71</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/11, Verney to GS, 22 May 1929.

<sup>72</sup> LNA, S3/1/6, "Extracts from BNC, 1909," pp. 1-4; "BNC Proceedings," *Leselinyana*, 24 August 1923; LNA S3/1/6/8, Report of Dip Supervisor, 13 December 1923; Pim, *Financial and Economic*, 117.

Well-trained dippers became especially important in October 1923 when the government passed the Prevention of Scab Act, making the dipping of all sheep compulsory in Lesotho. In 1922 386,000 sheep and goats were dipped in Lesotho. During the year following the passage of the Scab Act, dippers dunked one million animals. The services and the expansion of tanks under the Scab Act were funded by the wool export tax, not a dipping fee. As workers erected more tanks in mountain areas, and government dip inspectors came to monitor more flocks, dip returns reached 2.5 million animals in 1930 when the last of the 219 tanks were completed. By 1932 the government staff inspected nearly 4 million head and found only a few instances of scab, whereas some 50% of flocks were infected in 1923. Fatalities among the dipped remained at about 0.02% in 1932.<sup>73</sup>

Despite low rates, dead sheep remained a flash point that highlighted the messy interplay of human error, social order, and ecology in the dipping campaigns. In Mohale's Hoek district, Verney investigated a case in which a British inspector named Gardiner had dipped 460 sheep in August 1923. Under Gardiner's supervision, a Mosotho man dipped the same flock again eight days later. Ninety animals died from arsenical poisoning according to Verney's report. He lambasted Gardiner for mixing the dip at full strength each time to treat a visibly weak and scabby flock that had been struggling through a cold, dry winter.<sup>74</sup> Whereas *Lekhotla la Bafo* manipulated the anti-scab campaigns and its imperfect veterinary

---

<sup>73</sup> CAR 1923-24, p.12; CAR 1925, p.14; CAR 1926, pp. 3-4; CAR 1927, p. 8; CAR 1930, pp. 20-21; CAR 1932, pp.11-12.

<sup>74</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/4, Verney to GS, 24 August 1923.

knowledge to advance its political ideals, Verney saw it first as a technical solution with which trained human labor could solve an epidemiological problem for primarily economic purposes. Both perspectives were grounded in realities, but also slighted the important roles played by ecology and transnational movements of animals and parasites.

Border politics, too, shaped human interactions with *psoroptes* and eradication policies. In Qacha's Nek and Quthing districts most sheep and wool crossed into South Africa through remote mountain passes. Governments on both sides had struggled to regulate trans-frontier human and livestock movement since the mid-nineteenth century. Rinderpest (1896-1902) had marked a new era when officials began monitoring livestock disease as much, or more than stock theft.<sup>75</sup>

In 1907 Basutoland police patrolled the southern border to prevent South African cattle infected with the tick-borne East Coast Fever from entering the territory. Scab was a new addition to Lesotho's police agenda. On the South African side, farmers and the Union's Department of Agriculture feared that if existing patterns of transnational sheep movements continued, without adequate dipping regulations, Cape flocks would again be afflicted with scab.<sup>76</sup> Veterinary policies in East Griqualand in 1914 focused too on cattle dipping to control the tick-borne East Coast Fever. Some African stockowners resisted these compulsory measures, which

---

<sup>75</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/5, Chief of Division of Sheep to GS, 20 June 1914; Ongeluksnek Farmers Sec. to GS, 12 February 1927; SAB, Chief, Division of Sheep (LSK), Vol. 69, S419, GS to SA Secretary of Agriculture, 12 June 1911.

<sup>76</sup> LNA, S7/1/6/20, Police Report, 25 March 1912.

also restricted stock movements.<sup>77</sup> Protests grew into attacks on dip tanks and veterinary staff. With regards to Basotho and dipping sheep, no resistance on such a scale took place. This difference owed, perhaps, to a lesser cultural reverence for sheep compared to cattle, and to a less visible colonial presence in Lesotho where chiefs had replaced European magistrates in local courts since 1884.<sup>78</sup> Nonetheless, officials in South Africa and Lesotho sought to update veterinary regulations and reinforce them through tighter border controls and more dipping.

In addition to European agricultural interests, Africans pushed the transnational anti-scab agenda. Many families in Quthing and Qacha's Nek had originally migrated from Herschel, Mount Fletcher, and Matatiele in South Africa after 1880, a process that continued in the early twentieth century.<sup>79</sup> Coming from Xhosa and Zulu-speaking groups, families maintained transnational social links, which involved moving livestock between lower, more crowded areas in South Africa and Lesotho's mountains where summer grass grew high and water ran plentiful. These transhumance patterns served the dietary and health needs of the animals while facilitating resource-sharing within families. To protect this historical link, chiefs in Mt. Fletcher and Herschel had petitioned against a 1906 proclamation which prohibited all sheep and goats from entering the Cape Colony from Basutoland. John Merriman, the Cape's prime minister, pressured the Basutoland government to create a dipping and inspection infrastructure so that the 1906

---

<sup>77</sup> SAB, South African Police (SAP), Vol.32, CONF6/271/14, Testimony of Nikilasi, 28 September 1914.

<sup>78</sup> Colin Bundy, "Popular Opposition, Collaboration and Social Control in the Anti-Dipping Movement," in Beinart and Bundy, *Hidden Struggles*, 191-21.

<sup>79</sup> SAB, LSK, Vol.69, S419, Mt. Fletcher Magistrate to Inspector of Sheep, 10 December 1907.



proclamation could be relaxed to prevent “harming people with deep social relations and grazing needs that both transcend the border.”<sup>80</sup>

These concerns worked alongside those of white farmers and stockowners whose properties abutted the Qacha’s Nek border. In 1911, the East Griqualand Farmer’s Association insisted that the Basutoland Government escalate dipping efforts, especially at the border crossings.<sup>81</sup> Verney and his veterinary department took these requests seriously, but they also found that South African border farmers greatly exaggerated their accusations of scabby Basotho sheep infecting their “clean” flocks. Verney cited the fine wool quality and prosperity in the South African border areas as evidence of the farmers’ exaggeration.<sup>82</sup> This debate spoke to the common perspective held by South African farmers, and indeed, by many lowland Basotho, that the mountains of Lesotho were unclean, underdeveloped, and backward. In the end, the Basutoland government had bundled evolving transnational veterinary science together with local labor, natural resources, and knowledge to eliminate sheep scab, if temporarily, in a national flock that had grown from 2.3 million in 1911 to over 3.8 million animals in 1931.<sup>83</sup> Scab, however, was but one biological threat to woolen sheep in southern Africa.

---

<sup>80</sup> SAB, LSK, Vol. 69, S419, Secretary of Agriculture to Inspector of Sheep, 28 October 1907; NTS, Vol. 8129, 337/340, Sec. for Native Affairs to GS, 28 March 1936; LSK, Vol. 69, S419, John Merriman to Dept. of Agric., 28 February 1908; *Transkeian Territories General Council: Proceedings and Reports of Select Committees at the Session of 1909* (Umtata: The Territorial News, Limited, 1909) (Hereafter TTGC), xxxiii.

<sup>81</sup> SAB, LSK, Vol. 69, S419, Basutoland GS to East Griqualand Farmer’s Assoc., 27 April 1911.

<sup>82</sup> SAB, GG, Vol. 1856, 54/681, Frank Verney to Sec. of Agric., 15 September 1923.

<sup>83</sup> *Basutoland Census for 1911*, 47; Pim, *Financial and Economic*, 194; Staples and Hudson, *Ecological Survey*, 23.

### 3.5 - Knowledge and Work in Eradicating Burweed

The story of burweed (*Xanthium spinosum*) eradication efforts in early 1900s Lesotho proceeded alongside the anti-scab campaign. But the burweed case also helps explain different factors in the historical context in which knowledge was circulated, understood, and applied. Whereas sheep dipping, especially after 1923, never provoked large-scale resistance among Basotho of any social strata, people routinely protested orders to dig *hlabahlabane* (burweed). To protest, people simply refused to work under the local chief's orders. Sometimes it was the chiefs themselves who refused to pass down the order. While this form of resistance shows clear political expression, a weapon of the weak as James Scott puts it, more germane for my work, these actions speak to the ways people linked their labor, ecological resources, and knowledge in their everyday lives.<sup>84</sup>

Scholars have studied the social and ecological history of weeds in southern Africa and beyond. In the context of the turn of the century Cape Colony, Lance Van Sittert examines the ways in which both non-native plants such as burweed, as well as some native species took on new meaning to land users and policy makers in terms of their ecological impact, but more importantly, on how they affected commodity values.<sup>85</sup> Often it was the same expanding market networks that

---

<sup>84</sup> Scott, *Moral Economy*; E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present* 50, no. 50 (1971): 76-136. Both of these works have informed the arguments brought forth in, among other works, Beinart and Bundy, *Hidden Struggles*.

<sup>85</sup> Van Sittert, "The Seed Blows;" See also, Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Warwick Frost, "European Farming, Australian Pests: agricultural settlement and environmental disruption in Australia, 1800-1920," *Environment & History* 4, no. 2 (1998): 129-43; William Beinart and Luvuyo

assigned economic value to products such as wool that facilitated the spread of non-native organisms in the first place, such as plants like burweed, or parasites like *psoroptes*. The etiology of rinderpest too, which was rooted in colonial trade and conquest, makes a fine example of biological dispersion across global spaces. Originally a native of Mexico, prickly pear, Van Sittert points out as another example, may have arrived in South Africa with a shipment of maize from Morocco or as an intentional import from India.<sup>86</sup>

This was indeed the case with burweed which experts believed had originated in the Americas before spreading across the wool producing world to Africa, Australia, and elsewhere either traveling on living sheep or in wool, machinery, or packing materials. The first record of the species on the subcontinent appears in 1849 near Cape Town when observers noted it as a botanical curiosity.<sup>87</sup> Taking this framework where plants become weeds within a shifting cultural and economic order as my starting point, and maintaining my focus on environmental knowledge, new questions emerge. First, how and why did people make specific decisions about whether or not to participate in the burweed eradication scheme? Furthermore, what does this tell us about what people in different social positions knew about this plant and its relevance in their lives?

---

Wotshela, *Prickly Pear: A Social History of a Plant in the Eastern Cape* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012).

<sup>86</sup> Van Sittert, "The Seed Blows," 658.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 660. Although burweed's origins and distribution history remain uncertain, experts now believe it a South American native. See, J. DiTomaso et al., *Weed Control in Natural Areas in the Western United States* (Los Angeles: University of California, 2013).



**Figure 3.4**  
Xanthium spinosum; Hlabahlabane; Burweed  
Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek  
Photo by author, January 2015

Burweed, like scab and all other non-native flora and fauna in Lesotho, had immigrated via South Africa. It is inadequate to attribute its spread solely to market forces, which have driven animals, plants, and other organisms across geographic and political frontiers. Instead, stock and human movements over time between Lesotho and South Africa stemmed from ecological and social realities as much as economic forces. A member of the aster family of flowering plants and known as spiny cocklebur in the United States and Bathurst bur in Australia, burweed thrives on disturbed ground such as roadsides, agricultural fields, and urban waste areas. In addition to its tangling in wool and mohair, ingesting seedlings and seeds at 1% of

bodyweight could fatally poison livestock, although this appears to have been rare. A summer annual, *Xanthium spinosum* can grow to three feet tall and germinates from seeds which drop in mid-summer (February in Lesotho). The spiny burs contain two seeds each that can survive for up to three years under field conditions, and also float well in water, making streams key channels for distribution.<sup>88</sup> In early twentieth century Lesotho, no chemical or biological remedies existed. Although Basotho had long used fire to manage pasture, this cultural preventative proved ineffective against *hlabahlabane*. Instead, human labor, coordinated and applied in December and January before seeding seemed the only possible preventative.

With this in mind, the Basutoland government began modest efforts to eradicate the plant in 1891 to assist its nascent wool industry amid complaints from domestic and international merchants that burweed was ruining wool from Basutoland.<sup>89</sup> At this early stage, government officials simply told chiefs that if burweed continued to spread, it would hurt wool profits. Chiefs then called matsema to dig burweed on a given day. Additionally, the resident commissioner ordered road-building crews to eliminate the plant on sight, even as they created new habitat for it by disturbing vegetation. Brief reports on these efforts for the 1890s show optimistic language where “chiefs and people were being gradually brought to see the necessity of taking active measures for the extirpation of burweed.” But by 1900, a pessimistic tone prevailed, as in, “nothing apparently will

---

<sup>88</sup> DiTomaso et al., *Weed Control in Natural Areas*.

<sup>89</sup> LNA, S3/1/9/2, Government Circular No. 84, 14 May 1891.

induce the natives to take proper steps for the destruction of these plants, in spite of the injury they cause to the wool.”<sup>90</sup> This same misconception, or, what Syed Alatas has termed “the myth of the lazy native,” underpinned British policy on noxious weeds into the 1930s when the focus of the agricultural and veterinary departments shifted towards other matters.<sup>91</sup>

From the start, the government eradication efforts erroneously assumed that would-be Basotho laborers thought of burweed in the same ways as the government: as a nuisance to be destroyed. This misunderstanding fueled continued apathy on the part of Basotho commoners and frustration for both government officials, and those chiefs who generally supported the campaigns.<sup>92</sup> For colonial officials, traders, some chiefs and stockowners, and the missionary-educated minority, wool exports could yield individual profits, promote employment, and fund development projects through export duties. Achieving these goals, so the philosophy went, would lead to broader prosperity where people could afford to buy food, material items, education, and health care. In short, proponents of this capitalist approach to development believed that a rising tide of wool returns would lift all boats. Embarking down this path meant adhering to the evolving sciences relating to wool production; including veterinary treatments as discussed above,

---

<sup>90</sup> CAR 1893-94, p.13; CAR 1899-1900, p.60.

<sup>91</sup> Sayed H. Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native: a study of the image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its function in the ideology of colonial capitalism* (London: Routledge, 1977); See also, Keletso Atkins, *The Moon is Dead! Give Us Our Money!: the cultural origins of an African work ethic, Natal, South Africa, 1843-1900* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1993).

<sup>92</sup> J. Putsoane, “Sehlaba-hlabane,” *Leselinyana*, 20 June 1912; *Litaba Tsa Lekhotla*, 1925, p.23; LNA, S3/1/9/2, Basutoland Chamber of Commerce to GS, 14 May 1923.

and economic botany, whose practitioners strived to understand how to propagate or destroy plant species according to their value, monetary or otherwise. Most adherents to this development approach, perhaps not coincidentally, also had direct financial stakes in sheep and wool, but all believed that *hlabahlabane* was an “evil” that fouled the productive landscape and needed to be exterminated.<sup>93</sup>

Like with sheep scab, South African agricultural policy set the regional bar for controlling specific plants. Sheep and goats had grazed extensively on South African rangelands in the Karoo, East Griqualand, and the Transvaal – long before Lesotho’s Maloti hosted large flocks – offering burweed plentiful habitat throughout the rangelands. Efforts to destroy it there, beginning with an attempt to legislate compulsory eradication in 1861, met with moderate success, though not without difficulty in terms of motivating labor or monitoring the progress of the campaigns.<sup>94</sup> South African farmers complained that burweed spread downstream from Basutoland, frustrating their efforts to eradicate it. Petitioners argued that Basotho land managers and their government needed to do more to clean up the mountains to prevent seeds from spreading down the many watercourses, including the Orange River system. Basutoland officials consistently refuted these complaints, insisting the claimants had no evidence of this dispersion.<sup>95</sup> Although burweed had

---

<sup>93</sup> See, for example, *Litaba Tsa Lekhotla*, 1925 and TNA, CO 646, BNC Sessional Papers, 1912. Both discussions show support from chiefs in destroying these plants; LNA, S3/1/9/2, Wright to GS, December 1920.

<sup>94</sup> Beinart, *Rise of Conservation*, 82-83; Van Sittert, “The Seed Blows,” 666-68.

<sup>95</sup> SAB, GG 935/17/447, Governor General to HC in Pretoria, 27 September 1912; LNA, S3/1/9/2, Cape Province Sec. to GS in Basutoland, 15 October 1923; “The Eradication of Noxious Weeds: Washed Down by Rivers,” *Cape Times*, 9 December 1927.

an older presence in the Cape Colony (Cape Province after 1910), by the time Basutoland officials seriously took up noxious weed policy, it was the Transvaal Province to the north that provided the most scientific knowledge on the subject. Building on legislation dating back to 1861 in the Cape Colony, the Transvaal passed a Noxious Weeds Act in 1909 that required property owners to clear their lands of specific plants deemed evils.<sup>96</sup>

The Noxious Weeds Act, which targeted burweed along with cocklebur (*Xanthium strumarium*) and Mexican poppy (*Argemone mexicana*) among others, drew on contemporary scientific research into the biology and ecology of plants. South African government Botanist Joseph Burt-Davy documented this culturally and economically specific knowledge in his *Descriptions and Illustrations of Noxious Weeds* – a key document for the Basutoland officials who framed the policy discussion. The pamphlet contained illustrations, various nomenclatures for the plants (though no African names), and detailed descriptions of the plants and specific instructions on how to eradicate them. These instructions went far beyond digging to discuss the seasonality, seed characteristics, and how to bundle and burn the uprooted plants to prevent reproduction.<sup>97</sup> From the legal standpoint, the Weed Acts gave broad powers to the government to inspect private lands and to level fines against those violating the law.<sup>98</sup> Although no such law existed in Lesotho at that

---

<sup>96</sup> LNA, S3/1/9/3, *Regulations for Destruction of Noxious Weeds* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1910).

<sup>97</sup> LNA, S3/1/9/3, J.B. Davy, *Descriptions and Illustrations of Noxious Weeds* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1913).

<sup>98</sup> LNA, S3/1/9/3, *Regulations for Destruction of Noxious Weeds*.



time, this knowledge, which linked biology, legislation, and labor to eliminate weeds designated noxious resonated with those promoting wool production. It resonated much less amongst the poor, mostly illiterate Basotho who were called out to take up hoe and spade to dig the weeds.<sup>99</sup>

In a different political and cultural context, Lesotho faced a similar set of problems as policy makers in the Transvaal and Cape Colony had before them. *Who* was responsible for weeding *which* lands? And how exactly, would people be convinced that such arduous labor was worth their effort? These posed difficult questions to which there were no clear answers. When the resident commissioner raised the issue of burweed and scab eradication at the 1908 BNC proceedings, Paramount Chief Letsie II, Chief Makhaola of Qacha's Nek, and most other chiefs agreed that campaigns must accelerate. But they disagreed about whether or not legislation should be enacted to compel chiefs and people to do the work. Several chiefs, along with traders and large stock owners, thought that only law could force lesser chiefs and commoners to comply. Others quickly pointed out that without any enforcement mechanism, laws were useless.<sup>100</sup>

Basutoland's anti-burweed campaigns show a set of fluid relationships between law, custom, ecology, and work. In 1903, a Mosotho councilor who had been appointed by the resident commissioner, and an appointee of Paramount Chief Lerotholi, formed a committee in the BNC to write down the "old laws of Moshesh

---

<sup>99</sup> LNA, S3/1/9/3, Telegram from AC, Qacha's Nek to GS, January 1917. The AC saying how apathetic people are about digging weeds; Interview with Mochinti Jane, 18 May 2015.

<sup>100</sup> *Report on BNC Proceedings for 1908*, 6-8, 20-23; Putsoane, "Sehlaba-hlabane."

[Moshoeshoe].”<sup>101</sup> Twenty-four men, some of whom claimed acquaintance with Moshoeshoe, convened for just two days to write down eighteen laws. The idea, as many Basotho and colonials saw it, was to transform spoken, non-binding customs into written laws. Known as the Laws of Lerotholi, this document attempted to strengthen the authority of the paramount chief, to formalize rules for succession in the chieftainship and personal inheritances, and not least, to define the jurisdiction of the British colonial administrators.<sup>102</sup>

But the Laws of Lerotholi were ambiguous in both content and legitimacy and its foundations were shaky from the start. First, the colonial influence was clear at least as much as any Sesotho custom. Also, Chief Jonathan Molapo, the influential chief of Leribe district refused to participate and vowed to ignore the laws for the rest of his days. On top of that, the creators of the laws, the BNC, remained an advisory body until 1960. As the historian L.B.B.J Machobane has pointed out, the Laws of Lerotholi must be understood, at least in part, as a colonial effort to formalize political authority in Lesotho following the Anglo-Boer War, a time when it was becoming clear that a new Union of South Africa would be formed largely on British terms.<sup>103</sup>

Seen in this context, the Laws of Lerotholi, which did have some indigenous purchase, could help prepare Basutoland for eventual incorporation into the Union. Political incorporation, as will become even clearer in later chapters, had ecological

---

<sup>101</sup> Dichaba Labane, quoted in Machobane, *Government and Change*, 88; See also TNA, CO 646, BNC Sessional Papers, 1903, pp. 18-22; Duncan, *Sotho Laws and Customs*, xiii-xiv.

<sup>102</sup> Machobane, *Government and Change*, 89-90.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-96.

dimensions too. In 1922, the BNC amended the laws for the first time to add regulations for, among other things, eradicating burweed. The basic regulation stated that it was “lawful for any chief strongly to order all people in his ward to eradicate burweed.” Furthermore, any person or headman refusing this obligation would be fined one goat, or £5 respectively. Although chiefs were also subject to fines for non-enforcement, fines were payable to the local chief, or in the case of a chief in violation, to his superior. This arrangement created a financial incentive for chiefs to regulate the collective efforts for weed destruction inconsistently.<sup>104</sup>

Letsema had been an important cultural, social, and economic institution throughout Lesotho’s history. It was an institution of collective labor that continues to play an important part in human relations with the non-human world in rural Lesotho, despite having provoked heated political debate across time. Its meanings and practices changed dramatically over the course of the twentieth century, echoing shifts in the regional economy, politics, and technology. In its most basic form, a village chief called upon men under his jurisdiction to perform various tasks on the chief’s agricultural holdings such as plowing, cultivating, or harvesting. The chief, under Sesotho custom, was obliged to provide food and beer to the workers. A chief could call letsema for other tasks too, such as gathering materials for a building; and, after burweed spread in the 1890s, to dig weeds.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> MMA, *Basutoland Native Laws of Lerotholi as amended by the National Council of 1922*. See also, Duncan, *Sotho Laws and Customs*, 138.

<sup>105</sup> Casalis, *The Basutos*, 162-63; Ashton, *The Basuto*; Motlatsi Thabane, “The Nature of Social Relations in the Nineteenth Century,” in Pule and Thabane, eds., *Essays on Aspects*, 67-70.

Under Sesotho land tenure systems, a chief allocated usufruct rights to married men to three arable fields for him to plant crops (See Chap. 1). Apart from these fields and residential sites, mission and trading stations, and government reserves, all other lands served as commons. Arable lands, however, typically reverted to commonage after the harvest.<sup>106</sup> In contrast to the arrangements in South Africa with regard to eradication responsibilities, even the 'owners' of usufruct rights questioned whether or not it was their duty to dig weeds from their fields. By the 1910s, many Basotho men were earning wages on farms and mines in South Africa and were either absent during letsema, or felt little need to work for food. In a departure from older letsema practices, women and elderly men were called to dig weeds in the absence of migrant workers. Some commoners, emboldened by both the BPA and LLB, criticized chiefs for abusing the letsema system by not providing food and beer, or, simply profiting by selling produce rather than storing it for village needs. Still others understood that burweed, though not a useful plant, only posed a threat to large wool producers and traders, and thus felt little need to expend their labor to bolster others people's economic interests without direct compensation.<sup>107</sup> Although diggers' voices are only murmurs in the archival record, evidence strongly suggests that this understanding of labor was widespread in the early 1900s.

---

<sup>106</sup> Casalis, *The Basutos*, 159; Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 73; Mohapi, *Temo ea Boholo*, 17-19.

<sup>107</sup> *Basutoland Census for 1911*, 12-13; S3/1/9/2, AC Leribe to GS, 17 March 1923; AC Qacha's Nek to GS, 29 May 1923; Interview with Emmanuel Ntsekhe, Roma, 1 November 2014; Epprecht, *This Matter*, 53; Machobane, *Government and Change*, 76-84.

The people who refused to dig *hlabahlabane* in those years compiled knowledge through these campaigns, while simultaneously being denied access to other important lessons. Unlike with prickly pear, or any number of other useful plants deemed “weeds” by officials, *hlabahlabane* had no practical use.<sup>108</sup> Its Sesotho name comes from the verb *ho hlaba*, meaning to stab or slaughter; an etymology that suggests that people understood the plant as something that could harm, or even kill.<sup>109</sup> Rural men and women also knew their own agricultural cycle, its nuance of weather and labor requirements. December and January in rural Lesotho are not only the months when burweed needed to be uprooted, but also labor intensive months on the agricultural calendar.<sup>110</sup>

In years when spring rains fell late, as in the drought years of 1912, 1914, 1919, 1922, and 1932, December became an important plowing month in the mountains once the fields were softened by consistent rain. Shortly after the new year, women, children, and some men would have weeded up and down the rows when the crops reached knee-high.<sup>111</sup> Given the heat and bodily exhaustion typical during this part of the cycle, it is little wonder that people were reluctant to dig weeds near roads or out in the commonage, chiefs orders or not. When people did participate, they learned the basic biology and ecology of the plant, how it thrived and how to destroy it. On another level, most laborers seemed to have little

---

<sup>108</sup> Beinart and Wotshela, *Prickly Pear*; Interview with Mochinti Jane, 18 May 2015; Interview with Mokhafisi Kena, 7 January 2015.

<sup>109</sup> Mabile and Dieterlen, *Southern Sotho-English Dictionary*, 86.

<sup>110</sup> Sechefo, “Twelve Lunar Months,” 931-41; Casalis, *The Basutos*, 159; Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 73.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

knowledge of its origin, or why burweed was designated “evil” by the government. Given the recent spread of burweed, farmers could not have understood the full potential for invasive plants to displace native grasses that had nourished flocks in the mountains for several generations.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, poverty, gender, and educational background, especially literacy, marginalized most commoners and even some chiefs. To some extent, these social conditions prevented them from knowing how the changing ecology in highland Lesotho, which now included burweed, merino sheep, and scab, linked them to wealthy stockowners, traders, and the international economy.<sup>113</sup>

Although the BNC wrote regulations on noxious weeds into the Laws of Lerotholi in 1922, the Basutoland Government did not issue a formal proclamation. Despite a general loathing for digging weeds, perhaps the work parties had checked the spread enough for the authorities to deem it under control. By the mid-1920s, reports from Qacha’s Nek showed little burweed. On the other hand, a 1930 report from the paramount chief’s own area around the royal village at Matsieng showed burweed thriving.<sup>114</sup> Whatever the case, from 1926 to 1934 the annual colonial reports make no mention of noxious weeds. Following the catastrophic drought of 1932-33, attention turned more to bitter karoo (*Chrysocoma tenuifolia*), called *sehalahala* in Sesotho. Officials feared that *sehalahala* would displace nutritious livestock grasses for generations to come, rather than as a direct threat to wool

---

<sup>112</sup> LNA, S3/1/9/2, AC Qacha’s Nek to GS, 9 March 1928.

<sup>113</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/5, Wachter to PVS, 16 December 1914.

<sup>114</sup> LNA, S3/1/9/2, Rafolatsane to AC Qacha’s Nek, 31 March 1928; Report from Matsieng, July 1930.

quality. To ecologists of the 1930s, *sehalahala* – although native to southern African semi-arid areas like the karoo – signified land degradation, which began a prolonged debate about overgrazing in Lesotho and elsewhere (See Chapter 5).<sup>115</sup>

### 3.6 - Conclusion

Not unlike the herders and the young dip supervisor at Ramatseliso's Gate in 1918, those people called to dig weeds experienced knowledge in fundamentally different ways than did those in higher social positions. The Basutoland government's intervention into rural lives and ecologies on behalf of the wool industry compares, in subtle yet important ways, to the history of irrigation in the American West. While the American deployment of government authority, private capital, engineering expertise, and human labor to irrigate the West dwarfs Lesotho's infrastructure of sheep dips—the anti-scab and burweed eradication campaigns still led to important “communal reorganization, to new patterns of human interaction, and to new forms of discipline and authority,” along with uncertain ecological effects.<sup>116</sup>

To kill *psoroptes* Basotho reconstituted their corpus of environmental knowledge by adopting new scientific remedies while working within a changing political ecology. Wool production, and the mountain climate and vegetation, affected one another. The colonial administration sought to control these effects by

---

<sup>115</sup> CAR 1935, p.8.

<sup>116</sup> Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 20.

expanding its system of regulatory communities by breeding merino sheep, by encouraging new grazing practices, by building an infrastructure for chemically destroying *psoroptes*, by mobilizing labor to dig unwanted plants, and not least, by employing Basotho chiefs to enforce these policies.<sup>117</sup> Ironically, *psoroptes* had proliferated because of merino sheep, and because of greater limits on available land. In terms of knowledge and social mobility, these schemes rarely opened up new economic opportunities for the poorest Basotho.

New knowledge about sheep, veterinary science, and plant ecology, which was disproportionately acquired by wealthier people, served more than market needs. Those who could access this knowledge reconfigured their perceptions of the mountain grasslands to see it as a system of economic resources to be used to advance personal and national agendas. But, this reconfiguration also incorporated older practices even while building new infrastructure and imbuing new landscape features with fresh meaning. Basotho enacted these agendas by facilitating a process in which non-native sheep largely displaced the more ecologically appropriate and calorie-rich fat-tail breeds. Lastly, this transition intensified the labor of herders, encouraged further accumulation of livestock, and precipitated ecological change in Lesotho's uplands.

As rural Basotho of all social strata interacted with the changing environment of 1920s Qacha's Nek, they struggled to understand how to approach the new possibilities for farming, grazing, and work; and how to balance those

---

<sup>117</sup> Agrawal, *Environmentality*, 127-30.



approaches in ways that would serve their changing cultural, economic, and political aspirations. In response to this struggle, in its many dimensions, Basotho and British leaders attempted a new initiative to expand agricultural knowledge through rural outreach beginning in 1924, an initiative that is the subject of Chapter 4.

## 4. ORIGINS AND PATHWAYS OF LESOTHO'S AGRICULTURAL DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMS, C. 1924-1960

### 4.1 - Introduction

On a September morning in 1952, twenty men wearing traditional blankets sat chatting in the chief's courtyard at Mashai village in the Qacha's Nek district. The chief had called a meeting to introduce Mokhafisi Kena, the new agricultural demonstrator in the area. Kena dismounted from his horse and stood tall. The twenty-seven year old wore a pressed uniform as he spoke about vegetable gardening, explaining in clear Sesotho: "You can plant peach trees and grow spinach and carrots in front of your house." He continued, "your wife won't spend long days searching for wild greens anymore...schools across Lesotho already cultivate gardens where children learn from practical work, and eat fresh produce." Demonstrators like Kena believed that progressive farming, which included gardening, could offer an improved diet where fruits, vegetables, and wheat enriched the staples of *papa* (stiff maize porridge), sorghum porridge and beer, greens, milk, and occasional meat.<sup>1</sup>

The discussion then turned directly to nutrition, a topic that highlighted some of the cultural and social issues at play in this interaction. Kena explained that people, especially children, needed to eat more meat, beans, and eggs for protein to

---

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Mokhafisi Kena, Ha Makhaola, 7 January 2015.

stave off nutritional diseases.<sup>2</sup> Suddenly a man stood up, shouting in protest. As the chief intervened, Kena insisted that the man speak his mind. “It’s not about wanting meat, it’s because there is no meat these days...we Basotho ate meat long before the whites came...you are a madman!”<sup>3</sup>

Kena apologized to the man, and rephrased his point: “True, poverty is deep and food is short, but it is also true in our custom that children don’t eat eggs, that elders eat meat before we feed our children, and we focus on quantity of cattle, not quality. I am asking you to change this.” The meeting continued until early afternoon with Kena addressing concerns about the upcoming plowing season and soil conservation work. That afternoon and the following day Kena visited people in their fields and kraals, also speaking to school children. He spent the night in Mashai, talking and drinking with the men, which he knew was essential to establish rapport. Build rapport he did. On a subsequent visit to Mashai he proposed marriage to Bernice Letsie, a teacher in the village, now his wife of sixty years. After two days at Mashai, Kena rode his horse to other villages, completing a circuit. He carried seeds, light implements, and veterinary medicine to show farmers new techniques,

---

<sup>2</sup> For example, the niacin deficiency disease called pellagra was first reported in 1907. Its incidence increased after 1933 continuing to get worse into the 1960s. CAR 1935, p. 6; *Basutoland Annual Report of the Department of Health for 1962*, p. 10; On malnutrition in the broader political context, see Diana Wylie, *Starving on a Full Stomach: Hunger and the Triumph of Cultural Racism in Modern South Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001); See also, Chapter 6.

<sup>3</sup> Mokhafisi Kena, 7 January 2015.

but also to discuss cultural practices of work, eating, and managing resources such as livestock, pasture, croplands, and household compounds.<sup>4</sup>

Kena's predecessors began demonstration work in Basutoland in 1924. The colonial government had launched the program in response to local circumstances, also drawing on transnational ideas about agriculture, poverty, progress, and race. Each demonstrator reported to an officer under the colonial Department of Agriculture. Officers were exclusively European, some British and some white South African, until the mid-1950s when Basotho moved into officer positions. Basutoland's agricultural policies, like its political economy, were closely intertwined with South Africa.<sup>5</sup> Recent scholarship has shown that agricultural education and demonstration in South Africa must be understood as part of the segregationist political project with which the state sought to keep Africans resident in rural areas and out of cities, at least when they were not working labor contracts.<sup>6</sup>

On the one hand, narrating the historical trajectory of agricultural demonstration in colonial Basutoland shows how these programs failed to effect agrarian change on a large scale. The Department of Agriculture promoted technical and cultural changes while leaving in place the political, economic, and social structures of colonialism and white supremacy in southern Africa. By the 1930s, Lesotho was heavily dependent on remittances from migrant labor to South African

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid; Interview with Maleseko Kena, Ha Makhaola, 19 May 2015; LNA, S3/1/1/8, Lawrence Wachter to GS, 4 April 1929.

<sup>5</sup> *Basutoland Report of the Department of Agriculture for 1936* (Hereafter RDA), pp. 6-12.

<sup>6</sup> Julia Tischler, "Education and the Agrarian Question in South Africa, c. 1900-40," *Journal of African History* 57, no. 2 (2016): 252-70.

mines; a system which Basotho and colonial officials alike knew had adverse social, economic, and agricultural consequences for Basotho families.<sup>7</sup>

In this way, the story is similar to that of the Negro Cooperative Demonstration Service in the American South of the early 1900s. As scholars have pointed out for southern Africa and the United States, these structures essentially created the very conditions of poverty that agricultural demonstration supposedly sought to mitigate.<sup>8</sup> But tracing the origins of Lesotho's demonstration program and the pathways that it followed also shows how Basotho demonstrators, chiefs, and farmers grappled with the limited political and economic opportunities that lay before them, often by embracing, or trying to embrace, new farming methods.

In similar histories of colonial Africa and India, and in the American South, a key question arises: could farmers afford to adopt new practices given their political and economic predicaments? In all cases, local variables of social order, culture, politics, and ecology conditioned the answers to this question.<sup>9</sup> The Basutoland

---

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 75; RDA 1952, pp. 15-16; "Ho Sebetsa Merafong," *Mochochonono*, 7 October and 18 November 1939.

<sup>8</sup> Karen Ferguson, "Caught in No Man's Land": The Negro Cooperative Demonstration Service and the Ideology of Booker T. Washington, 1900-1918," *Agricultural History* 72, no. 1 (1998): 33-54.

<sup>9</sup> On demonstration and extension work in Africa, see Owen Kalinga, "'The Master Farmers' Scheme in Nyasaland, 1950-1962: a study of a failed attempt to create a yeomen class," *African Affairs* 92, no. 368 (1993): 367-87; Henrietta Moore and Meghan Vaughan, *Cutting Down Trees: Gender, Nutrition and Agricultural Change in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890-1990* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993), 114-21; Eric Green, "A Lasting Story: Conservation and Agricultural Extension Services in Colonial Malawi," *Journal of African History* 50, no. 2 (2009): 247-67; Eric Green, "Labor Costs and the Failed Support of Progressive Farmers in Colonial Malawi," in *Landscape, Environment and Technology in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa*, eds. Toyin Falola and Emily Brownell (London: Routledge, 2012), 173-201; For India, see Benjamin Siegel, "'Modernizing Peasants and Master Farmers': All-India Crop Competitions and the Politics of Progressive Agriculture in Early Independent India," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 37, no. 1 (2017), forthcoming; For the American South, see Ferguson, "In No Man's Land;" Jeannie Whyne, "Black Farmers and the Agricultural Cooperative Extension Service: The Alabama Experience, 1945-1965,"

Department of Agriculture typically chose Basotho that already owned land, animals, and equipment to receive material and educational support, a policy which failed to serve the poorest farmers and accentuated rural social inequality. It was also official policy to exclude women from the main farming demonstrations until the later 1950s. In addition to understanding how knowledge circulated, exclusion becomes a central theme: exclusion by gender, by education, by poverty, or by geographic location. We must grasp, too, how it was that some marginalized Basotho, especially women, the landless, and the uneducated, expanded their stock of knowledge both directly and indirectly from demonstration services.<sup>10</sup>

This story played out across an institutional landscape that encompassed Sesotho land management systems, South African agricultural colleges, American ideas about industrial education, colonial governments, and not least, Lesotho's churches. Protestant and Catholic missions expanded their influence in the mountain areas in this period by establishing new churches, schools, and social programs that often coincided with government agricultural initiatives. Scholars have rightfully criticized colonial and post-colonial government agricultural

---

*Agricultural History* 72, no. 3 (1998): 523-51; Mark Hersey, *My Work is That of Conservation: An Environmental Biography of George Washington Carver* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011); Roy Scott, *The Reluctant Farmer: The Rise of Agricultural Extension to 1914* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970).

<sup>10</sup> My analysis of these social dynamics draws on Ian Scoones and John Thompson, "Knowledge, power and agriculture – towards a theoretical understanding," in *Beyond Farmer First: Rural people's knowledge, agricultural research and extension practice*, eds. Ian Scoones and John Thompson (London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 1994), 16-21.

interventions for implementing top-down schemes that ignored local realities.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Basotho did make political claims by resisting certain agricultural policies at certain times. But this focus occludes our understanding of the important cultural changes that did take place as well as the dynamic context in which these changes occurred.<sup>12</sup> People of various social distinctions aspired to agricultural knowledge as a way of remaking themselves as self-sufficient Basotho farmers, an act that was itself political. As a concept with many manifestations and meanings, progress (Sesotho: *tsoelopele*) had deep historical roots in Lesotho. Knowledge of crop varieties, veterinary health, soil conservation, and technology had been in flux at least since the Basotho nation formed in the mid-1800s. The period from 1924-1960, with all of its tensions and contradictions, proved to be an important time for the evolution of agricultural policy and practices in Lesotho.

#### **4.2 - Lesotho, South Africa, and Agricultural Knowledge in the Early 1900s**

Formed in 1910, the Union of South Africa government sought to modernize its agricultural sector under a white-dominated system of land ownership. The Land Act (1913) undergirded this effort by prohibiting Africans from owning land outside reserves or sharecropping with white farmers, a system that had previously dominated production in the areas surrounding Lesotho. In this system, many

---

<sup>11</sup> For the colonial period, see Showers, *Imperial Gullies*; Wallman, *Take out Hunger*; For the post-independence period, see Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*; Aerni-Flessner, "Development, Politics, and the Centralization of State Power."

<sup>12</sup> For example, Showers, *Imperial Gullies*; Mekenye, "Re-Examination of the Lekhotla La Bafo's Challenge to Imperialism."

Basotho, had negotiated sharing agreements or worked for wages. The Union government also subsidized irrigation equipment and land for white farmers. Mechanization and segregationist policies made life on white-owned farms more precarious for African tenants, forcing many families onto reserves within the Union or into Basutoland. As the population in Lesotho swelled, many of these migrants established new homes in the Maloti.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to rearing small livestock and producing wool, highland Basotho sowed maize, beans, and sorghum. Less commonly, people cultivated wheat and peas. Pumpkins grew in the fields with crops and women collected numerous types of wild greens.<sup>14</sup> Basotho designated land in three main categories: village, cultivated fields, and commonage. In the 1920s, people produced food using fields and commonage mostly. There were few trees then, especially in the mountains, and home gardens were virtually unknown. In an important cultural change, people incorporated village spaces into production systems more after the 1920s.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to African farmers in some settings, highlanders could not claim a deep historical presence in the high Maloti during which they had built agro-ecological knowledge over many generations.<sup>16</sup> This is a crucial point because government interventions in Lesotho, like demonstration work, did not pose the

---

<sup>13</sup> Van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine*; Keegan, *Rural Transformations*; CAR 1903, p. 15; CAR 1907, pp. 9, 41.

<sup>14</sup> Sayce, "Ethno-Geographical Essay," 270-73; Pim, *Financial and Economic*, 190-94. Wool exports rose from 1.6 million lbs. in 1900 to 13 million in 1929.

<sup>15</sup> Mohapi, *Temo ea Boholo*; Stephen Turner, "Sesotho Farming: The Conditions & Prospects of Agriculture in the Lowlands & Foothills of Lesotho," PhD diss., University of London, 1978, pp. 100-05; Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 78-80; Mokhafisi Kena, 7 January 2015; Interview with Seleso Tsoako, 17 January 2015.

<sup>16</sup> For example, the swidden system in Zambia. See Moore and Vaughan, *Cutting Down Trees*, 20-25.



same level of cultural rupture that was true in other cases. People had accumulated a corpus of environmental knowledge, but as I have shown, that corpus was in flux as new settlers populated the Maloti. Not local chief or farmer, nor colonial official could fully understand the agro-ecological changes occurring in the Maloti in the early 1900s.

In 1911, 37,000 people lived in Qacha's Nek. According to census data, one third of the district's 5000 families owned a single-share plow that could be hitched to oxen. With heavy, irreversible shares that could only push the soil to one side, the idea was to plow deep in the early 1900s. A common plow was the Ames Eagle #25, made in Worcester, Massachusetts, and the German made Rud-Sack plow. Other families cultivated small plots with hoes. Farmers broadcasted seed by hand before turning it into the earth. Planting in rows was uncommon.<sup>17</sup> Sesotho agriculture linked family members, relatives, friends, and chiefs in a complex web of productive relationships where everyone contributed resources. Someone brought the oxen, another person owned the plow, while still others offered labor. Another person, perhaps an elderly man or widow, offered his fields. All participants earned a negotiated share of the harvest. Who was available to work at what point in the cycle, who owned the implements, and who owned the land depended on a variety of factors, all of which changed during the course of the demonstration programs.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> *Basutoland Census for 1911*, 6-7, 40, 47; "Rud. Sack mehoma ea tshipi," *Mochochonono*, 5 December 1934; Mokhafisi Kena, 10 December 2014; Sayce, "Ethno-Geographical Essay," 272-73.

<sup>18</sup> See Sheddick, *Land Tenure*; Turner, "Sesotho farming;" Edward Makhanya, *The Use of Land resources for Agriculture in Lesotho* (Roma: University of Lesotho, 1979), 5-10. These variables have been well reviewed, though figures for this period are scarce, and are closely linked to the demands

The ways in which population growth and the evolving political economy of migrant labor affected farming put new stress on the Sesotho land tenure system. In this system, local chiefs allocated usufruct rites for three fields to each man upon marriage. From plowing season through harvest, these fields were the exclusive property of the owner. Once the harvest was complete, the fields were then opened for common grazing upon the chief's orders.<sup>19</sup> In the 1920s nearly all married men owned fields in their villages of residence, but this changed during the course of the demonstration programs. In addition to crop farming and wool production for market, people raised cattle for meat, milk, skins, and manure. As a central cultural and economic resource, Basotho exchanged cattle in marriage rites, slaughtered them at funerals, and harnessed them for draft power. Horses and donkeys, too, traversed bridle paths, transporting wool from grazing posts to European traders. These trading posts connected Basotho with international markets as well as wider circulations of agricultural and veterinary knowledge.<sup>20</sup>

The South African government constructed and disseminated agricultural knowledge, mostly to support white farmers. Agricultural colleges for whites, such as Elsenburg in Stellenbosch and Glenn in the Orange Free State, began conducting experiments and publishing results in the first years of the 1900s. Working through the Transkei Native Council, the Union government also established several "Native"

---

of the migrant labor system where men often had a break from a mining contract to plow and spend holidays at home.

<sup>19</sup> Staples and Hudson, *Ecological Survey*, 35-38; See also, Duncan, *Sotho Laws and Customs*, 74-79; Quinlan, "Marena a Lesotho," p. 115.

<sup>20</sup> LNA, S3/1/6/1, BNC discussion on dipping, 1909; Sayce, "Ethno-Geographical Essay," 283-86; CAR 1919-20, p. 2; CAR 1922-23, p. 7.

agricultural colleges. Tsolo, located near the city of Umtata, began in 1908 as an “agricultural institution” where Europeans trained male African apprentices in addition to conducting on-site demonstrations in, for example, plowing techniques and row planting. In 1913, under pressure from Transkei Council members to expand the role of these institutions, Tsolo launched a program to train African students in what many, including mission-educated Africans and government agriculturalists, understood to be scientific agriculture. The hope was that graduates could set positive examples for their neighbors when they returned home to farm, or, work as demonstrators themselves. The school formally began training African men to work as rural demonstrators in 1920.<sup>21</sup>

White agricultural colleges trained students for capitalist industrial farming, while the native colleges aimed to create a class of self-sufficient yeomen farmers. By learning and applying scientific farming techniques, so the logic went, these farmers would develop in reserved homelands for Africans. For segregationists and the later architects of apartheid, Africans were essentially rural people who could best improve themselves through agriculture and small-scale industry like carpentry and masonry, rather than in the alien spaces of European cities. The fact that land was scarce in the overpopulated reserves served the needs of industrial capital because most farmers, no matter how skilled, would still be partially dependent on wage labor to meet basic needs. In this way the agricultural colleges

---

<sup>21</sup> TTGC 1909-1910, pp. 5-7; TTGC 1912-13, pp. v-x; TTGC 1921-22, pp. xxiii-xvi; See also, Tischler, “Education and the Agrarian Question,” 255-64.

supported the Union agenda by maintaining a political economy in which blacks remained subordinate to white capital.<sup>22</sup>

But for many Basotho and for Africans in the Union too, the concept of improvement, or progress, had deeper historical roots. To consider these roots is to complicate how we understand people's perspectives on education, work, and farming within the larger colonial political economy. For Lesotho's missionaries, progress was a blend of Enlightenment ideals and biblical teachings about morality and piety. That is, a person should adhere to new ideas about science and reason, and then apply these ideas in daily activities such as agriculture to advance towards civilization. The farther a person advanced down this teleological path, the closer he or she came to salvation in the eyes of God. In this view, progress existed against its opposites: conservatism, superstition, and arbitrariness, which supposedly characterized Africans.<sup>23</sup>

For Basotho, life had always been about progressing in the broad sense; that is, moving through time by navigating the full range of historical challenges while adapting to political, cultural, and ecological changes along the way. King Moshoeshe, for example, had moved into modern day Lesotho from the north, finding new environments to raise his family and expand his influence. During the

---

<sup>22</sup> "The Agricultural Industry of the Orange Free State: The Rise and Growth of the Glenn School of Agriculture and Experiment Station," *The Agricultural Journal of South Africa* 16 (1925): 1169-71; William Beinart, "Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development: a southern African exploration, 1900-1960," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 11, no. 1 (1984): 75-77; Tischler, "Education and the Agrarian Question," 266.

<sup>23</sup> Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, 14-16; Epprecht, *This Matter*, 30-33; On the subject of progress in agricultural and veterinary knowledge, see Tamarkin, *Volk and Flock*, 14-21.

tumultuous 1800s Moshoeshoe and his followers used older forms of social organization in conjunction with new technologies. They rode on non-native horses and used European-made firearms to defend themselves. Both Christian and pagan farmers tethered plows to oxen to sow maize and wheat in a process that bound non-native technologies and crops to African cultures and ecologies. To some, progress meant making cash by exporting agricultural commodities or by working for wages.<sup>24</sup> In the conceptual sense, then, missionaries and their converts could not claim ownership over progress, but Christian missions did have big hands in sculpting the meaning of progress, especially as it applied to the agricultural world in which demonstrators worked from the 1920s to the 1960s.

In the first decades of the 1900s, agricultural education had been mostly informal in villages. Boys learned to drive plows by following behind fathers, uncles, and older brothers, whipping and shouting at the oxen by name.<sup>25</sup> Women brought food out to plow teams in November and December. In the most laborious part of the cycle, girls weeded fields alongside older women under the hot January sun, learning the task as they chatted and sang to break the monotony. Increasingly, as more men worked in the mines, some women plowed the family fields. Women also performed all food processing such as threshing, winnowing, and stone grinding grain into flour; and of course, women cooked too. Harvest duties, however, crossed gender boundaries by employing men, women, and children who often worked in

---

<sup>24</sup> Sanders, *Moshoeshoe*, 125-31.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Clement Shata, Ha Makhaola, 13 December 2014; CAR 1926, p.15.

groups based on reciprocal responsibilities. Apart from direct mentoring, adolescent boys and girls learned cultivation, animal husbandry, homemaking, and gathering food and medicine through Sesotho initiation schools. But by 1920 a growing number of Basotho sent their children to mission schools instead, where they studied agriculture among other subjects.<sup>26</sup>

Jobo Moteane taught Christian converts at his mountain mission station at Sehonghong that achieving material prosperity would please God. This manifested in new architectural styles and market enterprise such as wool production. Through their many schools, PEMS had also emphasized literacy since their beginnings in Lesotho, with the primary aim being on reading scripture which missionaries had translated into Sesotho by the 1860s. PEMS did establish an industrial school at Leloaleng in the 1880s where students learned carpentry, stone-cutting, and blacksmithing. But PEMS did little in terms of formal agricultural education.<sup>27</sup> The result of their literary approach to education was that by the 1920s, even in the mountain communities where Moteane proselytized, a small but influential class of educated people had emerged, called *batsoelopele* (the progressive/civilized ones). This group was well positioned to seize opportunities in commerce, agriculture, and politics at the local and national levels. PEMS was the only church in the mountains

---

<sup>26</sup> Casalis, *The Basutos*, 141-46; Ashton, *The Basuto*, 46-50; Mohapi, *Temo ea Boholo*, 13-17; Interview with Marapeli Raselepe, Ha Makhaola, 25 December 2014; Interview with Tšelisio Ramakhula, Maseru, 14 November 2014.

<sup>27</sup> P. Butterfield, "A History of Education in Lesotho," *The Africa Institute*, Pretoria, no. 41(1977): 8-9.

before the Roman Catholic's established Hermitage Mission near Qacha's Nek town in 1921.<sup>28</sup>

The Catholic Church, which today claims the largest Christian following in Lesotho, has been an important educational institution, especially in the mountain areas. French priests from the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) established the first Catholic mission at Roma in 1862. Although the OMI was much slower to Africanize its leadership, the Catholics had asserted a larger presence in the mountains by the 1930s. The Catholic emphasis on vocational skills, including agriculture, as opposed to the more literary education espoused by PEMS, may have gained them more favor with poorer, uneducated highlanders.<sup>29</sup>

The French turned over control of the Lesotho mission to the Canadian OMI in 1930. In 1933, a spirited Quebecois named Joseph Bonhomme became bishop of Lesotho and aggressively expanded Catholic missions in the mountains. Strongly patriarchal in their approach, Catholics provided agricultural education for men and homemaking skills like sewing, cooking, and gardening for women and girls. Bonhomme's initiative was part of a larger program of social action which had been developed in South Africa at Marianhill Mission by Father Bernard Huss.<sup>30</sup> As an educator, Huss engaged the racist political economy by promoting a type of self-help

---

<sup>28</sup> Moteane, reproduced in Ambrose and Brutsch, trans., Part V, *Mehloli* 3, no. 1 (1991): 7; Reginald Dove, *Anglican Pioneers in Lesotho: Some Account of the Diocese of Lesotho, 1876-1930* (Maseru, 1975), 162; Hincks, *Quest for Peace*, 482-90; Epprecht, *This Matter*, 30-33. It is worth noting that the Anglican Church also had a minor presence in the mountains by this time.

<sup>29</sup> Francois Mairot, *Suivez le Guide S'il Vous Plait!: A tous leurs Parents, Amis et Bienfaiteurs En témoignage de Gratitude Pour Cent ans De labeur apostolique, 1862-1962* (Maseru, 1962), 129-32; Hincks, *Quest for Peace*, 482-90. PEMS posted its first Mosotho minister, Moteane at Sehonghong in 1893, whereas the Catholics ordained its first Mosotho priest only in 1931.

<sup>30</sup> Hincks, *Quest for Peace*, 482-90; Epprecht, *This Matter*, 169-78.

in which agriculture formed a central vehicle on the path to social uplift. Huss had taught Africans on mission farms and in rural villages since the 1910s. He wrote books on agriculture, one of them in Sesotho, and he lectured in Basutoland too. In 1926 Huss helped create the Catholic African Union (CAU) to spread the doctrine of social action.<sup>31</sup>

These Christian institutions, and the ideas about progress resonating from their clergies and congregations, informed the perspectives of political leaders who advocated agricultural demonstration as a partial response to regional ecological changes. Following a catastrophic drought in 1919, a South African government commission declared that “deterioration of the veld and soil erosion were national dangers.” Therefore, the state needed to build fences, develop irrigation works, afforest eroded areas, and promote agricultural education and demonstration services.<sup>32</sup> The report included Lesotho, where the Maloti cradled the headwaters of the Orange River, a vital water source for South Africa. South Africa had sought, both before and after Union in 1910, to prepare Basutoland for incorporation into the Union, especially by controlling soil erosion.<sup>33</sup> Small-scale efforts to conserve soil, mostly through tree planting, began when the British appointed Lawrence Wachter, a graduate of the Agricultural College at Wye, England, as Basutoland’s first

---

<sup>31</sup> Mairot, *Suivez le Guide*, 129-32; Hincks, *Quest for Peace*, 491; Epprecht, *This Matter*, 169-78; Francis Schimlek, *Against the Stream: Life of Father Bernard Huss, C.M.M. The Social Apostle of the Bantu* (Durban: Marianhill Mission Press, 1949), 43-49.

<sup>32</sup> DuToit, *South Africa Drought Investigation Commission Report*, 17-20, 29-30; Pim, *Financial and Economic*, 150; Joseph Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007), 159.

<sup>33</sup> Pim, *Financial and Economic*, 150.



agricultural officer in 1911.<sup>34</sup> But the Drought Commission's findings for Lesotho and its recommendations triggered more state interventions in rural areas. Agricultural demonstration formed a key part of this intervention.<sup>35</sup>

Rural agricultural outreach in the British Empire was well established in some territories by the early 1920s, but Lesotho's demonstration programs proceeded differently. Colonial agricultural departments had sent trained officers into rural areas since before 1900 in territories from Borneo to the Gold Coast. But British officers, not local agriculturalists, trekked to villages to lecture peasants in most places until the 1930s. Many colonial officers had trained at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture (ICTA) in Trinidad after it opened in 1922. Some extension officers gained local experience through long careers in one place, while others came and went. Colonial extension officers lectured, mostly through translators, about production techniques based on findings from British research institutions located on several continents. The focus of extension work, then, was to extend the research findings, the basis for scientific agriculture, to people who were supposedly ignorant of such knowledge.<sup>36</sup>

Early British extension efforts aimed to boost cash crop production such as cocoa and cotton in West Africa, but by the 1920s these programs shifted to incorporate, at least to some extent, farmers' needs and food production. Perhaps

---

<sup>34</sup> LNA, S3/10/5/53, HC, South Africa to RC of Basutoland, 12 October 1911; CAR 1911-1912, p.6; "Maseru Murmurings," *Basutoland News*, 11 December 1945; A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, *A Biographical Dictionary of the British Colonial Service 1939-1966* (London: Zell Publishers, 1991), 369.

<sup>35</sup> CAR 1922, pp. 10-11.

<sup>36</sup> See George Masefield, *A History of the Colonial Agricultural Service* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 90-97; Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 61-71.

Lesotho's experience differed, in part, because of its proximity to European farming communities in South Africa and because of its relatively small potential for commodity production (wool and wheat). Lesotho's agricultural priorities and the program's use of African demonstrators from its inception set it apart from many tropical British territories. Basutoland was situated outside of the tropics where much of the Empire's tropical-centric research held less empirical weight. Also, the structure of the Basutoland government, where the chiefs still held substantial political authority and the territory was administered by the high commission, and technically a protectorate not a colony, gave the resident commissioner pause at investing in any form of agricultural research. It was not until the 1950s that the colonial administration of Lesotho invested substantially in agricultural research which included a college and experiment station. In part, this accounts for the word demonstration having been used more often than extension.<sup>37</sup>

While the Union of South Africa government and its British partners in the Basutoland colonial administration urged conservation work and agrarian reform for their own purposes, Basotho political leaders asserted themselves too. The national council's (BNC) powers were limited, but its members had advocated, with some dissent, for state support of agriculture, soil conservation, and education.<sup>38</sup> By 1924, the BNC had already become an important forum for discussing environmental interventions in Lesotho.<sup>39</sup> The BNC was not alone. Members of the

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> For example, TNA, CO 646, BNC Sessional Papers, 1916, pp. 11-16.

<sup>39</sup> LNA, S3/1/6, BNC discussion on dipping, 1909; CAR 1924, pp.11-13; CAR 1930, p. 10.

Progressive Association (BPA), several of whom served in the BNC, argued that improving smallholder agriculture through formal education could alleviate poverty.<sup>40</sup> Scientific knowledge, in the words of one Mosotho progressive, “could blaze a trail out of poverty” if applied appropriately to a modest resource base. Backing this view, BPA member Labane Chokobane spoke at a large public meeting in 1924 to insist on agricultural education, including rural outreach.<sup>41</sup>

The social and political philosophy of the BPA, with its language of progressivism, had important transatlantic dimensions. The links between southern Africa and the southern United States with respect to progress, racial uplift, and industrial and agricultural education have yet to be fully explored.<sup>42</sup> My comments here are suggestive and aim to open up new questions about these links. Booker T. Washington of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama espoused the notion that improved knowledge of industry, home economics, and agriculture could deliver southern black people from poverty. When George Washington Carver arrived at Tuskegee in 1896 to develop the school’s agricultural department, he sought to transform black sharecroppers into a self-sufficient yeomanry by imparting agro-ecological knowledge about soils, manures, and crop varieties. This transformation,

---

<sup>40</sup> MMA, Constitution of the BPA, 28 November 1907.

<sup>41</sup> “Tsela ea ho Balehela Bofuma,” *Naleli Ea Lesotho*, 20 June 1924; “L.F. Chokobane,” *Naledi Ea Lesotho*, 11 July 1924; CAR 1922-23, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> For exceptions, see Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, The German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Robert Vinson, *The Americans are Coming!: Dreams of African American Liberation in Segregationist South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012).

Carver believed, could improve the lives of black farmers even in the face of white supremacy and consequent land dispossession.<sup>43</sup>

To bring this knowledge to black farmers, Carver developed a “farmer’s college on wheels.” The Jesup Agricultural Wagon, named after its sponsor, Morris Jesup of New York, became the physical manifestation of the Negro Cooperative Demonstration Service in the early 1900s. The mule-drawn wagon carried a one-horse plow and harrow, garden tools, and a butter churn. Thomas Campbell, the first black demonstrator in the US Department of Agriculture and among the first to operate the wagon in 1906, recalled that many things were inappropriate for the poorest farmers, most of who sharecropped on white-owned cotton lands, and had little choice in what crops they sowed. The butter churn, for example, found little use because so few people owned cows. Furthermore, as Karen Ferguson has pointed out, to create an independent yeomanry through self-sufficiency in a region where white prosperity depended on cotton monoculture and the subjugation of black labor was subversive, and often brought harsh reprisals from the planter class.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, Carver’s demonstration model did not directly address the social and political problems that kept black farmers’ in poverty. But as the historian Mark Hersey has shown, in the early 1900s Carver did develop elaborate systems of low-tech knowledge for – what we might call today – sustainable agriculture.<sup>45</sup> In

---

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Ferguson, “Caught in No Man’s Land,” 42-43; Hersey, *My Work is That of Conservation*, 144-45.

<sup>44</sup> Ferguson, “Caught in No Man’s Land,” 48.

<sup>45</sup> Hersey, *My Work is That of Conservation*, 218.

addition to the actual knowledge, Carver's approach to rural demonstration was an innovation that was taken up far from Alabama.<sup>46</sup>

Evidence suggests that this demonstration model traveled to South Africa, though not exclusively, with the Baptist missionary James East. East had grown up in rural Alabama as the son of former slaves and may have learned directly from Tuskegee's movable school. Accompanied by his wife, he arrived at Middledrift, South Africa in 1909. He expressed frustration at racial inequality, especially the inadequate farmland in the reserves, but like his missionary colleagues he also felt great dismay that "the natives did not seem to possess even the most elementary knowledge of farming or homemaking."<sup>47</sup>

In tandem with his preaching, East carried implements into rural areas by wagon to conduct impromptu demonstrations on, for example, how to plow with horses. His wife would accompany him, teaching rural women about horticulture, vegetable and fruit canning, nutrition and cooking. He eventually linked up with the newly established Fort Hare Native College in 1918 to create an agricultural training program along with a local farmers association. At Fort Hare, East collaborated with D.D.T Jabavu, the son of a prominent African newspaper editor. Jabavu had recently visited Tuskegee to study their agricultural curriculum for possible use in South

---

<sup>46</sup> See B. D. Mayberry, "The Tuskegee Movable School: A Unique Contribution to National and International Agriculture and Rural Development," *Agricultural History* 65, no. 2 (1991): 85-104.

<sup>47</sup> "Excerpts from Brief Report of Conditions and Work of Rev. J.E. East and Wife, Missionaries to Middledrift, S. Africa," *Mission Herald* 26 (1923): 17-21.

Africa.<sup>48</sup> In 1918 the South African Department of Agriculture hired James East as the first government demonstrator in the Ciskei Territories. By East's own account, he was an "agricultural missionary," and evidence suggests that people generally welcomed him, despite his blindness to local farming practices, particularly the centrality of cattle.<sup>49</sup> In contrast to the two Tuskegee men who had traveled to Togo in 1902 under German auspices to help Africans 'improve' commercial cotton production, at the expense of growing food, East was most concerned with food. "The only way I can meet our Lord's injunction 'Give ye them to eat,'" he reported from the field, was "to show them how to plow so as to get food."<sup>50</sup>

While Basutoland's resident commissioner Edward Garraway (1917-1926) generally embraced the prospect of demonstration work and its potential for transforming Lesotho's agriculture, he favored a balanced budget above other priorities. The meager agricultural purse in the 1920s was derived primarily from a hut tax and the wool export duty, which went mostly to fund the campaign to eradicate sheep scab. But the colonial agricultural officer Laurie Wachter, with support from the BNC, pushed hard for the program. Wachter had toured

---

<sup>48</sup> Farieda Khan, "Rewriting South Africa's Conservation History—The Role of the Native Farmers Association," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 4 (1994): 499-516.

<sup>49</sup> "Rev. J.E. East Appointed," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 12 November 1918; Paul Germond, "Note on the Development of the Farm and Agricultural Courses at Fort Hare," in Alexander Kerr, *Fort Hare 1915-48: The Evolution of an African College* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1968), 265-70; Vinson, *The Americans are Coming*, 29-31.

<sup>50</sup> Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*, 144-45; James East, "From the Field," *Missionary Herald*, January 1920.

agricultural colleges and observed demonstration work in the Transkei and Ciskei in March 1924, and from this experience, he devised his plan for the program.<sup>51</sup>

At Tsolo Agricultural College Wachter saw Afrikaner cattle and thoroughbred stallions grazing on 3400 acres of pasture. Maize, groundnuts, and sorghum covered another 250 acres. Students received three days of lectures and three days of practical work every week. The faculty aimed to “teach natives to be better farmers on their own land” and to train demonstrators for government work in rural areas. He was particularly impressed after his visit to Fort Hare, where James East had worked recently. Wachter applauded the rigorous agricultural curriculum in which students spent the last year in practical work by growing beans, maize, and potatoes. He also applauded Fort Hare’s mission for rural demonstration.<sup>52</sup> Wachter returned to Basutoland and wrote a report of his tour to share with the BNC.<sup>53</sup>

It is important to note that Basotho leaders had long been interested in industrial education modeled, at least in part, after Tuskegee. In 1898, Paramount Chief Lerotholi had initiated the establishment of an industrial school in Maseru. The school finally opened its doors to its first thirty students in 1906. Students took two year courses in carpentry, stone cutting, or blacksmithing.<sup>54</sup> Oswin Bull, a principal of the school in the 1930s, but then employed in South Africa’s native

---

<sup>51</sup> LNA, S3/1/1/6, GS to PEMS Chairman, 4 October 1923; Transkei Magistrate to Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria, 3 January 1923.

<sup>52</sup> LNA, S3/1/1/6, Wachter to Basutoland GS, 24 January 1924; Wachter to GS, 7 April 1924.

<sup>53</sup> LNA, S3/1/1/6, Wachter to GS, 6 June 1924; PC Griffith Lerotholi to GS, 18 August 1924.

<sup>54</sup> CAR 1905-06, pp. 61-64.

education system, visited Lesotho in 1910 to advise the government. Bull had toured black colleges in Canada and the American South in 1905-1907, and then again in 1935 under the auspices of a Carnegie Visitor's Grant. Echoing the Tuskegee philosophy, Bull believed in industrial and agricultural education as a means for racial progress and he undoubtedly shared his findings from his tours with his colleagues in Basutoland.<sup>55</sup>

Following Wachter's recommendations, in late 1924 the resident commissioner granted a small budget to start the program, barely enough to hire the first demonstrators. The BNC insisted that qualified Basotho be hired as soon as they could be trained. Councilors recognized that farmers were more likely to respect men who understood the cultural, ecological, and social experience of farming in Lesotho in addition to what they learned at the colleges.<sup>56</sup> Edwin Moletsane, a recent graduate of Tsolo and originally from Thaba Nchu (just outside of Lesotho), began work at Roma, Lesotho in September 1924 as the territory's first demonstrator. Brimming with excitement, Moletsane highlighted his Sesotho language as his most valuable skill because by "explaining the work to people in their mother tongue they understand it quicker." In January 1925 there were three demonstrators stationed in Lesotho, a modest start which reflected the shoestring budget. But in 1960, at the height of the agricultural department's drive to improve

---

<sup>55</sup> Oswin Bull, *Training Africans for Trades: A Report on a visit to North America Under the Auspices of the Carnegie Corporation* (Pretoria: The Carnegie Visitor's Grants Committee, 1935). This industrial school still operates today as Lerotholi Polytechnic.

<sup>56</sup> CAR 1924, p. 13; "Improved Farming," *Mochochonono*, 23 February 1927; *Litaba Tsa Lekhotla*, 1925, pp. 42-50.



Lesotho's agriculture, forty-three Basotho demonstrators worked across nine districts with help from 205 assistant demonstrators.<sup>57</sup>

### **4.3 - Priorities and Approaches in Demonstration Work**

As a new recruit in 1952 Mokhafisi Kena had learned from prior generations of demonstrators who used different approaches in their work. An important mentor was Elias Magadlela, a native of Qacha's Nek and the district's first demonstrator in 1926. In Magadlela's time, there was just one demonstrator per district. Methods resembled the older institute model from the Transkei, in which demonstrators delivered large lectures to farmers from bases at administrative centers, missions, or large villages rather than working in smaller settlements. Demonstrators recorded how many lectures they gave and to how many people in order to calculate the program's success. At these bases, demonstrators also cultivated plots to show new methods.<sup>58</sup>

In the first decades of the program, the Department of Agriculture emphasized low-tech cultural changes as a means to enhance market production, but also to diversify household food supplies given the local ecological and political contexts. For example, Magadlela began work in 1926, when crops suffered from

---

<sup>57</sup> CAR 1924, p. 13; LNA S3/1/1/6, Edwin Moletsane to GS, 4 October 1924; Wachter to GS, 25 November 1927; RDA 1960, pp. 113-14.

<sup>58</sup> For example, in 1936 Magadlela delivered three large lectures to a total of 305 attendees. RDA 1936, pp. 11-13; Interview with Kena, 23 January 2015; Tischler, "Education and the Agrarian Question," 268.

cutworm, drought, and frost damage.<sup>59</sup> Magadlela and his colleagues explained that cutworm could be controlled by plowing winter soil to kill the larvae by exposing them directly to frost.<sup>60</sup>

In conjunction with new cropping strategies, demonstrators attempted to show farmers the benefits of a husbandry based on animals, trees, soils, and manure. To be sure, this body of knowledge overlapped with older practices in many ways. Strict proponents believed that it was the new practices that could produce stronger crops while preserving soil fertility and stability. Not unlike Carver's emphasis on soil in early 1900s Alabama, this program was largely based on agro-ecological knowledge yet few people could afford to adopt it.<sup>61</sup> Life in the mountains required plentiful heating and cooking fuel, especially in the winter. With few trees, people had historically dried cattle dung for fuel. By afforesting the grassland, so the logic went, people would eventually use firewood exclusively, which would free up manure for use in household gardens and in fields. People also used dung to build and insulate houses. For some, manuring fields simply required too much labor. For others, they owned no cattle, so they typically gathered that which was left around the village.<sup>62</sup>

If few Basotho readily adopted manuring as a basic practice, more people embraced vegetable gardens. In fact, gardening initiatives remained a popular part

---

<sup>59</sup> LNA, S3/1/1/6, Wachter to GS, 25 November 1927; CAR 1926, pp. 7, 13.

<sup>60</sup> Lawrence Wachter, "Advice on Wheat Growing and Winter Ploughing," *Naledi ea Lesotho*, 9 April 1926; Sechefo, *Customs and Superstitions*, 34.

<sup>61</sup> Hersey, *My Work is That of Conservation*, 195.

<sup>62</sup> Sayce, "Ethno-Geographical," 270-73.

of demonstration services throughout the program. As Kena did in 1952, his predecessors too, taught people how to construct garden spaces with peach trees framing plots of cabbage, spinach, carrots, and other vegetables. Whereas home gardens were unknown in the early 1920s, in 1936 three demonstrators supervised 110 household and school gardens across Qacha's Nek, up 40% from the previous year.<sup>63</sup> By 1961, Basutoland government surveys found 21,000 home gardens spread across the territory. Communal gardens also became popular through demonstrators' efforts. These were plots operated cooperatively by between ten and thirty women to share materials, tools, seeds, and knowledge. Qacha's Nek, for its part, reported 104 communal gardens in 1961, more than any other district. Today, household gardens are a standard part of the village landscape, the style and elaboration of each one reflects the varied knowledge and capabilities of its owners (See Figure 4.1). Certainly, the efforts of non-government groups contributed to the growth of home gardens too, especially for those living around mission stations.<sup>64</sup>

Gardens, however, were not universally embraced because they conflicted with parts of the Sesotho land tenure system. During summer months most livestock lived at mountain grazing posts. But in the winter and early spring animals roamed about, grazing in and around the village on local grass and field silage. Animals also devoured unfenced gardens and tree saplings. Demonstrators also

---

<sup>63</sup> Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 78-79; RDA 1936, p. 25.

<sup>64</sup> RDA 1961, p.18. My observations on gardens are based on fieldwork and numerous interviews.



**Figure 4.1**

Home Garden, Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek  
Photo by author, December 2014

encouraged winter crops such as peas and wheat, which, at first, fit uneasily into local land laws. When people finished the traditional harvest of maize, beans, and sorghum in late autumn, the chief announced that all fields were open to common grazing until plowing the following spring. Those who planted winter crops or cultivated gardens often found themselves in conflict with stockowners who expected to graze their animals on winter fields for the remaining silage. In 1947 the BNC debated the matter, and eventually passed a law making the gardener responsible for adequate fencing. As for the winter crops, stockowners were required to keep their animals away.<sup>65</sup> The BNC debates on these matters show that

---

<sup>65</sup> *BNC, 43<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1947, Vol. 2, 546-48; BNC, 48<sup>th</sup> Session, 1952, Vol. 2, pp. 559-63.*

while livestock rearing remained important, officials and villagers alike validated new practices, and new calendars for using village and field spaces.<sup>66</sup>

Although demonstrators circulated knowledge of low-tech cultural methods, new technological and biological resources, commercial fertilizers and market production did feature in the early years of demonstration work. As early as the mid-1920s the Department of Agriculture, working mostly through traders, sold imported seed varieties to farmers. It was the demonstrators' job to explain to farmers how to select and sow, for example, drought resistant maize seed like Wisconsin Dent. The department also promoted North American wheat varieties. In an experiment in Maseru district in 1926, a demonstrator planted one-half acre in potatoes, to which he gave "a liberal dressing of kraal manure, and 200 lbs. of superphosphates." Perhaps owing to local ecology, or to human error, the crop became infected with eel worm and the experiment failed.<sup>67</sup> If early demonstrators urged people to plant diverse crops and to rotate them, they also promoted wool production which complicated local land use systems further. The department had placed merino stud rams at district administrative camps since the early 1900s to service as many ewes as possible for a small fee per animal. Sheep scab, too, continued to infect flocks in the late 1920s, as it had since it was first detected in

---

<sup>66</sup> Sayce, "Ethno-Geographical Essay," 270-73; Staples and Hudson, *Ecological Survey*, 22-30.

<sup>67</sup> LNA, S3/1/1/6, Wacher to GS, 25 November 1927.

1903. Demonstrators worked with veterinary staff to enforce government regulations for both sheep dipping and breeding programs (See Chap. 6).<sup>68</sup>

Like with the effort to eliminate fat-tail sheep, most farmers could not afford to meet the technical and economic demands of progressive agriculture even in this early phase. Intensive plowing in the winter, for wheat or to combat cutworm, proved difficult because many male household heads worked in South Africa for most of the year. From the 1920s into the 1960s absentee rates from migrant labor were high. In any village in Lesotho, on any given day, 40-50% of men were working in South Africa. Nor was it simply a problem of human muscle. In winter months, some oxen would be too weak to break the crusty soil to destroy cutworm.<sup>69</sup>

As was the case with the stud ram services, improved seeds cost money. The same was true of phosphate fertilizers recommended for optimal yields of hybrid seeds like Wisconsin Dent.<sup>70</sup> Government census figures, drawn from traders' reports, showed increased sales of harrows, planters, plows, and fertilizers as evidence of progress in demonstration work. Agrarian planners, however, never addressed the economic reasons why so few Basotho purchased them. Mining, the main wage employment for prospective buyers of these items, paid an average of £3 per thirty shifts in 1936, a pittance that prevented most families from purchasing

---

<sup>68</sup> CAR 1906-07, p. 57; CAR 1926, p. 13; "Report of BNC Proceedings for 1926," *Leselinyana*, 3 December 1926.

<sup>69</sup> By 1936, 25% of all males in Qacha's Nek worked in South Africa, 40% in 1956. *Basutoland Census for 1936*, 5; *Basutoland Census for 1956*, 74; Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 83-87.

<sup>70</sup> LNA, S3/1/1/6, Wachter to GS, 25 November 1927; CAR 1929, p. 10; See also, James McCann, *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with a New World Crop, 1500-2000* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 110-11.

these progressive tools. Given this predicament, people short on animals, land, or equipment viewed demonstrators' work skeptically when they promoted implements, seed, or fertilizers, or sought to eliminate fat-tail sheep.<sup>71</sup>

Shifts in agricultural policy and demonstration services came from an intersection of ecological change, transnational scientific trends, and colonial politics. In 1932-33, a severe drought desiccated crops, killed stock, and dried up springs. Many people starved.<sup>72</sup> In subsequent government reports, colonial economists and ecologists argued that soil erosion posed the greatest threat to Lesotho's people and environment. In a broader context, world economic depression and the American Dustbowl stimulated international research on erosion, spawning engineering works to mitigate it.<sup>73</sup> For the British and South African governments, erosion formed the primary obstacle to economic development in Basutoland, as well as in African reserves and overseas colonies. With new financial support from a British grant in 1936, the Basutoland government established a soil erosion office whose agenda shaped agricultural policy until independence in 1966. The office had its own staff who, with legions of

---

<sup>71</sup> CAR 1936, p. 22; Interview with Mochinti Jane, 18 May 2015; Mokhafisi Kena, 7 January 2015.

<sup>72</sup> CAR 1933, pp. 34-37.

<sup>73</sup> Pim, *Financial and Economic*, 140-43; David Anderson, "Depression, Dust Bowl, Demography and Drought: the colonial state and soil conservation in East Africa during the 1930s," *African Affairs* 83, no. 332 (1984): 321-43.

Basotho laborers, constructed the contour furrows and grass strips that mark the landscape today.<sup>74</sup>

But government bureaucrats, soil experts, and laborers did not act alone. Demonstrators played a significant role in these conservation schemes by continuing to encourage cultural and technical changes such as plowing on the contour, as opposed to plowing up and down the slope, which had been a common-labor saving technique. In this practice, oxen would pull the plow down slope, taking advantage of gravity, and then drag the plow back up to start the next furrow. For people who could afford new implements, and who had to work with steep fields, demonstrators taught how to use new plows with reversible shares that were designed to push soil to the low side of each furrow regardless of which direction the team was plowing along the contour. Demonstrators also urged rotational grazing, manuring, gardening, and tree planting.<sup>75</sup> This body of knowledge, although far from impeccable, aimed to preserve soil fertility and stability.

Despite relatively poor funding, the demonstrators continued to work in the shadow of the engineering component of the anti-erosion campaign by interacting with land-users in various capacities. In addition to their work of transferring knowledge, demonstrators worked along with district and national agricultural officers to police farming practices. For instance, they inspected illegal plowing of

---

<sup>74</sup> TNA, DO 35/1187, Colonial Development Fund, Application for Grant, 16 May 1946; RDA 1938, pp. 62-70; RDA 1946, pp. 24-27; RDA 1955, pp. 22-24; RDA 1962, pp. 36-40; Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, 177-84.

<sup>75</sup> RDA 1936, pp. 11-14; RDA 1950, p. 7; Mokhabi Lesoli, 13 January 2015; Mokhafisi Kena, 23 January 2015; Tseliso Ramakhula, 14 November 2014.



virgin lands (*thite*) on steep slopes and reprimanded people for not maintaining conservation structures. These policing actions, to be explained further in chapters five and six, drew some rebukes from farmers. But demonstrators also worked with commoners and chiefs to improve food production and conserve ecological resources in new ways.<sup>76</sup>

Just as the content of demonstrators' work changed, so too did the ways they attempted to transfer this knowledge. In 1946, the Basutoland government obtained another grant from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund (CDWF) to advance a ten year development plan in which agricultural improvement was central. Apart from the continuance of the soil conservation schemes, investment in technology like tractors and irrigation equipment was still minimal. Instead, funds went to support small experiment stations for testing new crop varieties and to expand demonstration work via new approaches. By 1950, the Department of Agriculture had concluded that calling large groups together based on a chief's order included a "high percentage of unwilling listeners," and that smaller focus groups might yield better results.<sup>77</sup> Like Kena's visit to Mashai in 1952, demonstrators used introductory meetings to seek out men with certain knowledge to help share progressive methods with their neighbors while showcasing their work on demonstration plots. Selected farmers cultivated "check plots" beside a plot worked by the demonstrator. The owner of the check plot might, for example, employ

---

<sup>76</sup> National University of Lesotho Archives (Hereafter NUL), Leribe Collection (LC) Box 37/1, Folder 1037, Chief of Leribe to GS, November 1954; Chief Joang Molapo to DC, October 1957; Tseliso Ramakhula, 14 November 2014.

<sup>77</sup> RDA 1950, p. 7; RDA 1955, pp. 26-27.

broadcast planting versus row planting and fertilizing with manure and phosphates.<sup>78</sup>

Kena spoke of one instance where farmers prepared maize seeds for sowing by mixing them with soil that had come from the grave of Father Gerard, the founding Catholic missionary in Lesotho. Farmers had commonly mixed seeds with various herbs or earth to protect them from evil spirits and pests. This instance, of what Basotho and colonials typically referred to as doctoring, made for an interesting blend of older beliefs with a special reverence for the Catholic patriarch.<sup>79</sup> In the end, farmers and demonstrators would measure the harvests in terms of quality and weight to prove the efficacy of the new techniques. Results varied of course, but farmers, at least those included in the process, were generally impressed with the benefits of the new techniques and inputs. The objective here was clear: to demonstrate, or show people how things could be done. In Sesotho, the term for demonstrator is *mosupisi oa temo*, literally, one who shows agriculture. *Mosupisi* comes from the verb *ho supisa* meaning to show to, or to point to. As the program progressed, more emphasis was placed on showing rather than telling.<sup>80</sup>

Whether showing or telling, the outcomes of demonstration work depended heavily on who each demonstrator was in relation to the communities in which he worked. His family, his education and experience, and his politics all mattered. Born in 1925, Mokhafisi Kena grew up at Makhaola village, just a single day's horse trek

---

<sup>78</sup> RDA 1946, p. 10; RDA 1951, pp. 8-10; RDA 1959, pp. 16-17.

<sup>79</sup> Mokhafisi Kena, 7 January 2015; Mohapi, *Temo ea Boholo*, 19-22.

<sup>80</sup> RDA 1946, p. 10; RDA 1951, pp. 8-10; RDA 1959, pp. 16-17; Interview with Marapeli Raselepe, 25 December 2014.

south of Mashai, where he met his wife. He attended a local school at the Tsoelike Evangelical Mission (PEMS) while tending his father's livestock on weekends, living with the animals at mountain posts during summer months. His father enjoyed a close relationship with Chief Makhaola Lerotholi, the popular district chief who had advocated on behalf of agricultural demonstration until his death in 1932. In addition to enjoying some of the most fertile field allocations in the village, the elder Kena worked as a tax collector, which was a paid position supervised by chiefs under the system of indirect rule. When the younger Kena turned seventeen he enlisted in the army and served with the Pioneer Corps, landing in Sicily with the Allies in 1943. This experience, he recalls, endowed him with powerful social capital that earned him respect beyond his young age when he returned home.<sup>81</sup>

In 1950 Kena accepted a government bursary to attend Fort Cox Agricultural College in South Africa. Fort Cox had opened in 1930 in the Ciskei Territory to supplement existing colleges. Built specifically to train Africans, Fort Cox trained agriculturalists for farming and demonstration work in South Africa, Lesotho, and elsewhere in Africa. For two years Kena trained in practical agriculture alongside other students from as far away as Kenya. The curriculum included courses in what he considered the foundations of scientific, progressive agriculture of the time: field

---

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Mokhafisi Kena, Ha Makhaola, 24 September 2008; See also Brian Gray, *Basuto Soldiers in Hitler's War* (Moriya: Morija Printing, 1953).

and animal husbandry, soil conservation, horticulture, sheep and wool, bookkeeping, and veterinary science.<sup>82</sup>

Just two years after the National Party had initiated Apartheid in South Africa, politics was pervasive at Fort Cox. Afrikaner lecturers taught in English, and according to Kena teacher-student relations were cordial and productive. But for Kena and many other Fort Cox students, this was their first exposure to the work of the African National Congress (ANC). Kena attended political meetings at nearby Fort Hare College. Some students, Kena recalls, questioned their instructors' legitimacy as a form of protest. While some activists saw the agricultural colleges and the associated demonstration programs as institutional tools for fixing Africans as rural people, and as a subordinate laboring class, others like Kena saw progressive agriculture as a potential vehicle for upward mobility through self-sufficiency. Similar to the ideologies of Booker T. Washington and Carver at Tuskegee, and James East and Bernard Huss too, Kena thought that self-sufficiency could also foster political power. He believed that for men willing to engage progressive ideas, small-scale commercial farming offered an alternative to mine labor, and could thus undermine the colonial political economy that many scholars argue marginalized Lesotho as a labor reserve.<sup>83</sup> Kena, who became a founding member of the Lesotho Communist Party after 1963, credits his Fort Cox years for enlightening him both politically and agriculturally. Even today, he remains

---

<sup>82</sup> SAB, NTS 7329, Fort Cox Principal to Secretary of Native Education, 12 January 1948; Native Commissioner to HC, 30 March 1943; Mokhafisi Kena, 7 January 2015.

<sup>83</sup> See Murray, *Families Divided*; Bundy, *The Rise and Fall*.

steadfast that modernizing agriculture with technology and knowledge can foster radical political change. Kena received his first-class diploma in 1951, capping an experience that he says showed him that “professional farming could be profitable, yielding more food and money if done properly, even in the mountains.”<sup>84</sup>

The Basutoland Department of Agriculture hired Kena immediately, posting him at Sehonghong, not far from Mashai. Villagers at Mashai, according to Kena, were impressed with him as a local WW II veteran. He spoke in a familiar Sesotho accent. They knew his family roots and his connections to the house of the late district Chief Makhaola. He was a fellow *molele*, and more or less, a child of their place.<sup>85</sup> But despite Kena’s charisma, and his efforts to bridge local and global worlds by drawing on his education and experiences, he also acknowledged that his work failed to reach those that might benefit the most.<sup>86</sup>

Kena worked within a rural social order defined by gender, age, work experience, birthplace, and education. The old man who contested Kena at the meeting addressed the nutrition issue on his own terms. Challenging the young demonstrator, he reminded Kena that animal husbandry and eating meat had deep cultural roots. From the man’s perspective, these roots had been dislodged in a colonial political economy where stock ownership became more unequal, and where the government had prioritized wool-producing rather than mutton-producing

---

<sup>84</sup> SAB, NTS 7347, Final report for Jimmy Kulla, 21 June 1950; Chief Native Com. to Sec. of Native Affairs, 15 May 1949; 154/327, Short Course for Women, June 1940; Diploma Students, December 1952; Mokhafisi Kena, 7 January 2015; Interview with Tseliso Ramakhula, 14 November 2014.

<sup>85</sup> Chief Makhaola died in 1932 and was replaced by his son Theko Makhaola.

<sup>86</sup> Mokhafisi Kena, 7 January 2015.

sheep. Kena's points about accumulating cattle and about children not eating eggs posed important questions, but in this context, they probably sounded condescending. Perhaps more importantly, the man wanted his social rank recognized, especially in a public space like the chief's courtyard. Age and social standing in the village context mattered greatly in demonstration work. This story strongly suggests that in 1952 – as in earlier and later periods – farmers wanted their own knowledge validated before considering new ideas. Kena's veteran status, local origins, and education only endowed him with so much authority over knowledge and people.<sup>87</sup>

#### **4.4 – Participants and Pathways in Knowledge Circulation**

Seleso Tsoako was born in the remote Lesobeng area of Qacha's Nek in 1919. Tsoako grew up there tending his grandfather's sheep, but eventually moved closer to the district capital when his father became ill. He attended school there, eventually becoming a primary school teacher himself and a devoted Catholic. Like many people in the district, he speaks fondly of Catholic education, especially the

---

<sup>87</sup> Basotho men had historically held military service in high regard as they did the common experience of male migration to and from South Africa. See, for example, David Coplan, *In the Time of Cannibals, The Word Music of South Africa's Basotho Migrants* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Canadian duo of Father Jean-Baptiste Rousseau and his brother Paul who lived and worked at the nearby St. Francis Mission from the 1940s into the 1980s.<sup>88</sup>

Tsoako had contributed to the Church's growth as both teacher and student. He says that his gardens, animals, and fields gave him all he needed. He never had to buy food until he lost most of his sight a few years ago. He attended many demonstrations throughout the district in the 1950s and 60s, sometimes taking his primary school students with him. At one such demonstration he recalled that the audience quickly became frustrated with a young demonstrator from Semongkong (outside of Qacha's Nek) who used technical English terms like crop rotation and leguminous within his Sesotho explanations.<sup>89</sup>

Being a teacher, and fluent in Sesotho and English, Tsoako prompted the demonstrator to repeat and explain in basic Sesotho. Nonetheless, many people sat confused or strolled off back home. This suggests that for many people present that day, access to this knowledge was limited. The demonstrator's credibility began on a low note because he was young and from outside the area. He then exacerbated the problem by using technically specific, sometimes foreign language. Language, as in all colonial interactions, created a filter through which knowledge flowed, sometimes very slowly or not at all. Technical terms were translated into Sesotho, but the literal translation took many years of use before it conveyed the intended meaning. For example, crop rotation became *phetolo ea lijalo*, literally, change of

---

<sup>88</sup> *Basutoland Census for 1956*, 99; Interview with Seleso Tsoako, 19 January 2015; Interview with George Mohlapiso, 29 May 2015; Interview with Father Clement Motloapa, St. Francis, 20 January 2015; Epprecht, *This Matter*, 180-82.

<sup>89</sup> Seleso Tsoako, 19 January 2015.

crops. Some people had rotated what they planted in their three fields, especially maize, sorghum, and wheat for many years. But this term could carry any number of meanings when heard for the first time.<sup>90</sup> For his part, Tsoako tapped his own educational background and linguistic abilities to learn about legumes, nitrogen fixing, and crop rotation—knowledge which he applied in his productive activities until recently. Ntate Tsoako remembers explaining things to his students on their trek back home. Now ninety-five years old, Tsoako lives modestly from a pension and by selling fresh eggs to neighbors. In concluding our interview, we shared some boiled eggs as he lamented the lack of what he called *tsoelopele*, progress.<sup>91</sup>

The 1960 Basutoland agricultural census defined a progressive farmer as someone willing “to improve himself” and possessing “sufficient land, livestock, labour and implements to farm properly.”<sup>92</sup> From the mid-1950s, demonstrators focused their energies on the people who met these criteria. By 1960 many Basotho had no land, no livestock, or for the poorest, no stock or land. In the 1920s nearly all married men owned fields in their villages of residence, but this had changed by the 1950s for several reasons. First, as more people migrated to the mountains, chiefs in villages with little arable land welcomed new settlers to build homes, but could not offer fields. Second, a localized migration was occurring as people moved to villages

---

<sup>90</sup> On language and translation in colonial contexts, see Diana Jeater, *Law, Language, and Science: The Invention of the “Native Mind” in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1930* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2007), 6-10; On Sesotho agricultural terms, see M. Sharpe, *Everyday Sesotho Grammar* (Moriya: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1970), 119.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Tsoako, 19 January 2015.

<sup>92</sup> Clifford Morojele, *1960 Agricultural Census of Basutoland: Part I, Census Methodology* (Maseru: Government Printers, 1963), 16.



that were closer to the growing infrastructure of roads, schools, mission stations, mine recruiting centers, and traders. During this process, a chief might offer a new arrival a residential building site but no fields.<sup>93</sup>

Lastly, some families accumulated fields across generations despite that under Sesotho custom and under the Laws of Lerotholi, chiefs had the responsibility to reallocate fields from wealthier to poorer residents. But chiefs seem to have been reluctant to enact this authority. Accumulation was especially true of families who were among the original settlers of a particular village. Widows, for their part, retained access to their late husbands' fields. But a son often worked his mother's fields and became *de facto* owner of his deceased father's fields, while remaining eligible for his own allocation upon marriage.<sup>94</sup>

From an ecological perspective, not all fields in the Maloti were created equal in terms of soil, drainage, and slope. The older families typically had the more fertile fields, and by the 1950s, more of them. In Makhaola village, for example, the area known locally as *sekoting* (the hollow) contains dark, well drained soils with northern exposure to the sun, characteristics that local farmers identify as desirable in an area dominated by lighter, sandier soils (See Figure 4.2). Farmers, however, needed to maintain soil fertility over time, which necessitated applications of specific knowledge and adequate access to labor. Micro-environments like *sekoting*

---

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Maletapata Makhaola, Ha Makhaola, 8 December 2014; Interview with Mapoloko Ramatseka, Ha Makhaola, 2 June 2015; See also Thabane, "Who Owns the Land in Lesotho?," 15-17.

<sup>94</sup> Duncan, *Sotho Laws and Customs*, 117; Interview with Manti Sekoala, 28 May 2015; *BNC, 53<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1958, Vol. 1*, 195.

dotted the mountain landscape of Lesotho.<sup>95</sup> Concentration of quality fields has played an important, yet understudied role in creating rural social differentiation. Not only could this material base yield better produce, it also provided an advantage for villagers across generations to acquire farming knowledge when field ownership became a prerequisite for achieving progressive farmer status in the eyes of the agricultural department: a designation which carried privileges (See Chap. 6).<sup>96</sup>



**Figure 4.2**

Sekoting, Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek  
Photo by author, November 11, 2015

By the mid-1950s, the Department of Agriculture had begun several mechanization projects in the lowlands where tractors played a central role. This

---

<sup>95</sup> Clement Shata, 13 December 2014; See Gerard Schmitz and Firouz Rooyani, *Lesotho: Geology, Geomorphology, Soils* (Moriya: National University of Lesotho, 1987), 47-55; Mabille and Dieterlen, *Southern Sotho*, 188.

<sup>96</sup> For example, Andrew Spiegel, "Changing Patterns of Migrant Labour and Rural Differentiation in Lesotho," *Social Dynamics* 6, no. 2 (1980): 1-13; David Turkon, "Social Differentiation in a Culturally Homogenous Setting: Changes in Sociocultural Institutions and Conceptions of Self and Other in Mokhotlong, Lesotho," PhD diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 1996.

was not so in the mountains. Demonstrators working in the Maloti did, however, encourage farmers to purchase, borrow, and share new ox-drawn implements to improve yields and to enhance one's professional and social status. Although many farmers owned plows, few people owned other implements such as harrows, cultivators, and planters like the one advertised in a 1949 Sesotho language newspaper (See Figure 4.3). For all but a few, planters like this one were out of



**Figure 4.3**

“You can plant all of your crops with this planter – maize, beans, monkey fruit, sorghum and others. Be sure that your planter has this symbol on it.”

Source: *Mochochonono*, October 1, 1949. National University of Lesotho Archives

Translation Credit: Madira Thetso, National University of Lesotho

reach. But the image in the ad spoke volumes about how a masculine professional farmer could improve his traditional lifestyle and perhaps strengthen his social standing by using this planter. Even to those unable to read the message, much less afford the planter, the manufacturer's message appealed to, and reinforced, what

were common aspirations for many Basotho farmers at that time: to improve one's livelihood through a blend of new technology and knowledge, applied in a particular physical and cultural setting. As one anthropologist has shown, everyone possesses a "will to improve." Or, as several interviewees assured me: everyone is progressive when they have access to appropriate knowledge and adequate resources.<sup>97</sup>

If men were at the forefront of demonstration work on all sides, at least until around 1960, women and girls still interacted with new agricultural knowledge in important ways. Women, after all, were more consistently present in the village setting than men. 'Me Mamahlomola Makhaola's experience illustrates how gender and family background conditioned the ways people compiled environmental knowledge. Born in 1932, she grew up in Lebakeng, a remote area located north of Tsoelike. She completed three years of primary school at a tiny Catholic mission outstation. She says that there were "no government demonstrations there in those days, but we learned some things at school about nutrition and building the body with vegetables...before that we just collected greens in the mountains without thinking much about it." But it was only sometime in the 1950s when she moved to Makhaola Village, which was much closer to the Qacha's Nek administrative capital,

---

<sup>97</sup> Tania Li, *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 5-6, 270; Interview with Marapeli Raselepe, 25 December 2014; Interview with Mokhabi Lesoli, 13 January 2015; Interview with Mpolokeng Putsoane, Ha Makhaola, 20 January 2015. Farmers used the planter to save labor, and to space seeds consistently and at uniform depth. Most farmers in Qacha's Nek, then and now, plant by hand-dropping seeds in furrows and then plowing in the seeds with generally erratic spacing. Typically, yields from fields where mechanical planters were used exceed those which were sown by hand.

to stay at her husband's place, as was the patrilocal custom, that she remembers seeing home gardens and fruit trees.<sup>98</sup>

Mamahlomola's husband worked in the mines much of the year. So, like most women in her position she sought ways to feed herself and her young son. Until about 1960, she and other women were not invited to the farming demonstrations, but still learned about new aspects of gardening, nutrition, poultry, and pigs by word of mouth and through the increasing influence of women's cooperative groups, especially the Homemakers Association. The Homemakers Association was founded in the 1930s in the Transkei. Among its founders, Bernice Mohapelo established a Basutoland Homemakers Association (BHA) in Lesotho in 1945. In this gendered and westernized domestic model, which became popular in rural Lesotho especially amongst Protestants, women learned new gardening techniques, fruit canning, sewing, and cooking.<sup>99</sup>

As part of its social action programs, the Catholic mission at nearby St. Francis promoted similar activities through the Catholic Economic Association (CEA), an institution which also sought to offer alternatives to buying and selling with white traders by providing discount rates on agricultural equipment and inputs. Several women in Makhaola village, 'Me Mamahlomola among them, spoke fondly of the knowledge they had learned not only from BHA demonstrations, but in

---

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Mamahlomola Makhaola, Ha Makhaola, 27 May 2015; Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 78-79.

<sup>99</sup> Epprecht, *This Matter*, 176-77; John Aerni-Flessner, "If We Govern Ourselves, Whose Son is to Govern Us?": Youth, Independence and the 1960's in Lesotho," PhD diss., Washington University in St. Louis, 2011, pp. 174-75.

primary school classrooms and in Catholic cooperatives. My interviewees took pride in producing canned and dried fruits, and maintaining tidy garden spaces of vegetables, fruit trees, and medicinal herbs.<sup>100</sup> Mamahlomola's village of origin and abbreviated education had limited her exposure to progressive agricultural ideas, and her gender had excluded her from attending demonstrations, at least temporarily.<sup>101</sup> Despite these limitations, she did compile a wealth of knowledge, capitalizing on her new geographic setting and shifts in demonstration methods.

Due in part to their roles as homestead managers in the absence of so many men, women seem to have embraced available demonstration services perhaps more than did men. Household gardens, largely seen as female spaces in those days, grew through the 1940s and 50s as discussed above. In addition to gardening, women took part in cooperatives and agricultural shows. Sesotho agriculture had relied on informal cooperatives for many years, including various arrangements for sharing land, labor, and equipment.<sup>102</sup> Few men joined government sanctioned cooperatives, whereas women embraced groups such as the BHA, church associations, and communal gardening groups. The Department of Agriculture hosted district shows where people entered produce in competitive categories (eg. maize, poultry, handicrafts) and winners earned prizes, or a trip to the national show in the capital Maseru. Demonstrators selected participants from villages to compete at the shows. Women who participated in these activities applied the

---

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Matumisang Khalala, Ha Makhaola, 27 May 2015; Mapoloko Ramatseka, 2 June 2015; Maleseko Kena, 19 May 2015; Epprecht, *This Matter*, 176-77.

<sup>101</sup> Mamahlomola Makhaola, 27 May 2015.

<sup>102</sup> Mohapi, *Temo ea Boholo*, 22-33; Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 83-85.

knowledge to remaking their domestic spaces, their gardens and kitchens, as well as to developing new ways to provide for their families.<sup>103</sup>

Access to cooperatives, agricultural shows, and other such networks for knowledge transmission for Basotho men and women did not come from human interaction alone. Literacy both opened up possibilities for some people and presented obstacles for others in compiling environmental knowledge. Farmers in Lesotho, as in most places, probably learned most from practical experiences like those discussed above. But agricultural literature still played a significant role, and increasingly so by the mid-twentieth century. To ignore the importance of printed material would be to reinforce the trope of Africans as oral people, not amenable to writing and reading. Furthermore, this literature was the precursor to subsequent agricultural information systems, which from the mid-1960s, involved radio broadcasts and today includes internet communications about crop prices, weather, and government services.<sup>104</sup>

Basotho began their experience with writing and reading when the PEMS arrived at Morija in 1833. Moshoeshoe quickly recognized the value in this new medium of communication, co-writing voluminous letters to colonial authorities. The PEMS missionaries prioritized reading, and had translated the Bible into Sesotho by the 1860s. They printed and distributed it from the Morija Printing Works, which they established in 1861 at the headquarters of the Protestant

---

<sup>103</sup> Matumisang Khalala, 27 May 2015; See also, RDA 1936, pp. 22-27; RDA 1940, p. 6; RDA 1950, pp. 11-12; RDA 1961, pp. 15-18.

<sup>104</sup> On Africans, orality, and literacy, see Leroy Vail and Landeg White, *Power and the Praise Poem: Southern African Voices in History* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1991), 20-33.

mission at Morija. The printers at Morija went on to publish an array of materials in numerous African languages, distributing them throughout southern Africa.<sup>105</sup>

A culture of literacy that incorporated elements of both pre-existing oral medium and vernacular idiom spread slowly in Lesotho by the late 1800s. Several Basotho authors wrote prolifically in Sesotho, Thomas Mofolo and Azariel Sekese chief among them. Along with the missionaries who transcribed the Sesotho language into dictionaries, these early authors helped standardize Sesotho, distinguishing it from other related languages in the Sotho-Tswana and Nguni linguistic families. The Basotho experience with literacy ran deeper in time than did the experiences of many other African ethno-linguistic groups yet in the nineteenth century literate Basotho represented a tiny fraction of the population.<sup>106</sup> But this group eventually ascended to political and economic prominence through the Basutoland Progressive Association (BPA), through commercial farming, and through the chieftaincy. Literacy rates rose slowly in the mountain areas, quickening when the Catholic Church launched its aggressive expansion in the 1930s. As most Basotho were engaged to some extent in agriculture (Sesotho: *temo*), it became an important topic for published writings.<sup>107</sup>

Agricultural literature took on a variety of forms. Basutoland's Sesotho language newspapers, and the institutions that published them, provided the most

---

<sup>105</sup> Dorothy Hall, ed., *150 Years Morija Printing Works of the Lesotho Evangelical Church: A Short Historical Review* (Morija: Morija Printing, 2011), 4-6.

<sup>106</sup> Mosebi Damane and Peter Sanders, eds., trans., *Lithoko: Sotho Praise Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 1-17.

<sup>107</sup> *Basutoland Census for 1911*, 26-27, 50-53; *Basutoland Census for 1936*, 8-9.



widespread material. By the 1930s several newspapers printed weekly letters, articles, and advertisements relating to agriculture. *Leselinyana la Lesotho* (the Little Light of Lesotho), the official paper of PEMS included an annual Farmer's Almanac along with Sesotho folk tales and serial novels, in which Basotho contributors commented on agriculture using Sesotho cultural idioms. It was in *Leselinyana* that Mofolo first published his Sesotho language novels in the 1890s. Established in 1863 and among the oldest African language newspapers on the continent, *Leselinyana* also printed excerpts from the BNC Proceedings, where councilors discussed a range of issues from controlled grazing to weed eradication campaigns.<sup>108</sup> The overall perspective of *Leselinyana* dovetailed, too, with the Tuskegee model for social uplift, a perspective expressed most vividly when a Mosotho editor serially published Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery*, which he translated into Sesotho across several volumes of the paper in 1960.<sup>109</sup>

Recognizing the growth in literary communication in Lesotho, the Catholic Church began publishing their own weekly in 1933 called *Moeletsi oa Basotho* (the Basotho Advisor). *Moeletsi's* circulation increased in the mountains during the 1930s when Bishop Bonhomme established new outstations in remote areas. In Qacha's Nek at St. Francis, Father Rousseau distributed bundles of back issues for

---

<sup>108</sup> In *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, Sekhesa, "Sekolo sa Temo," 14 March 1912; "Almanaka ea Balemi," 5 January 1923; E. Mohapeloa, "Khoholeho ea Mobu," 6 September 1933; See also Daniel Kunene, "Leselinyana la Lesotho and Sotho Historiography," *History in Africa* 4 (1977): 149-161; Peter Quella, "'Now My Tale Has Travelled Far!': Ts'omo-Making as Contemporary Tradition in Lesotho," PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 2007, pp. 30-31.

<sup>109</sup> H. Lekhethoa, trans., "Tse latelang tsa Buka e ngotsoeng ke Booker T. Washington," *Leselinyana*, 2 June 1960.

free over the course of his forty years at the mission. *Moeletsi* preached self-sufficiency and moral piety through agriculture and education, sometimes carrying ads for Fort Cox scholarships as well as ads for the latest farm implements. Although the OMI and PEMS clashed on other matters, they tended to embrace similar notions of progress through a specific type of work ethic (See Chap. 6). In the wake of the Great Depression which included the 1932-33 droughts in Lesotho, agriculture took center stage in this vision. Both the Protestant and Catholic newspapers complimented Lesotho's demonstration efforts in addition to printing scripture, critical opinions of Sesotho institutions like polygyny and initiation, world and local news, and especially from the 1950s, opinion on national politics.<sup>110</sup>

A final newspaper was *Mochochonono* (the Comet), the official paper of the Basutoland Progressive Association (BPA). Like the others, *Mocho* carried government propaganda on progressive agriculture, translating it into Sesotho when necessary. But the government propaganda appeared in conversation with, and sometimes debated, the opinions and other writings of Basotho contributors. *Mocho* spared its readers the overt Christian messages, but clearly espoused a "low-modernist" approach where agricultural improvement that blended subsistence with small-scale commercial production could alleviate rural poverty, an approach that the missions underscored in their own publications (See Chap. 6).<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> Mochinti Jane, 18 May 2015; C. Mokorotlo, "Litholoana," *Moeletsi oa Basotho*, 22 July 1947; See also, Epprecht, *This Matter*, 178-79.

<sup>111</sup> "Improved Farming," *Mochochonono*, 23 February 1927; See Jess Gilbert, "Low Modernism and the New Deal: A Different Kind of State," in *Fighting for the Farm: Rural America Transformed*, ed. Jane Adams (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 129-46. I adapt the term "low-

All of the papers encouraged a type of progressivism in which certain agricultural practices and technologies complimented literacy and worldly knowledge. Although literacy rates are difficult to gauge from the 1920s to the 1960s in rural Lesotho, census data for 1936 shows that 26% of females in Qacha's Nek could read while just 19% of males were literate. By 1946, the number was 32% for females and 24% for males.<sup>112</sup> But far fewer people could read Sesotho or English at levels adequate for understanding these newspapers. Nonetheless, literacy did increase through the 1940s and 50s, and printed knowledge also flowed from literate to non-literate people via church sermons, in school classrooms, at public meetings, and through daily social interactions. For literate farmers, advertisements and the accompanying agricultural columns in the papers offered educational opportunities while simultaneously creating aspirations for mechanical implements and a new type of farming that was often unrealistic for them, let alone the poorest Basotho.<sup>113</sup>

Apart from the newspapers, readers read government literature that addressed veterinary health, crop production, and gardening. Government officers produced Sesotho language pamphlets to spread knowledge about sheep scab, its consequences and treatments, beginning in 1906. The head agricultural officer

---

modernism" to emphasize that demonstrators, at least until the later 1950s, worked with farmers on small projects in contrast with 'high-modern' approaches as in Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

<sup>112</sup> *Basutoland Census for 1936*, 8-9; *Census for 1946*, 13. The higher literacy rate for females is reflected in both PEMS and Catholic mission school enrollments. More female students resulted from both expectations of male work in mines and from mission efforts to educate girls.

<sup>113</sup> In *Mochochonono*: "Women's Farmer's Assoc.," 23 December 1939; J. Sehloho, 'Development of Agriculture in Basutoland,' 8 June 1940.

Laurie Wachter wrote guides on maize, wheat, and sorghum cultivation, including control of such prominent pests as stalk-borer and cut-worm by chemical and cultural means; such as winter plowing to kill the worm larvae.<sup>114</sup> These government efforts complimented demonstration services, developing into intensive propaganda campaigns by the 1950s. Along these lines, the Department of Agriculture began publishing the quarterly *Pampiri ea Balemi ba Lesotho* (The Basutoland Farmer's Journal). Paramount Chieftainess Mantšebo Seeiso wrote the foreword for the inaugural volume in 1955, citing it as a symbol of a modernizing nation. She believed the journal provided a forum for farmers to "discuss and obtain advice for solving their day-to-day problems...the journal is a milestone in our progress." *Pampiri ea Balemi* ran for five years, circulating 6000 copies of each volume, which carried submissions from demonstrators, officers, and farmers in both Sesotho and English.<sup>115</sup>

By 1960, Africanization of the Department of Agriculture was well under way at all levels. A key moment came when Cliff Morojele, who grew up in Lesotho and trained as a statistician, managed and authored the Basutoland portion of the 1960 Global Census of Agriculture. He insisted that Basotho demonstrators, who knew the people and places to be enumerated, could collect the most accurate data. That year

---

<sup>114</sup> For example, Henning, *Lekhuekhue la Liphoofole*; Lawrence Wachter, *Tsa Temo Lesotho* (Moriya: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1925). Excerpts from government publications were often reprinted in the Sesotho language newspapers discussed above. For example, "Winter Work in Vegetable Gardens," *Mochochonono*, 14 August 1937.

<sup>115</sup> Mantsebo Seeiso, "Foreword," *Basutoland Farmers Journal* 1, no. 1 (1955).

demonstrators gathered an array of data as they performed their usual duties.<sup>116</sup> A few years earlier Lesotho had opened its own agricultural college, staffed with Basotho instructors among the British. Apart from training the next generation of demonstrators, the college also held farmers' days and workshops open to the public, providing intellectual resources and some material assistance too.<sup>117</sup>

Like the farmer's journal and the 1960 census, and like the expansion of agricultural demonstration services as a whole, the college marked an important moment for all Basotho. Considering Basutoland's formidable economic and agricultural challenges in the early 1960s, and the social inequality that characterized the later years of demonstration programs, it is tempting to see these developments as purely symbolic.<sup>118</sup> Indeed, as Paramount Chief Mantsebo's comments indicate, for those wishing to make at least part of their living from the land, these developments did represent their aspirations to participate in the new cultural and political world of the time. If these programs failed to achieve large agrarian transformations, and left the regional political economy in place, demonstrators still contributed to a growing pool of knowledge and to important cultural changes such as the ways people managed their agricultural calendar to the ways people reorganized village spaces.

---

<sup>116</sup> Morojele, *1960 Agricultural Census*.

<sup>117</sup> RDA 1962, pp.19-25.

<sup>118</sup> CAR 1965, pp. 24-27. In 1965 a drought triggered failed harvests and acute food shortages.

## 4.5 - Conclusion

Agricultural demonstration and extension, in varied forms, remains a central component of agricultural development policy in many countries across the world. International and local experts, politicians, and farmers continue to debate the concepts and methods behind this work.<sup>119</sup> This chapter has reconstructed localized historical contexts in which debates about demonstration evolved during the decades before Lesotho's independence in 1966. People in disparate social positions, including the demonstrators themselves, sought opportunities by attaining and applying agricultural knowledge using the resources available to them.

Knowledge and practice conflicted and overlapped through the process of compilation— a process that was imperfect, complex, and pluralist. By probing questions about the localized social dimensions, and the links to transnational ideas about agricultural education, ecological change, and rural development, we deepen our understanding of the pathways and barriers to knowledge more broadly. Whereas demonstrators dealt mostly with low-tech methods, the anti-soil erosion campaigns came to rely, to some extent, on highly technical and labor intensive approaches. Chapter 5 will examine these campaigns.

---

<sup>119</sup> See J. K. Mutimba, "Reflections on Agricultural Extension and Extension Policy in Africa," *South African Journal of Agricultural Extension* 42, no. 1 (2014): 15-26.

## 5. RETHINKING SOIL CONSERVATION IN COLONIAL LESOTHO, C. 1903-1956

### 5.1 - Introduction

Human, animal, and plant communities shape how water, wind, and gravity manipulate soil in the process of erosion. Humans have a prominent yet partial role in this process. It is our ability to develop cultural and technological mechanisms and to apply these in our activities that distinguishes us from other agents of soil change. To understand the physical changes in soils we must also grasp the ways diverse human actors have engaged with the constantly shifting knowledge about soil: how to grow food in it, how to maintain it for specific uses, how to use it to build things, and how to control its motion.<sup>1</sup>

Lesotho's experience with soil erosion and conservation schemes has produced stories that tell us about this circulation of knowledge in the past—its origins, pathways, and filters. As a specific case, Lesotho offers a sense of how global ideas informed local knowledge and action during the colonial period. We need to better understand how knowledge flowed within and between various social networks. For instance, how did ideas about soil conservation develop and circulate

---

<sup>1</sup> For an overview of soil erosion and conservation, see Benno Warkentin, ed., *Footprints in the Soil: People and Ideas in Soil History* (Amsterdam: Elsevier Science, 2006).

amongst American soil experts, South African agriculturalists, British colonial officials, and Basotho chiefs and farmers?<sup>2</sup>

The 1930s proved to be a pivotal decade for constructing knowledge about soil erosion and for applying this knowledge through state-led conservation programs. The Great Depression in the 1930s worsened when drought visited places as geographically separated as the American plains and Lesotho's highlands.<sup>3</sup> As a crisis with ecological, economic, and cultural dimensions, the Dustbowl drove American research and policy on soil in new directions which had global ramifications. Population growth in Africa too, and its relationship to environmental change also contributed to new ideas and policies.<sup>4</sup>

But Lesotho's experience with conservation, state-led and otherwise, did not begin with this surge of concern about the world's soils. Historical sources mention eroded areas from the mid-1800s, but government-led conservation work in Lesotho began around 1903.<sup>5</sup> Veterinary Department staff planted trees, cordoned off eroded areas, and explained erosion to people based on contemporary scientific knowledge. From the beginning, soil conservation intertwined with political changes in South Africa, a connection that influenced Lesotho in important ways. But like in the US, only an extreme event could raise national interest in erosion.

---

<sup>2</sup> On circulation of scientific knowledge amongst social networks see Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 179-83; Jacobs, *Birders of Africa*, 8-9, 102-03.

<sup>3</sup> Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: the Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); CAR 1933, pp. 8-9, 34-35.

<sup>4</sup> See Paul Sutter, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Gullies: Providence Canyon and the Soils of the South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015); Anderson, "Depression, Dust Bowl," 322-24.

<sup>5</sup> See especially, Germond, *Chronicles of Basutoland*.



It was Lesotho's own dustbowl in 1932-33, known locally as *Lerole* (the Dust), that prompted new government research and intervention. Beginning as localized experiments in late 1935, Basutoland's anti-erosion programs grew larger in the 1940s during the "second colonial occupation" when colonial administrations amplified efforts to modernize African agriculture.<sup>6</sup> Combining physical and cultural approaches to combat erosion, the Europeans and Basotho who carried out these schemes transformed the ecological, cultural, and aesthetic characteristics of Lesotho's landscape. The most visible manifestation of the schemes was the extensive network of terraces, grass strips, diversion furrows, and other structures. In Qacha's Nek, erosion was less pronounced in the early 1900s, yet highlanders still faced ecological changes affecting the soil, especially vegetation change. The government dedicated few resources to conservation in Qacha's Nek until the 1940s. Although engineering structures were part of the program, the mountain approach focused more on cultural changes; namely, by reforming agricultural and pastoral practices as ways to regenerate vegetation.<sup>7</sup>

In her well-known work, soil scientist and environmental historian Kate Showers evaluates Lesotho's soil conservation schemes. She argues that the science behind the schemes was ill-conceived, purely imported from elsewhere, and implemented with no input from Basotho. For Showers, the physical structures

---

<sup>6</sup> See John Lonsdale and D. Low, "Introduction: Towards the New Order 1945-1963," in *The Oxford History of East Africa, Vol. III*, eds. D. Low and Alison Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 12-16.

<sup>7</sup> Government efforts at cultural reforms aimed, in part, to cultivate biological materials like trees and grasses to conserve soil. The contrast with the physical/engineering approach will become clear.

exacerbated donga (gully) erosion by concentrating water in areas that had previously distributed runoff across wider spaces. I am primarily concerned with the social, cultural, and political parts of this argument rather than with the soil science evaluation. Contrary to Showers' argument, the schemes in Lesotho never entirely abandoned the cultural, or holistic approach, and this was especially true in Qacha's Nek.<sup>8</sup>

The extent to which science becomes ideology in specific political contexts, such as under British colonialism where racially based assumptions of superiority underpinned most policies, is also part of my analysis. But assigning too much agency to an ideology like conservationism can mute important African voices. In Basutoland from 1903 until the 1950s, chiefs, agricultural demonstrators, writers, teachers, farmers, herders, laborers, both women and men, engaged in different ways, in a dynamic cultural and environmental process. People debated matters of land use and law, and worked to build new structures, implement new practices, and maintain older ones.<sup>9</sup>

Other scholars have reconstructed stories of African resistance to soil conservation schemes, linking these episodes to anti-colonial politics. These

---

<sup>8</sup> Showers, *Imperial Gullies*; See also, Kate Showers, "Soil Erosion in the Kingdom of Lesotho: Origins and Colonial Responses, 1830s-1950s," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15, no. 2 (1989): 263-86; Showers and Gwendolyn Malahleha, "Oral Evidence in Historical Environmental Impact Assessment: Soil Conservation in Lesotho in the 1930s and 1940s," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 2 (1992): 276-96.

<sup>9</sup> Beinart, "Soil Erosion, Conservationism;" On agency, see Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 44-46.

sentiments did emerge in Lesotho, if far less so than in Tanganyika or Nyasaland.<sup>10</sup> Resistance in Lesotho was minimal in comparison, and seemed to have had more to do with local chieftain politics, control over one's labor, and livelihood pursuits than anti-colonialism. The tensions between chiefs and commoners, amongst chiefs themselves, and between highlanders and lowlanders, illustrate how differing views on science, agriculture, and development emerged during these years.

Looking at these tensions by focusing on how knowledge circulated also complicates our picture of what Mahmood Mamdani has called "decentralized despotism" in rural colonial Africa.<sup>11</sup> Far from being pawns of the colonial state, Basotho leaders, in conversation with British officials, identified erosion as a serious ecological and economic problem. They discussed it in the Basutoland National Council (BNC) nearly thirty years before the national schemes began. Other Basotho read about erosion in Sesotho publications, wrote editorials in newspapers, worked on conservation gangs, or simply talked to demonstrators, chiefs, and neighbors.

The wave of technical knowledge about soil and conservation emerging in the 1900s constituted a major expansion in what rural Basotho knew. This expansion, I argue, was an important historical process. Science, like all knowledge, is defined by the language and symbols of the network in which it circulates. The knowledge deployed in Basutoland had developed within specific standards of

---

<sup>10</sup> On resistance, see Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*, 181-88; Pamela Maack, "We Don't Want Terraces!': Protest & Identity under the Uluguru Land Usage Scheme," in *Custodians of the Land*, Maddox et al., eds., 152-70; Mandala, *Work and Control in a Peasant Economy*; Wapulumuka Mulwafu, *Conservation Song: A History of Peasant-State relations and the Environment in Malawi, 1860-2000* (Cambridge: The White Horse Press, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 37-50.

observation, experiment, and documentation, but many Basotho participated in this network as both knowledge makers and as learners. European soil experts, at least some of them, were more responsive to African ecological and cultural conditions than has previously been acknowledged.<sup>12</sup>

For Basotho, earlier experiences with rinderpest, sheep scab, and agricultural demonstration shaped how they understood science as well as what they came to expect from government interventions. The cultural approaches to soil conservation, too, such as rotational grazing opened up dialogs, often tense dialogs, about how to maintain what Emmanuel Kreike has called “environmental infrastructure.” By rethinking Lesotho’s experience with conservation in a global context, and examining how these schemes unfolded on the ground, not only do we improve our understanding of the ways older ideas about land management clashed and overlapped with new ideas, we also recognize the limits of transnational currents in science to effect change in local environments.<sup>13</sup>

## **5.2 - Soil Science and Conservation: An International Overview**

Modern soil science emerged in the late nineteenth century. Of course, this field incorporated older knowledge and experiences. This was true of both soil classifications and the centrality of ecological relationships to soil formation and conservation. From ancient Mesoamerican and Chinese civilizations to West Africa

---

<sup>12</sup> Latour, *Science and Action*, 179-83; Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory*, 21-27.

<sup>13</sup> See Kreike, *Environmental Infrastructure in African History*. For a model of this more inclusive approach about overlapping knowledge in soil conservation, see Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 49-68.

of more contemporary times, we know that humans have thought about and experimented with soil in myriad ways. But a specific modern soil science, which had close ties to market-based agricultural production, makes for a logical point of departure. It was because of its position within dominant networks of global political and economic power, especially colonial capitalism, that this science shaped Lesotho's experience with government-led conservation the most.<sup>14</sup>

Crucial developments came out of the United States. As chief of the US Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Soils, Milton Whitney led the first national soil survey which was published in 1909. Whitney believed that the texture of soil mattered most in agriculture. Soil exhaustion, in Whitney's view, was a myth. In contrast to Whitney, Franklin Hiram King showed how East Asian farmers used organic fertilizers to sustain agricultural production over time. In what became an influential book called *Farmers of Forty Centuries* (1911), King argued for intensive use of manures and legumes to fix nitrogen. Whitney's retirement in 1927 and the Dustbowl in the 1930s stimulated new thinking about erosion and created new political space for a larger, more interventionist soil conservation bureaucracy.<sup>15</sup>

Hugh Hammond Bennett embodied this interventionist approach, and became the most influential American on the transnational soil conservation scene. As an inspector for the southern portion of Whitney's national survey Bennett

---

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Sandor et al., "The Heritage of Soil Knowledge Amongst the World's Cultures," in Warkentin, ed., *Footprints*, 43-80; Verena Winiwarter, "Soil Scientists in Ancient Rome," in *Footprints*, 2-4; Barbara Williams, "Aztec Soil Knowledge: Classes, Management, Ecology," in *Footprints*, 18-20; Judith Carney, "Indigenous soil and water management in Senegambian rice farming systems," *Agriculture and Human Values* 8, no. 1 (1991): 37-48.

<sup>15</sup> Sutter, *Let Us Now Praise*, 40-44.

worked in Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. Through this work, he began to see erosion as a conjuncture of natural processes and human activity. Bennett argued that preventing erosion could only be done by educating land users, regulating land use through legislation, and building engineering works.<sup>16</sup> A passionate speaker, Bennett studied soils across the United States as well as in Central America, South America, and Cuba. Bennett pushed soil towards the forefront of American conservation policy when he co-wrote *Soil Erosion, A National Menace* (1928).<sup>17</sup>

In *Soil Erosion*, the authors explained how removing vegetation, crop residues, and trees exposed soil to wind and water. Farming, mining, grazing, and road building posed the greatest cultural threats. Bennett laid out the framework for the US Soil Conservation Service (SCS), formed during the New Deal in 1935. *Soil Erosion* also recommended rotational grazing and revegetation. Regarding engineering works, the authors acknowledged that dams, diversion furrows, and other structures would likely play prominent roles in future schemes, but stressed that revegetation was more important. It was later, during the ecological and economic uncertainty of the 1930s, that Bennett prioritized engineering. This methodological tension, between building physical structures to control water movement versus encouraging practices that would support trees and grasses to

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 49-51, 54-61; Beinart, "Soil Erosion, Conservationism," 56-57; Sarah Phillips, *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 136-40.

<sup>17</sup> Sutter, *Let Us Now Praise*, 59, 85; Hugh Bennett and W.R. Chapline, *Soil Erosion, A National Menace* (Washington: USDA, April 1928).

absorb water, would play out in conservation schemes in the US, Africa, and elsewhere.<sup>18</sup>

South Africa, too, had a long experience with state conservation that influenced Lesotho. Ideas about conserving pasture, water, forests, and soils circulated within an expanding commercial agriculture. The nineteenth-century conservationist John Croumbie Brown believed that the severe drought periods of 1820-23, 1845-47, and 1862-63 were linked to the loss of vegetative cover that had resulted from European and Africans extensively grazing livestock.<sup>19</sup> Understanding the relationship between drought, vegetation change, water sheds, and pastoral practices became a dominant thread in southern African discourse in the early years of the twentieth century. Following Brown's writings, scientists, farmers, and officials believed that South Africa would eventually become an uninhabitable desert. Their concerns about vegetation change and drought intensified while market agriculture grew after 1870, a time when the state sought to improve irrigation, especially as a way to support white farmers.<sup>20</sup>

References to erosion in Basutoland first appeared in official publications within the context of irrigation that had important transnational dimensions. As the

---

<sup>18</sup> Bennett and Chapline, *Soil Erosion*, 2-3, 23, 31-34; Phillips, *This Land, This Nation*, 45; Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 55-61; Anderson, *Eroding the Commons*, 157-67; TNA, DO 35/916/16, Russell Thornton, "A review of 7 years work in the High Commission Territories," 23 February 1942.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Grove, "Scottish Missionaries, Evangelical Discourses and the Origins of Conservation Thinking in Southern Africa 1820-1900," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15, no. 2 (1989): 163-87; See also, Saul Dubow, ed., *Science and Society in southern Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 1-10; Beinart, *Rise of Conservation*, 99-105.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Francis Kanthack, "Irrigation Development in the Cape Colony: Past, Present, and Future," *Agricultural Journal of the Cape of Good Hope* 24, no. 6 (1909): 645-57; Smith Cormack, "Settlement in South Africa," *The Sun & Agricultural Journal of South Africa* 15 (January, 1924): 54-58; Keegan; *Rural Transformations*, 198-99; Beinart, *Rise of Conservation*, 158-59, 175-82.

Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) ended, Cape Colony government officials sought ways to reconstruct the country and to assure that poor whites had economic opportunities in agriculture. State-sponsored irrigation schemes, planners argued, could alleviate this political problem by appropriating African lands and reclaiming it for white settlement.<sup>21</sup> To research the potential for irrigation in 1901, the Cape government commissioned the British civil engineer William Willcocks, who had recently overseen the first Aswan Dam on the Nile River in Egypt. Willcocks argued that irrigation needed to be a core part of development plans in South Africa, and he believed that the government ought to play a central role.<sup>22</sup>

During his tour of southern Africa Willcocks visited Basutoland where he became more concerned with soil erosion than with irrigation. Willcocks claimed that the friable soils were eroding away, especially where “numerous roads, paths, and cattle tracks scour away the ground, and cut the country into deep ravines.” He believed that if the “very serious erosion” continued as it had over the preceding thirty years, “the loss to the country would be incalculable.” Willcocks prescribed a blend of physical and biological fixes to mitigate the problem. He recommended building stone weirs across the gullies while planting willow and poplar trees in the wet ravines, and wattles and aloes in the dry ones.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Sir Alfred Milner to Mr. Chamberlin, 29 September 1902, cited in Cecil Headlam, *The Milner Papers: South Africa, 1899-1905, Vol. 2* (London: Cassell & Co., 1933), 278-80; Beinart, *Rise of Conservation*, 176-77.

<sup>22</sup> “Sir W. Willcocks, Engineer, Is Dead” *New York Times*, 29 July 1932, Accessed 1 August 2016. <http://search.proquest.com>.

<sup>23</sup> Willcocks, “Report on Irrigation in South Africa,” 30-34.



As another key figure who publicized irrigation and soil conservation, the engineer Francis Kanthack applied his knowledge of water sheds in the Punjab region of India to his studies of southern Africa. The Cape colonial government appointed Kanthack as Director of Irrigation in 1906. From this position he argued for increased state intervention. Apart from his experience in India, Kanthack followed developments in forestry and irrigation in France, Germany, and the United States.<sup>24</sup> In the “destruction of forests,” which Kanthack took to mean grasslands too, “man is everywhere the trouble...with the resources of Nature he has by burning [sic], felling, lopping, barking, over-grazing, or other maltreatment.” He insisted that afforestation, in part, could prevent the erosion in highlands that had caused flooding and destruction of agricultural lands in the past on nearly every continent. Although Kanthack focused on the Cape and scarcely mentioned Basutoland, his ideas about watersheds and the human role in destroying or conserving them, intersected with powerful political forces as officials forged the Union of South Africa.<sup>25</sup>

The question of incorporating Basutoland into the Union was neither new in 1910 nor would it disappear when the Union was established. Basotho leaders feared that incorporation would damage their political and cultural institutions such as the chieftainship, and most of all, threaten their territorial integrity by opening Basutoland to foreign settlers and mineral prospectors. The British High

---

<sup>24</sup> C. Plug, “Kanthack, Mr. Francis Edgar,” *Biographical Database of Southern African Science*,” Accessed on 1 August 2016. <http://www.s2a3.org.za/bio>; Beinart, *Rise of Conservation*, 180-82.

<sup>25</sup> Francis Kanthack, “The Destruction of Mountain Vegetation: Its Effects upon the Agricultural Conditions in the Valleys,” *Agricultural Journal of the Cape of Good Hope* 33, no. 2 (1908): 194-204.

Commissioner (HC) Lord Selborne assured Basotho that their mountain kingdom would not be incorporated into the Union, at least not in 1910.<sup>26</sup> Speaking at a national *pitso* (public meeting) in March 1909, Selborne announced that there was “no thought of that [incorporation] whatever.” But he followed with the caveat: “but I also think that this plan cannot last forever... the time must come, and it will be good for South Africa and good for Basutoland if the whole is looked after by one Governor-General.”<sup>27</sup> Scholars have confirmed that South African and British officials sought to bolster the flow of cheap labor from Basutoland to the mines, but the ecological dimensions of the relationship must not be overlooked. For irrigation to play a prominent role in the Union’s future, Willcocks and Kanthack argued, the Basutoland government must intervene to control erosion which the engineers believed increased silt loads in the river catchments.<sup>28</sup>

The 1919 drought caused economic and ecological damage in South Africa that stimulated state-sponsored research and subsequent shifts in conservation policy. Like Kanthack and Willcocks, the chairman of the Drought Commission Heinrich Du Toit admired American conservation research and policy.<sup>29</sup> Following his service to the Boer cause in the Anglo-Boer War, Du Toit became concerned

---

<sup>26</sup> TNA, CO 646, “Speech delivered by His Excellency the High Commissioner at the Pitso held at Maseru on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 1909,” in BNC Sessional Papers, 1909.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Kimble, *Migrant Labour*, 1-7; Eldredge, *South African Kingdom*, 187-92; Thabane, “Aspects of Colonial Economy,” 106-11; On South Africa’s political influence on anti-erosion campaigns, see Thackwray Driver, “Anti-Erosion Policies in the Mountain Areas of Lesotho: the South African Connection,” *Environment and History* 5, no. 1 (1999): 1-25; Thackwray Driver “The Theory and Politics of Mountain Rangeland Conservation and Pastoral Development in Colonial Lesotho,” PhD diss., University of London, 1998.

<sup>29</sup> Beinart, *Rise of Conservation*, 238-39; Beinart, “Soil Erosion, Conservationism,” 54.

about the future of Afrikaner agriculture. He traveled to the US in 1902 where he learned about the latest in farming machinery and irrigation. He empathized with Teddy Roosevelt and his perspectives on organized conservation. Du Toit also visited Mexico and Panama before returning home. In 1920 the Union government appointed him chairman of the Drought Commission.<sup>30</sup>

The Commission compiled their findings from interviews, mostly with white land users, and from field surveys and reports by a regional cast of scientists and administrators. According to the report, parts of South Africa had always been dry, but “since the white man has been in South Africa enormous tracts of country have been entirely or partially denuded of their original vegetation, with the result that rivers, vleis [marsh] and water holes described by old travelers have dried up or disappeared.” Scientists found that mean annual rainfall had not changed in recent times, but they did identify shifts in the nature and incidence of rainfall: changes that they believed humans and animals had effected by removing vegetation. The Commission believed, too, that vegetation loss led to sheet and donga erosion. Erosion, they claimed, was extending rapidly over much of the Union, and so, “prompt action was therefore imperative.”<sup>31</sup>

At the heart of the report, authors argued that small stock farmers, who had experienced the greatest economic losses in 1919, served as the main cultural

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. On the transfer of knowledge on dryland farming, see Sarah Phillips, “Lessons from the Dust Bowl: Dryland Agriculture and Soil Erosion in the United States and South Africa, 1900-1950,” *Environmental History* 4, no. 2 (1999): 245-66.

<sup>31</sup> *Final Report of the Drought Investigation Commission* (Cape Town: Cape Times Limited, Government Printers, 1923), 3-4, 14-15; See also, DuToit, *Drought Investigation Interim Report*, 7-10, 17-26.

catalyst for accelerating erosion. Commissioners acknowledged that erosion occurred on cultivated land too, but they focused their data collection on veld (pasture) erosion.<sup>32</sup> Most farmers corralled (kraaled) their sheep and goats in order to protect them from predatory jackals. Shepherds, by necessity, had to drive the animals from the kraal daily in order to reach adequate grass and water. From this perspective, the animals required more energy and feed than was necessary. They also trampled grass along the way and destroyed vegetation in and around kraals. During drought years, where some water holes dried up and grazing was scarcer, livestock struggled to maintain health on long treks to eat and drink, leaving themselves vulnerable to illness, parasites, and pre-mature death. Apart from losing stock, this constellation of factors exposed more soil to the erosive power of water and wind.<sup>33</sup>

To mitigate this cycle of vegetation change, erosion, drought, and livestock losses, the commission recommended that farming communities work cooperatively to exterminate the jackal to remove the said impetus for kraaling. The government would provide cheap materials and favorable loans for European farmers to erect fences along property boundaries and to divide their lands into paddocks where they could rotate their stock in calculated ways. Farmers needed to develop their water resources too. Not least, the commission recommended that the Union government create a Department of Reclamation to control soil erosion. Farmers

---

<sup>32</sup> *Final Report of the Drought Investigation Commission*, 12-15.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 12-15.

from affected areas who were interviewed said that they believed it was time that an official be appointed who could advise them on soil erosion. The government would also create tree nurseries to encourage tree planting as a central part of erosion prevention and reclamation efforts.<sup>34</sup>

Similar to the United States prior to the Dust Bowl, the state was still limited in terms of investing in filling-in dongas and building conservation works. The emphasis here was on encouraging practical reforms. To promote cultural changes in this regard, the commission recommended more state support for agricultural education and demonstration work (See Chap. 4), an initiative which extended into Lesotho in addition to African reserves and white farm areas.<sup>35</sup> The commission, however, gathered limited data on Basutoland. But the few references to Basutoland underscored that Union officials believed that the territory's ecological and cultural changes needed to be better understood because of Basutoland's vital importance to regional water supplies.<sup>36</sup>

Among the officials who responded to Du Toit's written request for input were Frank Verney and Laurie Wachter, Basutoland's principal veterinary surgeon and agricultural officer respectively. Both men agreed that kraaling and extensive grazing were standard practices in Lesotho, and that soil erosion was a serious problem. Verney opined that there was "no part of South Africa where the

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 52, 124.

commission could observe the true lessons of erosion better than in Basutoland.”<sup>37</sup> It is unclear on what basis he made such claims, but by 1920 Verney had traveled widely in rural Basutoland, especially while building up the sheep-dip infrastructure. For Verney, planting poplar and willow trees was the only effective method. Wachter seconded Verney’s emphasis on trees, elaborating that certain trees thrived on the donga bottoms (willows and poplars), while others did well on drier banks (wild cherry and American aloe). Wachter also indicated that preserving local vegetation, and experimenting with new grasses was useful as animal forage and to protect soil. Both men, however, doubted state-led programs and agreed with the commission that governments ought to prioritize educative approaches.<sup>38</sup>

The Drought Commission Report portrayed a regional context that was at once localized and enmeshed in transnational discourses about erosion and conservation. Outside of southern Africa and the United States, the Colonial Office in London took interest in soil erosion and conservation in colonial areas. In the first three decades of the 1900s the British had prioritized agricultural commodity production in their territories, but an important shift occurred in the 1930s.<sup>39</sup> Fueled by perceptions of ecological decline and population growth, especially in East Africa, and underpinned by new research into African agricultural systems and ecology, the Colonial Office turned more attention towards addressing

---

<sup>37</sup> Frank Verney to GS, Maseru, 13 October 1921, in *Final Report of the Drought Commission*, 204-5.

<sup>38</sup> Lawrence Wachter to GS, Maseru, 14 October 1921, in *Final Report of the Drought Commission*, 205-06.

<sup>39</sup> Anderson, “Depression, Dust Bowl,” 322; Anderson, *Eroding the Commons*, 70-72, 135-40; Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 55-56; Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 148-53.

environmental and socioeconomic problems.<sup>40</sup> New farming and livestock policies aimed at creating sustainable farming communities as a way to slow urbanization in cities like Nairobi, Kenya and Kampala, Uganda. This political motive for reforming agricultural policy had been a driving force in South Africa and Lesotho since the 1910s, as evidenced by the native agricultural colleges and demonstration programs. Although these policy shifts took various shapes, addressing soil erosion was a common item that linked the official conservation agendas in east and southern Africa to developments elsewhere in the British Empire.<sup>41</sup>

Individuals often helped create these links. Frank Stockdale, as a prominent example, began his career with the colonial agricultural service in Ceylon before becoming the leading authority on soil erosion in the British Empire. From 1916 to 1929 Stockdale and the agricultural department in Ceylon worked to prevent soil erosion in the island's tropical hills where the creation of tea and rubber estates had caused deforestation and consequent soil erosion. They experimented with contour walls, drains, and pits. In 1931 Stockdale toured East Africa to see the erosion there, continuing on to South Africa to observe the nascent conservation programs underway. Like others in his cohort of soil experts, he also visited the United States in 1937. He marveled at the achievements of the US Soil Conservation Service: the

---

<sup>40</sup> For examples of contemporaneous research on agriculture and ecology, see Colin Trapnell, *The Soils, Vegetation and Agricultural Systems of North-Western Rhodesia* (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1937); Malcolm Hailey, *An African Survey: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938); Staples and Hudson, *Ecological Survey*; See also, Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory*, 22-26.

<sup>41</sup> Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 145; Tischler, "Education and the Agrarian Question," 252.

prolific scientific research, the deployment of trained experts, and the scale of the state-led interventions.<sup>42</sup>

In 1935 Stockdale and other members of the Colonial Advisory Council on Agriculture and Animal Health (CAC) had called for full-time soil erosion officers in each East and Central African territory. While East Africa was noted as the most eroded area, the CAC also referenced Ceylon, Nigeria, Jamaica, Palestine, and among other places, Basutoland. The CAC insisted that, from then on, colonial administrations in the territories treat soil erosion as a “major question of policy.” Stockdale, like Bennett in the US, knew that more localized research on the natural and cultural processes behind erosion was needed to carry out conservation schemes successfully, but he still felt they knew enough to move forward.<sup>43</sup>

G.V. Jacks and R.O. Whyte of the Imperial Bureau of Soil Science published *The Rape of the Earth: A World Survey of Soil Erosion* in 1939 to convince the public of the urgency to act on soil erosion on a global scale. The book popularized erosion as an environmental problem with political and social dimensions. Readers, especially policy makers, could browse photos that depicted dust storms on the Great Plains, rice terraces in Java, drainage furrows in Texas, and gullies in Basutoland. The authors acknowledged Basutoland for its seemingly successful in-progress conservation schemes. Perhaps more importantly, they alerted readers of possible political consequences of erosion. Because the headwaters of the Orange

---

<sup>42</sup> Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 163-66; Anderson, *Eroding the Commons*, 158-60, 180-82.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*



River were in Basutoland's mountains, Jacks explained that "the occupiers of Basutoland could ... hold South Africa to ransom."<sup>44</sup> This statement speaks to the alarmist tone of *Rape of the Earth*, but it also articulated the importance of regional and local politics, culture, and geography in conservation planning. The transnational currents of knowledge affected each of the many cases that Jacks and Whyte reviewed in 1939. Yet each place also had their own experience with erosion and state-led conservation schemes.

### **5.3 - Soil and Erosion in Early-Twentieth Century Basutoland**

Soil mattered to the Basotho who selected settlement sites in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It mattered, too, for where erosion occurred, to what extent, and how conservation measures proceeded from place to place. Lesotho is part of a tectonic formation called the Karoo Basin, which covers much of South Africa. Within the Karoo, the Lesotho Formation covers most of Basutoland with the exception of the northern and western lowland parts of the country and some parts of the Senqu Valley. These areas, generally under 7000 feet are part of the Clarens formation.<sup>45</sup> Soil formations have specific geological characteristics, namely the type of parent material. Most soils in the lowlands and foothills came from sedimentary rocks in the Clarens formation. By contrast, places at elevations above 3000m

---

<sup>44</sup> G.V. Jacks and R.O. Whyte, *The Rape of the Earth: A World Survey of Soil Erosion* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1939), 272-73.

<sup>45</sup> Schmitz and Rooyani, *Lesotho: Geology, Geomorphology, Soils*, 6-8; See also, Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, 100-14.

contain soils formed from igneous basalt. Apart from the nature of parent material, the amount of organic matter in particular soil types depended on various factors such as slope, sun exposure, elevation, average temperatures, and vegetative cover.<sup>46</sup>

The authors of a 1987 soil survey of Lesotho drew on earlier soil studies when they identified eleven distinct soil series by specific names, which they then classified under broader scientific categories. For instance, the Fusi series had formed from basaltic alluvium in mountain valleys under dense grass cover, and had subsequently been covered with topsoil washed from surrounding slopes. Along with four other local types, the Fusi series fell under the mollisol classification, a soil group characterized by a dark humus surface layer. Other categories, defined by their parent material and formation processes were inceptisols, vertisols, and entisols.<sup>47</sup>

When Staples and Hudson conducted their ecological survey in 1936 they recorded only basic characteristics of soil horizons: color, depth, and permeability. From the agronomic perspective, Staples and Hudson also analyzed levels of nitrogen, potash, and phosphorus in samples from mountain locations. As a primary source of knowledge that would inform government soil conservationists, the survey's findings were helpful yet did not account for the important micro-

---

<sup>46</sup> Schmitz and Rooyani, *Lesotho: Geology, Geomorphology, Soils* 144-49, 157, 166-68; M. Marake, "Arable Agriculture," in Chakela, ed., *State of the Environment*, 42-44.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 144; See also, D.M. Carroll and C.L. Bascomb, "Notes on the Soils of Lesotho," Technical Bulletin, no. 1, (London: Ministry of Development, 1967) and *Soils of Lesotho: A System of Soil Classification for Interpreting Soil Surveys in Lesotho* (Maseru: The Office of Soil Survey, Conservation Division, Ministry of Agriculture, 1979); Stockley, *Geology of Basutoland*.

environmental characteristics so prevalent in the Maloti. But the survey team did raise key issues of ecological diversity such as soil's chemical content, and vegetation and precipitation patterns.<sup>48</sup> Lesotho, for its small size, contained a wide variety of soils, each with its own advantages and disadvantages to farmers, builders, and livestock owners. Soil erosion, as a mesh of natural and cultural processes occurred unevenly across Lesotho, as did the schemes to mitigate it.<sup>49</sup>

Just as surveyors and soil scientists have classified Lesotho's soils, Basotho land managers had also developed a terminology for soils. According to M. Molelekoa Mohapi, a Mosotho author who wrote a Sesotho text called *Temo ea Boholo-holo Lesotho* (Traditional Agriculture in Lesotho) in 1956, Basotho farmers distinguished between two main types of soil.<sup>50</sup> On the one hand was *selokoe* (wet soil) and on the other was *lehlabathe* (sand). Farmers separated *selokoe* into three sub-classifications of soil based on its color and capacity to hold water. Each type of wet soil could be found in specific places and could support specific crops. *Selokoe se sesoothero* (brown soil) drained water well, and was also the most widespread type in Basutoland. In it, farmers grew sorghum, sweet reed, melons, and beans. People sought *selokoe se setšo* (black soil) in or near reed beds, where they sowed wheat, pumpkins, peas, and lentils. They also collected black soil to dry and make a kind of brick used in building. A final type of wet earth, blue soil (*selokoe se seputsoa*) was

---

<sup>48</sup> Staples and Hudson, *Ecological Survey*, 10-11; Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, 46-47; Driver, "Theory and Politics," 105-10.

<sup>49</sup> James McCann, "Soil Matters: Erosion and Empire in Greater Lesotho, 1830-1990," in McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land*, 141-45.

<sup>50</sup> This discussion draws mostly on Mohapi, *Temo ea Boholo*, 22-24. I confirmed some terms during my field research through working and discussing these concepts with farmers in Qacha's Nek.

less desirable, but Mohapi claims that farmers usually sowed crops based on immediate food needs rather than according to ideal soil types.<sup>51</sup>

Basotho classified *lehlabathe* (sand) in two sub-types according to color: red and yellow. Maize and potatoes could grow in the sandy soils with adequate rain, but the brown and black soils worked better during drier times. A final earthen type, *letsopa* (clay) provided an important building material. People dug *letsopa* from designated pits in or around villages, adding cattle and horse dung, to make *molilo* (dung plaster).<sup>52</sup> Basotho soil classifications reflected utility, but these classifications also show a systematic understanding of agro-ecology and the central place of soil in that ecology.

Basotho land managers, like their European counterparts in South Africa, noticed changes in this ecology. Most written evidence that we have showing Basotho concerns of erosion comes from members of the Basutoland National Council, and to some extent, from Sesotho language newspapers too. The minutes of BNC proceedings cannot fully explain what people knew and did not know about soil erosion. These voices, however, do provide texture to this story by giving us a sense of how Basotho and Europeans discussed erosion, where erosion was happening and where it was not. As chiefs and other prominent Basotho, most BNC members managed land across the territory, and interacted with commoners at

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

public meetings, especially local grazing supervisors, farmers, stockowners, and builders.

In the BNC, matters of land use, labor, and finance intertwined with knowledge of soil erosion and possible approaches to conservation. In his opening address to the first session of the BNC in July 1903, resident commissioner Herbert Sloley said that “the dongas in the country are a serious evil, and you should speak of means for checking them.” Drawing on Willcocks’ recommendations from the 1901 irrigation report, Sloley reiterated that “the planting of trees will improve the country.” A chief from Maseru district agreed, but issues of law and migrant passes dominated the agenda at that first meeting.<sup>53</sup> But that same year, the veterinary department under Frank Verney built stone walls across gullies in Mafeteng district as an experimental project.<sup>54</sup>

Five years later the department took steps in all districts to begin similar experiments, establishing four tree nurseries.<sup>55</sup> In 1910 the assistant commissioner in Qacha’s Nek requested seeds for black and silver wattle, explaining that many chiefs were requesting seedlings. Chiefs in Qacha’s Nek sought support for planting trees even at this early stage when soil erosion was a relatively minor problem there. Undoubtedly, the chiefs’ desire for fuel wood, and for building material for bigger architectural styles also drove their desire for trees.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> TNA, CO 646, BNC Sessional Papers, 1903.

<sup>54</sup> CAR 1902-03, p. 35.

<sup>55</sup> *Proceedings of the Basutoland National Council, 1908*, 27-29.

<sup>56</sup> LNA, Qacha’s Nek District Letters for 1910, AC Qacha’s Nek to GS, 21 March 1910.

When the Basutoland government created the new Department of Agriculture in 1911 with Laurie Wachter at the helm, many Basotho and other observers believed soil erosion to be a problem in the lowland and foothill areas.<sup>57</sup> The Maloti, as Verney reported to the Drought Commission in 1921, had thus far “escaped this persecution.” But Verney also speculated that severe erosion would accelerate in the mountains where the ecological impact of more people, more cultivated fields, and more animals would be accentuated by the “more violent agencies of snow, greater extremes of heat and cold and thunder storms.”<sup>58</sup> From his new position, Wachter led efforts to prevent and reclaim dongas, starting in Maseru district. With the cooperation of local chiefs and Basotho laborers, the conservation crews fenced-in dongas in which they built stone dams and planted willow, pine, cherry, aloe, and prickly pear.<sup>59</sup>

Meanwhile, near the town of Teyateyaneng, a crew created an experimental enclosure on “a piece of land very badly cut into by dongas” where they planted some 30,000 poplar and willow trees.<sup>60</sup> The department carried out these initial efforts on a shoestring budget and the schemes were limited in scale, but this work still demonstrated a belief in afforestation as the primary way to conserve soil in the 1910s. Although some chiefs supported afforestation, Wachter complained of an

---

<sup>57</sup> CAR 1912-13, p. 7; Nathan Sekhesa, “Makhulo a Felile,” *Leselinyana*, 3 October 1912.

<sup>58</sup> Verney to GS, 13 October 1921, in *Final Report of the Drought Commission*, 204-05.

<sup>59</sup> CAR 1912-13, p. 7.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

“apathy and indifference of the natives to the evils of soil erosion and to the question of afforestation generally.”<sup>61</sup>

What Wachter saw as apathy was not simply laziness. The ways in which the schemes unfolded from 1912 suggest that motivating people to plant and maintain trees involved a cultural change about which chiefs and commoners alike were uneasy, though not necessarily resistant to. During WW I the schemes slowed when several thousand Basotho and Wachter too, served the British war effort in Europe. Government expenditures remained fairly constant through the war years because the entire Basutoland budget for agriculture, education, public works etc. came from locally generated revenues, especially a hut tax on all married men and a customs duty. Erosion persisted during the war and so too did public discourse on the problem.<sup>62</sup>

Phillip Molise, a counselor from Maseru, spoke to the BNC about erosion in 1916. Molise said that Basotho lose much through “the washing away of our land” and that the “difficulty had always been money.” He continued, “I am speaking of the government money because the dongas have increased...it is a pity that the matter was not brought forward earlier, now the country is full of them.” Molise argued that

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> After the 1912-1913 colonial report there is hardly a mention of soil conservation until 1927, but the matters persisted in the Proceedings of the BNC. This omission in official reports was due in part to Wachter’s absence, but also due to the dedication of the veterinary and agriculture departments to eliminating sheep scab and burweed during these years (see Chapter 3). On expenditures, see TNA, CO 646, BNC Sessional Papers, 1913 and 1916; CAR 1916-17, p. 3. In 1913 the Basutoland government reported spending £18,634 on agriculture out of £153,485 total. In 1916, during the height of the war in Europe, £15,907 out of £161,000 was spent on agriculture. Public works expenditure was consistently the highest expense, which may have included some funds for afforestation and donga reclamation.

the matter had become too important for Basotho alone to manage and that “we must now cry to the government for help.” Trees, he believed, were important for the soil and as fuel, but he added that the problem was goats because they ate the trees once they were planted.<sup>63</sup>

The matter of goats represented a larger interplay of local culture and economy with conservation science. Molise had presumably singled out goats and not cattle or sheep because the former tended to graze more indiscriminately, leaving no stubble behind. One counselor suggested that all goats be removed to the mountains so that trees could thrive in the eroded lowlands. Another man disagreed, insisting that “we prefer goats to trees” because many people live from milking them, especially poorer people. RC Sloley concurred, saying that people used goats to feed children. The consensus was that both trees and goats (and other livestock) could coexist in new conservation systems. But the question of how to integrate afforestation with the Sesotho *leboella* system (See Chap. 1), in which local chiefs regulated access to certain spaces around villages, was less clear. Leboella spaces included areas in between cultivated fields and around paths and roads where erosion was most acute, but did not extend to open commonage.<sup>64</sup>

So where could people raise trees to stabilize soil and provide fuel wood? Sloley proposed that villages establish tree plantations on rocky grounds that were used for neither grazing nor cultivation, and also in dongas. He suggested that the

---

<sup>63</sup> TNA, CO 646, BNC Sessional Papers, 1916.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



government might partially pay for fencing material for those that wanted to protect young trees. The paramount chief responded that even gardens and trees planted in rocky areas technically belonged to chiefs; a point which raised important issues about potentially new types of property and new forms of labor. If a person planted and maintained trees in a common area, did that make them his to use or sell? Would chiefs have the right to call on *letsema* labor for conservation work? Molise and others had also asked for the government to provide expertise on donga prevention and reclamation. James MacGregor, an author, translator, and colonial official with thirty years' experience in the administration, told the BNC that the government had meant for initial afforestation projects to pass knowledge on to Basotho about which species to put where and how to plant and maintain the various species. Advocates hoped that common Basotho could then do the work by planting seedlings obtained from government nurseries.<sup>65</sup>

Conservation workers earned small wages for their efforts at first, but now, Sloley insisted that chiefs needed to lead the way by calling out *letsema* to plant trees. Some chiefs agreed that people would oblige this use of *letsema*, while others protested. A chief from Maseru district said bluntly: "the dongas are deep and the government should be responsible for the work...people may respond to one work order from the chiefs but otherwise they won't do it." He reminded the council that building walls and planting trees was arduous work. People had to "quarry stone and carry it to the slood [gully] on sledges." Repeatedly digging holes for seedlings

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

made for a long day's work too. This demand on commoners' labor, alongside the anti-burweed campaigns that were happening concurrently, seemed unreasonable to most Basotho. This was likely not only because they wanted cash for certain types of labor, but it was probably unclear to many people how their work would protect soil, let alone foster broader prosperity. At the close of the 1916 BNC proceedings, the relationship between property, labor, and conservation remained uncertain.<sup>66</sup>

Following the South African Drought Commission's recommendations in 1923, Basutoland's Department of Agriculture expanded its reach, but soil conservation remained part of a broader effort to change land-use practices rather than one of state-led engineering schemes. The government launched the agricultural demonstration program in 1924 for this purpose. Basotho demonstrators showed people about trees, manuring, gardening, and contour plowing. For instance, demonstrators showed people that by using animal manure in fields and gardens, instead of drying and burning it as fuel, farmers could sustain soil fertility and improve harvests. Conservation experts in the transnational sphere stressed the importance of adopting this practice. But for Basotho, especially mountain dwellers, dried manure (*lisu*) was often the only available fuel, or at least the easiest fuel to obtain.<sup>67</sup>

For conservationists, trees were the obvious answer to this problem. In some places, tree planting did accelerate, especially where people appropriated certain

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> LNA, S3/1/1/6, Report on Agricultural Demonstration Work, 1 September 1926.

cultivars for their own purposes. For instance, under Chief Makhaola of Qacha's Nek who generally supported afforestation, many people cultivated American aloe (*Agave americana*) to create enclosures for their livestock (See Figure 5.1).



**Figure 5.1**  
Leseling Village, Qacha's Nek  
Note: the aloe enclosures cultivated behind the village and between homesteads.  
Photo by author, May 2015

Arranged in various patterns, these giant aloe plants mark the landscape through much of Lesotho.<sup>68</sup> But like in the 1920s of the United States, the Basutoland government devoted relatively few financial and human resources towards soil conservation. Still, there were those Basotho who continued efforts by planting trees and organizing work parties. Others wrote in *Leselinyana* to publicize the problem and to urge action, complementing what Wachter wrote in propaganda

---

<sup>68</sup> *Agave americana* was introduced in the early 1900s. See Wachter, in *Final Report of the Drought Commission*, 205-06; Ambrose et al., *Biological Diversity*, 6. I draw here on my field observations, conversations, and photographs.

pamphlets that were translated into Sesotho and distributed to farmers. But knowledge of erosion on the national scale was still limited. No comprehensive surveys of Lesotho's ecological base had yet been done in 1930.<sup>69</sup>

In May 1931 Russell Thornton, then the Director of Native Agriculture in South Africa, conducted the first such survey of Basutoland at the request of the British High Commission. He toured the lowlands and a sliver of the mountain areas in order to assess the feasibility of establishing a pasture experiment station and a reclamation service "as a means of improving the natural pasture, checking pasture denudation, and consequent soil erosion." He believed that Lesotho's soil was some of the most fertile and well-watered in South Africa. He concluded, however, that sheet and gully erosion were "rife throughout the lowlands," much of the best soil having already "found its way to the sea." Unless checked, the rest of the soil was sure to follow.<sup>70</sup>

As for the highlands, Thornton reported that erosion was minor compared to the lowlands. But he also wrote that people were plowing steep slopes as they abandoned other fields that had been overcome by weeds. He never traveled to Qacha's Nek, but to see a similar highland environment he did visit the area around Maletsunyane Falls. Bitter-karoo bush (*Chrysocoma tenuifolia*), according to Thornton, had displaced native grasses in over grazed areas, but the plant still helped anchor soil to steep mountain slopes, if less so than grass. He recommended

---

<sup>69</sup> For example, Sayce, "Ethno-Geographical Essay," 268, 278, 288; N.A.M., "Hlaba-hlabane le mangope," *Leselinyana*, 5 December 1924; Lawrence Wachter, "Temo Lesotho," *Naledi Ea Lesotho*, 27 March, 3 April, and 10 April 1925; "Tree Planting in Lesotho," *Leselinyana*, 22 August 1930.

<sup>70</sup> SAB, NTS, Vol. 10163, Ref. 52/419, Thornton, "Report on Pastoral and Agricultural Conditions."

that the Department of Agriculture in Basutoland continue its demonstration work, donga reclamation, and stock improvement programs, but he also suggested more legal proclamations to overhaul Basotho land use practices. He argued that if the Scab Act of 1923 had led to the elimination of sheep scab through compulsory dipping, then new proclamations could effectively force people to build fences and rotate grazing between paddocks, limit the number of stock a man could own, and prevent farmers from plowing steep slopes. Thornton asserted that overhauling the system of "communal farming which is recognized as the worst system in the world, as it stifles all individual effort whether for the betterment of stock, grazing, or agricultural practice....would largely solve these difficulties."<sup>71</sup>

Thornton's report provides a historical snapshot of only a few places in Basutoland. Yet more importantly, his misconceptions draw attention to several important realities. First, he drew his conclusions by observing a seasonal landscape in late May, a time when herders began returning most livestock to the villages for the cold winter months, leaving the heavily grazed high pastures behind to regenerate for the following year. Typically people awaited the harvest during this time, leaving little activity in the fields for him to observe. Second, the land tenure system was not communal in the strict sense. Chiefs were supposed to regulate residential spaces, who plowed which fields, and what animals grazed which pastures around the village, and at what time of year. Pastures in the higher cattle

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

post country was another matter entirely, as will be shown.<sup>72</sup> Though he agreed with Thornton in theory, the resident commissioner at that time, J.C. Sturrock counter argued that pushing for freehold tenure without broad support from the Basotho would do more harm than good. Not only would it outrage the chiefs, but it would leave many people without land and thus, without an incentive to learn about or participate in soil conservation activities.<sup>73</sup>

Lastly, Thornton failed to recognize that plowing new fields on steep slopes had little to do with laziness and everything to do demography and economy. Despite population growth, there was a shortage of motivated labor. The population of Qacha's Nek, including the area that became Mokhotlong district, had nearly tripled between 1911 and 1936, from 36,000 residents to near 95,000. Some of the increase came from people migrating from the lowlands and from South Africa to seek new residences along with field allocations and access to cattle posts.<sup>74</sup> Oscillating labor migration to South Africa, as a percentage of total population, had increased by 10% between 1911 and 1936. Absentee men were not present at home to perform the tasks that Thornton believed were essential to improved farming, especially plowing several times per year and planting cover crops to control weeds and fix nitrogen. Instead, many fields sat fallow in the winter after being grazed down to stubble, allowing weeds to flourish. Before the plow revolution and when arable lands were more abundant, people did abandon old fields to plow new ones.

---

<sup>72</sup> See, for example, Staples and Hudson, *Ecological Survey*, 22-24; Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 75-77, 86; Quinlan, "Marena a Lesotho," 115-16.

<sup>73</sup> SAB, NTS, Vol. 10163, Ref. 52/419, J.C. Sturrock to HC Stanley, 4 December 1931.

<sup>74</sup> *Basutoland Census for 1911*, 6-7; *Census for 1936*, 4; Interview with Seleso Tsoako, 19 January 2015.

But by 1930, deep plowing with draft power, especially on the steep slopes of the Maloti, had amplified the ecological impact of the practice.<sup>75</sup>

Sturrock claimed that the current budget could not support a new experiment station, but he still believed that Basotho leaders should consider Thornton's recommendations. Some chiefs agreed with him. Chief Makhaola, according to Sturrock, "was very fully alive to the danger, and to the extent to which the loss of pasture had already occurred." Sturrock suggested that Makhaola, among others, wanted to modify existing grazing practices to improve vegetation and soil stability. While considering the limited historical material for precisely documenting ecological change, there seems little doubt that officials as well as a diverse group of land users in Lesotho and South Africa believed that erosion posed an obstacle to their agrarian aspirations. Although there was support for some aspects of a conservation program, the Basutoland government lacked the financial and human resources to begin an extensive anti-erosion effort before 1935.<sup>76</sup>

#### **5.4 - Crisis, Collecting Data, and Conservation Planning, 1932-1936**

As Christmas of 1933 approached, Basotho looked forward to 1934. As one Mosotho wrote, "we wave our delightful farewell to the passing year... a year of

---

<sup>75</sup> *Basutoland Census for 1911*, 12-13; *Census for 1936*, 5; According to Sheddick, labor shortage as much as land shortage contributed to farmers plowing steep lands in the 1930s; See *Land Tenure*, 84-86; See also, Piers Blaikie, *The Political Economy of Soil Erosion in Developing Countries* (New York: Routledge, 1985).

<sup>76</sup> SAB, NTS, Vol. 10163, Ref. 52/419, J.C. Sturrock to HC Stanley, 4 December 1931.

hardships, distress, and misery.”<sup>77</sup> Wool and mohair prices had plunged after 1929, shrinking Lesotho’s main export industry. For other families, the slump in gold, coal, or other commodity prices meant less work and remittances from men working in South Africa.<sup>78</sup> Then, the worst drought in living memory began in Basutoland in 1932. Farmers had sown crops in a dry spring in 1932. After a sprinkling of mid-summer rains, the drought continued. In autumn 1933 some farmers reaped barely enough grain to last the winter. Others reaped nothing at all. The winter came and the winds blew the desiccated soil from pastures and fields, swirling dust everywhere.<sup>79</sup>

People scrambled to survive. Women scoured the countryside in vain for any edible greens and roots. Many Basotho fled to towns, or into South Africa to search for work or assistance from relatives. Government officials planned relief efforts to feed the hungry. In government sponsored food-for-work programs, able-bodied people built small dams, repaired roads, and stabilized dongas in exchange for maize meal rations. Men and women who could not work received rations too. People who had sheep and goats to spare slaughtered them for food and shared the meat within village social networks.<sup>80</sup>

According to official reports, the Famine Relief Department assisted people in all districts except Qacha’s Nek, where officials believed people were better off. This lesser impact owed, in part, to a fair wheat harvest in 1933 and the

---

<sup>77</sup> “A Review of the Year,” *Mochochonono*, 20 December 1933.

<sup>78</sup> Pim, *Financial and Economic*, 190.

<sup>79</sup> CAR 1933, p. 34; Jan Qethoha, “Famine Relief in Basutoland,” *Mochochonono*, 20 December 1933.

<sup>80</sup> CAR 1933, pp. 34-36.



slaughtering of small stock, which were more numerous in the mountains. Still, some highlanders complained that they too deserved assistance. When heavy rains arrived in November and December 1933, the government loaned 30 lbs. of maize seed to each farmer to insure a good harvest for the following year.<sup>81</sup> But few people sowed the seed. The hungriest people ate it, while others reported that their draft oxen had died in the drought or were simply too weak to plow. Some people argued that the government could do more.<sup>82</sup>

The experience of drought and famine in 1933 had profound impact on how Basutoland's anti-erosion programs unfolded with respect to culture, politics, and ecology. Ecological changes had occurred. Small stock declined by over 500,000 animals because people had eaten so many sheep and goats. In Qacha's Nek of 1934, stockowners possessed only 33% of the small stock that they had in 1931. Cattle struggled to subsist on parched pastures and dried-up watering holes. Officials estimated that 120,000 cattle died during 1933 and owners sold another 30,000 to buyers in the Union.<sup>83</sup> Although people lamented the loss of animals, officials pointed out that the destocking had a "beneficial effect on the pasturage, and areas that looked like permanent deserts were now one waving mass of grass."<sup>84</sup>

The drought also helped shift conversations about government interventions into rural lives. While some critics scorned the government for its inept relief

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Qethoha, "Famine Relief;" Mohlohlo Majara, "Tlala Lesotho," *Leselinyana*, 18 October 1933; W.N. Mohajana, "Tlala le Komello, Phamong," *Leselinyana*, 8 November 1933.

<sup>83</sup> CAR 1933, p. 13; Pim, *Financial and Economic*, 194.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.; Qethoha, "Famine Relief;" Majara, "Tlala Lesotho."

efforts, other people thanked it for the food-for-work, or just for the food. In terms of stimulating public interest and government initiative, this drought was for Basutoland what the 1919 drought was for South Africa. Members of the BNC argued that the government should strengthen agricultural education initiatives, improve livestock and pastures, and prevent soil erosion.<sup>85</sup> In addition to national political discourse, Christian missions became more involved in farming and erosion control than in the past. Especially in Qacha's Nek, *Lerole* created an opportunity for Catholics to expand into areas where the government had devoted few resources for famine relief. It was in this period that the Catholics accelerated their program for social action by espousing the virtues of agriculture and self-help. After 1933, anti-erosion featured in this program too.<sup>86</sup>

But Catholic leaders and political groups too, believed that the government should invest more to improve rural lives. Basutoland Progressive Association (BPA) members echoed calls by government and mission leaders for agricultural improvement to protect against future shocks. They also advocated for overhauls of the political system in which they believed that chiefs obstructed development by abusing *letsema*, neglecting their land regulatory duties, and collecting excessive taxes.<sup>87</sup> *Lekhotla la Bafo* (council of the commoners) took a more political economic

---

<sup>85</sup> K.P. Mabela, "Likolo tsa Temo Lesotho," *Leselinyana*, 16 August 1933; "BNC Proceedings," *Mochochonono*, 5 September 1934; Assa Moshabesha, "Teach us to be better farmers," *Mochochonono*, 26 September 1934.

<sup>86</sup> Hincks, *Quest for Peace*, 491-92.

<sup>87</sup> On support from the BPA, see in *Mochochonono*: "Cooperative Societies: Reverend B. Huss of Mariazell Mission," 27 May 1931; "Matters of the BNC Proceedings," 31 October 1934; John

approach, arguing that the drought and famine was first and foremost, a consequence of imperial (British and South African) exploitation of Basotho people, sheep, and pastures. Although LLB members were skeptical of financial assistance from London, they believed that the Basutoland government could use tax revenues, including proceeds from the wool export duty, to improve rural lives.<sup>88</sup>

Despite political differences, evidence suggests that many secular and church leaders believed that the government should lead anti-erosion efforts, which meant developing agriculture and livestock in ways that would foster both economic prosperity and ecological stability.<sup>89</sup> How to achieve these ends was less clear. After the drought the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs in London commissioned the economist Alan Pim to report on the financial and economic position of Basutoland. In October 1934 Pim embarked on a fact-finding mission with Mr. S. Milligan, the representative in South Africa of the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation. Pim toured Basutoland's populated lowlands and the highlands too, also traveling to the Transkei to see the agricultural colleges at Tsolo and Fort Cox. He reviewed Basutoland's revenues, expenditures, and industries, especially agriculture and wool, to present possibilities for development.<sup>90</sup>

---

Monaheng, "Don't Be Misled. Sons of Basutoland," 12 December 1934; "Sir Alan Pim's Report," 19 June 1935.

<sup>88</sup> Edgar, *Prophets with Honour*, 10-15.

<sup>89</sup> On support by church leaders, see P.R. Molise, "Kopano ea Balemi Roma," *Moeletsi oa Basotho*, 18 April 1934; A.A., "Thibelo ea Mangope," *Leselinyana*, 19 June 1935; Edward Mohapeloa, "Khoholeho ea Mobu," *Leselinyana*, 6 September 1933.

<sup>90</sup> Pim, *Financial and Economic*, vi-viii.

Pim claimed that Basutoland faced two main obstacles to improving agriculture and livestock which he saw as two parts of the one viable path for economic development. First, he argued that soil erosion must be dealt with on a large scale. Second, if livestock theft continued unchecked it would prevent stockowners from improving their stock. In contrast to the South African Drought Commission's findings about the link between jackals, kraaling, and erosion, Pim made no such ecological connection between theft, kraaling, and erosion in Basutoland, although he did propose a livestock registration system for this reason. By the 1930s, especially following *Lerole*, stock theft seemed to be on the rise in the mountains, and kraaling was the common response to secure animals from thieves.<sup>91</sup> Although Pim disagreed with Milligan on some points of the erosion problem, its extent and causes, he reproduced Milligan's report verbatim.<sup>92</sup>

Milligan believed that historically soil conservation, such as terracing, had been done "by the pick of the world's agriculturalists, hardworking and industrious peoples possessed of a sound hereditary knowledge of hill cultivation." By contrast, Milligan believed that the Basotho "were an ignorant population who have no knowledge of how to deal with such questions."<sup>93</sup> That Basotho had developed few soil conservation techniques in arable agriculture, at least in terms of physical structures, seems accurate enough. But Milligan ignored the political-economic reality in which Basotho lived, farmed and reared animals in the past and present.

---

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 134; "Combatting Stock Theft," *Mochochonono*, 21 November 1936.

<sup>92</sup> Pim, *Financial and Economic*, 134-43; Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, 145-48.

<sup>93</sup> Milligan, quoted in Pim, *Financial and Economic*, 136-37.

Cultivating steep slopes above 6000 feet was new for Basotho in the late 1800s. Basotho had only recently taken up ox-drawn plows to break up more grassland. This technological change occurred while farmers simultaneously worked smaller, fixed plots as the population grew within the constrained political boundaries. Full-time farming for migrant workers, moreover, was near impossible. But migrants made what they believed to be the best of limited choices in order to pay taxes, purchase consumer goods, and invest in cattle. Milligan's assumptions obscured a broader context that might have offered planners a better understanding of erosion and how to mitigate it, even within the racist and segregationist political landscape of southern Africa. Still, Milligan's conclusions, more or less, corroborate what Basotho and others indicated earlier: erosion posed a serious problem that required attention if Basotho wanted to farm for subsistence and market purposes.<sup>94</sup>

The authors reported that erosion in the lowlands and highlands resulted from different causes and should thus be handled differently. In the populated lowlands, sheet and donga erosion progressed around places where animals gathered or traversed on a regular basis such as at missions, traders, dipping stations, and along roads and paths, stripping away the vegetation. Water collected from slopes above these places and when heavy rains fell, run-off rushed over the exposed ground and carried soil away. Erosion had damaged arable fields much less

---

<sup>94</sup> Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 73-78; Eldredge, *South African Kingdom*, 191-94; Kimble, *Migrant Labour*, 224-230; On population, migrant labor, farmers, and soil erosion, see Michael Mortimer and Mary Tiffen, *More People, Less Erosion: Environmental Recovery in Kenya* (New York: J. Wiley, 1994); Berry, *No Condition is Permanent*.

so, but Milligan, without measuring scientifically, estimated that 10% of arable fields needed rehabilitation.<sup>95</sup>

Pim and Milligan agreed with Thornton and other earlier observers that the mountains were less eroded. They still insisted that the slopes were losing soil, especially in steep valleys and along bridle paths. Herders typically took animals to the valleys and slopes with the sweetest fodder, where animals grazed and trampled the grass, exposing the soil. Bitter Karoo bush grew in the disturbed soil. Although unpalatable to animals, this shrub that Basotho called *sehalahala* served “a useful purpose in arresting soil erosion.” Plowing steep slopes, a practice well established in Qacha’s Nek by 1935, exposed loose soils to, among other forces, gravity.<sup>96</sup>

For rehabilitating the lowlands, Pim recommended that the Basutoland government invest in large scale conservation works. He cited two models to follow. One was the work of Mr. H. Hobson, a South African farmer who had improved his land by building a system of contour ridges and blocking up dongas; measures which distributed water across wider areas while encouraging new vegetation. The second model was in the Herschel district, where Thornton and his colleagues were building a network of earthen structures that were supposedly helping to prevent erosion and revegetate a badly denuded landscape.<sup>97</sup>

Conservation plans for the mountains were different. Pim saw vegetation change and erosion in the mountains as a “complex issue” linking Basotho stocking

---

<sup>95</sup> Milligan, quoted in Pim, *Financial and Economic*, 135, 140-41.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

practices, grazing regulations, chiefs, and the ecology of specific plants. Pim said that to plan conservation schemes for the mountains in 1935, given officials' limited understanding of ecology and culture there, would "amount to working in the dark." In addition to encouraging more demonstration activities, he asked the Dominions Office to commission an ecological survey to better understand these relationships. The following year Staples and Hudson conducted their *Ecological Survey* (See Chaps. 1 & 3). It is puzzling that Pim did not see the same "complex issues" at work in the lowlands. Pim's report, including detailed budgets for anti-erosion work in the lowlands, provided the Basutoland government with knowledge that was transferable within colonial policy-making networks, to draw up financial and logistical plans to begin a new phase of soil conservation.<sup>98</sup>

Not surprisingly, Basutoland's funding needs attracted regional interest. To support Basutoland's conservation plans while asserting its regional political ambitions, the Union of South Africa proposed partial funding in cooperation with the Dominions Office's contribution. In a late 1935 memorandum, the Secretary for Native Affairs proposed financial support to Bechuanaland and Swaziland, the other two high commission territories, to drill boreholes and build irrigation dams. Basutoland would receive support for its anti-erosion plans.<sup>99</sup> The secretary said the grants would help prepare the territories for transfer to the Union. As the new director of agriculture in Basutoland, Thornton believed it was folly to use the

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 140-43, 221-22; Staples and Hudson, *Ecological Survey*, 45-46.

<sup>99</sup> TNA, FCO 141/872, Memorandum of the principal points discussed by the minister and Secretary for Native Affairs with representatives of the high commission, 12 November 1935.

conservation works as a “political lever” to incorporate the territory into South Africa. Although Thornton believed that transfer was in the best interest of the Basotho, and an eventual inevitability, he argued that the Union funding would make his job tougher by squandering the support of the people for the anti-erosion schemes which he had “fought hard to gain trust in.” The RC agreed with Thornton, and assured Basotho leaders that transfer would never happen without a full national discussion.<sup>100</sup>

Paramount Chief Griffith Lerotholi discussed this proposal with the BNC before declaring that although Basotho wanted technical assistance with anti-erosion projects, the nation wanted no financial support from the Union. On this point, Showers and Malehleha seem to be mistaken when they argue that Chief Griffith opposed any soil conservation measures until a last minute deal. Evidence suggests that although some chiefs and commoners disputed aspects of conservation through the 1950s, such as contour banks, rotational grazing, and funding sources, there was little opposition to the idea of government-led anti-erosion schemes on the whole.<sup>101</sup>

By the mid-1930s, knowledge and fear about soil erosion ran deep for many Basotho, especially with *Lerole* in recent memory; but so too, did fear about incorporation into the Union. Local newspapers translated and published parts of the memorandum, as they did the actual Pim Report. Several contributors wrote

---

<sup>100</sup> TNA, FCO 141/872, Thornton to E.O. Richards (RC), 20 November 1935; Richards to William Clark (HC), 20 November 1935.

<sup>101</sup> Showers and Malahleha, “Oral Evidence;” See also, Driver, “Theory and Politics,” 170-71.



strongly against this proposal, explaining that Basotho knew about the bad treatment that Africans received in the Union, and would refuse incorporation. These sentiments were widely shared amongst Basotho, be they chiefs or commoners, BPA or LLB members. This demonstrates a firm resistance against territorial threats and Union meddling in Lesotho's affairs. This was hardly the end of Union meddling. But this dialog also demonstrates that many, if not most, Basotho wanted the conservation works, including the science that underlay it. Conceding that the Basotho were in need of securing food and protecting their soil, Griffith even suggested that Basotho inquire into selling mineral rights to pay for the program. Or, he claimed, Basotho would do the work for free.<sup>102</sup>

Neither approach was necessary at that time. In 1936 the Colonial Development Fund approved several loans for Basutoland. The overwhelming bulk of it, £160,000, went towards "large scale anti-erosion works," while smaller allocations went to fund the ecological survey, build wool sheds, and erect bull camps for stock improvement.<sup>103</sup> Thornton stayed at the department's helm but the engineer L. H. Collett took over the new wing created for anti-erosion work. Collett had worked with Thornton on the conservation scheme in Herschel. Beginning in 1933, Collett employed 500 men and 300 women to build contour banks and reclaim dongas in Herschel, paying them small daily wages.<sup>104</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> TNA, FCO 141/872, Chief Griffith Lerotholi to RC Richards, 30 March 1936; GS, Maseru to the Editors of *Leselinyana*, *Mochochonono*, *Moeletsi*, and *Basutoland News*, 11 April 1936; "Basutoland and Erosion," *Cape Times*, 28 April 1936; "Will Basotho Accept," *Mochochonono*, 2 May 1936.

<sup>103</sup> RDA 1936, p. 1.

<sup>104</sup> Showers, "Soil Erosion"; Beinart, *Rise of Conservation*, 348-49.

Anti-erosion in Herschel seemed successful at first, but by 1937 the schemes encountered problems that foreshadowed failures to come in Lesotho's own schemes. Rain water pooled up behind contour banks, breaching the structures which were especially vulnerable before vegetation grew on them, which served to strengthen the integrity of earthworks. Often, crews hastily built the banks. Breaches enabled water to rush across fields, carrying away soil and carving gullies in the process. Many farmers, encouraged by political leaders, deliberately plowed up contour banks. In other cases the banks were poorly placed to withstand local rains. As William Beinart concluded, "contour banks were vulnerable in Herschel for both environmental and social reasons."<sup>105</sup> Nonetheless, Collett began work in Basutoland while the impact of the Herschel schemes remained uncertain. After nearly three years on the Basutoland schemes, Collett toured the US with the support of a Carnegie Grant, returning to Basutoland in December 1938, ready to ramp up anti-erosion work.<sup>106</sup>

## **5.5 - New Conservation Work Begins, 1935-1941**

The ways planners organized people to perform conservation work and the nature of the work performed, speaks to how knowledge of erosion as a cultural and ecological process circulated amongst engineers, foremen, and workers. Primary

---

<sup>105</sup> Beinart, *Rise of Conservation*, 349-51; Kate Showers, "Soil Erosion and Conservation: An International Cautionary Tale," in Warkentin, ed., *Footprints*, 396-97.

<sup>106</sup> RDA 1938, p. 62.

sources that would document the experiences of the men and women who worked on these projects are scarce, but we can infer some things about how people understood these projects by recreating local context. Thomas Andrews has shown for the case of coal mining in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Colorado that understanding the workscape as “a place shaped by the interplay of human labor and natural processes,” can reveal “how nature shaped the lived experience, identity, and politics” of those performing the labor. For those Basotho involved directly in anti-erosion work, what they knew about their environment, and the things they learned through the work, occurred within a particular workscape.<sup>107</sup>

Beginning in late 1935, Collett supervised several projects in Morija, Matsieng, and Roma, where plow cultivation had the longest history. Being centers of missionary influence (Roma and Morija) and the royal village (Matsieng), these places seemed obvious starting points for both environmental and political reasons. In December 1935, for example, seventy-five Basotho laborers, including fifteen women, worked under a European foreman on the “Matsieng Gang.” Men quarried stone and hauled it to gullied areas where others erected retaining walls on the banks of dongas, and built weirs across donga floors. For draught power, the Matsieng Gang harnessed more than three dozen oxen to transport stone by sledge. To build contour banks, they guided ox-drawn plows along contours, using picks,

---

<sup>107</sup> Thomas Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 125; See also, Stefania Barca, “Laboring the Earth: Transnational Reflections on the Environmental History of Work,” *Environmental History* 19, no. 1 (2014): 3-27; For a different approach to labor, commodity production, and political struggle in colonial Africa, see Atkins, *The Moon is Dead!*; Allen Isaacman, *Cotton is the Mother of Poverty: Peasants, Work, and Rural Struggle in Colonial Mozambique, 1938-1961* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995).

shovels, and harrows to smooth out the structures. Women planted grass on the freshly constructed contours and planted willow and acacia trees in dongas and beside stream beds. Indeed, these were all laborious and poorly paid tasks, but they also required skill. Excavating, shaping, and repositioning earth and rock, and planting trees were not new tasks for Basotho in 1935. But performing these specific tasks for wages in a concerted effort under a non-chief authority to build a system for controlling water and conserving soil was new work.<sup>108</sup>

Earnings on this early labor force varied and reflected a colonial and gendered division of labor. The European foreman, often a local trader who had received training “in the practical side of conservation work,” earned £25 for a 25-day work month. Basotho were paid by the day. “Head boys,” who were Basotho men that supervised smaller crews and presumably had some training, earned two shillings per day. The bulk of male laborers earned less than nine pence per day. Women earned just four pence per day.<sup>109</sup> Dwarfed by the European supervisors’ pay rates, these wages were less than what people could earn on farms or mines, or in cities in South Africa, but the anti-erosion work offered some money for work near home (See Figure 5.2). Agricultural officers, with the cooperation of local chiefs, assembled conservation crews of people who, quite often, were too old or unfit to work in the mines.<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>108</sup> LNA, S/165 538 II, L.H. Collett, Soil reclamation and Donga Prevention Report, 6 December 1935.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.; LNA, S/165 538 II, Lawrence Wachter, Quarterly Agricultural Report, 16 January 1937.

<sup>110</sup> By comparison, mines paid £3 per thirty shifts in 1936. CAR 1936, p. 22. See TNA, DO 119/1055, Confidential Reports on Chiefs, 1935.



**Figure 5.2**

Constructing a contour bank using a  
ditcher and oxen, 1936

Source: TNA, CO 1069-211

The government extended these anti-erosion projects over the next few years. With each passing year Basotho men and women knew more about the technical, ecological, and social aspects of these schemes. When a crew showed up with its foreman to build contours in village fields, it is likely that many people knew about the schemes ahead of time. BNC members had discussed Pim's report, and newspaper editors published several of its main findings.<sup>111</sup> Meanwhile, agricultural

---

<sup>111</sup> RDA 1938, p. 63; RDA 1940, p. 13; TNA, FCO 141/872, J.C. Sims, GS to A.G. Marwick, 14 April 1936; "Soil Erosion: Points to Remember," *Leselinyana*, 1 May 1935; "Extracts from the Pim Report," *Mochochonono*, 23 October 1935.

demonstrators had continued their work in all districts, promoting cultural and biological approaches to soil conservation: terraced gardening, manuring, tree planting, crop rotation, and livestock improvement. As a prominent example, Edwin Ntsasa, one of the first demonstrators in Lesotho, continued rural outreach in several districts since starting work in 1924. Ntsasa also addressed farmers by writing in several publications from the 1920s into the 1950s. He wrote to explain the merits of soil conservation systems, linking the physical engineering aspects of it to cultural changes, such as vegetable gardening. Ntsasa brought his experience and knowledge to the BNC where he served as a special agricultural department representative in the late 1940s.<sup>112</sup>

Collett, too, demonstrated how conservation structures worked and how to maintain them. Beginning in late 1935, he addressed audiences in Morija, Roma, and elsewhere in the lowlands, explaining that conservation was more than just building and maintaining structures; it required the very cultural changes that had been pushed by demonstrators like Ntsasa.<sup>113</sup> Laurie Wachter, whose career as an agricultural officer in Basutoland spanned three decades, was another important part of the network for circulating knowledge. He did so by lecturing about manuring, contour plowing, and stock improvement as cultural methods for maintaining soil. Perhaps more than any other European official, Wachter embodied

---

<sup>112</sup> LNA, S/166 538 I, L. Wachter, Quarterly Reports for 17 November 1935 and 7 September 1937; Edwin Ntsasa, "Agriculture," *Our Gazette: Morija Training Institution* 1 (October 1925): 4; E. Ntsasa, "Vegetable Gardening in Basutoland," *Pampiri ea Balemi ba Lesotho* 1, no. 1 (1955): 40-43.

<sup>113</sup> LNA, S/165 538 II, L. Wachter, Quarterly Report, 11 May 1936; L. H. Collett, Report and Transport Log, November 1935 and February 1936; RDA 1936, p. 14.

the cultural and biological approach; also taking interest in the mountains, touring the region regularly to evaluate demonstrators there.<sup>114</sup>

It was during the 1930s, too, that the Catholic Church expanded its network of outstations. The Catholic program of social action, advocated by Bernard Huss and his colleagues in the Lesotho diocese, promoted agriculture as one of its main activities, which included soil conservation.<sup>115</sup> Huss spoke to numerous audiences in Lesotho. Additionally, the Morija Press published his Sesotho language textbook on agriculture in 1923. In the book, Huss discussed various soil types, rain patterns, erosion, and river flows, drawing on his experiences at a mission on the Kei River for comparison. The book's circulation is difficult to know, but BPA member Labane Chokobane had wanted every farmer to have a copy and the fact that the Morija Press published it suggests a significant circulation.<sup>116</sup>

The Catholic message of *ntlafatso* (improvement) resonated with many Basotho, especially following the 1933 crisis. Catholics learned about soil conservation in primary and secondary schools, and by working on church fields. Indeed, the Catholic Church and the Basutoland government were hardly one in the same, but knowledge about soil erosion and conservation circulated between these institutions. By the mid-1930s, mission stations were important centers of activity for Basotho across social groups. Apart from the government experts and missionary influences, those Basotho who had worked on conservation crews, of

---

<sup>114</sup>LNA, S/165 538 II, Wachter to GS, 12 September 1932; S/164 538A, Wachter to GS, 7 May 1936.

<sup>115</sup>Hincks, *Quest for Peace*, 491-92; Epprecht, *This Matter*, 176.

<sup>116</sup>Schimlek, *Against the Stream*, 49; Huss, *Temo har'a ba Batso*, 84-87; "Taba ea Temo," *Naledi Ea Lesotho*, 11 July 1924.

course, would have spoken to other men about the work when they returned home. Men talked about work, whether on the mines, in the fields, or on anti-erosion projects. The point is not that everyone knew of these schemes, but this evidence strongly suggests that knowledge of soil conservation circulated widely.<sup>117</sup>

To put the 1936 grant to use, the Department of Agriculture purchased new tractors, bulldozers, and large plows for speeding up anti-soil erosion work. These mechanical upgrades never entirely displaced manual labor, but did shrink the importance of crews like the Matsieng Gang. Chiefs, too, still called out letsema labor, especially for planting trees and digging burweed.<sup>118</sup> By 1940 conservation crews had built 6.7 million yards of terraces, constructed eighty-three livestock dams, and planted half a million trees. Additionally, workers sowed 420,000 yards of terrace bank with grass. Officials in 1940 claimed that the more important accomplishment was that “the confidence and support of the bulk of the people have been obtained.”<sup>119</sup> These official statistics and comments were published primarily for administrative fiscal purposes to account for the colonial grant from London. The statistics, however, also indicate substantial changes in the landscape as well a sense that many Basotho worked to make these changes. But the official reports tell us precious little about the local contexts –social, political, economic, and ecological – in which Basotho engaged with these schemes.

---

<sup>117</sup> Tseliso Ramakhula, 14 November 2014; Mokhafisi Kena, 23 January 2015.

<sup>118</sup> NUL, LC 37/2, Report on Village Tree Planting, 3 March 1943; TNA, DO 35/916/16, Thornton, “A review of 7 Years work,” 23 February 1942.

<sup>119</sup> RDA 1940, p. 13.





**Figure 5.3**

Contour Plowing  
Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek  
Photo by author, December 2014

Historical evidence of the scheme's challenges helps to illustrate these local experiences. Some farmers, especially those with small lands, protested that they could not afford to lose any acreage to grass strips. It was not clear to all that the initial sacrifice of space might preserve productive acreage in the long run as agricultural officials had tried to explain. If grass strips and terraces were to follow the natural topographic contours, then these structures would also cut through existing field boundaries. Field owners contested the terraces and strips when they believed the structures upset what had been property boundaries between field neighbors, designated so by the local chief. Farmers had commonly solved subsequent boundary disputes in the chief's court (*lekhotla*), but the new issue of

structures raised questions about how much authority the Department of Agriculture had to meddle in land affairs.<sup>120</sup>

In a politically constrained territory where land was at a premium, labor shortage also presented a problem. Collett explained in May 1937 that maintenance “would be a very difficult question as we go on” for social and ecological reasons as had been the case in Herschel.<sup>121</sup> Heavy summer rains created powerful runoff that often found its way to the weak spots of terraces or contour ridges where high grasses could obscure minor breaches. In November 1936 several storms including hail, typical weather for late spring, sent torrents down the slopes of Matsieng, destroying contours and tree saplings.<sup>122</sup>

Who, exactly, would bear responsibility for maintenance during various times of year when field ownership differed? The realities of oscillating migrant labor in the political economy of southern Africa complicated this matter further. For instance, during a rainy January in 1937 in Maseru district, apart from miners away on contract, many men were working in South Africa harvesting wheat and shearing sheep, leaving anti-erosion crews wanting for labor. Maintenance, too, was non-existent.<sup>123</sup> Given the plunge in commodity prices after 1929, and the frequent drought within recent memory, many farmers probably lacked confidence that their

---

<sup>120</sup> RDA 1942, pp. 15-16; Interview with Tseliso Ramakhula, 14 November 2014; Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, 227-30; Interview with Mokhafisi Kena, 23 January 2015.

<sup>121</sup> LNA, S/165 538 II, Wachter, Quarterly Report, 31 May 1937.

<sup>122</sup> LNA, S/165 538 II, L.H. Collett, Report for 6 months ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 1936, 12 February 1937; Russell Thornton, “Anti-Erosion Measures and Reclamation of Eroded Land,” Paper Read at the Third Meeting of the *South African Society of Engineers*, 1942, pp. 20-21; Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, 128-31.

<sup>123</sup> LNA, S/165 538 II, Wachter, Quarterly Report, 31 May 1937.

labor on anti-erosion maintenance would be rewarded with grain to eat or sell, and so, they sought other opportunities. Collett did learn that constructing banks and terraces during the crop season angered many farmers, so he focused work in the winter months. The problem then was that fallow winter fields belonged to the community, leaving maintenance up to the chiefs, for which they called *matsema*, which commoners increasingly refused to do, depending on the responsible chief's relationship with the government and with his people.<sup>124</sup>

Issues of property, labor, and soil conservation featured in the political reforms in late 1930s, which set the parameters within which people experienced anti-erosion activities in the mountains. Discussions in the BNC following Pim's report showed some consensus about erosion, but by 1938 colonial officials and many Basotho too, had grown frustrated with the lack of cooperation by chiefs in carrying out policy at the local level. After the Conference of Colonial Directors of Agriculture in July 1938, which Wachter attended, the Dominions Office said that soil conservation "merited special attention" throughout the Empire.<sup>125</sup> Closer to home, the resident commissioner Sir Edmund Richards, with support from the BPA and some progressive chiefs, believed that the parallel administration needed changes.

---

<sup>124</sup> *Lekhotla la Bafo* developed a critique of *letsema*, linking the chiefs to an imperial system in which commoners' labor was exploited. See John Marks, "Misery of the People of Basutoland," *Umsebenzi*, 10 April 1937, cited in Edgar, *Prophets*, 171-73; NUL, LC 37/2, Report of Village Tree Planting, 3 March 1943; Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 150-51.

<sup>125</sup> SAB, LDB Vol 4939, Ref Z1044, T.L. Kruger, Secretary for Agriculture and Forestry to Secretary of OFS Agricultural Union, 24 February 1943; TNA, DO 35/930/8, Report on Proceedings of Conference of Colonial Agricultural Directors, 18 November 1938.

As the main instrument of authority, the chieftaincy on the whole had failed to enforce laws and proved stubborn on agricultural initiatives. For instance, some chiefs opened leboella out of season to strengthen their own herds, while others refused to call matsema to eradicate noxious weeds.<sup>126</sup> The BPA urged government reforms that would pave the way for a national constitution that would ultimately give more rights to commoners. In response to the BPA, the Basutoland government moved to weaken the power of ward and local chiefs while, in theory, granting the paramount chief greater powers to legislate.<sup>127</sup> This shift in government stance complimented Thornton's position as the Director of Agriculture by delegating more authority to his department. Thornton likened the agricultural changes promoted by the department to a spiked wheel, whose spikes will "stab through native agricultural practice...until the whole wheel with all of its points revolves freely." Creating new laws, so Thornton believed, was the only way to move the wheel forward.<sup>128</sup>

The Native Administration Proclamation No. 61 of December 1938 gave the Paramount Chief of Basutoland the power to issue rules and orders providing for the "peace, good order, and welfare of his people." It also gave the high commissioner powers to change the structures of the chieftainship. As L.B.B.J. Machobane has explained, "chiefs were brought fully under the machinery of the colonial administration and their numbers were cut from about 2500 to 1340."

---

<sup>126</sup> Epprecht, *This Matter*, 99-102.

<sup>127</sup> Machobane, *Government and Change*, 184; Driver, "Theory and Politics," 174-75.

<sup>128</sup> TNA, DO 35/916/16, Thornton, "A Review of 7 Years Work," 23 February 1942; Driver, "Theory and Politics," 173.

Many areas covered under the PC's new delegated powers, which were closely tethered to the progressive agendas of the BPA and the colonial administration, related to agricultural development and soil conservation.<sup>129</sup>

Paramount Chief Griffith Lerotholi died in early 1939 and was soon replaced by a female regent, 'Mantsebo Seeiso. With little consultation in the BNC, 'Mantsebo signed Order 1/26 in March 1941, which established a legal framework for anti-erosion measures. The order included twelve laws that were eventually adopted into the existing Laws of Lerotholi. Each law bestowed more authority on the Department of Agriculture, but still required consultation with local chiefs to build contours wherever officers deemed appropriate in both arable and pastoral areas. Rights to build these works excluded specific months to accommodate the standard growing seasons. As a response to cases of sabotage or simple carelessness, the order also prohibited plowing into contours and terraces. Provision was made, too, for maintaining the structures. In arable fields, the owners bore full responsibility, while the community was responsible for maintenance in the commonage.<sup>130</sup> With new laws in place, conservation schemes moved into the highlands.

---

<sup>129</sup> Duncan, *Sotho Laws and Customs*, 152-58; Machobane, *Government and Change*, 185-86; Driver, "Theory and Politics," 174-75.

<sup>130</sup> Paramount Chief's Order 1/26, 26 March 1941, reproduced in Thornton, "Anti-Erosion Measures," 23-24; Driver, "Theory and Politics," 174-75.

## 5.6 - Conservation Reforms in the Highlands, 1942-1956

Residents of Qacha's Nek saw no engineering component to government agricultural and anti-erosion programs until 1942. Staples and Hudson's *Ecological Survey* reiterated earlier observations that the mountains were primarily pastoral lands where vegetation changes and soil erosion had accelerated since 1880.<sup>131</sup> Rough or non-existent roads had prevented the Department of Agriculture from hauling machinery into mountain areas to build anti-erosion structures. Beginning in 1942, when more funds allowed, the department built a system of grass strips and diversion furrows, rather than terraces. Instead of using paid crews, independent contractors performed the work for a set rate, at least until 1946 when local groups were paid directly for building structures under the supervision of European, and some Basotho foremen. Physical structures played an important part in mountain conservation, but the cultural approaches, namely regulating grazing lands and regrouping villages, had the greatest impact in Qacha's Nek and in the newly designated Mokhotlong district.<sup>132</sup>

To carry out these policies, chiefs continued to play important roles. Chief Makhaola Lerotholi had died in 1932, leaving the ward leadership to his eldest son Theko Makhaola. Along with many highlanders by the late 1930s, Theko was a

---

<sup>131</sup> Staples and Hudson, *Ecological Survey*, 39-40; I recognize that the extent and nature of these changes was not entirely clear, and that the surveyors applied their findings to the paradigm of climax ecology, which was standard in 1930s ecological science. See Chapter 3. See also, Ian Scoones, "Range Management Science and Policy: Politics, Polemics, and Pasture in Southern Africa," in Leach and Mearns, eds., *Lie of the Land*, 34-38; Driver, "Theory and Politics," 109-11.

<sup>132</sup> TNA, DO 35/1180, Y950/3, W.G. Leckie to GS, 2 August 1945; *BNC, 42<sup>nd</sup> Session, 1946, Vol. 1, 4*; RDA 1948, pp. 29-30; Unfortunately, I have yet to find archival files explaining who these contractors were, who they employed, and how they interacted with local chiefs and land users.

Catholic and had been educated in Catholic schools. In stark contrast to his father who had eighteen wives, Theko had only one. Makhaola the younger added a potent voice to the BNC beginning in 1932. He extended many of his father's positions by endorsing progressive political and agricultural reforms, yet he shrewdly guarded the powers of chieftainship. Commoners in Qacha's Nek knew him as *monna khomo*, man cow, for his practice of fining people one cow for being late to courts and meetings. This nickname, it seems probable, also developed from his collecting excessive fines from those stock owners violating grazing regulations in the 1950s. Like his father before him, as chief of the *melele* Theko brokered agricultural and pastoral knowledge between the government and commoners by enacting and enforcing anti-erosion policy in the 1940s and 50s. The ways in which he did so tell us much about people and conservation knowledge during these years.<sup>133</sup>

The Basutoland government formed its mountain conservation policy by drawing on discourses amongst an international cast of experts, Basotho chiefs and agriculturalists, South African conservationists, and British colonial officials. In August and September of 1944, the American soil scientist Hugh Bennett toured South Africa to see anti-erosion schemes. As he was a towering figure in soil conservation, the public took interest in Bennett's visit. As Belinda Dodson has shown, the places he visited and did not visit highlighted the political and social

---

<sup>133</sup> TNA, DO 119/1055, Native Chiefs of Basutoland: Confidential Report for 1935; Jones, "Chiefly Succession," 74-77; Rosenberg et al., *Historical Dictionary*, 204-05.

fissures in South Africa, which widened further after 1948 when the newly elected National Party inaugurated apartheid.<sup>134</sup>

Under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture, Bennett visited white areas mostly, while spending just one day in the Transkei where soil conservation programs, by contrast, were implemented by the Department of Native Affairs. He spent two days in Basutoland, where he is said to have stood on a new contour bank admiring the site of “natives unloading manure onto their lands from a cart.” Bennett hardly commented on what he – having had extensive experience in the Jim Crow south – surely recognized as racial tension and political inequality. But his visit attracted public attention to soil conservation in the region.<sup>135</sup>

Much of this attention pointed towards the highlands. Reflecting on anti-erosion schemes to date, conservationists in the early 1940s echoed Francis Kanthack from a generation earlier by arguing that uplands deserved greater priority as the place where erosion began. In this view, water draining from denuded slopes gained velocity as it rushed into valley fields, overwhelming anti-erosion works.<sup>136</sup> In June 1945, E.M. Palmer helped push this sentiment into public view. As the spokesperson for the newly formed Veld Conservation Trust in South

---

<sup>134</sup> Belinda Dodson, “A Soil Conservation Safari: Hugh Bennett’s 1944 Visit to South Africa,” *Environment and History* 11, no. 1 (2005): 35-54; See for example, “Conserving the Soil in Basutoland,” *The Star*, 16 October 1944; “The Fight for the Soil,” *The Friend of the Free State*, 30 November 1945.

<sup>135</sup> Hugh Bennett, *Soil Erosion and Land Use in the Union of South Africa* (Pretoria: Department of Agriculture and Forestry, 1945); “Basutoland’s Lesson in Soil Saving: Work of Ten Years Not Halted by War,” *The Star*, 23 October 1944; Dodson, “Soil Conservation Safari,” 36, 42-43.

<sup>136</sup> H. A. Tempany et al, “Soil Erosion and Soil Conservation in the Colonial Empire,” *The Empire Journal of Experimental Agriculture* XII, no. 47 (1944): 121-53; TNA, DO 35/916/16, Thornton, “A Review of 7 Years’ Work,” 23 February 1942; DO 35/1180, Y950/4, Frank Stockdale to Creech Jones, 27 October 1945.



Africa, Palmer published an article that articulated mountain conservation to political shifts in the Union towards intensified racial segregation. Paralleling this shift, postwar conservation discourse in southern Africa demonized African practices as particularly destructive, more so than did the Drought Commission in 1923.<sup>137</sup>

Palmer's chosen title spoke volumes about the transnational political-ecology at work: "Basutoland – Heart of the Union." The piece provoked comments from colonial officials in Basutoland, and made its way into BNC policy discussions. Palmer based the article on the observations of C.J. van Rensburg, a government botanist who had traveled in the Maloti. In short, Palmer argued that the situation was dire because Basotho grazed their animals randomly, plowed steep slopes, and burned grass indiscriminately. In her view, Basotho were destroying not only the vital watershed of the Orange (Senqu) River system, but altering other rivers that spilled east of the Drakensberg into Natal, especially the Tugela. Unless the Basutoland government intervened authoritatively to conserve highland vegetation and soils, the "sponge of South Africa" could dry up. In other words, if African land-use practices were not modified immediately then the desiccation of the so-called sponge, consisting of montane wetlands and reedbeds would destroy whole river systems and threaten the very existence of the Union.<sup>138</sup>

---

<sup>137</sup> E.M. Palmer, "Basutoland – Heart of the Union," *Veld Trust News* 1 (June 1945): 2-18; Driver, "Anti-Erosion Policies," 6-8.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*; See also, C. Mokuku, "Biodiversity and Protected Areas," in Chakela, ed., *State of the Environment*, 146-51.

Not everyone agreed with this assessment. Some observers, Bennett among them, praised the Basutoland soil conservation schemes. But as the government secretary in Maseru confessed, these praises were made “in order to condemn the absence of any large scale projects in the Union.”<sup>139</sup> A contributor to a South African newspaper acknowledged the trials and tribulations of promoting cultural change: “It was not easy to persuade the Basotho to adopt anti-erosion methods of farming, or to put manure to its proper use.” Where land was closed off to grazing temporarily without fencing, according to this writer, it was “rare for man or animals to trespass.”<sup>140</sup>

The British high commissioner in southern Africa, Sir Evelyn Baring, took a stronger stance against Palmer’s arguments, and traveled for three weeks in the Maloti to assess the situation himself. Baring also undertook his journey in order to respond to concerns by Jan Smuts, the Union prime minister, who had urged Baring to force more anti-erosion schemes in Basutoland. Baring gathered information from agricultural officials and chiefs, but he also brought two publications for comparative reading: Palmer’s article and Staples and Hudson’s *Ecological Survey*.<sup>141</sup>

After his journey, Baring wrote straight to the Dominions Office in London to set the record straight. He said that Palmer’s article contained “inaccurate and many exaggerated statements,” and was written as “sensational journalism.” Grazing had altered vegetation on some slopes, but not on others. Damage to pastures was

---

<sup>139</sup> DO 35/1180, Y950/3, GS to Lord Harlech, 28 July 1945; “Conserving the Soil,” *The Star*, 16 October 1944; Dodson, “Soil Conservation Safari,” 42-43.

<sup>140</sup> “Basutoland’s Lesson,” *The Star*, 23 October 1944.

<sup>141</sup> DO 35/1180, Y950/5, Sir Evelyn Baring to Eric Machtig, Dominions Office, 25 February 1946.

“serious but not quite as appalling” as Palmer had claimed. He followed Staples and Hudson’s distinctions of grasses and ecological zones, adding that in the highest areas around the sources of the Orange River, grey grass (*Festuca rubra*) was undamaged. Baring conceded that erosion in the mountains could affect the flow of the Orange; but he said the Tugela source was too remote for grazing, adding that it ran in Basutoland for only a 100 meters before crossing into the Union. He recommended that the Department of Agriculture continue building grass strips and diversion furrows in the cultivated areas. As for land above the cultivated fields in the cattle post areas, he urged authorities to prohibit plowing and rest each slope once every three years. “All progress in the mountain area,” Baring conceded, “depended on improvement in transport.”<sup>142</sup>

Highland farmers, chiefs, and policy makers wanted a new road linking the mountain areas to the lowlands. Demands were especially firm in a drought year like 1946 when many people struggled to produce adequate food.<sup>143</sup> The debates on the conditions of the project tell us about how people understood the cultural and physical aspects of anti-erosion schemes in relation to their needs and aspirations. Fresh back from WW II service in the Middle East, Chief Theko Makhaola and his colleagues in the BNC debated a memorandum on a ten-year development plan for Basutoland in October 1946. Drawing on Baring’s latest recommendations and on

---

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> BNC, 42<sup>nd</sup> Session, 1946, Vol. 1, 1-5, 15-19.

British conservation priorities elsewhere, the memorandum stressed soil conservation as a foundation for economic development.<sup>144</sup>

Few Basotho farmers would have disagreed with the resident commissioner when he said, “without its soil, its principal asset, Basutoland will die.”<sup>145</sup> But the RC’s comment highlighted the ecological reality of the time as well as the narrow colonial assumption that Basutoland could only be a nation of farmers and herders; this despite its long relationship with industrial centers in South Africa. Nonetheless, under provisions of the British Colonial Development and Welfare Act, the colonial office appropriated £830,000 for Basutoland to be allocated evenly across three parts: public works, social services (eg. health and education), and agriculture, especially soil erosion.<sup>146</sup>

Highland councilors spoke loud about the road. Mahlabe Mokhachane of Qacha’s Nek wanted the project expedited to facilitate the flow of “medicine, food supplies during drought, and building materials for schools and hospitals.” He spoke to the maldistribution of resources in the territory, adding that “it would appear as if the government and the paramount chief do not look upon the mountain areas as part of Basutoland.” Using similar terms, Felix Sekonyela of Mokhotlong pushed for

---

<sup>144</sup> *Basutoland Memorandum of Development Plans for 1945*, 11, 15; See also, Tempany et al., “Soil Erosion”; DO 35/1180, Y950/4, Frank Stockdale to Creech Jones, 27 October 1945.

<sup>145</sup> *BNC, 42<sup>nd</sup> Session, 1946, Vol. 1*, 5.

<sup>146</sup> The other two HC Territories, Bechuanaland and Swaziland received similar grants; *Basutoland Memorandum, 1945*.

the road too, which, if built, would go from Maseru through to Mokhotlong, bisecting Basutoland between north and south.<sup>147</sup>

The RC supported the road as a way to facilitate the flow of machinery for conservation works as well as for other development projects in the mountains. He stressed, however, that the government was also concerned that the road would lure more people to the mountains, which would contribute to ecological deterioration. From this perspective, more settlers meant more erosion, whereas technology meant development. The bigger obstacle for Basotho was that the Dominions Office would only fund the project on the condition that twenty-mile wide Agricultural Improvement Areas (AIAs) buffer the road on each side.<sup>148</sup>

The Department of Agriculture had originally proposed AIAs in 1945. Under the plan, the department would take over rights to allocate and regulate land from local chiefs in areas designated as severely damaged. Department officials would classify areas as agricultural land, grazing land, or tree plantations based on agro-ecological potential.<sup>149</sup> Plans for AIAs fit squarely within the post-war “second colonial occupation,” in which local administrations sought to develop territories through increased interventions, which included technical, political, cultural, and ecological components (See Chap. 6). Research from the 1930s, such as Staples and Hudson’s *Ecological Survey* in Basutoland and Lord Hailey’s *African Survey* more broadly, informed and misinformed many of these interventions on the continent. In

---

<sup>147</sup> BNC, 42<sup>nd</sup> Session, 1946, Vol. 1, 17-20.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>149</sup> RDA 1946, p. 4; Driver, “Theory and Politics,” 175.

the regional context, the AIAs were modeled, in part, on South African Betterment programs and Southern Rhodesian centralization schemes.<sup>150</sup>

Chiefs firmly rejected the AIAs in 1945, refusing to give up their greatest power: the right to allocate land. The provisions of the road proposal, however, offered the Department of Agriculture a new opportunity to push the AIAs through the BNC.<sup>151</sup> Viewed through a political lens, department officials and chiefs too, worked within a larger network of colonial and South African conservationists and politicians who sought to incorporate Basutoland, especially its precious watersheds, into the Union. In this framework, reforming the Sesotho land tenure system to institute freehold tenure, which meant removing land from chiefs' control, formed the *sine qua non* of the AIAs. That the larger political project shaped policy and practice seems accurate enough, but a closer look at the mountain context shows a more nuanced engagement with scientific ideas about soil conservation.<sup>152</sup>

Edwin Ntsasa, the veteran agricultural demonstrator and special agricultural representative to the BNC, opposed the chiefs' view on AIAs. He argued that "our grandfather's have almost killed the country...it is full of dongas and we are continuing to murder it." The fault, he continued, "lies with us and with His Majesty

---

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.; On post-war development and scientific knowledge see Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 210-15; Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory*, 100-03, 324; On centralization see Terrence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War in Zimbabwe: A Comparative Study* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 71-75; On betterment see Jacobs, *Environment, Power, and Injustice*, 173-80; J. Yawitch, *Betterment: the myth of homeland agriculture* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1981).

<sup>151</sup> BNC, 42<sup>nd</sup> Session, 1946, Vol. 1, 32-37; Driver, "Theory and Politics," 176.

<sup>152</sup> For example, see Pauline Peters, *Dividing the Commons: Politics, Policy, and Culture in Botswana* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994), 76-77; Anderson, *Eroding the Commons*, 215-20; Driver, "Anti-Erosion Policies."

the King [George VI], as the government looks on." Ntsasa, like many commoner Basotho, wanted the technical and financial resources of the government, even if it meant adopting certain cultural changes. For Ntsasa, the government was responsible for using funds derived from Basotho taxes and British grants to improve farming through technical, educational, and legal interventions. Other councilors, like Bereng Lerotholi saw it as a government takeover of already scarce land resources. Bereng asked, "where will we plow if not within twenty miles of the road?" Another councilor blamed the government for doing too much building of terraces and contours and not enough "explaining these things to us." In this way, Ntsasa and other councilors found common ground in believing that although Basotho wanted to understand new types of knowledge, most people became skeptical when not informed of new developments. As one councilor from Qacha's Nek put it, "a Mosotho understands things quickly when he handles them with his own hands and not from theory." Apart from demonstrators, other farmers, and agricultural officers, chiefs played a key role in this regard.<sup>153</sup>

As the acting paramount chief at the 1946 BNC proceedings, Theko Makhaola's job was to explain that under the provisions of the AIAs, agricultural and pastoral activities would require "consultation" with department officials. The paramount chief, as Theko assured the council, would still have the ultimate say over these matters. Instead of consulting chiefs alone, farmers would ask agricultural demonstrators and officers about what fields could and could not be

---

<sup>153</sup> BNC, 42<sup>nd</sup> Session, 1946, Vol. 1, 30-37; BNC, 48<sup>th</sup> Session, 1952, 491.

plowed. A proposed arable field's suitability was based mainly on the specific calculation of its slope. Farmers would now be required to seek advice on where to place contour strips, and where and when to close pastures. Many chiefs claimed that they were already doing these things. Perhaps to placate the resident commissioner, the BNC agreed to institute reforms similar to those of the AIAs, but the specific width of a buffer zone around the road was to be omitted from the agreement. Forty-four council members voted for the amended measure and none against. The BNC also voted that the PC and chiefs, not the Department of Agriculture, retained responsibilities for enforcing anti-erosion regulations as outlined in 1942. In the end, the department implemented only one experimental AIA in the Quthing district, which had mixed results at best.<sup>154</sup>

Despite the BNC's tepid response to formal AIAs, the government pushed ahead with plans for rotational grazing in the mountains by working through Paramount Chief 'Mantsebo, but more especially, through two ward chiefs: Matlere Lerotholi of Mokhotlong and Theko Makhaola of Qacha's Nek. Under the schemes, ward chiefs used funds from the newly established national treasury to hire Basotho caretakers to travel around on horseback to enforce closures beginning in mid-1947. By the end of 1948, 1050 square miles had been destocked for a period of between one and two years. This figure was out of a total of 4350 square miles that

---

<sup>154</sup> BNC, 42nd Session, 1946, Vol. 1, 41, 52-57; BNC, 43rd Session, 1947, Vol. 2, 540.



were marked for closure. The objective was to “get our grass back,” as the resident commissioner explained to the BNC in 1947.<sup>155</sup>

Local knowledge informed science in the plans for rotational grazing. The plan designated time periods for closure according to how much erosion had occurred, and how much bitter karoo bush had spread within the area in question. Conservationists in the Department of Agriculture claimed that the system merely extended the *leboella* system from village areas to the cattle posts, just as Staples and Hudson had recommended in 1938.<sup>156</sup> The policies acknowledged the Basotho disdain for fences and the prohibitive costs involved in fencing. No fences were used to demarcate pasture; only geographic boundaries such as ridges and rivers, and some stone beacons would mark these spaces. A chief’s representative would publicly announce which pastures were open and which were closed. Some pastures were closed for two years, while others just one. The idea was to close lands based on the “points of the compass:” western and southern facing slopes one year, and eastern and northern facing slopes the next.<sup>157</sup>

Thackwray Driver has argued that these closures were never actually enforced in Mokhotlong district, which accounts for the lack of resistance on the part of common Basotho.<sup>158</sup> Despite the political and logistical difficulties involved in such closures, I believe Driver is mistaken. At Sani Pass in Mokhotlong (see Map

---

<sup>155</sup> LNA, S/349, 2476 I, Director of Livestock and Agricultural Services to GS, 12 August 1949; RDA 1949, pp. 28-43; BNC, 43<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1947, Vol. 2, 492-93; BNC, 46<sup>th</sup> Session, 1950, Vol. 1, 340-41.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.; LNA, S/349, 2476 I, Minutes of a Meeting Held at Matsieng on Controlled Grazing, 4 August 1949; RC to ‘Mantseebo Seeiso, 17 August 1949.

<sup>158</sup> Driver, “Anti-Erosion Policies,” 11.

#4) and in several places in Qacha's Nek, the chiefs and their caretakers successfully enforced rotational grazing in the late 1940s and 50s. P.A. Bowmaker, the Basutoland director for agriculture and livestock services toured several closed areas in late-1949. He traveled through the Senqu Valley around Sehonghong, proceeding south to Sehlabathebe and the upper Tsoelike Valley, where he remarked that destocked areas showed "very marked recovery." Bowmaker also noted that the "whole of the Mashai basin, in the broader sense had been destocked, and a wonderful cover of *Aristida sp.* is coming in generally as a pioneer [grass]."<sup>159</sup>

Being relatively new to Basutoland, Bowmaker probably used Staples and Hudson's survey and other reports as ecological benchmarks. But he had the benefit of local knowledge too. A local senior agricultural demonstrator named Ntahanyana guided Bowmaker from Mashai to Sehlabathebe. Ntahanyana would have had extensive knowledge of the area, including where cattle posts had been located and who owned them. They traversed the formidable Matebeng Pass, hardly a well-traveled track then or now, which would have afforded the pair a commanding view of the grazing country in eastern Qacha's Nek.<sup>160</sup>

Paramount Chief 'Mantsebo attempted to strengthen the 1941 anti-erosion laws by issuing several new orders, drawing on reports by Bowmaker and others. In November 1947 she told all chiefs in Order No. 1/32 that "small stock should not be kept in the villages, but that they should be kept at cattle posts," even in the winter.

---

<sup>159</sup> LNA, S/349, 2476 I, Bowmaker, "Cattle Post Trek," 26 November 1949.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

'Mantsebo's order contradicted older seasonal transhumance patterns where all animals sheltered near villages during the harsh winters. This was especially true for people and animals living at higher elevations. In addition to sheep and goats, 'Mantsebo's order included horses and donkeys, but cattle were allowed to come down in the cold months.<sup>161</sup>

Some chiefs disagreed on this issue, but for the most part, their biggest investment, cattle, could still winter near the villages. As for the poorest commoners who owned perhaps a few goats and a donkey, they would suffer from not having access to meat, milk, and transport year round. Some BNC members spoke on behalf of the poor, pointing out that thieves had been stealing animals from cattle posts more since the 1933 drought, a phenomenon which exposed the meager property of poorer families. Qacha's Nek councilors reported that during the winter of 1951 nine herdboys had frozen to death at the cattle posts and 500 sheep and goats had died in a snowstorm. In 1952, at the insistence of a Chief Sekake from Qacha's Nek, 'Mantsebo amended the order to allow some small stock to shelter near the villages in the winter and during lambing season.<sup>162</sup>

It must be said, too, that the late 1940s and early 50s in Lesotho were times of political crisis. After Proclamation No. 61 of 1938 eliminated nearly half of the officially gazetted chiefs and headmen, chiefs sought leverage to preserve what they believed was an attack on the chieftaincy, not only by the colonial administration,

---

<sup>161</sup> LNA, S/349, 2476 I, PC 'Mantsebo Seeiso, Circular No. 1/32, 20 November 1947.

<sup>162</sup> BNC, 42<sup>nd</sup> Session, 1946, Vol. 3, 423-27; BNC, 48<sup>th</sup> Session, 1952, 517-22. See also, Driver, "Theory and Politics," 182.

but also by the BPA and *Lekhotla la Bafo*. In this context, murderers killed dozens of people across the territory, leaving mutilated bodies as evidence of medicine murder. Medicine murder was a practice whereby a chief or his/her assistants killed someone in order to obtain *liretlo*: human flesh kept as medicine to endow its beholder with special powers. In the end, the government tried and hanged several high level chiefs for involvement in medicine murders.<sup>163</sup>

Scholars have covered this subject at length. But for this study, it is enough to say that, like the campaigns to fight rinderpest, anti-erosion schemes unfolded within tense local political context as well as within the larger political-economy of colonial capitalism. Powerful chiefs like Theko Makhaola, who was himself implicated in medicine murders in 1953, exercised great authority over environmental regulations and the circulation of knowledge that underlay those regulations. The extent to which intimidation was a key tool used by Theko to assert his influence amongst his people, and to enforce conservation regulations, remain questions to be explored in further research.<sup>164</sup>

The varied responses to the rotational schemes highlighted the limits of specific chiefs' powers while raising the question of who controlled the high cattle post country. When Evelyn Baring toured the Maloti in 1949, he learned from Chief Matlere Lerotholi that, in fact, most chiefs had little control over cattle posts. Rather,

---

<sup>163</sup> For example, G.I. Jones, *A Report on the recent outbreak of "Diretlo" murders in Basutoland* (London: Office of Commonwealth Relations, 1951); Peter Sanders and Colin Murray, *Medicine Murder in Colonial Lesotho: The Anatomy of a Moral Crisis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, TNA, FCO 141/445, Notes of a Meeting Re: Theko Makhaola, 17 August 1954.

what colonial officials had long believed were traditional communal grazing resources, actually operated based on semi-private property rights.<sup>165</sup> When a stockowner or his shepherd built a cattle post, they secured exclusive rights to the stone huts which they had built as well as to the grass around the post. The owners of the post had the right to use it continuously unless it went unused for a year or more. In theory, chiefs controlled which stockowners established posts in their wards. Implementing closures as discussed in the BNC, meant removing cattle posts, at least temporarily. A chief's order to remove posts from an area all together represented a rupture from older regulatory relationships between chiefs, commoners, animals, and pastures. Many chiefs, who themselves usually had large herds, refused to close pastures against their own interests; or, they simply believed this to be a contravention of customary property rights, to which chiefs were supposed to protect.<sup>166</sup>

Regulatory responsibilities and politics intersected too. As the eldest son of the original *molele*, Theko Makhaola commanded a great deal of respect in Qacha's Nek. Evidence suggests that he successfully closed some grazing areas. But other areas, perhaps those administered by political foes, required more diligence. In 1952, several chiefs in eastern parts of his ward complained to the district commissioner that Theko's grazing caretakers had taken fines directly from people found grazing animals in closed pastures. The plaintiffs insisted that they alone had

---

<sup>165</sup> LNA, S/349, 2476 I, Bowmaker, "Cattle Post Trek," 26 November 1949.

<sup>166</sup> LNA, S/350, 2476 II, DLAS to GS, 30 December 1949.

rights to collect these fines in their local areas. Theko replied that they had not been doing their jobs, and so as the ward chief, he had the right to step in. PC 'Mantsebo sent her representatives out to Qacha's Nek several times over the next three years to investigate. In August 1954, the Basotho investigators found in the original case, and in several other cases too, that "the ways in which fines were being collected were not consistent with any laws whatsoever." Despite these allegations, Theko maintained that he was simply carrying out the PC's grazing orders. The case had not been pursued further when the file ended in 1955.<sup>167</sup>

Was Theko an ardent supporter of government anti-erosion schemes or had he become a local strong man, prioritizing his own ambitions? The answer, undoubtedly, lies in between. Theko Makhaola, like his father before him, navigated a political space that linked the BNC and the British colonial administration to rural highlanders. He at once championed his people's aspirations for roads, agricultural resources, schools, and dispensaries, while pleasing the British, and perhaps enriching himself along the way. Like his father, he collected a hefty government salary for his work within the BNC, yet he still amassed substantial debt at local shops and in South Africa too.<sup>168</sup> From this political disposition, Theko embraced his roles as both agrarian modernizer and benevolent chief of Qacha's Nek.

In conjunction with rotational grazing measures, Theko had begun regrouping villages. Beginning in 1931, the paramount chief had called for people

---

<sup>167</sup> TNA, FCO 141/445, Report of the Paramount Chief's Messengers, August 1954; Police Report, Maseru, 21 January 1955.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

living in small hamlets to relocate to established villages further downslope. Few people moved in 1931, but after Proclamation No. 60 of 1938, PC 'Mantsebo theoretically had authority to carry out such schemes, although she never did issue an explicit order. Bowmaker reported in 1949 that the "grouping of villages in Qacha's Nek [was] very satisfactory." The archives contain little about specific village groupings, but I have learned of several consolidations through my fieldwork. For example, people at Senatla's village, located on a bluff overlooking the Senqu, dismantled their houses and moved to Ha Makhaola, just a mile away. A stroll through the site today reveals ruins of perhaps a dozen homesteads, now overgrown with aloe, wattle, and grass (See Figure 5.4). This policy echoed village regrouping schemes elsewhere in colonial Africa, but for many Basotho chiefs, and for educated and non-educated commoners too, the scheme was also based on sound ecological and demographic realities.<sup>169</sup>

Since the late 1800s, migrant families had settled higher areas, which decreased the acreage available for grazing. It was near the highest settlements, too, that people plowed the steepest slopes. Clement Shata, a retired miner and dedicated farmer whose family relocated to Ha Makhaola from Senatla's village in the late 1940s, recalled that it made sense to free up grazing space near the village. Shata now frequently hunts for hares in the overgrown site of his ancestors' former village: a vivid example of how people remade places through everyday activities

---

<sup>169</sup> *BNC, 43<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1947, Vol. 2, 532-38; LNA, S/349, 2476 I, Bowmaker, "Cattle Post Trek," 26 November 1949.*

and by imbuing those places with new meaning. The Shata family was among the first to settle at Senatla's in the late 1800s, and after the move, they retained rights to their field allocations nearby. Moving from place to place in order to conserve resources, or to access new resources, as families living in the Maloti know, has been central to their history. Others claimed that small hamlets had become more vulnerable to stock thieves, and so, security in numbers made sense.<sup>170</sup>



**Figure 5.4**

Site of Senatla's Village, Qacha's Nek  
Note: vegetation on former house sites  
Photo by author, January 2015

Regrouping villages and rotating pastures, then, called for some cultural changes while still being rooted in the past. As Grace Carswell has argued, one criterion for evaluating how rural Africans interacted with government anti-erosion

---

<sup>170</sup> Interview with Clement Shata, 13 December 2014; Interview with Mokhafisi Kena, 7 January 2015; Interview with Mochinti Jane, 18 May 2015; See also, TNA, WO 33/501, Dobson, *Military Report, Vol. II*, 118.



schemes is to examine the extent to which interventions departed from past practices. Carswell's point about terraces in Kigezi, Uganda, where farmers had built similar structures in the past, instructs our understanding of both village regrouping and rotational grazing in Basutoland. In contrast to Southern Rhodesia or the South African Bantustans, few instances of resistance turn up in either oral or written sources, but several issues did surface that tell us about how various groups grappled with these policies.<sup>171</sup>

In 1947, BNC member Theko Bereng from Qacha's Nek raised a motion that "the government be asked to compensate the owners of huts to be removed in controlled grazing areas." Bereng said that although the people of Qacha's Nek agreed "that grazing control is a very good thing," people with children and widows especially were afraid that they could not carry out orders "because of poverty." A councilor from Butha-Buthe supported the motion, requesting that chiefs supply thatch grass and wooden poles to newcomers for building. Alas, it was not to be. Matlere Lerotholi from Mokhotlong joined a chorus of councilors and chiefs from the lowlands in arguing that these "people in the mountains" have had plenty of time to move, and should not have been there in the first place. The motion was crushed by a vote of 70 to 1.<sup>172</sup>

Chieftainess 'Mantsebo formalized an anti-erosion policy in 1955 that seemed to corroborate the view that the mountain dwellers needed to make way for

---

<sup>171</sup> Carswell, *Cultivating Success*, 60-62; Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 208-10.

<sup>172</sup> BNC, *43<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1947, Vol. 2*, 532-38.

the nation's flocks and herds. Her policy blended the political and ecological concerns of the Union and Basutoland governments, while making it more difficult for mountain chiefs to monopolize the territory's most verdant pastures. As of November 1955, local and ward chiefs held the ultimate responsibility for pasture management, but had no right to deny livestock from outside their ward. They could only do so if the animals in question exceeded an established carrying capacity for a given area. Supposedly, cattle posts would be allowed on valley bottoms and not on mountain slopes.<sup>173</sup>

This was an effort to entrench what colonial authorities believed to be traditional forms of grazing control. It left much in the hands of the chiefs, who by 1955 had come under increasing political fire not only from groups like the BPA, but from their very own constituents. For the poorer people who were forced to move to new village sites, or to keep their few animals at remote cattle posts the entire year, the policies made little economic sense even if they could grasp the underlying environmental knowledge. For wealthier stock owners, especially chiefs, from lowland areas and some from the mountains too, the latest round of conservation policies served to establish a notion of the commons that was at once conservative and modern. It was conservative in the imagined sense that it sought to de-settle places that had once been cattle posts only. It was modern in the sense that it sought to formalize grazing regulations through bureaucratic control and by deploying the

---

<sup>173</sup> RDA 1955, pp. 65-66.

latest in scientific stock management as a way to develop the mountains for progressive farming and livestock production.<sup>174</sup>

## **5.7 - Conclusion**

Despite the political failure of the agricultural improvement areas in the mountains, the government still built the road, or, at least part of it. By 1956, at the close of the ten-year development plan, the road extended to the right bank of the Senqunyane River via an impressive bridge.<sup>175</sup> AIAs, in the strict sense, may have been a failure, but several of the constituent policies such as contour plowing, regulations against plowing steep slopes, and not least, rotational grazing and village regrouping were implemented. Furthermore, it is in the problems of implementing these policies, as in the anti-erosion schemes as a whole, that we see the different ways that people engaged with new environmental knowledge.

The so-called hard facts of soil conservation science, including pasture management, circulated through disparate networks. International experts on soil and irrigation like Hugh Bennett, William Willcocks, and Russell Thornton contributed to policies through their observations, experiments, and reports that drew on examples from India and East Africa to southern Africa and the American South. On the ground in Basutoland, it was various government officials like Laurie Wachter, Edwin Ntsasa, and Chief Theko Makhaola in addition to countless unnamed

---

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> CAR 1956, p. 25.

Basotho who guided the likes of Staples and Hudson on their ecological survey, who produced these facts. Perhaps more importantly, these local actors, named and unnamed, inserted local knowledge into these facts. In varied ways, they circulated these ideas across the Basotho social spectrum, filtering the knowledge through the dense prism of local politics and culture.

While the work of building physical structures like contours was important, this chapter has shown that by analyzing the cultural approaches to soil and pasture conservation, which were most prevalent in Lesotho's mountains, we gain a fuller appreciation of how these schemes unfolded. Viewed one way, these policies were aimed at making Basotho into sedentary capitalist producers by consolidating people into larger villages where they could farm full-time, cultivate gardens of perennial plants (eg. fruit trees), and rear improved livestock in carefully regulated spaces. From a different view, the increasing power of the government to intervene into rural lives posed a threat to the chieftaincy as the core political and cultural institution that, in part, defined what it meant to be a Mosotho. These views, to the extent that they were accurate, both conflicted and overlapped with one another during the conservation schemes from 1935 to 1956. For Basotho, the questions of what farming and livestock rearing meant for their cultural identity and what possibilities these activities presented for personal and national futures took center stage in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

## 6. MAKING A LIVING FROM THE LAND: THE POSSIBILITIES OF PLACE, C. 1950-1965

### 6.1 - Introduction

Mochinti Jane completed his education at Eagle's Peak High School in Qacha's Nek in 1955 at age twenty-two. Like most Basotho men in his position, then and now, he faced a difficult and limited set of choices for how to pursue a livelihood. He had recently married a woman with whom he hoped to raise a family. The young couple had grown from modest roots. He hailed from a village called Leseling, situated about a six-hour trek north of Qacha's Nek town (See Map #4). Leseling was "overseas" as local Basotho say, referring to its location on the right side of the Senqu River. Here, the river separates the more populated communities along the main road from the more rural parts of the district, most of which today are connected only by bridle paths and faint cell phone service. Mochinti's father made his living at Leseling from farming maize and several hundred sheep whose wool he sold to the trader at the Tsoelike store.<sup>1</sup>

Although a fellow *molele* from Qacha's Nek, Mochinti's bride grew up in a different type of place. Tebellong was a cluster of villages also located "overseas," but it was much closer to the main road and thus, generally more connected to town, markets, education, and communication networks. Her father worked as a clerk in a European-owned shop nearby. Upon marriage she had moved to her husband's village while he finished school near town at Eagle's Peak. Speaking about his wife's

---

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Mochinti Jane, Motalaneng, 18 May 2015.

adjustment to her new home, Ntate Jane recalled that “she was not living like my people there at Leseling, she didn’t know how to grind grain on a stone and so, she had to learn.”<sup>2</sup>

Ntate Jane’s options and choices at this juncture in his life provide important texture to the situation in which many Basotho found themselves in the mid-1950s. After sixty years of colonial government interventions into agriculture and pastoralism, Basutoland relied more heavily on imported grain than ever before. In 1955, the territory imported 185,000 bags of maize to feed its 560,000 people. The African population had grown 14% between 1936 and 1956, while maize imports had nearly tripled between 1932 and 1955.<sup>3</sup> Rainfall variation and market fluctuations for Basutoland’s main exports of wool, mohair, and wheat played important roles, but the overall trend towards food insecurity on the national level was clear. Earnings from Basotho migrant workers, especially miners, helped circulate money in Basutoland to purchase grain. But to some extent, the system of labor migration within which so many Basotho families were embedded, also contributed to low productivity on the small farms throughout Basutoland. Absent working age men meant less labor through much of the agricultural cycle.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> RDA 1955, p. 64. Each bag held 200 lbs. of grain; See also, Pim, *Financial and Economic*, 193; The most rapid population growth occurred in the first four decades of the 1900s. Between 1936 and 1946 growth was negligible. From 1936-1956 the population of Qacha’s Nek actually decreased slightly, whereas Maseru district accounted for most of the national increase. CAR 1955, p. 24; *Basutoland Census for 1956*, 70.

<sup>4</sup> CAR 1955, p. 27. In 1955, roughly 75% of the 59,000 Basotho employed in South Africa worked on gold, coal, and diamond mines; On the adverse effects of labor migration on intensive farming in Lesotho, see Murray, *Families Divided*, 16-19. See also, Berry, *No Condition*, 138.

But the import-export cash nexus and the colonial political economy that underpinned it formed only part of the story. The food, fuel, building materials, medicine, and clothing that Basotho drew directly from the mountains were far less calculable. Even less countable than the material uses of natural resources were the human relationships to the Maloti as a place. Since the 1880s, Basotho highlanders from diverse clan lineages had imbued the landscape with meaning by building homes and cattle posts, herding livestock, cultivating fields and gardens, working for wages, and naming locations and physical features.<sup>5</sup>

Like many other *melele* in his age set, Mochinti was a third generation highlander. His grandfather had migrated from Ketane in western Lesotho to find new pastures for his livestock. Ntate Jane's father was born and raised at Leseling, where he lived and worked nearly all of his life, going to the mines only once. "Leseling" translates as the place of light. The village was named for the way the afternoon sun cast a ray back on the village through a notch in the mountains to the west; or was it because of its unhindered eastern exposure to the morning sun? Explanations seemed to differ here. Living at Leseling, Mochinti's father would have felt the sharp sting of poverty after drought, failed harvest, or a drop in wool prices. This was likely the case during *Lerole* of 1933, the very year that his second wife gave birth to their youngest son, Mochinti. Like most highlanders, the elder Jane

---

<sup>5</sup> My incorporation of place as a key part of environmental knowledge along with material aspects draws especially on Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*.

made do; building up what was then a medium sized flock of sheep. But undoubtedly, he worried about what lay in store for his sons.<sup>6</sup>

Mochinti's father had been skeptical of the Catholic missionaries who had established a small outstation with a primary school at Leseling around the time that Mochinti was born. Despite his misgivings that the Catholics might "make his son a priest," he insisted that Mochinti go to school. In part, this was because the family fields would pass on to Mochinti's older brother, leaving none for him. New field allocations were increasingly rare by 1955, and so, agricultural prospects for a landless young man were dim. As for the sheep, thieves had stolen them and the elder Jane had used his few cattle to pay *bohali* for his two sons to marry in the customary Sesotho way. He had nothing in terms of material capital to bequeath to Mochinti, nor the money to send his son to school.<sup>7</sup>

Mochinti credits Father Jean-Baptiste Rousseau for taking him in at the St. Francis mission and then loaning him the tuition to complete high school at Eagle's Peak. "But if it was for myself," Mochinti says, "I wanted to be in farming." Unlike most *melele* men at the time, however, Mochinti became neither a full-time farmer, nor a miner during his working prime. Instead, he taught for many years at the St. Francis primary school where he had pursued his own education, and he later worked as an education administrator around the district. Apart from the bleak prospects in farming and livestock with no land or animals in 1955, he says it was

---

<sup>6</sup> Mochinti Jane, 18 May 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., On land holdings and shortages, see C.M.H. Morojele, *1960 Agricultural Census of Basutoland: Part 3, Agricultural Holdings* (Maseru: Agricultural Department, 1963), 10-14; See also, Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 186-87; On Catholic outstations in the area, see Mairot, *Suivez le Guide*, 113-15.



Rousseau who steered him towards the work of teaching. In the rondavel where I interviewed Mochinti, a black and white photograph of Rousseau hung prominently on the wall as evidence of Ntate Jane's reverence for the Quebecois priest.<sup>8</sup>

Now retired from teaching, Mochinti lives in a compound just behind the St. Francis mission where he carefully maintains his garden that includes a tree nursery where he cultivates pine, peach, and poplar (See Figure 6.1). He proudly showed me his recent certificates from Lesotho's Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation that recognize his knowledge and work in propagating trees and harvesting rain water. He does not regret his career in education. But his pride reveals something



**Figure 6.1**  
Mochinti Jane, Motalaneng, Qacha's Nek  
Photo by author, May 18, 2015

else that many elder Basotho seem to feel: that the work of farming and animal husbandry can provide economic sustenance while connecting people to the cultural

---

<sup>8</sup> Mochinti Jane, 18 May 2015.

landscape that their forebears built. To be sure, Mochinti's sentiment draws on a host of factors ranging from disillusionment with post-colonial governments to his relative comfort as a retired educator with a pension.<sup>9</sup>

But there is an important history to this sentiment, one that is grounded in both tangible changes as well as the cultural and ecological characteristics of specific places. The decade between 1955 and 1965 marks an important part of this history. In that decade, the South African government refined its apartheid policies which had implications for Basutoland in terms of agriculture, politics, and employment. Colonial governments attempted similarly ill-conceived programs in Rhodesia among other places.<sup>10</sup> Continuing its political pressure to incorporate Basutoland, South Africa's betterment programs influenced how its Department of Agriculture formed and implemented development schemes.<sup>11</sup> The British, too, sought to modernize their colonies to prepare them for further integration into the global capitalist economy as producers of primary products.<sup>12</sup> In terms of agriculture and livestock in Basutoland, African and non-African experts encouraged

---

<sup>9</sup> Mochinti Jane, 18 May 2015; Interview with Mpolokeng Putsoane, 20 January 2015; Interview with Maletepata Makhaola, 8 December 2014.

<sup>10</sup> See De Wet and McAllister, "Rural Communities in Transition: A study of the socio-economic and agricultural implication of agricultural betterment"; Nancy Jacobs, "The Great Bophuthatswana Donkey Massacre: Discourse on the Ass and the Politics of Class and Grass," *American Historical Review* 106, no. 2 (2001): 485-507; Jocelyn Alexander, "Technical development and the human factor: sciences of development in Rhodesia's Native Affairs Department," in Dubow, ed., *Science and Society*, 212-37.

<sup>11</sup> Mekenye, "Re-Examination of the Lekhotla la Bafo," 86.

<sup>12</sup> Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 248-53.

new methods for developing its natural resources. These methods intersected and often conflicted with the nationalist politics that were then emerging.<sup>13</sup>

But these factors can only be understood in conjunction with the social and cultural changes that were specific to places. In terms of changes for common Basotho, a growing number of people from diverse backgrounds attended schools and churches, participated in various cooperative groups, read newspapers, and sought new consumer goods. Stemming from these developments, shifting perspectives on work, land, and time shaped how people contemplated the possibilities of place. To understand how these perspectives changed, and to highlight the distinctiveness of the mountain context, I will first examine the Pilot Project at Tebetebeng in the lowlands (1953-1958). Planners attempted to transform the Tebetebeng River watershed into “a miniature Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA).” The idea was for farmers to adopt new technology and techniques to conserve resources and produce for market. The scheme was intended as a model to be used for developing Basutoland as a nation of yeomen farmers; a principal that planners believed underlay a critical stage of growth for all nation-states.<sup>14</sup>

Second, an important counter philosophy to the Pilot Scheme’s technical-heavy approach to agricultural development emerged just as the scheme was falling apart. James Jacob Machobane created an innovative mixed-cropping system designed for poor Basotho to harvest food year-round using minimal technology. By

---

<sup>13</sup> See *Basutoland Census for 1946*, 13-14; *Census for 1956*, 99; Epprecht, *This Matter*, 121-24, 141-45.

<sup>14</sup> RDA 1951, p. 12; See also, Hillbom and Svensson, *Agricultural Transformation*, 1-7.

understanding the story of Machobane and his work during these years we gain a deeper sense of Basotho perspectives on agricultural pursuits from both cultural and ecological standpoints.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, the comparisons between the Pilot Scheme and the Machobane system illuminate what occurred, and what did not occur in the Maloti in terms of agricultural and pastoral development. Highlanders in this period saw no tractors, much less any large schemes to improve farming. Instead, the meager government expenditures in the mountains went towards establishing a wool and mohair infrastructure by building wool sheds, enumerating livestock, and improving animals for maximum production.<sup>16</sup> By analyzing how different people experienced these programs, we gain a better understanding of the ways people have compiled environmental knowledge as a single historical process with both cultural and material dimensions.

## **6.2 - The Pilot Project**

In 1951, the Department of Agriculture claimed that the proposed Pilot Project would move Basutoland into a “second phase of agricultural development.” In the first phase, which supposedly began with the original grant from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund (CDWF) in 1936, the department had focused on stabilizing soils and conserving grazing lands. According to officials, the first phase

---

<sup>15</sup> James Machobane and Robert Berold, *Drive Out Hunger: The Story of J.J. Machobane of Lesotho* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> RDA 1959, p. 15.

was near complete and it was now time to move on to the “more difficult second phase by which there must be a general improvement in farming systems used to ensure larger yields than are obtained at present.” From the planners’ perspective, a preliminary large-scale experiment involving a cross-section of the population, would demonstrate the appropriate path for all Basotho. Residents from other districts, it was hoped, would come to observe the project in action, while others would read about it, or at least see photographs, in newspapers and government publications. Still others would hear about it by word of mouth.<sup>17</sup>

The plans drew on transnational ideas about rural development. Prior to launching the Pilot Project, Paramount Chief ‘Mantsebo Seeiso and other chiefs had traveled to England in 1951. The chiefs toured English agricultural experiment stations and training facilities. Another group that included Theko Makhaola from Qacha’s Nek, toured Northern Rhodesia, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanganyika. They were impressed at what they saw.<sup>18</sup> When they returned they shared these experiences with their colleagues in the BNC and advocated for more local research on crop varieties, livestock breeds, and fertilizers. They agreed, too, with the agricultural department’s initiative to implement concentrated schemes in order to apply research findings in Lesotho’s diverse agro-ecological communities. BNC members discussed the proposed Pilot Project and eventually applied for another CDWF grant

---

<sup>17</sup> RDA 1951, p. 12; *BNC, 47<sup>th</sup> Session, 1951, Vol. 2*, 503-09.

<sup>18</sup> “Marena a ea East Africa,” *Mochochonono*, 7 June 1952; On the broader transnational context, see Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 248-53; Frederick Cooper, “Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backwards Africans, and the Development Concept,” in *International Development and the Social Sciences*, eds., Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 64-92.

to fund the project. In September 1952, the Dominions Office (DO) in London provided £86,000, along with additional funds for a research station, the agricultural college, and some smaller mechanized farming schemes.<sup>19</sup>

J.M. King, the director of livestock and agricultural Services (DLAS) in 1952, seemed aware of the possible pitfalls of social and ecological planning. The department, he wrote, had “no intention of laying down in advance a rigid and detailed program, unrelated to the physical, social, and human difficulties – expected and unexpected – which will be encountered in the next few years.” The course of the project, he claimed, would distinguish “between the reclamation and demonstration aspect of the scheme, and its more advanced, partly investigational aspect.” The former part would embrace systems already known to the Basotho land users, such as soil and water conservation, tree planting and grazing control, timely cultivation, and use of manure. The second part would include “systems and practices as yet untried in Basutoland, e.g. mechanized cultivation and mixed farming.” Farmers living in the project area would not be compelled to participate. Interested farmers were encouraged to work in cooperative groups.<sup>20</sup>

Answering questions about how and why the project ended in failure just five years after it began conveys much about administrative ignorance. Scholars have pointed out that the farmers in the project areas lacked the mechanisms for discussing their agricultural problems with the government. From this perspective,

---

<sup>19</sup> RDA 1952, p. 6-7, 13-15.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

the poor communication within the colonial social and political order, above all, accounted for the failure of the project.<sup>21</sup> But this explanation obscures how it was that some people, and not others, compiled environmental knowledge and benefitted from the scheme. The reasons for failure were as much about local differences amongst the project's intended beneficiaries. Planners overlooked these differences, and to some extent, accentuated them. J.M. King lacked the experience and local knowledge of previous agricultural officials like Laurie Wachter, who had, to some extent, come to understand these realities. If the soil conservation schemes in the late 1930s and 40s marked a departure from the low-modernist approaches to agrarian development, the Pilot Project signaled a sharper turn towards modernist planning.<sup>22</sup>

From the outset, implementing the Pilot Project proved difficult. Planners had to select a suitable project site first. Department of Agriculture representatives worked with the ward chiefs of Leribe, Berea, and Maseru districts to find an appropriate site. Mountain districts, perhaps for political as much as geographic reasons, were never considered.<sup>23</sup> PC 'Mantsebo, in cooperation with the ward chief of Berea, eventually selected the Tebetebeng Valley in March 1953 to be Basutoland's miniature TVA. Tebetebeng was located near the busy town of

---

<sup>21</sup> Thabane, "Aspects of colonial economy and society," 118; Aerni-Flessner, "Development, Politics, and Centralization," 406.

<sup>22</sup> King had taken the post of DLAS in mid-1948, having previously worked as an agricultural officer in Tanganyika, see RDA 1948, p. 6. Wachter had worked in Basutoland for more than thirty years and was known to travel widely throughout the country. For example, see LNA, S/165 538II, Wachter, Quarterly Report, 31 May 1937.

<sup>23</sup> RDA 1953, pp. 17-19.

Teyateyeneng (TY) and offered an appropriate setting in that it encompassed lowland, foothill, and mountain ecological zones. Plowed fields and soil conservation works, in various states of repair, covered the valley floors and gradual slopes. The steeper uplands supported numerous cattle posts. It was socially diverse too. Migrant workers headed many families, while progressive farmers and comparatively poorer women and men, worked the valley's farms.<sup>24</sup>

If Tebetebeng was an appropriate site, the selection process and the project as a whole were still highly politicized. This reality reflected the current situation while foreshadowing the contentious politics that has marked nearly every large and small rural development project in Lesotho since then.<sup>25</sup> Who had what powers in the BNC as well as who had authority over local natural resources in the mid-1950s, at the district and village levels, had changed since the 1940s. Beginning in 1938, the paramount chief had exercised broad powers by issuing national proclamations, especially in regards to soil conservation, grazing, and agricultural improvement. By the mid-1950s, the BNC had become more decentralized. Although senior chiefs had argued that the BNC be able to legislate since its founding, it was Theko Makhaola who finally pushed reforms to the foreground in 1942.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 18; A. Douglas and R. Tennant, *Basutoland Agricultural Survey 1949-1950* (Maseru: Basutoland Government, 1952), 90-96.

<sup>25</sup> See Wallman, *Take Out Hunger*, 94-95, 132-33; Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*; Aerni-Flessner, "Development, Politics, and Centralization," 406-07; Robert Hitchcock, "The Lesotho Highlands Water Project: Water, Culture, and Environmental Change," in *Water, Cultural Diversity, and Global Environmental Change*, ed. Barbara Johnston et al. (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2011), 319-38.

<sup>26</sup> Machobane, *Government and Change*, 238-43.



In a historic speech, the chief of Qacha's Nek urged BNC members to adopt reforms that would weaken the power of chiefs, while giving commoners a new voice. Theko asked the Council: "If we do not satisfy our people, what are we ruling for?" Theko wanted each district to have a certain number of elected representatives to form district councils (DCs), each of which would send a delegation to the annual BNC proceedings in Maseru to air grievances and present motions for discussion. His logic was clear: "We have our people who are not chiefs but agriculturalists; they want to be protected and ask that they should be given a voice in the Council." Chief Theko also acknowledged the widespread public complaints that chiefs favored their friends for jobs and in granting access to resources such as choice fields and reserved grazing. He included himself in their ranks: "we select from those who are on our side." Theko advocated for a BNC composed of half hereditary chiefs, with the other half consisting of officials elected by taxpayers from the districts. In short, he sought a bicameral legislature with an upper house of chiefs and a lower chamber of elected commoners.<sup>27</sup>

Not surprisingly, Chief Theko's proposed reforms moved slowly. Discussing the proposal the following year, the resident commissioner urged the members of the council, in typical paternalist terms, "not to try to go too fast or too far at once."<sup>28</sup> He made it clear that in 1943, there would be no bicameral, partially-elected legislative council in Basutoland as there was in other British territories such as

---

<sup>27</sup> Chief Theko Makhaola, BNC for 1942, quoted in Machobane, *Government and Change*, 238.

<sup>28</sup> Resident Commissioner's Speech to the BNC for 1943, quoted in Machobane, *Government and Change*, 239.

Nigeria and Uganda. Not to be defeated so quickly, a committee of chiefs formed a resolution that proposed three key alterations to the BNC governing framework: to enable people to make their wishes better known to councilors; to make the council more representative; and lastly, to provide means whereby commoners could consult the council when it was not in session. As a key feature in these proposed reforms, district councils in each of the nine districts would work with their respective district commissioners and principal chiefs to hold *lipitso*, public meetings where people could air their concerns. In addition to the principal chief and his chosen delegates, one representative per district council would attend BNC proceedings. In 1950, the number was increased to four reps from each district council to attend the BNC in Maseru.<sup>29</sup>

By 1958 the composition of the BNC and the DCs had evolved in both structure and ability. The resident commissioner still served as president and maintained substantial latitude to appoint people to the DCs whom he, for instance, knew supported government agricultural policies. The RC also retained the authority to appoint five national members however he saw fit. The paramount chief remained the lead advisor in the council. Of the ninety-four members technically nominated by the paramount, however, thirty-six were to be indirectly elected by the district councils. In the districts, every 1000 Basotho taxpayers elected a single representative to their respective DC. For example, sparsely populated Mokhotlong district (formerly part of Qacha's Nek) had the smallest DC with just nine members

---

<sup>29</sup> Machobane, *Government and Change*, 238-43.

while Maseru counted thirty-nine in its council. The district commissioner, as the head colonial official, served as chairman of these councils while a Mosotho councilor typically chaired the meetings.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to progressive chiefs, new political parties drove these structural changes. The Basutoland African Congress (BAC) had formed in 1952, which became the BCP (Basutoland Congress Party) in 1958. A teacher and activist, Ntsu Mokhehle and several BCP co-founders were frustrated with the slow pace of reforms in Basutoland. Founders also rallied to fight against the indignities of the apartheid government in South Africa. To this end they forged links with the African National Congress (ANC), and later with the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). The BCP quickly attracted support from *batsoelopele* (progressives), many of whom had been affiliated with the Basutoland Progressive Association (BPA). Mokhehle himself had been a member of Lekhotla la Bafo since the 1930s. Like their forebears LLB and the BPA, the BCP criticized the chieftainship for its role in sustaining colonialism and advocated a constitutional government.<sup>31</sup>

The BCP's ranks included teachers, nurses, WW II veterans, and civil servants. Protestants joined more than did Catholics. The BCP's demands included an end to the unofficial color bar, equal pay for equal work, and an end to the white trader monopoly, among other things. They were progressive in that they supported a national, secular education system and constitutional reforms. They upheld older

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Weisfelder, *Political Contention in Lesotho, 1952-1965* (Roma: Institute for Southern African Studies, 1999), 4-5; Gill, *Short History of Lesotho*, 203-04.

values too, for example, in keeping women from voting. Generally speaking, they advocated for reforms that moved them towards being a modern state, one modeled in part on Kwame Nkrumah's vision of scientific socialism for independent Ghana. The BCP enjoyed sweeping victories in 1960 when the first open elections for the district councils took place, and when the national council (BNC) had finally gained legislative powers. But the BCP had still not gained deep support in the mountains, and by then, an opposition party had emerged.<sup>32</sup>

A second party, the Basotho National Party (BNP) was founded in 1959 by a national council member named Chief Leabua Jonathan. Jonathan and other party founders believed that the BCP's hostility towards chiefs, Catholics, and white expatriates undermined their vision for Lesotho's future. Like the BCP, the BNP insisted on the Africanization of public and private employment, and a rapid move towards self-government. But the BNP feared that the BCP was too closely tied to international communism, a path which Leabua Jonathan believed would harm international relationships with western powers; and furthermore, would exclude chiefs, Christians, and capitalist enterprise, including in farming. The Catholic Church actively supported the BNP while the Protestant Church supported the BCP, prying open a political rift that has continued ever since.<sup>33</sup>

But before the BNP formed, the BCP was already pushing the national council to Africanize the Department of Agriculture. To this end, the government

---

<sup>32</sup> Balam Nyeko, "The Independence Movement, 1952-1966," in Pule and Thabane, eds., *Essays on Aspects*, 155-59; Epprecht, *This Matter*, 196.

<sup>33</sup> Weisfelder, *Political Contention*, 25; Nyeko, "Independence Movement," 160-64.

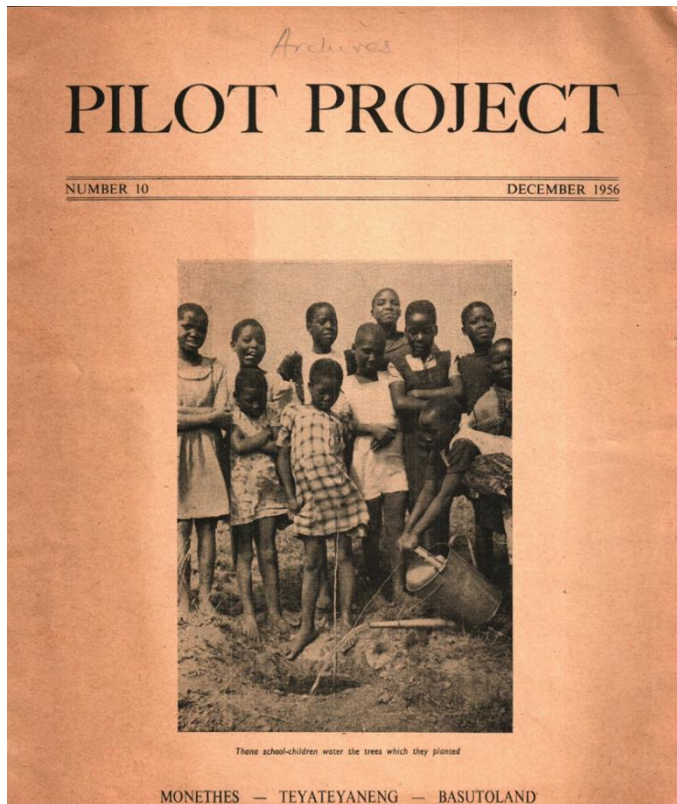
established a liaison position to broker information between the paramount chief and the department. Ntseke Molapo, a Mosotho who had previously worked as a demonstrator, filled this position. Molapo traveled around to monitor and report on the Pilot Project, soil conservation, and weed eradication among other things. European agricultural and livestock officers along with some demonstrators worked with local chiefs to manage the day-to-day operations of the project. This regulatory community, clumsy, top-heavy, fragmented, and clearly in transition during the life of the Pilot Project (1953-58), struggled to administer at the local level. But this perspective does not account for important on-the-ground problems such as people's access to factor endowments like land, animals and equipment, and not least, people's access to specialized knowledge.<sup>34</sup>

The Pilot Project officially began in April 1953. It attempted to bring together everything that the agricultural department had tried in its forty years and to showcase it all in one place. A project bulletin for 1956, designed primarily for the literate public, reported on the program's first three years. In an effort to illustrate the project to all Basotho, the bulletin also included photographs of the people of Tebetebeng performing a variety of tasks: from women and children planting trees to men plowing with tractors (See Figure 6.2). Its authors acknowledged that there had been "some failures and disappointments, and where there had been progress it had often been slow." In continuing earlier government initiatives, soil conservation

---

<sup>34</sup>Machobane, *Government and Change*, 238-43; RDA 1957, p. 8-9.

crews built and repaired grass strips, contour furrows, and dams. Others planted thousands of poplar, pine, and peach trees.<sup>35</sup>



**Figure 6.2**  
Pilot Project Bulletin,  
December 1956  
Source: Morija Museum &  
Archives, General Collection

By 1956 it was clear to officials that few people wanted to plant trees “in their own interest.” Reluctantly, planners implemented a system in which chiefs, instead of calling customary matsema, reported the number of trees planted each month to an official. Chiefs then received cash from the national treasury with which they paid the individuals who had planted trees.<sup>36</sup> The people who planted most of the trees, typically women, elderly men, and children, were the same people called

<sup>35</sup> MMA, “Pilot Project, TY, Basutoland,” no. 10, December 1956.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

on to dig burweed to support the wool industry.<sup>37</sup> The fact that these people refused to mobilize for matsema, demanding cash instead, speaks to how people understood their labor. Underappreciated by Basotho and colonial officials alike and poorly documented compared to the adventures of migrants, these commoners sought modest compensation for their labor that planners had believed ought to serve the common good.<sup>38</sup> Motivation, a force that moves people to act, proved to be a misunderstood concept on the part of department officials and project planners.

As for the children who planted trees and maintained vegetable gardens in the Pilot Project, they did so under the auspices of their primary schools. Agriculture and nature study in Lesotho's primary schools was nothing new in the 1950s. But the effort to encourage scientific agricultural knowledge of a certain type, as a set of relationships linking ecology and nutrition with the skilled application of labor, took on new forms. The Mokhatlane's Village Young Farmers Club testified to this intensification. From 1956 to 1958, M.E. Makhetha, an education officer on the Pilot Project extension team, organized this club which included nine primary schools. In addition to school children, unenrolled herd boys participated too. The idea was for boys and girls to establish and monitor plots at their schools using stones and aloe plants to divide the spaces into vegetable gardens, orchards, and plots for crops.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> BNC, 52<sup>nd</sup> Session, 1957, Vol. 1, 66-70.

<sup>38</sup> On male migrant experiences in Sesotho culture, see Coplan, *In the Time of Cannibals*.

<sup>39</sup> M.E. Makhetha, "The Mohatlane's Village Young Farmer's Club," *Basutoland Farmer's Journal* 2, no. 6 (1958): 57-59.

In practice, few children participated until Makhetha and other extension officers went from home to home to explain the club's activities to parents.<sup>40</sup> Viewed in terms of a larger political project, and in conjunction with agricultural demonstration and the South African agricultural colleges where the demonstrators had trained, the motivations for intensifying African farming were clear. Scientifically trained yeomen farmers with the help of some off-farm income, so the logic went, would develop in their respective homelands, or in Lesotho. For colonial administrators and Basotho leaders too, children who learned the new methods and time tables associated with progressive agriculture in Basutoland were key agents in creating this Basotho yeomanry.<sup>41</sup>

Agricultural education for children was an important, yet single part, of the Pilot Project's broader objective for promoting cultural changes which had both ecological and political-economic dimensions. As in Theko Makhaola's Qacha's Nek district, regrouping villages also featured in the Pilot Project's aim to reform land use practices. The rationale was to remove small hamlets that were typically located further upslope. Planners believed that this would foster revegetation of overgrazed pastures, allow previously plowed fields on steep slopes to grow fresh grass, and control erosion in the river catchments. According to the project bulletin in 1956, many chiefs had given orders and people were moving into new villages or into extensions of larger existing villages. As the author of the bulletin claimed in rather

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> See Tischler, "Education and the Agrarian Question."



simplistic terms, “the population is increasing all the time. The area available for ploughing and grazing is not. Therefore it must not be wasted.”<sup>42</sup>

But the regulatory community responsible for monitoring agricultural practices, within which chiefs were central, responded in various ways. As a set of issues, land shortage and land tenure framed many challenges for the project. Village regrouping posed less of a problem, however, than did regulating which fields could be plowed. During the second half of the 1950s, farmers throughout Basutoland plowed *thite* (virgin fields) more so than in the past. According to the 1960 agricultural census, the demand for new fields was so acute that “many people make continuous requests for the cultivation of virgin land, while others extend their existing parcels by cultivating the adjacent grazing areas.”<sup>43</sup>

Under the Laws of Lerotholi, before a farmer could plow a new land, an agricultural officer or demonstrator, in cooperation with the local chief, had to assess the plot based on its slope, soil, and proximity to roads and watercourses. Despite the laws prohibiting unauthorized plowing being widely publicized via Sesotho government circulars and public meetings, many chiefs inside and outside the project area either refused to enforce the laws or did not fully understand the regulations. In Leribe, for example, agricultural officers reported that chiefs would not acknowledge cases where people had been reported for plowing *thite*. Often, farmers who had already tilled slopes that were deemed too steep by officials

---

<sup>42</sup> MMA, “Pilot Project,” 3; Assumptions about population growth underpinned the dominant colonial policies in Africa, but the 1956 Census showed modest, and uneven growth across the districts. See *Basutoland Census for 1956*, 70.

<sup>43</sup> Morojele, *1960 Agricultural Census, Part V: Land Classification and Farming Practices*, 10-13.

refused to remove them from production. In November 1955, the district commissioner of Leribe toured the district and concluded that “the courts are very ignorant of the PC’s orders regarding ploughing of lands [and] grazing.” So, the commissioner requested more Sesotho copies of the PC’s orders to distribute.<sup>44</sup>

Did these chiefs in Leribe not understand, or even not know, the laws against plowing *thite*? Or, were they resisting the colonial regulators by “playing dumb” as one Mosotho scholar and friend has suggested?<sup>45</sup> The truth, I believe, lies somewhere in between. The regulatory framework could not encompass all villages. Chiefs in remote areas had less contact with the district councils or senior chiefs who knew the regulations well. This information flowed slowly or not at all. In some cases it was a matter of chiefs carrying out their duties to allocate fields no matter what, while other chiefs were more committed to department policies. The latter was the case in 1954 when two representatives from a mountain village in Leribe complained to the district chief Letsie Motšoene that several farmers had unjustly been forced to remove fields from production, leaving them no fields with which to support their families. Motšoene reminded the petitioners that three years earlier, all of the sloping fields had been closed when the villages in the area were regrouped. He echoed colonial explanations that put ignorance above all else, adding

---

<sup>44</sup> NUL, LC, 37/1, Folder 1037, DC, Leribe to DLAS, 29 November 1955; Laws of Lerotholi, reproduced in Duncan, *Sotho Laws and Customs*, 155-56.

<sup>45</sup> Personal Correspondence with Tlali Abel Phohlo, Roma, October 2014.

that the “people of the Maloti find it difficult to understand the importance of this scheme of preserving and saving this country from the danger of soil erosion.”<sup>46</sup>

In another case, local politics and competing claims to land motivated Chief Motšoene’s actions for regulating plowing. In mid-1955 a group of thirty farmers complained to the district agricultural officer that Motšoene had unilaterally declared that all of their fields were unfit for production. The chief ordered this while farmers on the other side of the valley, on a similar slope, continued to cultivate their fields. The district officer, for his part, had no good answer for the petitioners as to why this was so. Just as Chief Makhaola had explained to the BNC that chiefs typically favored their friends, it may have been that Motšoene acted in favor of patrons rather than based on ecological realities or agricultural policy.<sup>47</sup>

It seems clear, too, that the exigencies of migrant labor played an important role in what knowledge was applied to plowing and how. Although land owners were ultimately responsible for their fields, in the late 1950s these owners were often away working in South Africa. An officer in Leribe responded to reports of some people plowing out contour strips by emphasizing that “many people hire others to plough for them, little boys usually doing the ploughing.” For this officer, young boys had neither the necessary knowledge nor the strength to plough consistently on the contours, and so, carelessly ploughed into grass strips and other structures. To be sure, as Showers has pointed out for Basutoland and others have

---

<sup>46</sup> NUL, LC, 37/1, Folder 1037, Letsie Motšoene, No. 27, 7 September 1954.

<sup>47</sup> NUL, LC, 37/1, Folder 1037, Senior Agricultural Officer, Leribe to Chief Motšoene, 26 April 1955; Chief Theko Makhaola, BNC for 1942, quoted in Machobane, *Government and Change*, 238.

shown in various African contexts, some farmers destroyed conservation works as resistance not simply to the colonial state, but to what they viewed as an oppressive and misguided policy.<sup>48</sup>

Although regulating *thite* and plowing practices posed challenges in the Pilot Project and for state-led conservation more broadly, the problems with the cooperative tractor groups reveal the most about how social inequality in terms of factor endowments and knowledge shaped the outcomes of agricultural development programs.<sup>49</sup> The tractor schemes relied, to a great extent, on so-called progressive farmers, who were designated so by demonstrators and other officials based on their knowledge, techniques, and their access to capital. Those people who demonstrated “the potential to be progressive farmers” were also central to the Pilot Project, and to the modernizing project that it exemplified.<sup>50</sup>

### **6.3 – Progressive Farmers in Lesotho**

To understand progressive farmers as a social category within Basotho society, and within the larger British colonial development frameworks, is to evaluate the promises and problems of agricultural policies in this period. Progress was a term deeply embedded in colonial assumptions of Africans as an inferior civilization (See Chap. 4). Governments and their partners expressed this

---

<sup>48</sup> NUL, LC, 37/1, Folder 1037, E.L. Chard, AO to DC, Leribe, 17 February 1955; Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, 227-29; For example, Maack, “We Don’t Want Terraces,” 158-59.

<sup>49</sup> *BNC, 53<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1958, Vol. 2*, 292-94; A.J. Douglas, “The Pilot Project,” *Basutoland Farmer’s Journal* 1 (Spring 1955): 29-30.

<sup>50</sup> RDA 1950, p. 7; Interview with Mokhafisi Kena, 23 January 2015.

assumption through various agricultural policies across the colonial world as well as in South Africa and the American South. In this view, Africans, natives, and black people were problems to be solved by instilling in them prescribed ideas about knowledge, reason, science, technology, and culture.<sup>51</sup> European authorities, missionaries, and educated Basotho used the term progress frequently in discourses about education, market participation, marriage practices, and architectural styles.<sup>52</sup> Agricultural demonstrators, too, had been using terms from these discourses as criteria to select farmers to participate in district shows and to help facilitate their educative work since the 1920s. But references to progressive farmers as an official group only appear in agricultural reports from 1958.<sup>53</sup>

To build a progressive farmer's scheme, the agricultural department outlined some profiles to provide criteria for demonstrators to use when identifying potential progressive farmers. There was, for example, "an ex-school teacher at Morija who incubates large numbers of eggs in a home-made incubator and supplies poultry and eggs to a large number of local residents." Progressive farmers did not necessarily have to be men, as shown in the case of "a woman at Teyateyeneng who for some years now has grown and harvested a good crop of groundnuts (peanuts)." Nor did they have to be commoners. One progressive chief, for instance, grew cotton and tobacco. Progressive farming, as these profiles show, meant breeding specific

---

<sup>51</sup> Epprecht, *This Matter*, 121-25; Mark Hobart, "Introduction: the growth of ignorance?" in *An Anthropological Critique of Development: The Growth of Ignorance*, ed. Mark Hobart (London: Routledge, 1993), 5-22; Beinart, *Rise of Conservation*, 353-58; On the American South, see Hersey, *My Work is That of Conservation*, 81-82.

<sup>52</sup> Epprecht, *This Matter*, 30-32, 121-25; See MMA, "The Constitution of the BPA," 28 November 1907.

<sup>53</sup> LNA, S/166 538I, Wachter, Quarterly Report, 7 September 1937; RDA 1958, pp. 15-16.

animals, cultivating new crops for market, and organizing space and time in certain ways.<sup>54</sup>

Perspectives about these cultivators varied. In line with the official point of view, progressive farmers saw themselves as *batsoelopele*, the progressive or enlightened ones: people who could teach other Basotho to farm, raise animals, and feed their families in ways that were better than in the past. Progressive farmers sought to improve their standards of living by increasing earned income, educating their children, acquiring consumer items like furniture and gas stoves, and perhaps most importantly, by diversifying their family food supply to improve nutrition.<sup>55</sup> With respect to nutrition, progressive farming ideas were linked to the gardening campaigns begun in the 1920s and the Basutoland Homemakers Association (BHA) begun in 1945 to build women's skills in food production, storage, and preparation. Both the BHA and the gardening programs had aimed to address nutritional diseases such as pellagra. Pellagra was a potentially deadly disease resulting from a niacin deficiency; a deficiency which had been common amongst rural poor who ate processed maize meal with little protein or vegetables to supplement it.<sup>56</sup>

Progressive farmers, according to official records, were few in the late 1950s, but their ranks grew, especially in the lowland districts. In Butha-Buthe the number

---

<sup>54</sup> RDA 1958, pp. 15-16.

<sup>55</sup> On the priorities of progressive farming, see *BNC, 48<sup>th</sup> Session, 1952*, 490-94; Makhetha, "Young Farmers' Club;" C.A. Mohale, "Temo ke bophelo ba rona," *Leselinyana*, 15 June 1963; Interview with Emmanuel Ntsekhe, Roma, 1 November 2014.

<sup>56</sup> *BNC, 53rd Session, 1958, Vol. 2*, 264-65; *Basutoland Report of the Department of Health for 1962*, 10; Epprecht, *This Matter*, 152-56; See also, Barrett Brenton, "Pellagra and Nutrition Policy: Lessons from the Great Irish Famine to the New South Africa," *Nutritional Anthropology* 22, no. 1 (1998): 1-11.

rose from thirty to sixty between 1958 and 1960. In Berea, the host district of the Pilot Project, they increased from forty-four to eighty-two during the same period. The numbers were lower in the mountains. According to the 1960 agricultural census progressive farmers represented just 0.4% of all farmers in the territory.<sup>57</sup> Claims that progressive farmers generally produced higher yields and a greater variety of food than the average Mosotho farmer seem true enough, but these comparisons need to be understood in context. The progressives, to varying degrees and due to various circumstances, had access to adequate and appropriate land, labor, draft power, and equipment.<sup>58</sup>

Knowledge and social relations mattered too. Progressive farmers used improved seed, animal manure, and commercial fertilizer to produce their goods. To use these inputs, progressive farmers deployed sophisticated knowledge that incorporated local ecology, animals, and scientific agriculture along with an understanding of the institutional framework that governed commercial agricultural production in post-WW II Basutoland. They knew the local traders.<sup>59</sup> They read, and sometimes wrote agricultural columns in the newspapers that told of farming methods, planting schedules, and commodity prices. Farmers criticized the political economic order too, especially as the Congress Party (BCP) gained momentum. One writer, for instance, did so in an editorial in *Leselinyana*, asking: “when will Basotho farmers be protected” from the white trader monopolies in

---

<sup>57</sup> RDA 1958, pp. 5-9; RDA 1960, pp. 4-7, Morojele, *1960 Agricultural Census, Part III*, 28.

<sup>58</sup> Morojele, *1960 Agricultural Census: Part III*, 24-28; *Part V*, 38-41.

<sup>59</sup> Mokhafisi Kena, 22 January 2015; Interview with Mokhabi Lesoli, Ha Matlali, 13 January 2015.

Basutoland and from the competition of larger producers in South Africa.<sup>60</sup> Progressives also worked closely with officials from the Department of Agriculture, for example, when they showcased their plots in rural demonstrations or displayed their produce at district agricultural shows. They understood, on some level, the laws governing land use and their local chiefs' responsibilities for regulating pastures, arable fields, and other resources such as trees, reeds, and plants.<sup>61</sup>

But with regards to knowledge circulation and cultural change in this period, the question of how progressive farmers, as a distinct group, interacted with other Basotho is perhaps more important. Most villagers, evidence suggests, respected progressive farmers for what they knew. The respect had a material dimension in the sense that progressives could share implements and inputs, and occasionally, offer wage work. People seem to have respected that progressives had compiled knowledge through experience and education, and that they knew how to connect the social and economic worlds of rural Lesotho to urban centers in Maseru and beyond. But along with respect, people also viewed these yeomen with some suspicion and envy. Some people perceived progressive farmers' knowledge as a type of property (not unlike their often disproportionate land holdings), something that separated them from the rest of the community. These tensions affected the way people shared, or did not share, environmental knowledge.<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Letlametlu, "Balemi be tla sireletsoa neng?," *Leselinyana*, 9 September 1961.

<sup>61</sup> RDA 1961, pp. 25-27; Mokhafisi Kena, 22 January 2015.

<sup>62</sup> See William Murphy, "Secret Knowledge as Property and Power in Kpelle Society: Elders versus Youth," *Journal of the International African Institute* 50, no. 2 (1980): 193-207.



Historical data about individual progressive farmers in Lesotho is scarce, but scraps of evidence provide some insight. I also draw on my fieldwork and oral interviews, which although they address later periods, provide a sense of the social dynamism of such relationships. Makalo Mokhotsoa farmed at his home in Mesapela, a village within the Tebetebeng Pilot Project area. According to a series of agricultural department photographs and captions from 1960, he grew peanuts and potatoes in fenced-in plots (See Figure 6.3). His wife was integral to the family



**Figure 6.3**

Makalo Mokhotsoa with an agricultural officer in a plot of groundnuts, August 1960  
Source: TNA, INF 10/179

enterprise, whether cultivating the fields or sorting through the sugar beans that they harvested from their fields. Makalo's children, when not in school, helped their parents in harvesting, sorting, bagging, and transporting the best produce for sale at nearby traders. They stored the rest for family consumption. Ntate Mokhotsoa

probably owned between four and eight cattle, which would have included plow oxen and milking cows. Under official requirements, he would have owned at least six arable acres. Like his progressive colleagues, Makalo did not work in the mines. Instead, he and his wife worked their fields and gardens year round in a tightly coordinated agricultural calendar to produce a variety of crops and maintain soils through conservation, manuring, and cover cropping.<sup>63</sup>

Based on this profile, the Mokhotsoa's exemplified a model family farm operation that might have fit well in England, New England, or the American South. The department photographed Mokhotsoa and his family while they performed tasks, likely staging some of them, and used the images in propaganda and in official reports to London.<sup>64</sup> While considering that the government selected its subjects for these images and used them to support its own aims, the photos still convey a sense of how some Basotho aspired to strengthen their farming capacities according to the tenets of progressive farming. The progressive family farm, as TVA planners in the USA believed too, was a core institution for economic growth. An important goal of the TVA, as one of its board members had argued, was to give rural people "the tools for fulfilling their Jeffersonian rights." In other words, with access to knowledge, land, capital, and markets, Basotho farmers at Tebetebeng and elsewhere, could take the lead as the economically and morally progressive vanguard in building an agrarian state.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> TNA, INF 10/179, Conservation Department Photo Albums, Part II.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Phillips, *This Land, This Nation*, 93.

To be sure, the comparison has limits. There was no hydroelectric component at Tebetebeng, let alone any electrification or industrial cities as there were in the TVA. But planners and progressive farmers still linked moral and cultural health to enlightened farming. To make this link, planners drew on imagined pasts and assumptions about rural people as much as on any empirical evidence. As this photographic evidence of this enlightened class suggests, Makalo Mokhotsoa seems to have made a fair living as did many of his counterparts in the 0.4% of Basotho farmers. To validate and publicize this model further, the agricultural department offered certificates to progressive farmers in formal proceedings in the villages in 1960, a clear precedent to the certificates that Mochinti Jane displayed fifty years later. The proceedings in 1960 appear to have been well attended. And judged by how the attendees donned their best blankets for the occasion, people respected the ceremonies and the farmers who received the certificates (See Figure 6.4).<sup>66</sup> But who these people were, and what factor endowments they had before being designated progressive farmers begs another set of questions.

As in other British territories and in the TVA, progressive farmer schemes in Basutoland failed to benefit the poorest people. Basotho widows, landless families, and those with no livestock or implements gained little from the schemes, at least in

---

<sup>66</sup> TNA, INF 10/179, Conservation Department Photo Albums, Part I.

the material sense. Mountain farmers, who faced a different set of ecological challenges than their lowland counterparts, also saw few benefits.<sup>67</sup> As Erik Green



**Figure 6.4**

A district commissioner and an agricultural officer present a certificate to a progressive farmer.

August, 1960

Source: TNA, INF 10/179

has argued for similar schemes in colonial Nyasaland (Malawi), there were two main problems. First, factor endowments such as access to land and livestock were too uneven in rural communities. According to the 1960 agricultural census of Basutoland, 55% of land holders had less than the six acres required for progressive farmer status. Another 31% of people that owned at least some land had no livestock at all. The schemes had accentuated these inequalities by heaping new

---

<sup>67</sup> RDA 1962, p. 16; Makhanya, *The Use of Land Resources*, 160.

intellectual and material resources such as extension services, access to credit, different types of seed, improved breeding animals, and commercial fertilizer on top of a relatively privileged class.<sup>68</sup> Second, partial integration, an economic process whereby rural household heads farmed in conjunction with wage employment, prevented a greater commitment to full-time farming. This was as true in Basutoland as it was in Malawi, especially with respect to working in South Africa.<sup>69</sup>

We cannot, however, adequately define rural social differentiation and its role in agrarian transformation in materialist terms. In his work on master farmers in colonial India, Benjamin Siegel affirms Green's argument, but he adds that the transfer of technology and techniques formed only part of a deeper cultural change. These schemes also sought to shatter what colonials had long seen as the stagnant and passive qualities of pre-modern peasants. Becoming a progressive capitalist farmer, Siegel argues, required new *mentalités*.<sup>70</sup> For Makalo Mokhotsoa and his fellow progressive farmers in Lesotho, they demonstrated these new *mentalités* by producing edible and marketable crops such as potatoes and peanuts, raising improved breeds of animals like brown-Swiss cattle, and participating in agricultural shows where they could showcase their success. Success, for these farmers, meant working with one's hands on the land in Lesotho as a way to attain

---

<sup>68</sup> Morojele, *1960 Agricultural Census, Part II: Households and Families*, 38 & *Part III: Agricultural Holdings*, 12-13, 37. The agricultural department did allow some flexibility here. For example, a teacher who owned land could be a progressive farmer as could someone without equipment but who showed commitment to "efficient and timeous cultivation." RDA 1959, p. 16.

<sup>69</sup> Green, "Labor Costs and the Failed Support of Progressive Farmers;" See also, Kalinga, "The Master Farmers' Scheme."

<sup>70</sup> Siegel, "Modernizing Peasants and Master Farmers."

material aspirations and to make claims to a Basotho agrarian identity. Furthermore, progressive farmers adapted a new sense of time, a carefully coordinated agricultural calendar by which they engaged a set of ecological and economic opportunities.<sup>71</sup>

Basotho in various social positions viewed progressive farmers and their claims to a particular agrarian identity in mixed ways. For commoners with little or no land and few animals, progressive farmers had accumulated more property than they needed. Many had accumulated fields across generations (See Chap. 4), whereas newly arrived immigrant families and many newlywed men had residential plots only. Basotho had historically recognized the social importance of the *morui* (pl. *barui*), a wealthy man in village life, as measured mostly in livestock ownership. Traditionally, *barui* dispersed patronage as *mafisa* or by compensating workers in cash or kind for assisting with harvesting and other tasks. King Moshoeshoe and chiefs more broadly, were *barui*. But since the mining centers opened and commercial agriculture dawned in the nineteenth century, and the transition to a cash economy accelerated, many commoners fit this description too.<sup>72</sup>

Some progressive farmers did, and still do, balance their own aspirations to profit with serving the greater good of the community in an older Sesotho sense of reciprocity.<sup>73</sup> Two male interviewees have shown this balancing act, if imperfectly.

---

<sup>71</sup> Christian Boehm, "The Social Life of Fields: Labour Markets and Agrarian Change in Lesotho," *Paideusis* 3 (2003):1-20; See the "Almanaka ea Balemi (Farmer's Almanac)," that was published annually in *Leselinyana*, for example, 5 January 1923 and 3 January 1930.

<sup>72</sup> Ashton, *The Basuto*, 175-77; Turkon, "Social Differentiation," 285-95.

<sup>73</sup> Turkon, "Social Differentiation," 295-98.

At Ha Makhaola, many people without land or animals harvested sorghum in Mokhafisi Kena's fields for wages in 2015. While participating in one such harvest outing, I spoke with people who joked about how "the old man" had managed to farm some of the village's best fields for so long. They complained about the low wages while simultaneously expressing gratitude for the work. At Ha Thifa, near Qacha's Nek town, Joseph Hlapi manages people and lands in a similar way. Hlapi studied agriculture at Utah State University, a credential which affords him credibility with local farmers and agricultural officials alike. But his prestigious formal education and worldly experience, like Kena's, also separates him from most neighbors.<sup>74</sup>

Hlapi and Kena are aware of their privilege. Like progressive farmers in the 1950s and 60s, they believe that knowledge and hard work, perhaps as much as material factor endowments, are the keys to more productive farming. They acknowledge the constraints of mountain soils and climate, and the problem of restricted markets and cheap South African imports too. Both men serve as leaders of the recently formed Qacha's Nek Farmers' Association, whose members seek to improve agriculture in the district by training young farmers and sharing resources amongst its membership. If local Basotho view these men with some suspicion and envy, they still knock on their doors frequently to ask for things. Consistent with *barui* of an earlier era, Hlapi and Kena loan or give people animals, seed, food, and implements. But these local visitors also seek knowledge from these progressive

---

<sup>74</sup> Mokhafisi Kena, 22 January 2015; Interview with Joseph Hlapi, Ha Thifa, 17 May 2015.

farmers. For instance, during my many visits with Kena men and women frequently stop in to ask him when and how to plant this or that crop, how to apply for agricultural credit from the government, what the price of beans is, or how to eliminate pests.<sup>75</sup>

Historically, the balance between personal aspirations and duty to the local *sechaba* (community) was uneasy, especially when it came to practices in arable fields. Most progressives cultivated fields year round, in wheat or peas for instance, which interfered with the Sesotho tenure system because it prevented animals from grazing the stubbles during the winter.<sup>76</sup> Maintaining one's soil conservation structures, too, became contentious. Most progressive farmers attended to this task while owners of adjacent fields who were often away at the mines may have neglected maintenance which could threaten the integrity of the whole system of engineering works when one contour strip breached, concentrating water behind a structure downslope.<sup>77</sup>

Socially, progressives sometimes talked down at migrant workers for not knowing how to perform certain tasks. In a hypothetical conversation published in the *Basutoland Farmer's Journal* in 1955, an older miner named Malefetsane had recently learned that school children at Tebetebeng were learning about soil conservation. Setho, the younger progressive farmer, said yes, it is the children who can teach older Basotho now. He teased the proud migrant worker Malefetsane:

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> BNC, 44<sup>th</sup> Session, 1948, Vol. 2, 349; BNC, 53<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1958, Vol. 2, 286-90.

<sup>77</sup> RDA 1960, p. 44.



“You call yourself a man because you have been to Gauteng (Johannesburg), but it seems you are still a baby because you know nothing about these things I have been explaining to you.” Malefetsane waved his *molamu* (staff) at Setho and replied: “But I know how to use my stick, so be careful how you speak to me!” Although hypothetical, this would have been a common Sesotho exchange; one that highlights the generational, occupational, and educational differences that existed amongst the rural commoner population.<sup>78</sup>

Chiefs, too, both respected and resented progressive farmers in their communities. Progressive farmers, many of whom were members of the Basutoland Progressive Association (BPA), had criticized the chieftainship for abusing *letsema*, which took people away from work in their own fields. As an opportunity cost in time, this obligation to perform tribute labor cut into the new progressive farmer *mentalité* where time was of paramount importance. Chiefs worried that these farmers posed a threat to the Sesotho land tenure system, within which chiefs retained their powers to distribute land and to tax people by way of fines and tribute labor. Many progressive farmers advocated for land tenure reform where they would receive formal title to their lands.<sup>79</sup> Their rationale was that if they improved their fields by applying their own labor and knowledge – by manuring, fertilizing, rotating with legumes to fix nitrogen, and maintaining conservation structures – then they ought to have secure title to the land. This title, proponents

---

<sup>78</sup> Douglas, “The Pilot Project,” 28.

<sup>79</sup> *BNC, 53rd Session, 1958, Vol. 1*, 48; *BNC, 53rd Session, 1958, Vol. 2*, 262-63, 308-09.

argued, would prevent an unscrupulous or jealous chief from reallocating part of a man's fields. Of course, this position on private title to land had roots in colonial agricultural policies. Viewed another way, under the Laws of Lerotholi, chiefs were required to reallocate when they deemed that one man had accumulated too many fields while another married man was denied his rightful allocation. In practice, this reallocation rarely occurred, which upheld the concentration of quality fields in the hands of the few.<sup>80</sup>

These tensions set the tractor schemes at Tebetebeng, and at other locations, on course for failure. Basotho farmers, to varying degrees, had always been interested in technology and tractors were no exception.<sup>81</sup> But the structure of these mechanized group farming schemes necessitated that participants radically redefine their agricultural mentalités. Many progressive farmers, who possessed the adequate capital and specialized knowledge required for participation, reoriented themselves well enough. Their less endowed neighbors, however, struggled to adapt for several reasons that speak to the cultural, ecological, and political dimensions of rural modernization initiatives.

Farming with tractors economically meant establishing large plots. In theory, the tractor operator, who was usually a trained member of the group, could plow continuously without having to turn the tractor constantly, thus conserving fuel and time. Given the rough topography and the historical patterns of population growth

---

<sup>80</sup> *BNC, 53rd Session, 1958, Vol. 1*, 194-95; *BNC, 53rd Session, 1958, Vol. 2*, 308-17; Interview with Maletapata Makhaola, 8 December 2014.

<sup>81</sup> See Wallman, *Take Out Hunger*, 83-85, 123-26. Wallman addresses the Pilot Project, but focuses on two others: the Taung Reclamation Scheme (1956-61) and the FarMech Scheme (1961-1965).

in villages, Basotho often owned one field in one area and another in a different area. Ntate Kena, as an example of a larger field owner in Qacha's Nek, cultivated two main plots that were 1000 meters apart. More recent arrivals to a village had fields scattered even further apart. According to the 1950 agricultural report, on average, Basotho farmers lived one mile from their fields.<sup>82</sup>

Participants in the Pilot Project formed four tractor groups. Each group consisted of land owners who had fields in the same area. While maintaining their customary rights, each farmer contributed dues towards the expense of the government-owned tractor. Each farmer, with his family or other labor, still maintained the contour ridges and grass strips that separated their fields from one another, while the tractor operator plowed all the fields continuously by simply lifting the implement when crossing field boundaries.<sup>83</sup>

Because of the typical patchwork of field ownership, however, in many cases there were several fields that interrupted the otherwise continuous layout. For instance, many men who worked in the mines did not participate in the tractor groups, and sometimes left their fields unattended for extended periods.<sup>84</sup> Under the Laws of Lerotholi, owners could leave a field fallow for two years before a chief could rightfully reallocate it to someone in need. Chiefs were reluctant to reallocate fields that had been fallow for many years despite pressure from the tractor groups

---

<sup>82</sup> MMA, "Pilot Project," 6, Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 89-91; Kena, 22 January 2015; Interview with Marapeli Raselepe, 25 December 2014; RDA 1950, p. 23.

<sup>83</sup> MMA, "Pilot Project," 6; Douglas, "The Pilot Project, Part II," *Basutoland Farmers Journal* 1 (Fall 1956): 47.

<sup>84</sup> Wallman, *Take Out Hunger*, 106-08; Douglas, "The Pilot Project," 29-30; Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 92-97.

to intervene.<sup>85</sup> Other field owners lived at home and farmed, but refused to participate; perhaps preferring to plow with their own oxen and reap their own harvest. Several interviewees have explained that Basotho farmers take pride in cultivating their fields with minimal assistance from outside their immediate social networks, especially when the fields have been in their family for generations.<sup>86</sup>

In a bulletin that compared average crop yields for the tractor groups versus non-group fields, the mechanized fields showed positive results. The comparison, as measured in bags of grain reaped, ranged from a modest advantage for the mechanized plots to more than double the harvest of those farmed with oxen.<sup>87</sup> These figures undoubtedly reflected many variables such as the use of fertilizers and micro-environmental factors such as soil quality. But it seems clear that the mechanized units, at least in the areas measured, produced more grain on average. Based on the sporadic participation of farmers in the schemes, it also seems clear that when it came to agriculture, Basotho were a varied lot with different ideas about land, money, time, and social organization.

People invested money in different ways. As scholars of agrarian southern Africa have shown, Africans had sought economic and social security by acquiring livestock, especially cattle, rather than cash.<sup>88</sup> Considering this, we can see how some people would have believed that paying tractor dues was irrational,

---

<sup>85</sup> The Laws of Lerotholi, reproduced in Duncan, *Sotho Laws and Customs*, 117; *BNC, 53<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1958, Vol. 1*, 195.

<sup>86</sup> Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 92-97; Interview with Clement Shata, 13 December 2014; Boehm, "Social Life of Fields," 1-3.

<sup>87</sup> MMA, "Pilot Project," 6.

<sup>88</sup> For example, Kuper, *Wives for Cattle*; Ferguson, "Bovine Mystique."

particularly if they already had access to draft animals and equipment. Still, there were others who did believe that by earning cash, they could shape their families' future by investing in their children's education, commercial livestock breeds, and agricultural inputs like fertilizer, seed, and implements. These cultural shifts, of course, occurred within a political-economy where African producers with tiny plots could only hope to compete with subsidized commercial farmers in South Africa. The architects of betterment programs in South Africa and the Pilot Project believed, if disingenuously, that small-holder farmers in Lesotho and in the reserves could profit through cooperation.<sup>89</sup>

Cooperation meant different things to different people. Basotho farmers had adapted to the acute shortages of labor and capital that had been shaped by the migrant labor system.<sup>90</sup> They did so by creating social technologies for sharing labor, equipment, land, and expertise amongst community relations. Known as *seahlolo* (sharecropping) or *ho lemisana* (to plow with one another), these arrangements, according to one chieftainess, "are what Sesotho farming is all about." But these arrangements were not communal in any pure sense. All participants earned something from the deal whether food, cash, or reciprocal labor. Colonial planners misunderstood the nature of these production arrangements, much as they had misunderstood letsema labor and grazing rights in the cattle post country.<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> De Wet and McAllister, "Rural Communities in Transition"; *BNC, 48<sup>th</sup> Session, 1952, Vol. 2, 472-79.*

<sup>90</sup> Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 92-97; Murray, *Families Divided*, 16-19.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*; Turner, "Sesotho Farming," 240-48; Maletepata Makhaola, 8 December 2014.

Few interviewees responded affirmative when I asked if they had participated in a *mokhatlo oa temo* (an agricultural association) in the past. Yet nearly all respondents spoke of their respective *seahlolo* arrangements over the years.<sup>92</sup> So when the planners at Tebetebeng complained that people would not join cooperatives, they were both wrong and right in their assessment. They were right in thinking that Basotho farmers pursued self-interests which conflicted with those of their neighbors. They were wrong in reducing the problem to the “tyranny of tradition,” as one agricultural officer put it, which he believed ruled the lives of rural people of all races.<sup>93</sup> Rather, the inconsistent participation in the tractor schemes shows that Basotho across the social spectrum were engaged in a long term process of cultural change, of which the social relations of production were a part.

In February 1958, members of a special BNC committee on the Pilot Project discussed its failures with special attention to the mechanized group farming. The chairman Edwin Ntsasa admitted that “we found the place [Tebetebeng] very bad, but we learned many things.” He believed that the harvest reports proved the advantages of mechanized farming. Ntsasa argued that this model of mechanization be made compulsory in select places, despite knowing how Basotho generally reviled the term “compulsory” in any agricultural initiative. In those places, Basotho tractor operators from the department would plow people’s fields for a fee.<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Mamotlatsi Motjoli, Ha Makhaola, 2 January 2015; Clement Shata, 13 December 2014; Marapeli Raselepe, 25 December 2014.

<sup>93</sup> MMA, “Pilot Project,” 6; A.G. Brightmore, “Editorial,” *Basutoland Farmer’s Journal* 2, no. 3 (1957):1.

<sup>94</sup> *BNC, 53<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1958, Vol. 2, 292.*

Other committee members disagreed. Representatives from lowland districts conceded that tractors were important, but they also insisted that farmers needed to retain the authority to make farm-level decisions. A councilor from Maseru, pointed out that in many areas “tractors will sink in the marshy fields, and so, people should have the choice.” George Bereng of Qacha’s Nek articulated a set of problems with modernization schemes: “We have not got lands situated together on a plain...we plough along slopes where there is some soil...we in the mountains would only be putting ourselves in financial difficulty.” He continued, “some say that it [tractors] ruins the soil because the heavy wheels crush the soil” and by bringing up the sub-soil which, when “mixed with the top soil it spoils the soil all together....leave it to those with suitable lands to use tractors.”<sup>95</sup> Bereng was not against technology, but he understood that there were important ecological and social considerations. Similar to schemes in India and Malawi, when the colonial grant for the Pilot Project ran out in 1958, the authorities blamed the project’s shortcomings on the people’s ignorance and laziness, neglecting any hint of the dynamism discussed above.<sup>96</sup>

To be sure, the Tebetebeng was a rivulet compared to the Tennessee. The scale of the technical, financial, and land inputs were no comparison. Still, the underlying ideas were rooted in the TVA model, in what James Scott calls high modernism in social and environmental engineering.<sup>97</sup> Following Timothy Mitchell’s theoretical framework, we can also see that Tebetebeng represented a focused, yet

---

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 293-96.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 183-86.

bold attempt to implement a techno-political experiment in Basutoland, which aimed to integrate Basotho peasants into a modern capitalist fold; albeit, in a subordinate role.<sup>98</sup> But as the actions of farmers, chiefs, and councilors demonstrate, there was not the level of state control in Basutoland as there was in Mitchell's case study of Egypt. Furthermore, narratives of the high modern miss the historical texture of how people of all social strata remade their landscapes and conceptions of work as they compiled and reconfigured knowledge, even as they struggled at the margins of a colonial political economy.

#### **6.4 - An alternative path for Basotho farmers?**

An analysis of the visionary Mosotho farmer James Jacob Machobane offers a bridge between the modernization schemes in Lesotho's lowlands and the pastoral development initiatives in Qacha's Nek. A remarkable figure by any account, Machobane developed an innovative farming system and a college for promoting it in the mid-late 1950s. His movement was known as *Mants'a Tlala*, Drive Out Hunger. Machobane's theories and practices emerged from his knowledge of Sesotho culture and local environments as well as his personal experiences with poverty and hunger.<sup>99</sup> But his system's agricultural practices, its assumptions about work, and its

---

<sup>98</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 10-14.

<sup>99</sup> For scholarly work, see A.F. Robertson, "Popular Scientist: James Jacob Machobane and Mantsa Tlala," *African Affairs* 93, no. 370 (1994): 99-121; On the system itself, see for example, Gudrun Schwilch, "Promoting the Machobane Farming System: An Interview with Letla Mosenene, an Advisor to Farmer Innovators in Lesotho," *Mountain Research and Development* 22, no. 1 (2002): 19-21.



methods for teaching, were also linked to a progressive and scientific ideology that overlapped in important ways with those of the Catholic and Protestant missions in Basutoland and the Department of Agriculture. Disentangling the relationship between innovation, local knowledge, and transnational ideas about agriculture and education, affords a fuller sense of historical possibilities that will help put Mochinti Jane's situation in the mountains in 1955 in sharper relief.

J.J. Machobane was born in 1914 in Frankfort, Orange Free State, just to the north of Lesotho. In Frankfort, his father farmed maize as a sharecropper on white-owned land, which is where Machobane first learned about farming and the injustices of the region. In his co-authored autobiography, he recalls pulling teams of plow oxen "in the fields until 11 o'clock at night" as an eight year old boy.<sup>100</sup> The Machobane family moved to Lesotho in 1924, settling in Leribe district. James grew up herding his father's animals in the summer, assisting with plowing in the spring, and harvesting crops in the late autumn. Around age seventeen, Machobane began primary school at a Catholic mission and later continued at the Protestant school at Morija, where he became interested in literature.<sup>101</sup> Following in a Basotho literary tradition, he published several Sesotho novels in the 1940s. According to one scholar of Sesotho literature, Machobane's "novels deal with complex moral issues, showing how the culture of a people has to be dynamic while at the same time retaining the best features of tradition."<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> Machobane and Berold, *Drive Out Hunger*, 8.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9, 14-23.

<sup>102</sup> Andreas Elias, quoted in Machobane and Berold, *Drive Out Hunger*, 23.

Machobane's literary perspective on culture echoed his approach to his life's work. His experiences and his aspirations to empower poor Basotho led him away from writing and back to agriculture. After marrying he returned to his father's place in Leribe where he experimented with different combinations of crops over the next twelve years.<sup>103</sup> Thinking carefully about time, seasonality, soils, and plant characteristics, Machobane planted and harvested crops at different times, and cultivated them with few inputs and on small plots. Through exhaustive trial and error, he honed his system, which he summarizes here:

I could see what to put and when, so as not to leave any space uncultivated. I lifted the potatoes in January. I planted the maize, beans, and sorghum in January. By March or April the beans were ready to be harvested. Then I planted wheat where the beans were. The wheat was ready for harvesting around November or December. At the same time I had to think of the maize which would be harvested by winter time, June or July. The pumpkin and watermelon would be planted then. The wheat was ready by November or December and what remained was the potatoes. Then the whole thing began again. This was the beginning of the Machobane Farming System.<sup>104</sup>

In December 1955, an agricultural officer named I.L. Chard, accompanied by three district councilors, went to inspect Machobane's work at Nqechane, Leribe. Chard reported on Machobane's intercropping system, noting the Mosotho's innovative use of donkeys to pull a cultivator, which had "the front and side tines removed," between rows to loosen soil for the next planting.<sup>105</sup> His use of the more affordable and less culturally revered donkeys, instead of the customary and exclusively male-owned oxen, reflected Machobane's concern for widows and other

---

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 14-23.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 35-36; See also, NUL, LC 37/2, Machobane to Mr. Venn, Soil Conservation Officer, 10 May 1957.

<sup>105</sup> NUL, LC 37/2, I.L. Chard to DLAS, 30 December 1955.

people who owned few or no animals. Chard noted the excess weeds, and the weakness of the sorghum. He also believed that because the system entailed “continual work and personal supervision,” it would “be difficult to propagate amongst the local farmers who generally prefer the easy way.” But overall, he was impressed with the system. He had “no doubt that Mr. Machobane is [sic] producing several times more foodstuffs on his plot than any Basuto with the same size plots or with larger plots.” Furthermore, and particularly germane with regards to the government focus on soil conservation in the 1950s, Chard concluded that “one big advantage of this system would be [that] soil erosion would be reduced considerably.” With that, he urged the director of agriculture to examine the system more closely.<sup>106</sup>

By November 1957, Basotho living outside Leribe were learning about Machobane’s system via the pages of *Leselinyana*, and no doubt, by word of mouth. In a letter to *Leselinyana*, a Mosotho contributor informed readers about Machobane’s life and the details of his system, advising “the nation and Lesotho’s chiefs to follow this wise method of agriculture.” He appealed to people’s sense of food insecurity at certain times of the year by stressing that Machobane’s system enabled year-round sowing and harvesting according to a new agricultural calendar.<sup>107</sup> In the following years, other newspaper contributors praised

---

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Richard Makhalane, “Ketelo ea Mong. J. Machobane, Thabeng,” *Leselinyana*, 4 November 1957. Translation of quotation by author.

Machobane, covering the progress of his movement and underscoring its variety of crops, which Machobane believed was essential for nutritional health.<sup>108</sup>

Following Chard's original assessment, the colonial government, especially the resident commissioner at the time, A.G. Chaplin, showed interest. At Machobane's request, Chaplin arranged for a comparison of the Machobane system with the conventional crop farming being promoted by the agricultural department: a deeply plowed, monocropped field with liberal applications of phosphate fertilizer.<sup>109</sup> Machobane later recalled that at Roma (one of two competition sites) the government plot yielded thirty-six bags of potatoes versus his eighty-seven. He attracted international attention for these impressive returns. In 1959, Machobane earned a travel grant from the Ford Foundation, with which he visited the US, Canada, the UK, and Germany among other countries. He returned to Lesotho more convinced of his intercropping system than before. "These countries had big crops and rich farmers," he observed, "but all were following the same road of chemical fertilisers [sic] and tractors and contour banks."<sup>110</sup>

Although government officials and agriculturalists showed early interest in Machobane's system, many became concerned about his ability to mobilize people, suspecting political ambitions. Machobane and Mants'a Tlala emerged as the Pilot

---

<sup>108</sup> For example, Hanes Hanes, "Monghali Machobane," *Moeletsi*, 23 May 1959; "Machobane: Ke tella Lesotho Bophelo ba ka," *Leselinyana*, 14 May 1960; "Machobane o tlisetsa Lesotho bo-Matoetoe," *Leselinyana*, 21 April 1962.

<sup>109</sup> RDA 1959, p. 19.

<sup>110</sup> MMA, J.J. Machobane, "The Machobane Mass Agricultural College and Development Foundation College, Mants'a Tlala, Basutoland, Unpublished Prospectus, 5 April 1961; Robertson, "Popular Scientist," 110-15; Machobane and Berold, *Drive Out Hunger*, 43, 63.

Project was falling apart. Despite some low-tech aspects of the Pilot Project, such as vegetable gardening, the new direction was towards large scale mechanized farming. Machobane's movement, for many agriculturalists and politicians both European and Basotho, posed a direct threat to this modern development paradigm. He gained some financial support following his trip to the US, with which he developed the Machobane Mass Agricultural College that he had initially launched with personal funds in 1957. He had trained twelve teachers, who in turn trained others to spread the knowledge through intensive extension work in the villages. Some 200 men and women had earned the rigorous certification, and these teachers drew new trainees from a waiting list that numbered 15,000 by 1960.<sup>111</sup>

Many agricultural officials, including seasoned Basotho demonstrators, came to see the Machobane College as undermining their own extension efforts. Professional pride undoubtedly played a part. For example, Edwin Ntsasa, the longtime demonstrator and agricultural representative to the BNC in 1958, merely shrugged when another councilor inquired about Machobane, saying that "we were never told that there was a man like him." Furthermore, if there were people who knew or worked with Machobane, he said, "I do not think that is official." Chard had evaluated the system three years earlier, and with the newspaper publicity too, it is improbable that Ntsasa was unaware of Machobane's work. Ntsasa, for all of his experience with teaching low-tech husbandry methods in the past, was clearly

---

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.; Interview with Stephen Ralitsele, Maseru, 11 June 2015.

dedicated to mechanized farming by the late 1950s. As Machobane came to know well, his low-tech methods fit uneasily within this official policy position.<sup>112</sup>

Proponents of the progressive farmers' scheme felt that Mants'a Tlala, with its emphasis on low-input, intensive labor mixed cropping, posed a threat to their initiative.<sup>113</sup> According to Machobane, harassment began after he returned from abroad when police demanded to see his registration certificate for the college. In 1962, he says he received threats of violence if he did not cease his work with the college. Who exactly harassed him is not entirely clear. Machobane appears little in official reports between 1963 and Lesotho's independence in 1966. This omission owes to some combination of neglect and repression by government and other actors, and to some disinterest on the part of farmers. Although Machobane continued his efforts, repression increased in the decades following independence when the Lesotho government and its development partners pursued large-scale mechanization, actively (and sadly) eliminating the political and cultural space for Mants'a Tlala.<sup>114</sup> It was somewhat recently, with fresh interest in local knowledge and a new government, that Machobane's system has received renewed attention.<sup>115</sup>

There are several ways to view Machobane and Mants'a Tlala in historical perspective. First, for those seeking local solutions to the problems that Basotho (and others) face today in farming small plots in an increasingly dry climate,

---

<sup>112</sup> *BNC, 53<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1958, Vol. 2, 266-67, 292.*

<sup>113</sup> Robertson, "Popular Scientist," 110-15; Machobane and Berold, *Drive Out Hunger*, 43, 63; Stephen Ralitsoele, 11 June 2015.

<sup>114</sup> Machobane and Berold, *Drive Out Hunger*, 67-70.

<sup>115</sup> For example, Schwilch, "Promoting the Machobane Farming System."

Machobane's work represents the best of African farming: an indigenous prophet of today's movements for sustainable agriculture. In this view, Machobane's theories and practices stand in rebellious opposition to agricultural modernization schemes which relied on commercial fertilizers and seeds, expensive implements, access to credit, large monocultural plots, and stable commodity prices. As has been the case in post-colonial contexts in much of the global south, these larger schemes, in various forms and with even more varied sponsors, have dominated the mainstream of agricultural development in Lesotho ever since the Pilot Project of the 1950s. Proponents of these schemes, for both political and practical reasons, squash people like Machobane, or at least deprive them of official support.<sup>116</sup> It is tempting to view Machobane's relationship to this modernization paradigm in such polarizing, yet grossly oversimplified ways.

To be sure, Machobane's system diverged sharply from the mechanized and planned approach of the Pilot Project. He also felt that cultural approaches to soil conservation (eg. crop rotation, mixed cropping, manuring), rather than grass strips and contour ridges, would better stabilize soils. His philosophy also departed from the progressive farmers' scheme, which was predicated on specific factor endowments. As I have shown, few Basotho could afford to adopt the techniques and technologies of so-called progressive farming in the 1950s and 60s.

---

<sup>116</sup> See, for example, Sissay B. Mekbib et al., "Machobane Farming System and Its Relevance to Climate Change Policy in Lesotho," African Technology Policy Studies Network, Policy Brief no. 35, August 2011; Andrea Palframan, "'In Common Nature': An Ethnography of Climate Adaptation in the Lesotho Highlands," *Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability* 20, no. 12 (2015): 1531-46; Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 223-28; Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture and the Making of Modern India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 6-10.

Furthermore, Machobane recognized the stark inequalities of gender, education, and socio-economic status in Basutoland. He strived to provide people with knowledge that could improve their lives through food production, regardless of how much land, equipment, or livestock they had.<sup>117</sup> He railed against the obsession with tractor farming and fertilizers, citing Lesotho's mountainous terrain, drought-prone climate, and fragile soils as barriers to these applications.<sup>118</sup> As A.F. Robertson has pointed out, Machobane "now seems to have been ahead of his time, anticipating a variety of fashionable interests" from small-scale, intensive farming techniques to his "recognition of the particular victimization of women in African agriculture."<sup>119</sup>

It is also important, however, to understand how Machobane's ideas evolved in a historical context where diverse actors were shaping and reshaping people's *mentalités* about farming, work, social relationships, and time. Putting him in conversation with these ideas, and with the proponents of these ideas, sheds light on how Basotho sized up the possibilities for making a living on the land in the 1950s. Several technical components of the farming system will illustrate this point. First, when I.L. Chard inspected Machobane's four-acre experimental plot in 1955 he found it "completely fenced in." For many Basotho, fencing continued to be unpopular as it had been in the past.<sup>120</sup> Machobane advanced the trend of cultivating plants during all four-seasons, which conflicted with the historical preeminence of

---

<sup>117</sup> MMA, Machobane, "Machobane Mass Agricultural College."

<sup>118</sup> Machobane and Berold, *Drive Out Hunger*, 34.

<sup>119</sup> Robertson, "Popular Scientist," 117-18.

<sup>120</sup> NUL, LC 37/2, Chard to DLAS, 30 December 1955; *BNC, 43<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1947, Vol. 2*, 546-48; *BNC, 48<sup>th</sup> Session, 1952, Vol. 2*, 559-63; Machobane and Berold, *Drive Out Hunger*, 48.



livestock and Sesotho grazing patterns. Protecting vegetable gardens and young tree plantations by enclosing certain areas had been part of a broader effort by the agricultural department, with mixed Basotho support, to reorganize productive spaces.<sup>121</sup> For Machobane, many Basotho, especially widows, had little access to animals and so could benefit more from plants. Gardens, along with trees for fruit and fuel wood purposes, if protected from livestock, could provide nutritious food and free up manure to replenish the soil.<sup>122</sup>

Animal manures, crop residues, and ash all featured prominently in Machobane's mixed cropping system to maintain soil structure and fertility. In order to cultivate year round, he encouraged farmers to work crop residues back into the soil rather than allow animals to graze them down to the roots.<sup>123</sup> This practice was neither new nor was it drawn from timeless Basotho farming practices. Historically, the animals that grazed recently harvested fields deposited some manure there, but I have found no evidence that Basotho applied animal manure to their fields or gardens prior to the twentieth century.<sup>124</sup> Government tree planting schemes began slowly around 1910 as a way to stabilize soil and free up manure for use as fertilizer. In fact, at the new Maseru agricultural school which had opened in 1955, instructors were giving public composting demonstrations in 1959. In 1958, the BNC debated whether or not to make manuring compulsory. The motion was

---

<sup>121</sup> Duncan, *Sotho Law and Custom*, 96-98.

<sup>122</sup> MMA, Machobane, "Machobane Mass Agricultural."

<sup>123</sup> NUL, LC 37/2, Machobane to Venn, 10 May 1957.

<sup>124</sup> Sayce, "Ethno-Geographic Essay," 277; Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 76-77. Burning in the commonage was sometimes used to promote new growth, and simply opening up new fertile fields was standard before political and demographic constraints made this increasingly untenable.

defeated easily because councilors felt that the practice had already been spreading for many years.<sup>125</sup>

Additionally, the Department of Agriculture and Machobane promoted the use of ash as fertilizer, but both parties expressed frustration when people said that digging in household ash heaps would disturb the ancestors.<sup>126</sup> It is unclear how Machobane first came to learn about manure and ash. But by repackaging the concept, especially at a time when the agricultural department stepped up their promotion of commercial fertilizers and more farmers began using them, Machobane sought a new progressive path.<sup>127</sup> To ease the labor burden of manuring, the department had funded (albeit poorly), a campaign to subsidize scotch carts. Despite good intentions, the department and Machobane both failed to fully appreciate how people's views of agricultural labor were changing; labor being crucial in collecting and applying manure, or indeed, in all farming tasks.<sup>128</sup>

Machobane's system required an intense dedication to progress and to a strict work ethic. In Machobane's words, "the Mants'a Tlala College motto was – First develop man, man will develop the land."<sup>129</sup> He believed that too many Basotho "had good education purely and highly academic." These educated people, he wrote in 1961, "were men and women devoid therefore of physical power for work." He

---

<sup>125</sup> *BNC 53<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1958, Vol. 2, 260-64*; TNA, INF 10/179, The Agricultural School at Maseru, March 1959.

<sup>126</sup> Machobane and Berold, *Drive Out Hunger*, 36; Tseliso Ramakhula, 14 November 2014.

<sup>127</sup> Robertson, "Popular Scientist," 118-20.

<sup>128</sup> Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, 54; Makalo Mot'soane, quoted in *Drive Out Hunger*, 89-90.

<sup>129</sup> Machobane and Berold, *Drive Out Hunger*, 47; On work ethic, see also, Atkins, *The Moon is Dead!*

committed himself to teaching self-reliance. For Basotho and rural people more broadly, he insisted that working the soil was the only means for self-sufficiency.<sup>130</sup>

In some ways, this philosophy accommodated the colonial and segregationist political projects which sought to develop Africans as farmers or tradesmen. But as I have argued, compiling the specialized knowledge for self-reliant, intensive farming and deploying it through one's own labor could also serve political ends whether in Lesotho, South Africa, or for that matter, the American South (See Chap. 4). At its foundations this idea echoed Chief Lerotholi's industrial school in Maseru which had opened in 1906. It echoed, too, the ideology behind the Catholic social action initiatives as well as Basutoland's agricultural demonstration programs. Machobane saw a moral component in agricultural labor, and he joined a chorus of African and non-African voices in the 1950s in articulating the importance of work and knowledge in this respect.<sup>131</sup>

Intensive agricultural systems like Machobane's, then and now, are only as good as people's motivation to dedicate year-round labor to them.<sup>132</sup> That is, soil, grass, plants, and animals only become resources through specific applications of knowledge and labor. The prevalence of absenteeism on Lesotho's farms from migrant labor played a role here, but so too did people's changing cultural aspirations in the mid-twentieth century. J.G. Mantlaka, a Mosotho school teacher, expressed this bluntly when he argued for better agricultural education in

---

<sup>130</sup> MMA, Machobane, "Machobane Mass Agricultural."

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Makalo Mot'soane, quoted in *Drive Out Hunger*, 89-90.

Basutoland in an article for the Catholic newspaper *Moeletsi oa Basotho*. “It is amazing how our African people have become anti-agriculture.” He continued, “today agriculture is looked upon as a low and unbecoming occupation by our people, though it cannot be disputed that the whole of the human living is from the soil...the soil is really our mother.”<sup>133</sup> Mantlaka, like Machobane and their contemporaries in the Department of Agriculture, although they disagreed on technical aspects, felt that Basotho could remake themselves as modern farmers to achieve personal, community, and national aspirations by working the home place, instead of digging and drilling in the mines of South Africa for wages. However quixotic this may seem given the structural constraints of the time, it was an important goal nonetheless.<sup>134</sup>

Finally, the Machobane farming system required its adherents to establish and maintain faith in the idea that individuals and communities could improve themselves, and each other, through a progressive relationship with their landscape. Machobane was not ignorant of the political and economic injustices around him. Nor was he unaware of the growth in nationalist party politics of his time, especially the BCP.<sup>135</sup> But by choice, which might seem puzzling in hindsight, he disarticulated Lesotho’s poverty from the larger political structures of colonialism and apartheid.

---

<sup>133</sup> J.G. Mantlaka, “The Place of Agriculture and Manual Work in Our Schools,” *Moeletsi*, 26 November and 17 December 1951.

<sup>134</sup> The official agricultural policy for 1951 stated, among its objectives: “To encourage a healthy outlook on agriculture as an occupation by expanding vocational education in agriculture and by creating an informed extension service.” RDA 1951, pp. 3-4.

<sup>135</sup> MMA, Machobane, “Machobane Mass Agricultural”; Machobane and Berold, *Drive Out Hunger*, 70-75, 96-101.

He believed that hunger, in and of itself, led to social disharmony, to theft, and to murder. He saw himself and his system as an apolitical toolkit, a savior of sorts, to address these problems.<sup>136</sup>

Writing about his own motivations, he explained that “I was first moved deep into my heart by the starving, diseased, cold and ignorant masses of my country.” It was then, he says, that “I moved into the masses, into the wilderness...to share with them in their misery and while making several experiments, researches and finally, demonstrations in the attempt to try and bring about a solution to their misery.” His mission, as he saw it, “was to help my parents with absolute truth and sincerity so that I should best serve my wife and children, with sincere preparation to best serve my neighbor as a step towards best serving my people and country with my untiring sincerity and love.”<sup>137</sup>

His sentiments drew on key Sesotho concepts that he believed had fallen out of favor, especially *hlonpho* (respect) and *sechaba* (community/nation).<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, he expressed a moral view of Lesotho, its environment, and people that also had clear links to the Protestant and Catholic presence there. His view was progressive, yet it fit uneasily with many Basotho in the 1950s who sought opportunities outside of agriculture; or at least they sought other opportunities as a way to supplement, or to make agriculture viable. Some sought wage work in the

---

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> MMA, Machobane, "Machobane Mass Agricultural."

<sup>138</sup> Mathabo Tsepa, "Promoting Food Security and Respect for the Land through Indigenous Ways of Knowing," PhD diss., The University of British Columbia, 2008, pp. 133-38; Machobane and Berold, *Drive Out Hunger*, 10-15, 93-94; Turkon, "Social Differentiation," 300-05.

mines or locally. Others sought higher education, or work as politicians, demonstrators, clerks, and not least, teachers.<sup>139</sup> This was the environmental, social, and cultural paradox facing Mochinti Jane in Qacha's Nek.

### **6.5 - People, Place, and Development Prospects in the Maloti**

Although just 150 km as the crow flies from Machobane's Mass Agricultural College in Leribe and the Pilot Project in Berea, Qacha's Nek was a very different place. Mochinti Jane had no tractor schemes to participate in. Few *melele* knew anything about Machobane or his farming system in the late 1950s, much less practiced it.<sup>140</sup> This was true because of the limits of communication and political repression, but also because of ecological factors. In most years, there were too many days of frost in the Maloti and the temperatures were too cold in the winter to reliably cultivate year round. If residents needed reminding of these constraints, Sehlabathebe, on the eastern edge of Qacha's Nek, received snow, rain, and frost that destroyed crops in mid-summer 1959.<sup>141</sup> Machobane farming, at least in its original orthodoxy, was for lowland environments. With regards to mechanization prospects, tractors did not work for mountain farmers, as George Bereng had explained to the BNC in 1958.<sup>142</sup> Reinforcing the long held view of the Maloti as a refuge, as a place apart from Lesotho proper, Eagle's Peak High School advertised an

---

<sup>139</sup> Epprecht, *This Matter*, 189-90.

<sup>140</sup> Mokhafisi Kena, 22 January 2015; Mochinti Jane, 18 May 2015; RDA 1957, 12-15.

<sup>141</sup> "District News: Qacha's Nek," *Basutoland News*, 17 February 1959.

<sup>142</sup> *BNC, 53<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1958, Vol. 2*, 293.

educational experience where the “mountain life is greatly beneficial to boys and girls physically, intellectually, and morally.”<sup>143</sup>

Despite what some people saw as a rugged if peaceful place, Mochinti lived in a Qacha’s Nek that was undergoing its own process of economic rationalization and cultural transformation. Residents living in or near the Senqu River Valley still grew the array of lowland crops on good years, but the government had designated the Maloti as essentially pastoral country.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, the Jane family and other highland pioneers had only built this frontier into more than seasonal grazing when they settled it permanently from 1880. Building the Maloti into a cultural landscape was a dynamic process. Settlement coincided with, for example, the expansion of the dipping infrastructure in the 1920s, Staples and Hudson’s ecological survey in the 1930s, and the rotational grazing schemes of the 1940s, all of which remade the Maloti as a place. In this process people reshaped the environment physically and imagined it in new ways.

From the government’s perspective, making maps, creating vegetation and agro-ecological classifications, and enacting new regulations served as technologies of control, which made the Maloti more legible for governing and for producing commodities, especially wool and mohair.<sup>145</sup> To some extent, as Arun Agrawal has argued in the context of India, colonized people became “environmental subjects” through this process. Environmental subjects were subordinate to various

---

<sup>143</sup> “Eagle’s Peak College,” *Moeletsi*, 22 January 1951.

<sup>144</sup> Sayce, “Ethno-Geographic Essay,” 276; RDA 1961, pp. 9-10.

<sup>145</sup> Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 183-84.

authorities like the Department of Agriculture, livestock inspectors, and the chiefs that regulated natural resources. Agrawal argues that as subjects, people also used the environment as a conceptual category or domain, within which they framed their thoughts and practices with plants, animals, and soils. Highland Basotho, then, incorporated these technologies of control into their stock of knowledge and into their mentalités, by pursuing opportunities and imbuing the Maloti landscape with new meaning, often through seemingly mundane activities.<sup>146</sup>

As a rational, productive space, at least from an agricultural planning perspective, the government made the Maloti even more legible when it carried out the first comprehensive agricultural survey of Basutoland in 1949-1950. The survey served as Basutoland's contribution to the World Census of Agriculture, which was initiated by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to compile data on less-known countries, i.e. the so-called third world. Its resulting data also provided statistical knowledge for government plans for agricultural development in Basutoland.<sup>147</sup>

In 1950, the government was in the middle of their ten-year development plans. Funded by the CWDF grant from 1946, the ten-year plan aimed to check soil erosion and to improve pastures. Despite the fact that the mountains were central to this larger scheme, the census, in the interest of saving time and money, focused on agriculture. This point illustrates how the Maloti, its inhabitants and their activities,

---

<sup>146</sup> Agrawal, *Environmentality*, 164-65.

<sup>147</sup> Douglas and Tennant, *Basutoland Agricultural Survey*, v-vi, 3.



received scant government resources. Census takers, who were mostly Basotho teachers trained specifically for the census, collected data on agricultural holdings and practices, equipment, crop yields, trees, and home gardens. While setting the bar for the more comprehensive 1960 census, the 1950 project also included the first set of aerial photos of Lesotho's landscape, taken from 14,000 feet.<sup>148</sup>

As the surveyors completed their work, the Department of Agriculture had already been developing the wool and mohair infrastructure in the Maloti. In addition to the dipping stations from a generation before, the department built a new system of corrugated iron shearing sheds in rural locations (See Figure 6.5).<sup>149</sup> They also implemented a system for tattooing livestock. Seen one way, tattooing and enumeration policies emerged from discourses about carrying capacity, pasture degradation, watershed conservation, and not least, stock reduction. We know that these discourses were rooted as much in racial politics as they were in ecological sciences. But for people like Mochinti's Jane's father who had had his sheep stolen, tattooing had other purposes and meanings too. On the softer side of this infrastructure, Basotho trained as wool classers to sort the wool for marketing purposes. Not least, the effort to breed merino sheep and angora goats for wool and mohair production respectively accelerated in these years. This breeding initiative began slowly around 1900 (See Chap. 3), and by 1960 it highlighted the gulf

---

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 90-95.

<sup>149</sup> Uys, *Lesotho Mohair Industry*, 57-69.

between policy makers, regulators, and wealthy stock owners on the one hand, and the poorest Basotho on the other.<sup>150</sup>



**Figure 6.5**  
Wool Shed, Sehlabathebe, Qacha's Nek  
Photo by author, December 2014

In 1953, BNC members and the director of livestock and agricultural services (DLAS) agreed that the wool and mohair industry needed to address quality problems if the country was to prosper. At the time, the official position was that the industry offered the best hope for export earnings: a hope that was supposed to benefit the nation as a whole.<sup>151</sup> The paramount chief passed the High Commissioner's Notice No. 150 in 1953, which established regulations to formalize the system in which Basotho produced, processed, and marketed wool and mohair. A slight increase in the wool export duty funded the new developments. First, wool

---

<sup>150</sup> RDA 1955, pp. 13-15; *Tattooing and Registration 1955* (Moriya: Morija Printing Works, 1955); See also Alexander, "Technical development," 215-18; Peters, *Dividing the Commons*, 77-81.

<sup>151</sup> *BNC, 49<sup>th</sup> Session, 1953, Vol. 1*, 171-75.

and mohair growers would have to bring their sheep and goats to “government approved premises” for shearing so that the department officials could oversee the work.<sup>152</sup> Previously, as Ntate Jane recalled from his childhood, stock owners and their caretakers sheared small stock at grazing posts in the absence of sheds. They trekked the unsorted and unwashed wool to trading stations where an attendant simply marked the bales “Basutoland.” Traders sold the bales to South African buyers at low rates. From the perspective of wool producers and traders, it was clear that Basutoland wool could do better. Better for who, exactly, was less clear.<sup>153</sup>

Construction of wool sheds began in 1936 following Allan Pim’s development recommendations. By 1953 there were still only a few sheds located mostly in the foothills and near roads. From 1953 to 1963, the agricultural department built dozens of new sheds in remote pastures near the territory’s largest flocks. Although this coincided with the slow construction of the new mountain road, the remote sheds required substantial human and animal muscle. During this time, the government built several air strips in the Maloti too, but these were of little use for the construction projects. Instead, a specially trained team of forty-six mules and fifteen horses transported all wood, iron, nuts, bolts, and tools to remote grassland sites for twenty-five new sheds in 1954 alone. Each structure required eight tons of materials, yet few local resources were used.<sup>154</sup>

---

<sup>152</sup> Notice No. 150, quoted in Uys, *Lesotho Mohair Industry*, 57-59; See also, CAR 1953, p. 57.

<sup>153</sup> Sayce, “Ethno-Geographic Essay,” 283-84; RDA 1950, pp. 14-15; Mochinti Jane, 18 May 2015.

<sup>154</sup> RDA 1957, p. 18; Uys, *Lesotho Mohair Industry*, 66-68; Henderson, *Survey of Our Sheep*, 13-14.

Although official records are silent on the details of human labor, each job had only one European development supervisor, meaning that Basotho did the hauling and building. Apart from a few larger churches and traders, these were some of the biggest buildings in the district, making for distinctive landmarks. Known in Sesotho as *sekiri* (pl. *likiri*) and taken from the Afrikaans word for shed (*skuur*), wool sheds were located just upslope from the dips. With scab no longer a major concern people washed their sheep and goats in the dips before driving them to the sheds for shearing. Bringing the animals to the sheds once, and sometimes twice per year marked a new annual migration for both livestock and herders. Summer was the time for shearing when the ovines needed their fleeces the least.<sup>155</sup>

Still a conspicuous presence in Lesotho today, the *likiri* housed a carefully coordinated process. Being a member of the South African Wool Board, production and processing in Basutoland were modeled on methods used in South Africa. Inside the shed, shearers clipped animals while an attendant gathered the wool to give to the classers.<sup>156</sup> Shearing is hard work, especially when using manual (non-electric) shears. In Australia a distinct subculture of shearer's labor and lore thrives. Archival records for this occupation in Basutoland, however, are quiet and interviewees merely shrugged when asked about shearing. Herders and stock owners did their own shearing. Certified classers received the wool at tables where they sorted it into sixteen different types and grades, thirteen types for mohair, and then deposited it

---

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.; RDA 1954, pp. 14-15; Mabile and Dieterlen, *Southern Sotho*, 346.

<sup>156</sup> Uys, *Lesotho Mohair Industry*, 55-60; MMA, R. Thornton, "Advice to Basuto Sheep Farmers on How to Shear and Prepare their Wool for Market," No Date.

into bins that were marked with letter codes (See Figure 6.6). Wool and mohair could be dirty, stained with bodily fluids, long, short, black, and all combinations of these. For example, classers placed “matty seedy mohair” in the BSDY bin, while BGREY signified “genuine grey and black-grey mohair.”<sup>157</sup> This was new work in the 1950s. In 1961 women, for the first time, became classers through the government training. Classing under the government roofs and regulations professionalized this stage of processing, incorporating those people and animals with official sanction while pushing others to the margins.<sup>158</sup>



**Figure 6.6**  
Wool Classers, Sehlabathebe, Qacha’s Nek  
Photo by author, December 2014

---

<sup>157</sup> Uys, *Lesotho Mohair Industry*, 60; RDA 1959, p. 15; Seleso Tsoako, 19 January 2015. These comments also draw on my conversations with workers at the Sehlabathebe wool shed on 18 December 2014 and on my own experiences working with sheep.

<sup>158</sup> Uys, *Lesotho Mohair Industry*, 68-69.

Like classing, a tattooing policy also aimed to standardize production. To identify livestock beyond simply knowing your own, Basotho had clipped the ears or noses of animals in coded ways for many years, especially sheep and goats.<sup>159</sup> But in the 1950s, the agricultural department established an official code that all stock owners were obliged to use on all livestock. The codes signified which ward the animal belonged to, and under which chief or headman the owners lived. For example, AGE indicated that an animal was from Qacha's Nek (A) at Letete's village (GE). This way, if stock strayed or were stolen and recovered by police, it would be clear which chief had the right to retrieve the animals on behalf of the owners.<sup>160</sup>

Perhaps not surprisingly, many stock owners feared that this would incentivize chiefs to impound stock that had supposedly strayed, in order to collect impoundment fees. By the late 1950s, for example, numerous cases had been leveled against Chief Theko Makhaola in Qacha's Nek for his inconsistent enforcement and often excessive fining.<sup>161</sup> As the case of Mochinti Jane's father attests, however, concerns about theft were widespread amongst stock owners and Theko often defended his actions on the basis of protecting his people's property. Along with the continued policing and other regulatory activities, tattooing became part of the order for legitimizing certain relationships between people, animals, and mountains, while delegitimizing others.<sup>162</sup>

---

<sup>159</sup> Sayce, "Ethno-Geographic Essay," 276.

<sup>160</sup> RDA 1952, p. 25; *Tattooing and Registration 1955*; RDA 1961, p. 30.

<sup>161</sup> TNA, FCO 141/445, Complaints against Theko Makhaola.

<sup>162</sup> Mochinti Jane, 18 May 2015; Sayce, "Ethno-Geographic Essay," 276; CAR 1956, p. 87.

The market prices for Basutoland wool strengthened steadily, and so the Department of Agriculture doubled down on its effort to ‘improve’ sheep and goats. To do this, the department, with paramount chief Mantsebo’s endorsement, effectively criminalized bastard sheep rams and billy goats to stop the interbreeding.<sup>163</sup> Notice No. 150 also forbade imports of strictly mutton-producing rams and subjected all bastard rams to castration by department officials. In 1959, livestock officers and demonstrators held meetings in villages to explain the objective of the campaign, which they believed “should not be relaxed until every bastard merino ram or boer goat ram has been eliminated from the scene.” In the department’s view, those responsible were “certain individuals who are keeping these rams for their selfish ends.” Furthermore, the tragedy was that these people also “harmed other people’s flocks as well which come in contact with these rams at the communal grazing areas.”<sup>164</sup> Not all stockowners saw it that way, and the enforcement mechanisms were never entirely effective because of short staff and in fact, some chiefs refused to cooperate with these measures. Smaller stockowners were producing sheep for sale and slaughter, while “more influential sheep owners pinned their faith” on pure merino wool. “Production of mutton,” officials claimed, was only “attractive to the uninitiated.”<sup>165</sup>

This tension demonstrates the varied mentalités emerging at this time. The “uninitiated” may not have understood the complexities of wool production or

---

<sup>163</sup> RDA 1959, p. 15; CAR 1953, p. 57.

<sup>164</sup> RDA 1961, pp. 17-18.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., Kena, 22 January 2015; Email interview with Peter Millin, 18 September 2015.

markets in the same ways, but it seems they did understand the limits of the ecological, economic, and cultural opportunities that lay before them. For Mochinti Jane, despite having no sheep to participate as a professional farmer as he may have wished, his options became available to him through his education and his social relationships, especially with Father Rousseau. For others, their different endowments and knowledge led to different choices. Wool classers for example, especially women, might have invested in non-merino animals for food to stretch their modest income. People did use these animals for ritual purposes too, but they kept them for their superior food value and because they required less care than merino, a fact that mattered to an owner who had no one to watch them constantly as she attended to other tasks.<sup>166</sup>

Perhaps not coincidentally, in 1963 reports of pellagra and malnutrition had increased, resulting, at least in the physiological sense, from too little protein and vegetables. Echoing the dominant demographic perspectives of the time, one observer, Robert Germond, framed the problem in terms of population growth, claiming that “in the spacious days there was no malnutrition,” that is, “before the plough invaded the Maloti.” Germond believed, too, that the government promotion of wool had changed not only the breeding stock, but also the way some people thought about small stock as commodities rather than as food.<sup>167</sup>

---

<sup>166</sup> Mochiniti Jane, 18 May 2015; Interview with Manti Sekoala, Ha Makhaola, 28 May 2015; Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 101.

<sup>167</sup> R.C. Germond, “The Fight against Malnutrition in Basutoland,” *Basutoland Times*, 26 April and 3 May 1963.



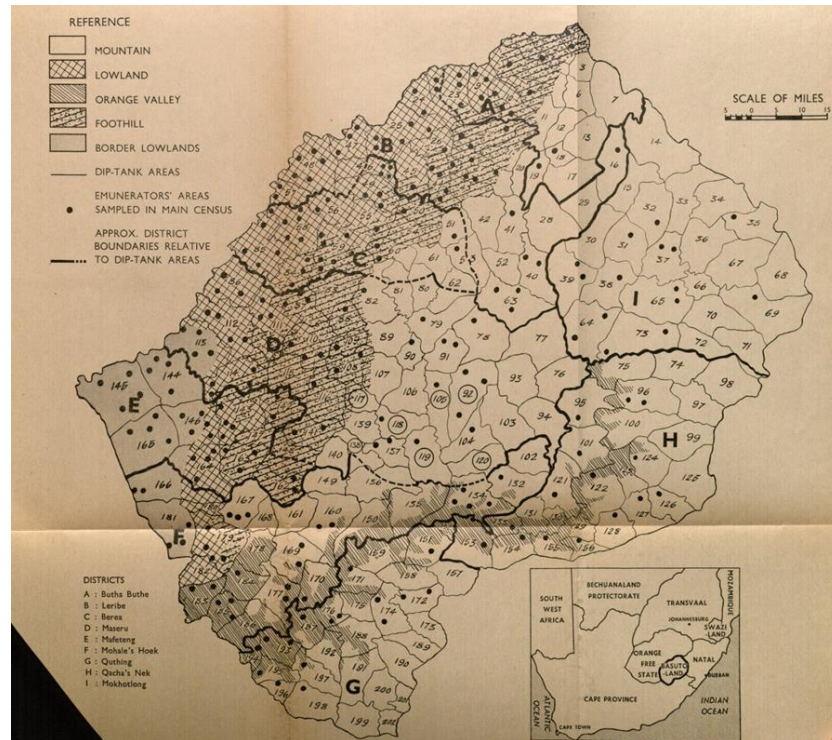
As I have shown, policy makers overstated population growth, and rarely did they seriously consider the relationships between farming, population density, and migrant labor; problems which had by then, been documented in official publications.<sup>168</sup> In addition to the obvious historical and political injustice of land dispossession in the nineteenth century, the problem also lay in policies that favored market production, and market producers, over food. By the late 1950s people who sought to integrate subsistence and market agriculture in creative ways, like J.J. Machobane, were pushed far outside of official circles.

These official circles widened in the early 1960s, as evidenced by the 1960 Agricultural Census. A joint effort between the Basutoland Department of Agriculture and the FAO, the census revealed deep social inequality in Basutoland. For this census, agricultural demonstrators were chosen to gather the data both because of their expertise and to save money by not hiring additional personnel. Read one way, the census and its elaborate framework for calculating the country by dip tank areas, villages, and households represented the latest in a long-term colonial simplification project (See Figure 6.7).<sup>169</sup> But apart from the material inequalities of who owned what tools and how much land, and who grew what crops, we also see glimpses of who the so-called uninitiated were, and how they engaged the world in which they lived.

---

<sup>168</sup> See, for example, Ashton, *The Basuto*; Sheddick, *Land Tenure*, 75; RDA 1952, pp. 15-16.

<sup>169</sup> Morojele, *1960 Agricultural Census, Part I*, 52-53, 121.



**Figure 6.7**  
 Dip Tank Areas and Ecological Zones  
 Source: Morojele, 1960 *Basutoland Agricultural Census, Part I*, 121.

Many men, of course, worked in South Africa. Miners who owned little or no land, as several interviewees explained, bought animals with their wages not so much to produce wool, although some did, but as a way to sustain their presence in a place while they were away, and to invest in a rural retirement.<sup>170</sup> There were those who had animals, equipment, and skill, yet no land who contracted from farm to farm as enterprising capitalists.<sup>171</sup> There were the wool classers, herders, and others who worked in the wool industry. There was Mochinti Jane and many more

<sup>170</sup> Murray, *Families Divided*.

<sup>171</sup> Morojele, 1960 *Agricultural Census, Part V*, 58-59; Mochinti Jane, 18 May 2015.

like him, who, by his hard earned knowledge and perhaps more importantly, by chance, took a different path, though no less separated from the place where he came from. Not least, the demonstrators, through their work of collecting census data, displayed a blend of local knowledge with a belief in the new path of scientific planning and modernist development.<sup>172</sup>

But how can we understand the people at the margins of the margin, the highest of the highlanders, such as those who stole livestock? Motlatsi Thabane has examined the *liphakojoe* (jackals) as they were known, a group of Basotho who lived clandestinely in the mountains around a foreign-owned diamond mine in the 1960s-70s. By night, jackals descended to the mines to collect ore to sift through on their own. Peering through a political lens, as Hobsbawm has done to explain banditry, Thabane explains how these men's actions articulated to the political and economic shifts of the time, especially, by making claims to Sesotho practices of property rights while protesting the government's legitimizing of industrial extraction.<sup>173</sup>

But the diggers, like stock thieves, also demonstrated a profound knowledge of the place in which they worked, and furthermore, how that place fit into wider economic webs. From the time mixed farmers settled the Maloti to my fieldwork in 2015, stock theft has been a serious concern of the people who live there, yet it has changed in subtle ways. Perhaps not surprisingly, people always seem to point their

---

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., *Part I*, 62-65.

<sup>173</sup> Motlatsi Thabane, "Liphokojoe of Kao: A Study of a Diamond Digger Rebel Group in the Lesotho Highlands," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 1 (2000): 105-21; See also, E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 26.

fingers at others. For many years it was the Xhosa-speaking immigrants who were the thieves (See Chap. 3). Or, it was people from South Africa who came at night and then rustled the stock back across the border to sell. More locally, some people point to the villages further into the mountains, saying “it is them, up there.”<sup>174</sup> This topic remains for further research to answer some questions while raising new ones about the micro-politics of environmental knowledge, and about identity and belonging. *Masholu* (thieves) may offer another social category for understanding how, over these 90 years, people have compiled, reconfigured, and applied knowledge for different purposes.

## **6.6 - Conclusion**

Energized by its vibrant national politics and the changes sweeping the continent, Basutoland moved closer to independence in 1965. Political fissures developed and widened between the BNP and BCP. Cracks formed along Catholic and Protestant lines. The parties disagreed, too, about what role chiefs would play in independent Lesotho and about how to engage, or disengage, with the South African apartheid state. But few disagreed that rural development meant improving the landscape as a system of natural resources where humans, animals, and technology would work together in calculated ways to serve the good of the nation. Young men and women enrolled at the Maseru Agricultural School in high numbers while the

---

<sup>174</sup> Interview with Lebamang Mohapi, 5 January 2015; Interview with Mokete Lephaeana, Ha Makhaola, 6 January 2015; Interview with Manti Sekoala, 28 May 2015.

newly formed agricultural information service (AIS) designed and mass produced posters, pamphlets, and films. The AIS began a farmer's radio broadcast too. Now composed mostly of Basotho, the Department of Agriculture prioritized farmers' training and information dissemination. But if the department had become more decentralized, it still continued the model where market production and technical improvement trumped small potatoes like J.J. Machobane.<sup>175</sup>

In 1965, national elections took place, but so too, did the worst drought since 1933. With international assistance, the government launched another food relief program as it had in 1933. This drought and subsequent food insecurity, perhaps not coincidentally, followed closely after the renewed effort to eliminate the hearty, drought tolerant fat-tail sheep and Boer goats.<sup>176</sup> The Basotho have a succinct, yet potent proverb for times of dearth: *Naha e jele boea*, the country has eaten wool. In other words, times are bad. Official livestock and agricultural policy continued on this track yet regulators at all levels struggled to bring all Basotho into the capitalist fold, especially highlanders and those less materially endowed.

---

<sup>175</sup> CAR 1965, pp. 24-27.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 6, 25.

## EPILOGUE

Lesotho celebrated fifty years of independence on October 4, 2016. On that day my friend Lebuajoang, the beekeeper and gardener from the introduction to this dissertation, sent me a message via Facebook, which he has recently begun using on his cell phone. The message read: “Ntate Chris, we are celebrating 50 years independence, but we are still poor, as you know, is this the [way] life should be? Educated but not creative, what’s wrong with us?” After thinking about his heavy words, I eventually wrote to remind him, as we have spoken about many times before, to bear in mind the important constraints of global capitalism, drought, and political disarray in Lesotho. I assured him, too, that he is both educated and creative, and that he is an inspiration to more people than he realized. My liberal words, no doubt, provided little comfort to my friend.

For many if not most Basotho, it has been a difficult and frustrating fifty years since Lesotho gained its independence from Great Britain on October 4, 1966. After just four years of independence, Chief Leabua Jonathan and the Basotho National Party refused to accept defeat in the 1970 elections. They suspended the constitution, jailed political opponents, sent others into exile, and ushered in sixteen years of authoritarian rule that was only broken by a military coup in 1986. Jonathan and the BNP pursued an aggressive modernization policy, drawing in numerous international development agencies to assist with building up its physical infrastructure and agricultural sector among other things. These agencies included heavy hitters like the World Bank, USAID, OXFAM, and CIDA (Canadian).

The development projects in the 1970s and 80s were similar to those in the 1950s and 60s. The transfer of technology model, rather than more explicit efforts to circulate knowledge, dominated the agendas. One scheme in the early 1970s attempted irrigated farming along the Senqu River in Quthing district. In another program, OXFAM helped establish farmer's training centers in the district capitals. Like the Pilot Project in the 1950s, these schemes met formidable challenges. By the later 1970s, development agencies and their partners in the Government of Lesotho had moved towards integrated rural development schemes. In these schemes, planners sought a similar approach as the Pilot Project although there was an added emphasis on improving roads and communications which could facilitate better market connectivity. It was hoped, too, that better access to schools and medical facilities would follow. Few material benefits accrued to the poorest people.<sup>1</sup>

Writing about the Thaba-Tseka Rural Development Scheme of the 1970s, James Ferguson has examined how the international development apparatus, represented here by CIDA and the World Bank, not only failed to alleviate poverty, but perpetuated the cycle of poverty by interfering in the political relationships between people and their government. To some extent, the project validated the authoritarian regimes in both Lesotho and apartheid South Africa. In this development model, technical, rather than political solutions were standard.<sup>2</sup> Still, important questions remain about how various people interacted with the different

---

<sup>1</sup> Aerni-Flessner, "Development, Politics, and Centralization," 402-05.

<sup>2</sup> Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, 11-21.

types of knowledge involved with this project such as land reform, agricultural marketing, and livestock breeding.

In 1986 the governments of Lesotho and South Africa, under military and apartheid rule respectively, signed a treaty that launched the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP). Implementing this multi-phase mega-project has involved a slew of international loans and construction firms as well as local skilled and unskilled labor. So far, two major dams, one hydro-power station, and a series of transfer tunnels have been built to store and transport precious Maloti water to the Johannesburg area. A third dam is in the early stages of construction as I write. Many communities were forced to relocate, while other people lost their arable fields and grazing space but not their residences. Ecological impact assessments suggest that biodiversity, soil erosion, and perhaps rainfall have all been adversely affected by the trauma of the construction activities and by the altered upstream and downstream flows in the Senqu River system.<sup>3</sup>

Although the government earns substantial royalties from selling the water to South Africa, the benefits from LHWP for common Basotho have been uneven. For one bulldozer operator whom I spoke with, the LHWP had offered him temporary employment and training, endowing him with skills that have enabled him to find work ever since, usually building roads. There are many people who can see the glimmer of the reservoirs from their villages. Yet many of these same people have

---

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Motlatsi Thabane, "Shifts from Old to New Social and Ecological Environments in the Lesotho Highlands Water Scheme; Relocating Residents of the Mohale Dam Area," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no.4 (2000): 634-35; Femi Akindele and Relebohile Senyane, eds., *The Irony of the White Gold* (Maseru: The Transformation Resource Center, 2004).



no reliable access to water supplies, especially during times of drought which seem to be more frequent and more severe in recent years.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps not coincidentally, the era of LHWP has paralleled the rise of HIV/AIDS in Lesotho. Along with its neighbors in South Africa and Swaziland, Lesotho is among the most affected countries in the global pandemic. Other people say that despite all of the problems with the LHWP, which have ranged from corruption at all levels of administration to undelivered compensation payments to the social problems associated with temporary worker communities (at construction sites), the network of new roads has made life easier.<sup>5</sup>

For most residents of Qacha's Nek the LHWP seems far away despite the fact that the fourth of five originally planned phases was to be the Tsoelike Dam. This dam would have been built just 1000 meters from the center of Ha Makhaola.<sup>6</sup> As LHWP plans have been reconfigured many times in the last sixteen years, for better or worse, it now seems unlikely that the Tsoelike Dam will ever materialize. Apart from LHWP, the government and its international partners have implemented smaller integrated schemes in Qacha's Nek. In 1983, for instance, a Canadian NGO funded the Seforong Women's Integrated Rural Development Project in the western part of the district. The project, which focused on women as the primary household

---

<sup>4</sup> Pascalinah Kabi, "Lesotho Caught Napping," *Lesotho Times*, 16 April 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Akindele and Senyane, *The Irony of the White Gold*.

<sup>6</sup> *Lesotho Highlands Water Project Feasibility Studies, Supporting Report C: Environmental and Social Impact in Lesotho* (Maseru: Ministry of Water, Energy, and Mining, 1986).

managers, had nearly collapsed after six years due to administrative problems.<sup>7</sup> But the story in Qacha's Nek has been more about small projects. For example, in a 1970s local water supply project, villagers at Ha Makhaola and surrounding communities collectively contributed cash, supplies, and labor to build a new spring-fed system which still serves these villages today.

In 1970, the Government of Lesotho formed the Sehlabathebe National Park on the eastern edge of Qacha's Nek district. The park encompasses part of an Afromontane grassland zone, a well-watered and very green area situated on the edge of the Drakensberg Escarpment. The park protects the vegetation and wildlife therein, in theory, from the people who have relied on the rich grasses for sustaining their herds and producing wool and mohair since settling the area in the 1880s. To be sure, it is a spectacular place to visit. Yet like so many histories of protected areas in Africa and elsewhere, the promised benefits from tourism have amounted to little for the majority of local residents.<sup>8</sup>

Investment in Qacha's Nek as in other mountain areas, it is fair to say, has been minimal. This has been generally true even since 1998 when a local *molele*, Pakalitha Mosisili, was elected Prime Minister; a position which he still held as of April 2017. Mosisili's relationship to mountain communities, from whom he derives his most loyal political support, is undoubtedly linked to a past in which highlanders

---

<sup>7</sup> Malejara Mothebang and David Hall, *Report on an Evaluation of the Seforong Women's Integrated Rural Development Project* (Maseru: Unitarian Service Committee of Canada, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> Ambrose et al., *Biological Diversity*, 78-79; See also Roderick Neumann, *Imposing Wilderness: Struggles over Livelihood and Nature Preservation in Africa* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998); Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

have felt marginalized by the centers of power in Maseru and Matsieng (the royal village). Situating these political circumstances in longer-term historical trajectories awaits further research.

As for farmers in Qacha's Nek, even those with significant off-farm income, confidence in agriculture is cautious at best. With fewer jobs in the mines and tightened immigration restrictions at the South African border, many men and women are reconsidering their options in the rural areas. Few people produce the grain needed to sustain their families, and with the array of cash expenses, be it for school fees or a new television, cash is more necessary than ever. There have been assorted government programs to encourage specialized market production of, among other products, asparagus, apples, peaches, and grapes. Several friends of mine have built greenhouses where they hope to raise tomatoes, peppers, and spinach to sell locally. Ntate Lebuajoang and others now produce honey in addition to vegetables. There has also been renewed interest in sustainable farming techniques, including the Machobane system. The government promotes a system known as conservation agriculture, by which cultivators dig small holes for each plant instead of plowing to minimize soil disturbance and preserve moisture.<sup>9</sup>

But it seems few people want to work so hard to produce mere sustenance. For one former student of mine, there is a different path. Thabiso (pseudonym) wants to marry a local woman in the Sesotho way by paying a negotiated *bohali* in

---

<sup>9</sup> *Sustainable Land Management Tool Kit* (Maseru: Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, Government of Lesotho, 2014).

cattle, and to raise his family in Qacha's Nek. He was a mediocre, yet energetic student in my English classes and later trained to be a carpenter at a tertiary school. He loves rural life. He tends his grandfather's livestock, participates in building projects and agricultural tasks, plays football, sings and dances, and drinks beer with the guys. He likes farming but says the market prospects for producing grain, beans, or vegetables are futile, especially given the recent droughts that destroyed crops in 2016. "It's not worth the work," he says. But he has a plan, which he explains to me as we participate in butchering a black ox at a funeral in the village.<sup>10</sup>

I do not approve of his plan and his expectations seem unrealistic. However illegal, Thabiso's plan derives from the environmental knowledge that he has compiled through his experiences and education in his young life. He will produce *matokoane* (marijuana) for market. He has negotiated with a relative for some space near a village some fifteen miles from his home. Growing and consuming marijuana in Lesotho is not new. In fact, Basotho were cultivating and smoking it when they moved into the mountains in the nineteenth century as were the Baroa before them. Through the 1900s, marijuana from Lesotho was a hot commodity in South Africa. Although this is difficult to document, it needs more research.

Thabiso has collected the seeds and has arranged for donkeys to transport the produce. He explains various methods for cultivation. To complete the plan, he has a buyer lined up. "I will do this," he says, "on my own." I nod my head, cautioning him as any teacher would his student. But thinking of his plan in the longer

---

<sup>10</sup> This information, and what follows, is drawn from my field notes for 24 May 2015.

trajectory of history, I see now that it makes perfect sense. Although I question his judgement on this, I respect where the plan comes from. The risks, he believes, are worth it to live well in the mountains, which for him means having money to spend.

Lesotho's paper currency itself speaks to the non-linear, socially uneven historical process which I have examined in this dissertation. The currency is called the *Loti*, or *Maloti* in the plural. The Maloti, or at least the idea of the mountains that give the currency its name, has played a central role in how people compile environmental knowledge. The mountains remain a core feature, too, in shaping Basotho identity more broadly. The 100-Maloti note, a common bill nowadays, depicts a young herder with a small flock of goats. The goats appear to be angoras. A close look reveals a lone black billy goat in the corner of the image.<sup>11</sup> The lone black goat, long revered by Basotho for its ritual and supernatural purposes, serves as a reminder that amid the overwhelming forces that drive governments to modernize, monetize, and rationalize the natural world in specific ways, environmental knowledge cannot be constricted by any single set of ideas.



---

<sup>11</sup> This is a 2010 version of this note.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### *I. Archives Consulted*

Commonwealth & African Studies Collection (CASC), Bodleian Library,  
Oxford University, United Kingdom

Lesotho Agricultural College Library (LAC), Maseru, Lesotho

Lesotho National Archives (LNA), Maseru, Lesotho  
Government Secretary (S)  
Qacha's Nek District Letters

Matsieng Royal Archives (MRA), Matsieng, Lesotho

Moriya Museum and Archives (MMA), Morija, Lesotho  
General Collection  
Mabille Collection  
Van Nispen Collection (VNC)

National University of Lesotho Archives (NUL), Roma, Lesotho  
General Collection  
Leribe Collection (LC)

Royal Geographic Society Archives, (RGS) London, United Kingdom

South African National Archives (SAB), Pretoria, South Africa  
Chief, Division of Sheep (LSK)  
Chief Entomologist (CEN)  
Governor General (GG)  
Prime Minister (PM)  
Secretary of Agriculture (LDB)  
Secretary of Justice (JUS)  
Secretary of Native Affairs (NTS)  
Secretary of the Treasury (TES)  
South African Police (SAP)

The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA), Kew, London, United Kingdom  
Colonial Office (CO)  
Dominions Office (DO)  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)  
Foreign Office (FO)

Information Department: Registered Files (INF)  
Maps and Plans (MPG)  
War Office (WO)

Wits Historical Papers (WHP), University of Witwatersrand,  
Johannesburg, South Africa

***II. Interviews Conducted by Author, translator noted if present***

- Gaba, Selisa. Ferndale, Gauteng, South Africa, 4 October 2014.  
Hlapi, Joseph. Ha Thifa, Qacha's Nek, 17 May 2015.  
Jane, Francis Mochinti. Motalaneng, Qacha's Nek, 18 May 2015.  
Kena, Maleseko. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 19 May 2015.  
Kena, Mokhafisi Jacob. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 10 December 2014.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 7 January 2015.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 22 January 2015.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 31 May 2015.
- Khalala, Matumisang. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 27 May 2015.  
Khalala, Tumisang. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 4 January 2015.  
Lephaeana, Mokete. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 6 January 2015.  
Lesoli, Mokhabi. Ha Matlali, Qacha's Nek, 13 January 2015.  
Lerotholi, Lebuajoang. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 30 November 2014.  
Makhaola, Maletepata. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 8 December 2014.  
Makhaola, Mamahlomola. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 27 May 2015.  
Millin, Peter. Interview by Email. 18 September 2015.  
Mohapi, Lebamang. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 5 January 2015. Phoka  
Mohapi, translator.  
Mohapi, Masebetoane. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 15 January 2015.  
Mohlapiso, George. Ha Manteko, Qacha's Nek, 29 May 2015.  
Morojele, Morabo. Maseru, Maseru, 11 June 2015.  
Motjoli, Mamotlatsi. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 2 January 2015.  
Motloapa, Fr. Clement. St. Francis Church, Qacha's Nek, 20 January 2015.  
Ntsekhe, Emmanuel Malefetsane. Roma, Maseru, 1 November 2014.  
Putsoane, Mpolokeng. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 20 January 2015.  
Ralitsoele, Stephen. Maseru, 11 June 2015.  
Ramakhula, Tseliso. Maseru, 10 November 2014.  
Ramatseka, Mapoloko. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 2 June 2015.

Raselepe, Marapeli. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 25 December 2014.  
Sekoala, Manti. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 28 May 2015.  
Shata, Clement. Ha Makhaola, Qacha's Nek, 13 December 2014.  
Tsoako, Seleso. Ha Rooijane, Qacha's Nek, 19 January 2015.

### **III. Government Publications**

*Agricultural Surveys Manual of Instructions for Fieldwork.* Bureau of Statistics, Government of Lesotho. Mazenod, Lesotho: Mazenod Institute, 1975.

*Basutoland Annual Reports by the Director of Education for the Years 1950-1954, 1957-1963.* Morija: Morija Printing Works.

*Basutoland Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture for the Years 1936-1956.* Morija: Morija Printing Works.

*Basutoland Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture for the Years 1957-1963.* Ladybrand: Norwood Coaker Printers.

*Basutoland Annual Reports of the Department of Health for 1961-1964.* Morija: Morija Printing Works.

*Basutoland Annual Reports of the Public Works Department for the Years 1957-1964.* Morija: Morija Printing Works.

*Basutoland Annual Reports of the Medical Department for the Years 1957-1960.* Morija: Morija Printing Works.

*Basutoland Census for 1911.* Cape Town: Argus Printing Company, 1911.

\_\_\_\_\_1936. Pretoria: Government Printer, 1936.

\_\_\_\_\_1946. Morija: Morija Printing Works, 1946.

\_\_\_\_\_1956. Maseru: Basutoland Government, 1956.

*Basutoland Colonial Annual Reports for the Years 1889-1965 (CAR).* London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office.

*Basutoland Memorandum of Development Plans for 1945.* Morija: Morija Printers.

*Basutoland National Council Legislative Council Debates, Official Report (Hansard), Second Meeting, 1961.* Printed in South Africa by Cape and Transvaal Printers Limited, 1961.



*Basutoland Native Laws of Lerotholi as amended by the National Council of 1922.*  
Moriya: Morija Printing Works, 1922.

*Basutoland Orders in Council, High Commissioner's Proclamations and Government Notices, Issued During the Period from the 12th March, 1868, to the 30th June, 1913.* Cape Town: Government Printers, 1913.

*Basutoland Proclamations and Notices, 1923.* Pretoria: Government Printers, 1923.

*Basutoland Report of the Administrative Reforms Committee. (MMA, Moore's Report)*  
April-July 1954.

*Cape of Good Hope. Department of Agriculture. Reports of the Chief Inspector of Sheep and of the Superintendent Sheep Inspector, Transkeian Territories, For the Year 1897.* Cape Town: Richards & Sons, 1898.

\_\_\_\_\_.*For the Year 1898.* Cape Town: Richards & Sons, 1899.

\_\_\_\_\_.*For the Year 1901.* Cape Town: Richards & Sons, 1902.

\_\_\_\_\_.*For the Year 1904.* Cape Town: Richards & Sons, 1905.

*Cape of Good Hope. Report and Evidence of Commission on Native Laws and Customs of the Basutos.* Cape Town: Saul Solomon & Co., Steam Printing Office, 1873.

*Cape of Good Hope. Report of the Honorable the Secretary of Native Affairs on His Visit to Basutoland in June, 1881.* Cape Town: Richards & Sons, 1882.

*Cape of Good Hope. Report of the Scab Disease Commission.* Cape Town: Government Printers, 1894.

*Cape of Good Hope. Rinderpest Conference Minutes.* Cape Town: Government Printers, 1896.

*Census of the Cape of Good Hope, 1904: Preliminary Report of the Director of the Census.* Cape Town: Government Printers, 1904.

*Correspondence Respecting Affairs of Basutoland and the Territories to the Eastward of the Cape Colony (Including Pondoland, Transkei, and St. John's River).*  
London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1882.

Davy, J.B. *Descriptions and Illustrations of Noxious Weed.* Pretoria: Government Printers, 1913.

- Department of Public Education, Cape of Good Hope. *The Native Primary School: Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers*. Cape Town: Cape Times Printers, 1924.
- Dobson, C.F. *South Africa. Military Report on Basutoland, Vol. I, General*. London: General Staff, 1910.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *South Africa. Military Report on Basutoland, Vol. II, Routes*. London: General Staff, 1910.
- Enslin, B.G. *Sheep Dipping Tanks: An Improved Design for a Circular Tank*. Pretoria: Government Printers, 1917.
- Final Report of the Drought Investigation Commission*. Cape Town: Cape Times Limited, Government Printers, 1923.
- High Commissioner's Proclamations and More Important Government Notices issued during the period from the 1st July, 1913 to the 31st December, 1916*. Cape Town: The Government Printing and Stationary Office, 1918.
- Lesotho Highlands Water Project Feasibility Study: Supporting Report C*. Kingdom of Lesotho: Ministry of Water, Energy and Mining, 1986.
- Litaba tsa Lekhotla la Sechaba Le Neng Le Phuthehile* (BNC Proceedings), 1912-1945. Morija: Morija Printing Works.
- Morojele, C.M.H. *Basutoland Village Population Lists*. Maseru: Department of Agriculture, 1960.
- Morojele, C.M.H. *1960 Agricultural Census of Basutoland, Part I – Census Methodology*. Maseru, Lesotho: Agricultural Department, 1961.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *Part II – Households and Families*. 1962.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *Part III – Agricultural Holdings*. 1963.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *Part IV – Crop Acreages, Yields, and Production*. 1963.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *Part V – Land Classification and Farming Practices*. 1963.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *Part VI – Agricultural Implements and Storage Facilities*. 1965.
- Pim, Sir Alan. *Financial and Economic Position of Basutoland: Report of the Commission Appointed by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs*. London: HMSO, 1935.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *Colonial Agricultural Production*. London: Oxford University Press, 1946.

*Proceedings of the Basutoland National Council (BNC)*. Maseru: Government Printing.  
\_\_\_\_\_. *For the 42<sup>nd</sup> Session, 1946.*  
\_\_\_\_\_. *For the 43<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1947.*  
\_\_\_\_\_. *For the 44<sup>th</sup> Session, 1948.*  
\_\_\_\_\_. *For the 45<sup>th</sup> Session, 1949.*  
\_\_\_\_\_. *For the 46<sup>th</sup> Session, 1950.*  
\_\_\_\_\_. *For the 47<sup>th</sup> Session, 1951.*  
\_\_\_\_\_. *For the 48<sup>th</sup> Session, 1952.*  
\_\_\_\_\_. *For the 49<sup>th</sup> Session, 1953.*  
\_\_\_\_\_. *For the 50<sup>th</sup> Session, 1954.*  
\_\_\_\_\_. *For the 51<sup>st</sup> Session, 1955.*  
\_\_\_\_\_. *For the 52<sup>nd</sup> Session, 1956.*  
\_\_\_\_\_. *Special Session on Constitutional Reforms, 1957.*  
\_\_\_\_\_. *For the 53<sup>rd</sup> Session, 1958.*

*Regulations for Destruction of Noxious Weeds*. Pretoria: Government Printers, 1910.

*Report of Proceedings of the Basutoland National Council, 1908, and Correspondence as to Affairs of Basutoland*. London: HMSO, 1908.

*Report of the Commission Appointed by His Majesty's Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Enquire into and Make Recommendations upon Education in Basutoland*. Pretoria: Government Printers, 1946.

*Results of a Census of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope with an Appendix Shewing Results of the Census of British Basutoland Taken in March, 1875*. Cape Town: Government Printers, 1878.

*Soils of Lesotho: A System of Soil Classification for Interpreting Soil Surveys in Lesotho*. Maseru, Lesotho: The Office of Soil Survey, Conservation Division, Ministry of Agriculture, June 1979.

*Sustainable Land Management Tool Kit*. Maseru: Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, Government of Lesotho, 2014.

*Tattooing and Registration 1955*. Morija: Morija Printing Works, 1955.

*Transkeian Territories General Council: Proceedings and Reports of Select Committees at the Session of 1909; Annual Reports and Accounts for 1908 and Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure*. Umtata: The Territorial News, Limited, 1909.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Session of 1910; Reports for 1909.*

\_\_\_\_\_. *Session of 1911; Reports for 1910.*

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Session of 1912; Reports for 1911.*
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Session of 1913; Reports for 1912.*
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Session of 1914; Reports for 1903.*
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Session of 1918; Reports for 1917.*
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Session of 1919; Reports for 1918.*
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Session of 1921; Reports for 1920.*
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Session of 1922; Reports for 1921.*
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Session of 1923; Reports for 1922.*
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Session of 1924; Reports for 1923.*

#### **IV. Primary Sources**

Arbousset, Thomas. *Missionary Excursion into the Blue Mountains being an account of King Moshoeshe's Expedition from Thaba Bosiu to the Sources of the Malibamatso River in the Year 1840.* Edited and translated by D. Ambrose and A. Brutsch. Morija: Morija Printing Works, 1991.

Ashton, Hugh. "A Sociological Sketch of the Sotho Diet." *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa* 27, no. 2 (1939): 146-214.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Basuto.* London: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Bennett, Hugh Hammond. *Soil Erosion and Land Use in the Union of South Africa.* Pretoria: The Department of Agriculture and Forestry, 1945.

Bennett, Hugh and W.R. Chapline. *Soil Erosion, A National Menace.* Washington: United States Department of Agriculture, April 1928.

Bereng, Patrick. *I Am A Mosotho.* Morija: Morija Printing Works, 1982.

Bull, Oswin. *Training Africans for Trades: A Report on a visit to North America Under the Auspices of the Carnegie Corporation.* Pretoria: The Carnegie Visitor's Grants Committee, 1935.

Casalis, Eugene. *My Life in Basutoland.* Translated by J. Brierley. London, 1889.  
Reprinted, Cape Town, 1971.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Basutos or twenty-Three Years in South Africa.* London: James Nisbet, 1861.

Clarke, Sir Marshall. "Unexplored Basutoland." *Proceedings of the Geographical Society* 10 (April 1888): 519.

- Damane, Mosebi. "Sotho Medicine." *Lesotho Notes and Records* 10 (1973-74): 48-58.
- Dornan, S.S. "Notes on the Bushmen of Basutoland." *South African Journal of Philosophy* 18 (1909): 437-50.
- Douglas, A. and R. Tennant, *Basutoland Agricultural Survey 1949-1950*. Maseru: Basutoland Government, 1952.
- Dower, William. *The Early Annals of Kokstad and Griqualand East*. Port Elizabeth: JAS Kemsley & Co., 1902.
- Du Toit, H.S. *South Africa Drought Investigation Commission Interim Report*. Cape Town: Cape Times Limited, Government Printers, 1922.
- Dutton, E.A. *The Basuto of Basutoland*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1923.
- Ellenberger, D. F. *History of the Basuto: Ancient and Modern*. Translated by J.C. MacGregor. Facsimile reprint of the 1912 edition. Morija: Morija Museum & Archives, 1992.
- Ellenberger, Victor. *Landmarks in the story of the French Protestant Church in Basutoland During the First Hundred Years of its Existence 1833-1933*. Morija: Sesuto Book Depot, 1933.
- Hailey, Malcolm. *An African Survey: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara*. London: Oxford University Press, 1938.
- Headlam, Cecil, ed. *The Milner Papers: South Africa, 1899-1905*. Volumes 1 & 2. London: Cassell & Company LTD, 1933.
- Henderson, G.T. *A Survey of Our Sheep and Wool Industry in Retrospect and Prospect*. Morija: Morija Printing Works, 1936.
- Henning, Otto. *Lekhuekhue la Liphoofole*. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1906.
- Huss, Bernard. *Temo Har'a Ba Batso Ba South Africa*. Morija: Morija Printing Works, 1923.
- Hutcheon, Duncan. "Rinderpest in South Africa." *Journal of Comparative Pathology and Therapeutics* 15 (1902): 300-24.
- Jacks, G.V. and R.O. Whyte. *The Rape of the Earth: A World Survey of Soil Erosion*. London: Faber, 1939.

- Jacottet, Edouard. *The Ethiopian Church and the Missionary Conference of Johannesburg*. Morija: Morija Printing Office, 1904.
- Jingoes, Stimela Jason. *A Chief Is A Chief By The People*. London: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Jones, G.I. *A Report on the recent outbreak of "Diretlo" murders in Basutoland*. London: Office of Commonwealth Relations, 1951.
- Kanthack, Francis. "The Destruction of Mountain Vegetation: Its Effects Upon the Agricultural Conditions in the Valleys." *Agricultural Journal of the Cape of Good Hope* 33 (1908): 194-204.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Irrigation Development in the Cape Colony: Past, Present, and Future." *Agricultural Journal of the Cape of Good Hope* 24, no. 6 (1909): 645-57.
- Kennan, Thomas P. "Discovery and Exploration of Basutoland: Notes on a Journey in 1888." *Lesotho: Basutoland Notes and Records* 4 (1959): 43-45.
- King, Franklin Hiram. *Farmers of Forty Centuries; or, Permanent Agriculture in China, Korea and Japan*. Madison: Mrs. F.H. King, 1911.
- Lagden, Godfrey Yeatman. *The Basutos; the mountaineers & their country; being a narrative of events relating to the tribe from its formation early in the nineteenth century to the present day*. London: Hutchinson & Co, 1909.
- Lugard, Lord. *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. London: Frank Cass & Co., 1965.
- Mabille, Adolph, and H. Dieterlen. *Southern Sotho-English Dictionary*. Revised by R.A. Paroz. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1993.
- Machobane, James Jacob and Robert Berold. *Drive Out Hunger: The Story of J.J. Machobane of Lesotho*. Johannesburg: Jacana, 2003.
- Makoa, Thabo and Anne-Laure Zwilling. *Shepherd Boy of the Maloti*. Morija: Morija Museum and Archives, 2005.
- Mangoaela, Z.D. "Makhaola Lerotholi." In *Lithoko tsa Marena a Basotho- Praise Poems of the Basotho Chiefs*, edited by Z.D. Mangoaela, 199-201. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1921.

- Mda, Zakes. *Sometimes There is a Void: Memoirs of an Outsider*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2011.
- Mofolo, Thomas. *Traveller to the East*. 1907. Translated by Harry Ashton. London: Penguin Books, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Pitseng: The Search for True Love*. 1910. Translated by Daniel Kunene. Morija: Morija Press, 2013.
- Mohapi, M. Molelekoa. *Temo Ea Boholo-holo Lesotho*. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1956.
- Molise, Andreas T. *Mafu a Liphoofo*. Maseru, Lesotho: The Social Centre, N.D.
- Moteane, Jobo. "Jobo Moteane's Account of a Journey through the Lesotho Highlands 100 Years Ago: Jobo Moteane O Hlalosa Leeto La Ho Ea Mehloing Noka Ea Senqu Lilemong Tse 100 Tse Fetileng." (1888) *Mehloli*, 1989-1991.
- Motsamai, C.A. *Serapeng Sa Meroho*. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1956.
- Nthunya, Mpho 'M'atsepo. *Singing Away the Hunger: Stories of a Life in Lesotho*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1996.
- Orpen, Joseph M. *History of the Basutus of South Africa*. Reprint of the 1857 edition. Maseru: Maseru Book Centre, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A glimpse into the mythology of the Maluti Bushmen." *Cape Monthly Magazine* 9 (1874): 1-13.
- Paroz, R.A. *A List of Sotho Plant Names*. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1963.
- Phillips, E. "A Contribution to the Flora of the Leribe Plateau and Environs." *Annals of the South African Museum* 16 (1917).
- Ratau, J. *Molisana oa Mosotho*. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1988.
- Roberts, D.F. "The Water Resources of South Africa – What of the Future?" *The South African Institution of Engineers* 4, no. 11 (1953): 402-07.
- Rosenthal, Eric. *African Switzerland: An Account of the Country and People of Basutoland*. Cape Town: Juta & Co., 1948.
- Sayce, R.U. "An Ethno-Geographical Essay on Basutoland." *The Geographical Teacher* 12, no. 4 (1924): 266–88.

- Schapera, Isaac. *Migrant labour and tribal life, a study of conditions in the Bechuanaland Protectorate*. London: Oxford University Press, 1947.
- Schimlek, Francis. *Against the Stream: Life of Father Bernard Huss, C.M.M., The Social Apostle of the Bantu*. Natal, SA: Marianhill Mission Press, 1949.
- Sechefo, Justinus. "The Twelve Lunar Months among the Basuto." *Anthropos* 4, no. 4 (1909): 931-41.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Twelve Lunar Months of the Basuto (concluded)." *Anthropos* 5, no. 1 (1910): 71-81.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Customs and Superstitions in Basutoland*. Roma, Lesotho: The Social Centre, 1960.
- Sekese, Azariel. *Pitso ea Linonyana le Tseko ea Sefofu le Seritsa*. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1928.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Mekhoa ea Basotho*. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1970.
- Sharpe, M. *Everyday Sesotho Grammar*. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1970.
- Sheddick, Vernon. *Land Tenure in Basutoland*. London: HMSO, 1954.
- Staples, R.R. and W.K. Hudson. *An Ecological Survey of the Mountain Areas of Basutoland*. Morija: Morija Printing Works, 1938.
- Stockley, G.M. *Report on the Geology of Basutoland*. Morija: Morija Book Depot, 1947.
- Tau, M. Nthoana. "Some medical, magical, and edible plants of Lesotho." *Lesotho Notes and Records* 9 (1972): 13-19.
- Tempany, H.A, G.M. Roddan and L. Lord. "Soil Erosion and Soil Conservation in the Colonial Empire." *The Empire Journal of Experimental Agriculture* XII, no. 47 (1944): 121-53.
- Thornton, Russell. *The Basuto Pony*. Morija: Morija Printing, 1938.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Anti-erosion measures and reclamation of eroded land." *Proceedings of the South African Society of Engineers* 40 (1942): 79-104.
- Trapnell, Colin. *The Soils, Vegetation and Agricultural Systems of North-Western Rhodesia*. Lusaka: Government Printer, 1937.
- Venn, A.C. *Some Results of Agricultural Research in Basutoland*. Morija: Morija Printing Works, 1957.



Verney, Frank. "The Rinderpest in South Africa." *Journal of Comparative Pathology and Therapeutics* 11 (1898): 95-103.

Wacher, Lawrence. *Tsa Temo Lesotho*. Morija: Morija Printing Works, 1925.

Willcocks, William. "Report on Irrigation in South Africa." *South African Pamphlets* 2, no. 34 (1901): 5-52.

Worthington, E.B. *Science in Africa: A Review of Scientific Research Relating to Tropical and Southern Africa*. London: Oxford University Press, 1938.

#### ***V. Other Reports, Surveys, Manuals, Translations, and Websites***

*Biographical Database of Southern African Science*. <http://www.s2a3.org.za/bio>.

Carroll, D.M. and C.L. Bascomb. "Notes on the Soils of Lesotho." Technical Bulletin, no. 1. London: Ministry of Development, 1967.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Soils of Lesotho: A System of Soil Classification for Interpreting Soil Surveys in Lesotho*. Maseru: The Office of Soil Survey, Conservation Division, Ministry of Agriculture, 1979.

*Centenary of the Catholic Church in Basutoland, 1862-1962*. Maseru: Mazenod Book Centre, 1962.

Gay, John and Debby Gill, *Health in Lesotho: 1993 Profile*. Government of Lesotho: Ministry of Health, 1993.

Gay, John, and David Hall. *Poverty and Livelihoods in Lesotho, 2000: More Than a Mapping Exercise*. Maseru: Sechaba Consultants, 2000.

Gill, Stephen and Tiisetso Pitso. Translators. "1909 Court on Settlement in the mountains." *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, October 1909. MMA, 2014.

Grant, James Murray. *The Diary of Inspector James Murray Grant, Frontier Armed and Mounted Police, 1873-74*. Transcribed by Ronald S. Webb. MMA.

Hall, David, and Pat Goss. *An Evaluation of the Qacha's Nek Village Water Supply Project Funded by Irish Aid*. Maseru: Sechaba Consultants, August 1996.

- Mangoaela, Z.D. "Makhaola Lerotholi." In *Lithoko tsa Marena a Basotho- Praise Poems of the Basotho Chiefs*, edited by Z.D. Mangoaela, 199-201. Translated by Patrick Bereng, May 2016. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1921.
- Mekbib, Sissay B., et al. "Machobane Farming System and Its Relevance to Climate Change Policy in Lesotho." African Technology Policy Studies Network, Policy Brief no. 35, August 2011.
- Mothabeng, 'Malejara, and David Hall. *Report on an Evaluation of the Seforong Women's Integrated Rural Development Project*. Maseru: Unitarian Service Committee of Canada, April 1989.
- Sukhatme, P.V., A.Q. Khan, and P. Aggarwal. *Report on the 1960 World Census of Agriculture: Volume II-Programme, Concepts and Scope*. Rome: FAO, 1969.
- Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep*. [www.scops.org.uk](http://www.scops.org.uk).
- Thabane, Motlatsi. "Who Owns the Land in Lesotho? Land Disputes and the Politics of Land Ownership in Lesotho." Research Report. Roma, Lesotho: Institute of Southern African Studies, 1998.
- Turner, Stephen and M. Adams. "Integrating Land Tenure Issues into Lesotho's Food Security Policy. Report for Lesotho Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security 3, no. 3 (February 2005).
- Uys, D.S. *The Lesotho Mohair Industry: History and Evaluation*. Port Elizabeth: Mohair Board, 1971.

## **VI. Newspapers and Periodicals**

*Basutoland News/Times*  
*Basutoland/Lesotho Witness*  
*Cape Monthly Magazine*  
*Farmers Weekly*  
*Imvo Zabantsundu*  
*Journals des Mission Evangelique*  
*Leselinyana la Lesotho*  
*Lesotho Times*  
*Moeletsi oa Basotho*  
*Mochochonono*

*Naledi ea Lesotho*  
*Pampiri ea Balemi ba Lesotho/Basutoland Farmers Journal*  
*Quarterly Paper of the Bloemfontein Mission*  
*The Cape Times*  
*The Friend of the Free State*  
*The Mission Herald*  
*The New York Times*  
*The Star*  
*The Sun and Agricultural Journal of South Africa/The Agricultural and Small-Holder  
Journal of South Africa*  
*The Veld Trust News*

## **VII. Secondary Sources**

Adams, Jane, ed. *Fighting for the Farm: Rural America Transformed*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

Aerni-Flessner, John. "Development, Politics, and the Centralization of State Power in Lesotho, 1960-1975." *Journal of African History* 55, no. 3 (2014): 401-21.

Agrawal, Arun. "Dismantling the Divide Between Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge." *Development and Change* 26, no.3 (1995): 413-39.  
\_\_\_\_\_. *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Ahearne, Robert M. "Development and Progress as Historical Phenomena in Tanzania: 'Maendeleo? We Had That in the Past.'" *African Studies Review* 59, no. 1 (2016): 77-96.

Alatas, Sayed H. *The Myth of the Lazy Native: a study of the image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its function in the ideology of colonial capitalism*. London: Routledge, 1977.

Alexander, Jocelyn. "Technical development and the human factor: sciences of development in Rhodesia's Native Affairs Department." In *Science and Society in Southern Africa*, edited by Saul Dubow, 212-37. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.

- Alverson, Hoyt. "Arable Agriculture in Botswana: Some contributions of the traditional social formation." *Rural Africana* 4 (Spring 1979): 33-47.
- Ambrose, David. *The Oxfam Guide to Qacha's Nek*. Roma, Lesotho: 1969.  
 \_\_\_\_\_. "A Short History of the Thaba Tseka District." *Maikutlo: Field Notes on Rural Development* (July, 1980): 4-7.
- Ambrose, David, Emmanuel Motebang Pomela, and Sumitra Talukdar. *Biological Diversity in Lesotho: A Country Study*. Maseru: National Environment Secretariat, 2000.
- Anderson, David. "Depression, Dust Bowl, Demography, and Drought: The Colonial State and Soil Conservation in East Africa during the 1930s." *African Affairs* 83, no. 332 (1984): 321- 43.  
 \_\_\_\_\_. *Eroding the Commons: The Politics of Ecology in Baringo, Kenya 1890-1963*. London: James Currey, 2002.
- Anderson, David and Richard Grove, eds. *Conservation in Africa: People, Policies, and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Andrews, Thomas. *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Anker, Peder. *Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire, 1895-1945*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Atkins, Keletso. *The Moon is Dead! Give Us Our Money!: the cultural origins of an African work ethic, Natal, South Africa, 1843-1900*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1993.
- Ballard, Charles. "The Repercussions of Rinderpest: Cattle Plague and Peasant Decline In Colonial Natal." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 19, no. 3 (1986): 421-50.
- Barca, Stefania. "Laboring the Earth: Transnational Reflections on the Environmental History of Work." *Environmental History* 19, no. 1 (2014): 3-27.
- Barnard, Alan. *Hunters and Herders in Southern Africa: A Comparative Ethnography of the Khoisan Peoples*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.  
 \_\_\_\_\_. *History and Theory in Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

- Barth, Frederik. "An Anthropology of Knowledge." *Current Anthropology* 43, no. 1 (2002): 1-18.
- Basso, Keith. *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996.
- Bayart, Jean Francois. *The State in Africa: the Politics of the Belly*. New York: Longman, 1993.
- Beinart, William. *The Political Economy of Pondoland 1860-1930*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development: A Southern African Exploration, 1900-1960." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 11, no. 1 (1984): 52-83.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "African History and Environmental History." *African Affairs* 99, no. 395 (2000): 269-302.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, Livestock and the Environment, 1770-1950*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Beinart, William, and Karen Brown. *African Local Knowledge & Livestock Health: Diseases & Treatments in South Africa*. London: James Currey, 2013.
- Beinart, William, Peter Delius, and Stanley Trapido, eds. *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa 1850-1930*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986.
- Beinart, William, and Colin Bundy. *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics and Popular Movements in the Transkei and Eastern Cape, 1890-1930*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Beinart, William, and Luvuyo Wotshela. *Prickly Pear: A Social History of a Plant in the Eastern Cape*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012.
- Berry, Sara. *No Condition is Permanent: the social dynamics of agrarian change in sub-Saharan Africa* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.
- Bezuidenhout, J.D. "A Short History of Sheep Scab." *Journal of the South African Veterinary Association* 82, no. 4 (2011): 188-89.
- Blaikie, Piers. *The Political Economy of Soil Erosion in Developing Countries*. London: Longman, 1985.

- Bloch, Maurice. "People into Places: Zafimaniry Concepts of Clarity." In *The Anthropology of Landscape: perspectives on place and space*, edited by E. Hirsch and M. O'Hanlon, 425-34. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- Boehm, Christian. "The Social Life of Fields: Labour Markets and Agrarian Change in Lesotho." *Paideusis – Journal for Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Studies* 3 (2003):1-20.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Bowman, Andrew. "Ecology to Technocracy: Scientists, Surveys, and the Agricultural Development of Late Colonial Zambia." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37, no. 1 (2011): 135-53.
- Bozzoli, Belinda and Mmantho Nkotsoe. *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy, and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1983*. London: James Currey, 1991.
- Brenton, Barret. "Pellagra and Nutrition Policy: Lessons from the Great Irish Famine to the New South Africa." *Nutritional Anthropology* 22, no. 1 (1998): 1-11.
- Broch-Due, Vigdis and Richard A. Schroeder, eds. *Producing Nature and Poverty in Africa*. Stockholm: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000.
- Bundy, Colin. *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979.
- Butterfield, P.H. "A History of Education in Lesotho." *The Africa Institute*, Pretoria, SA, no. 41(1977): 8-9.
- Carney, Judith. "Indigenous soil and water management in Senegambian rice farming systems." *Agriculture and Human Values* 8, no. 1 (1991): 37-48.  
 \_\_\_\_\_. *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Carswell, Grace. *Cultivating Success in Uganda, Kigezi Farmers & Colonial Policies*. Oxford: James Currey, 2007.
- Chakela, Q.K., ed. *State of the Environment in Lesotho*. Maseru: National Environment Secretariat, 1999.

- Challis, Sam. "Creolisation on the Nineteenth-Century Frontiers of Southern Africa: A Case Study of the AmaTola 'Bushmen' in the Maloti-Drakensberg." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38, no. 2 (2012): 265–80.
- Challis, Sam, Jeremy Hollman, and Mark McGranaghan. "Rain Snakes from the Senqu River: new light on Qing's commentary on San rock art from Sehonghong, Lesotho." *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* 48, no. 3 (2013): 1-24.
- Chambers, Robert. *Rural Development: Putting the Last First*. New York: Longman, 1983.
- Comaroff, Jean. "Healing and Cultural Transformation: The Tswana of Southern Africa." *Social Science and Medicine* 15B (1981): 367-78.
- Comaroff, John. "Dialectical Systems, History and Anthropology: Units of Study and Questions of Theory." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 8, no.2 (1982): 143-72.
- Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff. *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa, Volume 1*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier, Volume 2*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- Conte, Christopher. *Highland Sanctuary: Environmental History in Tanzania's Usambara Mountains*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004.
- Cooper, Frederick. "Peasants, Capitalists, and Historians: A Review Article." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 7, no. 2 (1981): 284-314.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backwards Africans, and the Development Concept." In *International Development and the Social Sciences*, edited by Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, 64-92. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Coplan, David. "Eloquent Knowledge: Lesotho Migrants' Songs and the Anthropology of Experience." *American Ethnologist* 14, no. 3 (1987): 413-33.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *In the Time of Cannibals: The Word Music of South Africa's Basotho Migrants*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Land from the ancestors: Popular religious pilgrimage along the South Africa-Lesotho border." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 4 (2003): 976-93.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "First meets third: Analyzing inequality along the US-Mexico and South Africa-Lesotho borders." *Journal of Borderland Studies* 25, no. 2(2010): 53-64.
- Coplan, David and Tim Quinlan. "A Chief by the People: Nation versus State in Lesotho." *Africa* 67, no.1 (1997): 27-60.
- Couzens, Tim. *Murder at Morija: Faith, Mystery, and Tragedy on an African Mission*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003.
- Crais, Clifton. *The Politics of Evil: Magic, State Power, and the Political Imagination of South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Croll, Elisabeth and David Parkin, eds. *Bush Base: Forest Farm: Culture, Environment, and Development*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Cronon, William. "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative." *Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (1992): 1347-76.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Uses of Environmental History." *Environmental History Review* 17, no. 3 (1993): 1-22.
- Cronon, William, ed. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996.
- Crosby, Alfred. *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Damane, Mosebi. *Histori Ea Lesotho*. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1950.
- Damane, Mosebi, and Peter Sanders. eds., trans., *Lithoko: Sotho Praise Poems*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.
- Davidson, Joanna. "Cultivating Knowledge: Development, Dissemblance, and Discursive Contradictions among the Diola of Guinea-Bissau." *American Ethnologist* 37, no. 2 (2010): 212-26.
- DiTomaso, Joseph et al. *Weed Control in Natural Areas in the Western United States*. Los Angeles: University of California, 2013.
- Dodson, Belinda. "A Soil Conservation Safari: Hugh Bennett's 1944 Visit to South Africa." *Environment and History* 11, no. 1 (2005): 35-54.
- Dove, Canon Reginald. *Anglican Pioneers in Lesotho: Some Account of the Diocese of Lesotho, 1876-1930*. Maseru: Mazenod Institute, 1975.



- Dovers, Stephen. "Commonalities and Contrasts, pasts and presents: An Australian view." In *South Africa's Environmental History: Cases and Comparisons*, edited by Stephen Dover, Ruth Edgecombe and Bill Guest. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002.
- Driver, Thackwray. "Anti-Erosion Policies in the Mountain Areas of Lesotho: the South African Connection." *Environment and History* 5, no. 1 (1999): 1-25.
- Dubow, Saul, ed. *Science and Society in Southern Africa*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Duncan, Patrick. *Sotho Laws and Customs*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1960.
- Edgar, Robert. *Prophets With Honour: A Documentary History of Lekhotla La Bafo*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1988.
- Eldredge, Elizabeth. "Land, Politics, and Censorship: The Historiography of Nineteenth-Century Lesotho." *History in Africa* 15 (1988): 191-209.  
 \_\_\_\_\_. *A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-Century Lesotho*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Elphick, Richard. *Kraal and Castle: Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.
- Epprecht, Marc. *'This Matter of Women is Getting Very Bad': Gender, Development and Politics in Colonial Lesotho*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000.
- Etherington, Norman. *The Great Treks: The Transformation of Southern Africa, 1815-1854*. Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited, 2001.
- Evans-Pritchard, E.E. *The Nuer: a description of the modes of livelihood and political institutions of a Nilotic people*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.
- Falola, Toyin and Emily Brownell, eds. *Landscape, Environment and Technology in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa*. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Fairhead, James and Melissa Leach. *Misreading the African Landscape: Society and Ecology in a Forest-Savanna Mosaic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

- Feierman, Steven. *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Ferguson, James. "The Bovine Mystique: Power, Property and Livestock in Rural Lesotho." *Man* 20, no. 4(1985): 647-74.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Ferguson, Karen. "Caught in 'No Man's Land': The Negro Cooperative Demonstration Service and the Ideology of Booker T. Washington, 1900-1918." *Agricultural History* 72, no. 1 (1998): 33-54.
- Ferragne, Marcel. *Trans-Lesotho: Accounts of the trips of the first missionaries in the Drakensberg*. Roma, Lesotho: The Social Centre, 1975.
- Firkus, Angela. "The Agricultural Extension Service and Non-Whites in California, 1910-1932." *Agricultural History* 84, no. 4 (2010): 506-30.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books, 1970.
- Frost, Warwick. "European Farming, Australian Pests: agricultural settlement and environmental disruption in Australia, 1800-1920." *Environment & History* 4, no. 2 (1998): 129-43.
- Gadgil, Madhav and Ramachandra Guha. *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Geertz, Clifford. *Agricultural Involution: The Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Wet and the Dry: Traditional Irrigation in Bali and Morocco." *Human Ecology* 1 (1972): 23-39.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books, 1983.
- Germond, Robert. "Economic Development and Land Reform in Basutoland," *South African Outlook. A Journal Dealing with Missionary and Racial Affairs* 95, no. 1134 (1965).

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Chronicles of Basutoland: A running commentary on the events of the years 1830-1902 by the French Protestant missionaries in Southern Africa*. Morija: Morija-Sesuto Book Depot, 1967.
- Giblin, James. *The Politics of Environmental Control in Northeastern Tanzania, 1840-1940*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.
- Gilbert, Jess. "Low Modernism and the New Deal: A Different Kind of State." In *Fighting for the Farm: Rural America Transformed*, edited by Jane Adams, 129-146. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.
- Giles-Vernick, Tamara. *Cutting the Vines of the Past: Environmental Histories of the Central African Rainforest*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002.
- Gilfoyle, Daniel. "Veterinary Research and the African Rinderpest Epizootic: The Cape Colony, 1896-1898." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 1 (2003): 133-54.
- Gill, Stephen. *A Short History of Lesotho*. Morija: Morija Museum & Archives, 1993.
- Goody, Jack, ed. *The Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958.
- Gordon, David and Shepard Krech, eds. *Indigenous Knowledge and the Environment in Africa and North America*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012.
- Grab, Stefan and David Nash. "Documentary evidence of climate variability during cold seasons in Lesotho, southern Africa, 1833-1900." *Climate Dynamics* 34 (2010): 473-99.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Sky of brass and burning winds: documentary evidence of rainfall variability in the Kingdom of Lesotho, Southern Africa, 1824-1900." *Climate Change* 101 (2010): 617-53.
- Gray, Brian. *Basuto Soldiers in Hitler's War*. Morija: Morija Printing, 1953.
- Green, Eric. "A Lasting Story: Conservation and Agricultural Extension Services in Colonial Malawi." *Journal of African History* 50 (2009): 247-67.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Labor Costs and the Failed Support of Progressive Farmers in Colonial Malawi." In *Landscape, Environment and Technology in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa*, edited by Toyin Falola and Emily Brownell, 173-201. London: Routledge, 2012.

- Grove, Richard. "Scottish Missionaries, Evangelical Discourses, and the Origins of Conservation Thinking in Southern Africa, 1820-1900." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15, no.2 (1989): 163-87.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Green Imperialism: Science, Colonial Expansion, and the Emergence of Global Environmentalism, 1660-1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Gupta, Akhil. *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Hall, Dorothy, ed. *150 Years Morija Printing Works of the Lesotho Evangelical Church: A Short Historical Review*. Morija: Morija Printing, 2011.
- Hammond-Tooke, W. David. *Imperfect Interpreters: South Africa's Anthropologists, 1920-1990*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1997.
- Hamnett, Ian. *Chieftainship and Legitimacy: An anthropological study of executive law in Lesotho*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.
- Harries, Patrick. "Under Alpine Eyes: Constructing Landscape and Society in Late Pre-Colonial South-East Africa." *Paideuma* 43 (1997): 171-91.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Butterflies and Barbarians: Swiss Missionaries and Systems of Knowledge in South-East Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007.
- Heap, Marion. *Health and Disease in South-Eastern Lesotho: A Social Anthropological Perspective of Two Villages*. Cape Town: UCT Centre for African Studies, 1989.
- Hersey, Mark. *My Work is That of Conservation: An Environmental Biography of George Washington Carver*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011.
- Hillbom, Ellen, and Patrick Svensson, eds. *Agricultural Transformation in a Global History Perspective*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Hincks, Craig. *Quest for Peace: An Ecumenical History of the Church in Lesotho*. Morija: Morija Museum and Archives, 2009.
- Hirschmann, D. "Early post-colonial bureaucracy as history: the case of the Lesotho central planning and development office, 1965-1975." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 20, no. 3 (1987): 455-70.

- Hitchcock, Robert K. "The Lesotho Highlands Water Project: Water, Culture, and Environmental Change." In *Water, Cultural Diversity, and Global Environmental Change*, edited by Barbara Rose Johnston et al., 319–38. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2011.
- Hobart, Mark, ed. *An Anthropological Critique of Development: The Growth of Ignorance*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959.
- Hodge, Joseph Morgan. "British colonial expertise, post-colonial careering and the early history of international development." *Journal of Modern European History* 8, no.1 (2010): 24-46.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007.
- Hotz, E. *Paul Ramseyer, Missionaire*. Paris: Société des Mission Évangélique de Paris, 1930.
- How, Marion. *The Mountain Bushmen of Basutoland*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Ltd., 1962.
- Huffman, Thomas. "The Central Cattle Pattern and interpreting the past." *Southern African Humanities* 13 (December 2001): 19-35.
- Hughes, J. Donald. "Three Dimensions of Environmental History." *Environment and History* 14, no. 3 (2008): 319-30.
- Iliffe, John. *The African AIDS Epidemic: A History*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006.
- Isaacman, Allen. *Cotton is the Mother of Poverty: Peasants, Work, and Rural Struggle in Colonial Mozambique, 1938-1961*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995.
- Jacobs, Nancy J. "The Great Bophuthatswana Donkey Massacre: Discourse on the Ass and the Politics of Class and Grass." *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 2 (2001): 485-507.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Environment, Power, and Injustice: A South African History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Birders of Africa: History of a Network*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.

- Jacobs, Nancy and Andrew Bank. "Introduction: The Micro-Politics of Knowledge Production in Southern Africa." *Kronos: Southern African Histories, Special Issue: The Micro-Politics of Knowledge Production in Southern Africa* 41 (November 2015): 11-35.
- Jacoby, Karl. *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- Jacot-Guillarmod, Amy. "Botanical Exploration in Lesotho." *Basutoland Notes and Records* 5 (1965-1966): 22-31  
 \_\_\_\_\_. *Flora of Basutoland*. Lehre, Germany: J. Cramer, 1971.
- Jeater, Diana. *Law, Language, and Science: The Invention of the "Native Mind" in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1930*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2007.
- Johnston, Deborah. "The State and Development: An Analysis of Agricultural Policy in Lesotho, 1970-1993." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22, no. 1 (1996): 119-37.
- Jolly, Pieter. "Melikane and Upper Mangolong Revisited: The Possible Effects on San Rock Art of Symbiotic Contact Between South-Eastern San and Southern Sotho and Nguni Communities." *The South African Archaeological Bulletin* 50, no. 161 (1995): 68-80.  
 \_\_\_\_\_. "The San Rock Painting from 'The Upper Cave at Mangolong,' Lesotho." *The South African Archaeological Bulletin* 61, no. 183 (2006): 68-75.
- Jones, G.I. "Chiefly Succession in Basutoland." In *Succession to High Office*, edited by Jack Goody, 57-81. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966.
- Kalinga, Owen. "'The Master Farmers' Scheme in Nyasaland, 1950-1962: a study of a failed attempt to create a yeomen class." *African Affairs* 92, no. 368 (1993): 367-87.
- Keegan, Timothy. *Rural Transformations in Industrializing South Africa: The Southern Highveld to 1914*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986.
- Kerr, Alexander. *Fort Hare 1915-48: The Evolution of an African College*. London: C. Hurst & Co., 1968.
- Khan, Farieda. "Rewriting South Africa's Conservation History-The Role of the Native Farmers Association." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 4 (1994): 499-516.

- Kimble, Judith. Edited by Helen Kimble. *Migrant Labour and Colonial Rule in Basutoland, 1890-1930*. Grahamstown, SA: Rhodes University Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1999.
- King, Rachel, Charles Arthur and Peter Mitchell. "Ha Makoanyane: the archaeology and history of colonial transitions in Lesotho." *Southern African Humanities* 26 (August 2014): 57-81.
- Kirk-Greene, A.H.M. *A Biographical Dictionary of the British Colonial Service 1939-1966*. London: Zell Publishers, 1991.
- Kjekshus, Helge. *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History*. London: James Currey, 1977.
- Kopytoff, Igor. *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Kratz, Corinne. "Conversations and Lives." In *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History*, edited by Luise White et al., 127-61. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- Kreike, Emmanuel. *Environmental Infrastructure in African History: Examining the Myth of Natural Resource Management in Namibia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Kunene, Daniel. *Heroic Poetry of the Basotho*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Leselinyana la Lesotho and Sotho Historiography." *History in Africa* 4 (January 1977): 149-61.
- Kuper, Adam. "The Social Structure of the Sotho-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa, Part I," *Journal of the International African Institute* 45, no. 1 (1975): 67-81.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Wives for Cattle: Bridewealth and Marriage in Southern Africa*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Post-modernism, Cambridge, and the great Kalahari debate," *Social Anthropology* 1, no. 1A (1993): 57-71
- Kynoch, Gary. *We are Fighting the World: a history of the Marashea gangs in South Africa, 1947-1999*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005.
- Lamar, Howard and Leonard Thompson, eds. *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

- Landau, Paul. *The Realm of the Word: Language, Gender, and Christianity in a Southern African Kingdom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995.
- Lansing, J. Stephen. *Priests and Programmers: Technologies of Power in the Engineered Landscape of Bali*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Latour, Bruno. *Science in Action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.
- Laydevant, Francois. *The Rites of Initiation in Lesotho*. Roma: The Social Centre, 1978.
- Leach, Melissa and Robin Mearns, eds. *The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996.
- Lelimo, Martin. *The Question of Lesotho's Conquered Territory: It's time for an answer*. Morija: Morija Museum and Archives, 1998.
- Lewis-Williams, J.D. *Believing and Seeing: symbolic meanings in southern San rock paintings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Evolution of Theory, Method and Technique in Southern African Rock Art Research," *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 13, no. 4 (2006): 343-77.
- Li, Tania. *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Long, Norman and Ann Long, eds. *Battlefields of Knowledge: The interlocking of theory and practice in social research and development*. Routledge: London, 1992.
- Lonsdale, John and D. Low. "Introduction: Towards the New Order 1945-1963." In *The Oxford History of East Africa, Vol. III*, edited by D. Low and Alison Smith, 12-16. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Maack, Pamela. "'We Don't Want Terraces!': Protest & Identity under the Uluguru Land Usage Scheme." In *Custodians of the Land*, edited by Gregory Maddox et al., 152-70. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996.
- Machobane, L.B.B.J. *Government and Change in Lesotho, 1800-1966: A Study of Political Institutions*. London: The Macmillan Press, 1990.



- MacLeod, Roy. "Introduction." In "Nature and Empire: Science and the Colonial Enterprise." Edited by Roy MacLeod. *Osiris* 15 (2000): 1-13.
- Maddox, Gregory, James Giblin, and Isaria Kimambo, eds. *Custodians of the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1996.
- Maes, Yvonne and Barabara Andes. *Agricultural Studies for Lesotho: from Subsistence to Self-Sufficiency*. Maseru, Lesotho: Maseru Book Centre, 1975.
- Mager, Anne. "'The People Get Fenced': Gender, Rehabilitation and African Nationalism in the Ciskei and Border region, 1945-1955." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 4 (1992): 761-82.
- Mairot, Francois. *Suivez le Guide S'il Vous Plait!: A tous leurs Parents, Amis et Bienfaiteurs En témoignage de Gratitude Pour Cent ans De labeur apostolique, 1862-1962*. Maseru: Maseru Institute, 1962.
- Makhanya, Edward M. *The Use of Land Resources for Agriculture in Lesotho*. Roma: NUL Department of Geography, 1979.
- Malahleha, G.G.M. "Mafube PEMS-Church of Scotland-Bantu Presbyterian-Mission Station." In *Mekolokotoane Kerekeng Ea Evangelii Lesotho: Jubilee Highlights, 1833-2008*, 129-34. Morija: Morija Museum & Archives, 2009.
- Maloka, Eddy Tsidiso. *Basotho and the Mines: A Social History of Labour Migrancy in Lesotho and South Africa, c. 1890-1940*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 2004.
- Mamdani, Mahmoud. *Citizen and Subject: contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Mandala, Elias. *Work and Control in a Peasant Economy: A history of the lower Tchiri Valley in Malawi, 1859-1960*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Marks, Shula and Richard Rathbone, eds. *Industrialization and Social Change in South Africa: African class formation, culture, and consciousness, 1870-1930*. London: Longman, 1982.
- Maro, Pendo. *Environmental Change in Lesotho: An Analysis of the Causes and Consequences of Land-Use Change in the Lowland Region*. New York: Springer, 2011.

- Marquardt, Gary. "Water, Wood and Wild Animal Populations: Seeing the Spread of Rinderpest through the Physical Environment in Bechuanaland, 1896." *South African Historical Journal* 53, no. 1 (2005): 73-98.
- Masefield, George. *A History of the Colonial Agricultural Service*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Mathieu, Jon. "Long-Term History of Mountains: Southeast Asia and South America Compared." *Environmental History* 18 (April 2013): 557-75.
- Mayberry, B. D. "The Tuskegee Movable School: A Unique Contribution to National and International Agriculture and Rural Development." *Agricultural History* 65, no. 2 (1991): 85-104.
- Mbembe, Achille. *On the Postcolony*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001.
- McCann, James. *People of the Plow: An Agricultural History of Ethiopia, 1800-1990*. Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800- 1990*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with a New World Crop, 1500-2000*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- McGregor, JoAnn and William Beinart, eds. *Social History and African Environments*. Oxford: James Currey, 2003.
- Mekenye, Reuben. "Re-Examination of the Lekhotla La Bafo's Challenge to Imperialism in Lesotho, 1919-1966." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 2, no. 10 (2012): 77-91.
- Melville, Elinor. *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.
- Mitchell, Peter. *The Archaeology of Southern Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Making History at Sehonghong: Soai and the last Bushman occupants of his shelter." *Southern African Humanities* 22 (September 2010): 149-70.

- Mitchell, Peter, and Sam Challis. "A 'First' Glimpse into the Maloti Mountains: The Diary of James Murray Grant's Expedition of 1873-74." *Southern African Humanities* 20 (2008): 399-461.
- Mitchell, Timothy. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002.
- Moffett, Rodney. *Sesotho Plant & Animal Names and Plants Used by the Basotho*. Bloemfontein: Sun Press, 2010.
- Mokitimi, 'Makali. *The Voice of the People: Proverbs of the Basotho*. Pretoria: UNISA Press, 1997.
- Montgomery, R.R. Bishop. *Francis Balfour of Basutoland: Evangelist and Bishop*. Facsimile reprint of the 1925 edition with an introduction by David Ambrose. Ladybrand: House 9 publications, 2010.
- Moodie, T. Dunbar with Vivienne Ndatshe. *Going for Gold: Men, Mines, and Migration*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- Moore, Henrietta and Meghan Vaughan. *Cutting Down Trees: Gender, Nutrition, and Agricultural Change in Northern Province of Zambia, 1890-1990*. London: James Currey, 1994.
- Mortimer, Michael, Mary Tiffen and Francis Gichuki. *More People, Less Erosion: Environmental Recovery in Kenya*. New York: J. Wiley, 1994.
- Moteane, M.N. "Nalane ea Moruti Jobo Moteane, 1848-1942." In *Mekolokotoane Kerekeng ea Evangeli Lesotho: Jubilee Highlights, 1833-2008*, edited by Stephen Gill et al, 73-82. Morija: Morija Press, 2009.
- Mudimbe, V.Y. *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.
- Mulwafu, Wapulumuka. *Conservation Song: A History of Peasant-State relations and the Environment in Malawi, 1860-2000*. Cambridge: The White Horse Press, 2011.
- Mutimba, J.K. "Reflections on Agricultural Extension and Extension Policy in Africa." *South African Journal of Agricultural Extension* 42, no. 1 (2014): 15-26.

- Murphy, William. "Secret Knowledge as Property and Power in Kpelle Society: Elders versus Youth." *Journal of the International African Institute* 50, no. 2 (1980): 193-207.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Rhetorical Management of Dangerous Knowledge in Kpelle Brokerage." *American Ethnologist* 8, no. 4 (1981): 667-85.
- Murray, Colin. *Families Divided: the impact of migrant labour in Lesotho*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Black Mountain: Land, Class, and Power in the Eastern Orange Free State, 1880s to 1990s*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.
- Neumann, Roderick. *Imposing Wilderness: Struggles over Livelihood and Nature Preservation in Africa*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998.
- Ortner, Sherry. "Theory and Anthropology since the Sixties." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 1 (1984): 126-66.
- Packard, Randall. *White Plague, Black Labor: Tuberculosis and the Political Economy of Health and Disease in South Africa*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989.
- Palframan, Andrea. "'In Common Nature': An Ethnography of Climate Adaptation in the Lesotho Highlands." *Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability* 20, no. 12 (2015): 1531-46.
- Peires, Jeffrey. *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-7*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989.
- Peters, Pauline. *Dividing the Commons: Politics, Policy, and Culture in Botswana*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994.
- Peters, Scott. "'Every Farmer Should Be Awakened': Liberty Hyde Bailey's Vision of Agricultural Extension Work." *Agricultural History* 80, no. 2 (2006): 190-219.
- Phillips, Sarah. "Lessons from the Dust Bowl: Dryland Agriculture and Soil Erosion in the United States and South Africa, 1900-1950." *Environmental History* 4, no. 2 (1999): 245-66.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Phoofolo, Pule. "Epidemics and Revolutions: The Rinderpest Epidemic in Late Nineteenth-Century Southern Africa." *Past & Present* 138, no. 1 (1993): 112-43.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Face to Face with Famine: The BaSotho and the Rinderpest, 1897-1899." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003): 503-27.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Ambiguous Interactions: BaSotho-Colonial Relations on the Eve of the Rinderpest Outbreak, 1896." In *African Agency and European Colonialism: Latitudes of Negotiation and Containment*, edited by Femi Kolapo and Kwabena Akurang-Parry, 83-104. New York: University Press of America, 2007.
- Popkin, Samuel. *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979.
- Portelli, Alessandro. *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.
- Pottier, Johan, Alan Bicker and Paul Sillitoe. *Negotiating Local Knowledge: power and identity in development*. London: Pluto Press, 2003.
- Quinlan, Tim. "Grassland Degradation and Livestock Rearing in Lesotho." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21, no. 3 (1995): 491-507.
- Ranger, Terence. "Growing from the Roots: Reflections on Peasant Research in Central and Southern Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 5, no. 1 (1978): 99-133.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War in Zimbabwe: A Comparative Study*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Voices from the Rocks: Nature, Culture & History in the Matapos Hills of Zimbabwe*. Oxford: James Currey, 1999.
- Redding, Sean. *Sorcery and Sovereignty: Taxation, Power, and rebellion in South Africa, 1880-1963*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006.
- Richards, Paul. *Indigenous Agricultural Revolution: Ecology and food production in West Africa*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Cultivation: knowledge or performance?" In *An Anthropological Critique of Development: The Growth of Ignorance*, edited by Mark Hobart, 61-78. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Ritchie, Donald. *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Robertson, A.F. "Popular Scientist: James Jacob Machobane and Mantsa Tlala." *African Affairs* 93, no. 370 (1994): 99-121.

- Roeder, Peter, Jeffrey Mariner and Richard Kock. "Rinderpest: the veterinary perspective on eradication." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 368, no. 1623 (2013): 1-12.
- Rosenberg, Scott. *Promises of Moshoeshoe: Culture, Nationalism and Identity in Lesotho*. Roma, Lesotho: Institute of Southern African Studies, 2008.
- Rosenberg, Scott, Richard F. Weisfelder, and Michelle Frisbie-Fulton. *Historical Dictionary of Lesotho: New Edition*. Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2004.
- Ross, Eric. *The Malthus Factor: Population, Poverty and Politics in Capitalist Development*. New York: Zed Books, 1998.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.
- Sanders, Peter. *Moshoeshoe, Chief of the Sotho*. London: Heinemann, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *'Throwing Down White Man': Cape Rule and Misrule in Colonial Lesotho 1871-1884*. Morija: Morija Museum & Archives, 2010.
- Sanders, Peter and Colin Murray. *Medicine Murder in Basutoland: The Anatomy of a Moral Crisis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005.
- Schmidt, Elizabeth. *Peasants, Traders and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1992.
- Schmitz, Gerard, and Firouz Rooyani. *Lesotho: Geology, Geomorphology, Soils*. Morija, Lesotho: National University of Lesotho, 1987.
- Schwilch, Gudrun. "Promoting the Machobane Farming System: An Interview with Letla Mosenene, an Advisor to Farmer Innovators in Lesotho." *Mountain Research and Development* 22, no. 1 (2002): 19-21.
- Scoones, Ian. "Range Management Science and Policy: Politics, Polemics, and Pasture in Southern Africa." In *The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment*, edited by Melissa Leach and Robin Mearns, 34-53. London: James Currey, 1996.
- Scoones, Ian, and John Thompson, eds., *Beyond Farmer First: Rural people's Knowledge, agricultural research and extension practice*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 1994.

- Scott, James. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Resistance in Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Scott, Roy Vernon. *The Reluctant Farmer: The Rise of Agricultural Extension to 1914*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970.
- Shipton, Parker. *The Nature of Entrustment: Intimacy, Exchange, and the Sacred in Africa*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Showers, Kate. "Soil Erosion in the Kingdom of Lesotho: Origins and Colonial Responses, 1830s-1950s." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15, no. 2 (1989): 263-86.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Water Scarcity and Urban Africa: An Overview of Urban-Rural Water Linkages." *World Development* 30, no.4 (2002): 624-25.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Imperial Gullies: Soil Erosion and Conservation in Lesotho*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Soil Erosion and Conservation: An International Cautionary Tale." *Footprints in the Soil: People and Ideas in Soil History*, edited by Benno Warkentin, 369-406. Amsterdam: Elsevier Science, 2006.
- Showers, Kate and Gwendolyn Malahleha. "Oral Evidence in Historical Environmental Impact Assessment: Soil Conservation in Lesotho in the 1930s and 1940s." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 2 (1992): 276-96.
- Siegel, Benjamin. "'Modernizing Peasants and Master Farmers': All-India Crop Competitions and the Politics of Progressive Agriculture in Early Independent India." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 37, no. 1 (2017), forthcoming.
- Singh, Meena. "Basutoland: a historical journey into the environment." *Environment and History* 6, no. 1 (2000): 31-70.
- Smith, Colin. *Green Mountain Doctor: Memoirs of a Government Medical Officer in Basutoland in the Nineteen Sixties*. Beaminster: Colin Smith, 2000.

- Spear, Thomas. *Mountain Farmers: Moral Economies of Land and Agricultural Development in Arusha and Meru*. London: James Currey, 1997.
- Spiegel, Andrew. "Changing Patterns of Migrant Labour and Rural Differentiation in Lesotho." *Social Dynamics* 6, no. 2 (1980): 1-13.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Rural Differentiation and the Diffusion of Migrant Labor Remittances in Lesotho." In *Black Villagers in an Industrial Society*, edited by Phillip Mayer, 109-68. London: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Spinage, Clive. *Cattle Plague: A History*. New York: Springer Science, 2003.
- Stow, George. *The Native Races of South Africa: A History of the Intrusion of the Hottentots and Bantu into the Hunting Grounds of the Bushmen, the Aborigines of the Country*. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1905.
- Sunseri, Thadeus. "The Entangled History of Sadoka (Rinderpest) and Veterinary Science in Tanzania and the Wider World, 1891-1901." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 89, no. 1 (2015): 92-121.
- Sutter, Paul. *Let Us Now Praise Famous Gullies: Providence Canyon and the Soils of the South*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015.
- Swart, Sandra. *Riding High: Horses, Humans, and History in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010.
- Tamarkin, Mordechai. *Volk and Flock: Ecology, Identity, and Politics among Cape Afrikaners in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2009.
- Thabane, Motlatsi. "Liphokojoe of Kao: A Study of a Diamond Digger Rebel Group in the Lesotho Highlands." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 1 (2000): 105-21.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Shifts from Old to New Social and Ecological Environments in the Lesotho Highlands Water Scheme; Relocating Residents of the Mohale Dam Area." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no.4 (2000): 634-35.
- Thabane, Motlatsi and Neville Pule, eds. *Essays on Aspects of the Political Economy of Lesotho: 1500-2000*. Roma: National University of Lesotho, 2002.
- Thabane, Motlatsi and Jeff Guy. "Technology, Ethnicity, and Ideology: Basotho Miners and Shaft-Sinking on the South African Gold Mines." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14, no. 2 (1988): 257-78.



- Thompson, E.P. "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century." *Past & Present* 50, no. 50 (1971): 76-136.
- Thompson, Leonard. *Survival in Two Worlds: Moshoeshoe of Lesotho, 1786-1870*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Tilley, Helen. *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1870-1950*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Tischler, Julia. "Education and the Agrarian Question in South Africa, c. 1900-40." *Journal of African History* 57, no. 2 (2016): 252-70.
- Tropp, Jacob. *Natures of Colonial Change: Environmental Relations in the Making of the Transkei*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006.
- Tsing, Anna. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Vail, Leroy, ed. *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*. London: James Currey, 1989.
- Vail, Leroy and Landeg White, eds. *Power and the Praise Poem: Southern African Voices in History*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991.
- Van Onselen, Charles. "Reactions to Rinderpest in Southern Africa, 1896-1897." *Journal of African History* 13, no. 3 (1972): 473-88.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Race and Class in the South African Countryside: Cultural Osmosis and Social Relations in the Sharecropping Economy of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950." *The American Historical Review* 95, no. 1 (1990): 99-123.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Seed is Mine: the Life of Kas Maine an South African Share Cropper 1894-1985*. New York: Harper Collins, 1996.
- Van Sittert, Lance. "'The Seed Blows about in Every Breeze:' Noxious Weed Eradication in the Cape Colony, 1860-1909." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 4 (2000): 655-74.
- Vaughan, Megan. *The Story of an African Famine: Gender and Famine in Twentieth Century Malawi*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Vinnicombe, Patricia. "A Fishing-Scene from the Tsoelike River, South-Eastern Basutoland." *The South African Archaeological Bulletin* 15, no. 57 (1960): 15-19.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *People of the Eland: rock paintings of the Drakensberg bushmen as a reflection of their life and thought*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Basotho Oral Knowledge: The Last Bushman Inhabitants of the Mashai District, Lesotho." In *The Eland's People: New Perspectives in the Rock Art of the Maloti-Drakensberg Bushmen, Essays in Memory of Patricia Vinnicombe*, edited by Peter Mitchell and Benjamin Smith, 165-90. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009.
- Vinson, Robert Trent. *The Americans are Coming!: Dreams of African American Liberation in Segregationist South Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012.
- Wallis, Malcolm and Roeland Van De Geer. *Government and Development in Rural Lesotho*. Roma, Lesotho: National University of Lesotho, 1984.
- Wallman, Sandra. *Take Out Hunger: Two Case Studies of Rural Development in Basutoland*. London: The Athlone Press, 1969.
- Warkentin, Benno, ed. *Footprints in the Soil: People and Ideas in Soil History*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Science, 2006.
- Watts, Michael. *Silent Violence: Food, Famine & Peasantry in Northern Nigeria*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- Webb, James. *Tropical Pioneers: Human Agency and Ecological Change in the Highlands of Sri Lanka, 1800-1900*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002.
- Weisfelder, Richard. "Early Voices of Protest in Basutoland: The Progressive Association and Lekhotla la Bafo." *African Studies Review* 17, no. 2 (1974): 397-409.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Political Contention in Lesotho, 1952-1965*. Roma: Institute for Southern African Studies, 1999.
- Weisiger, Marsha. *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009.
- Wayne, Jeannie. "Black Farmers and the Agricultural Cooperative Extension Service: The Alabama Experience, 1945-1965." *Agricultural History* 72, no. 3 (1998): 523-51.
- White, Luise. *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

- White, Luise and Stephen Miescher and David Cohen, eds. *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?" In *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, edited by William Cronon, 171-85. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1996.
- Wittmayer, Julia M., and Bram Buscher. "Conserving Conflict? Transfrontier Conservation, Development Discourses and Local Conflict Between South Africa and Lesotho." *Human Ecology* 38 (2010): 763-73.
- Worboys, Michael. *Spreading Germs: Disease Theories and Medical Practice in Britain, 1865-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Worster, Donald. *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Ecology of Order and Chaos." *Environmental History Review* 14, no. 1/2 (1990): 1-18.
- Wright, John. *Bushman Raiders of the Drakensberg, 1840-1870: A study of their conflict with stock-keeping peoples in Natal*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1971.
- Wylie, Diana. *Starving on a Full Stomach: Hunger and the Triumph of Cultural Racism in Modern South Africa*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001.
- Yawitch, J. *Betterment: the myth of homeland agriculture*. Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1981.
- Zimmerman, Andrew. *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, The German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

### ***VIII. Unpublished Dissertations, Theses, and Papers***

- Aerni-Flessner, John. "If We Govern Ourselves, Whose Son is to Govern Us?": Youth, Independence and the 1960's in Lesotho." PhD Diss., Washington University in St. Louis, 2011.
- De Wet, C.J. and P.A. McAllister. "Rural Communities in Transition: A study of the socio-economic and agricultural implication of agricultural betterment and development." Working Paper No. 16, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, Grahamstown. November 1983.
- Driver, Thackwray S. "The Theory and Politics of Mountain Rangeland Conservation and Pastoral Development in Colonial Lesotho." PhD Diss., University of London, 1998.
- Gay, Judy. "Basotho Women's Options: A study of marital careers in rural Lesotho." PhD Diss., University of Cambridge, 1980.
- Germond, Robert C. "The Quest: A Study of the Population Problem in Basutoland, Unpublished Manuscript, Volume III," 1952. Held at LNA.
- Himmelegreen, David, and Nancy Romero-Daza. "Seasonal Nutrition, Food Habits, and Health Care decision-Making in Mokhotlong." ISAS Working Papers, National University of Lesotho, no. 3 (1992).
- Quella, Peter. "'Now My Tale Has Travelled Far!' Ts'omo-Making as Contemporary Tradition in Lesotho." PhD Diss., University of Wisconsin, 2007.
- Quinlan, Tim. "Marena a Lesotho: Chiefs, Politics and Culture in Lesotho." PhD Diss., University of Cape Town, 1994.
- Spiegel, Andrew. "Migrant Labour Remittances, The Development Cycle and Rural Differentiation in a Lesotho Community." MA Diss., University of Cape Town, 1979.
- Tsepa, Mathabo. "Promoting Food Security and Respect for the Land Through Indigenous Ways of Knowing: Educating Ourselves Through Lesotho's Qacha's Nek Community Project." PhD Diss., University of British Columbia, 2008.

Turkon, David. "Social Differentiation in a Culturally Homogenous Setting: Changes in Sociocultural Institutions and Conceptions of Self and Other in Mokhotlong, Lesotho." PhD Diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 1996.

Turner, Stephen D. "Sesotho Farming: The Conditions & Prospects of Agriculture in the Lowlands & Foothills of Lesotho." PhD Diss., University of London, 1978.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### CHRISTOPHER R. CONZ

152 Central St. #1 Somerville, MA 02145  
crconz@bu.edu

---

#### Education

Boston University Ph.D. Candidate, Department of History/African Studies Center Dissertation Title: <i>"Wisdom Does Not Live in One House:" Compiling Environmental Knowledge in Lesotho, 1880-1960s</i>	Boston, MA 9/2011-5/2017 (expected)
M.A. History	9/2013
University of Massachusetts M.Ed., Certification to Teach History, Grades 8-12	Amherst, MA 5/2004
University of Hartford B.S. Business Administration	West Hartford, CT 5/1999

#### Teaching Experience

Boston University Graduate Writing Fellow, Writing Program <i>Course Taught: The Environment in Africa's Past and Present</i>	Boston, MA 8/2016-Present
Teaching Fellow, Department of History <i>Courses: Environmental History of Africa World History After 1500 History of International Relations, 1900-1945 History of War</i>	9/2012-5/2016
Instructor, Department of History <i>Course Taught: World History After 1500</i>	5/2014-6/2014
United States Peace Corps <i>English Teacher, Tsoelike High School</i>	Qacha's Nek, Lesotho 11/2007-9/2009
Longmeadow High School <i>History Teacher</i>	Longmeadow, MA 8/2004 - 6/2007

Springfield Public Schools  
*Substitute Teacher*

Springfield, MA  
9/2001 – 5/2004

### **Fellowships, Grants, Scholarships**

Boston University Graduate Writing Fellowship	2016 - Present
Boston University Summer Research Fellowship	2016
Boston University Graduate Dean's Fellowship	2011-2016
Boston University Graduate Research Abroad Fellowship, UK	2015
Fulbright Student Scholarship (IIE), Lesotho	2014-2015
Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future	2013
Foreign Language and Area Studies Summer Fellowship, Lesotho	2012

### **Peer Reviewed Journal Manuscript**

*A Farmer's College on Four Hooves: Agricultural Demonstration in Lesotho, 1924-1960s*  
Submitted to *Agricultural History* April 2016  
Publication Status: Revise and Resubmit

### **Book Review**

"Birders of Africa: History of a Network (Nancy Jacobs)," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 49.2 (2016), pp. 297-299.

### **Conference & Workshop Presentations**

<i>Fighting Rinderpest in Lesotho: Chiefs, Border Fences, and Veterinary Knowledge, 1896-1902</i>		
African Studies Association Meeting	Washington, DC	12/1/2016
Walter Rodney Seminar, Boston University	Boston, MA	9/26/2016

<i>"Urging the People to Clean up their Country:" People, Sheep, and Pests in Colonial Lesotho</i>		
African Environments & their Populations	Washington, DC	4/23/2016
Northeastern Workshops on Southern Africa	Burlington, VT	4/15/2016

*Knowledge, Context, and Social Interaction in Lesotho's Agricultural Extension Program, 1924-1960s*

African Studies Association Meeting	San Diego, CA	11/20/2015
WHEATS	Boulder, CO	10/4/2015

*Maize, Monotony, and Malnutrition: socio-environmental history and pellagra in Lesotho*  
Northeastern Workshops on Southern Africa      Burlington, VT      4/21/2013

*Environment, Knowledge, and Agency in Lesotho's Southeastern Highlands*  
BU Graduate Student Conference in African Studies      Boston, MA      3/30/2013

*The People and Landscapes of Lesotho*  
Springfield College      Springfield, MA      3/20/2010  
Van Sickle Middle School      Springfield, MA      4/3/2010

### **Languages**

Sesotho – *Reading & Speaking Proficient*  
French – *Reading Proficient*  
isiZulu – *Functional*

### **Memberships & Affiliations**

American Society for Environmental History  
African Studies Association  
Friends of Lesotho  
Qacha's Nek (Lesotho) Farmers Association

### **Other Work & Volunteer Experience**

Operation Crossroads Africa      Kenya  
*Volunteer Group Leader*      6/2007-8/2007

Operation Crossroads Africa      Ghana  
*Volunteer Participant*      6/2004-8/2004

Springfield Public Schools      Spfld, MA  
*Teacher, Environmental Center for Our Schools (ECOS)*      9/2003-6/2004