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'IF WE GOVERN OURSELVES, WHOSE SON IS TO GOVERN US?': YOUTH,

INDEPENDENCE AND THE 1960s IN LESOTHO

By

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## Acknowledgments

There is only one name on the title page of this dissertation. This requirement means that the multiple and compounding debts that I accrued in the course of finding, defining, researching and writing this thesis have to be made good on this page. I could not have completed this project without the selfless and untiring efforts of many people on multiple continents and I thank them all. The errors that remain have slipped through, at times, against the better judgment of my readers and I alone am responsible for those that are still in the text.

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## Chapter 1: Youth, Independence and the 1960s in Lesotho

Maleseka Kena was born and raised in East Griqualand (now the Matatiele District), South Africa hard up on the mountainous southern border of Lesotho.<sup>i</sup> She moved to Lesotho in 1954 as a twenty-one year old to work as a teacher's assistant in the remote mountain community of Mashai. In the fashion of a timeless love story, she met Jacob Kena, whom the British colonial government had stationed there as an agricultural demonstrator. Married in 1956, they still live overlooking the Orange River Valley in the rural Qacha's Nek District village of Tsoelike Auplas, now in their sixth decade of marriage. Their married life, however, has involved many long absences as Jacob was heavily involved in politics in South Africa and Lesotho. A member of both the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), the Kenas moved back and forth between Lesotho and South Africa until 1964 when, declared *personae non gratae*, they moved permanently to Tsoelike Auplas, where Jacob's mother was living. In Lesotho, Jacob helped start the Communist Party of Lesotho in 1961, and made at least one unsuccessful run for Parliament on their ticket. Arrested after the Lesotho government's declaration of a State of Emergency in the wake of the nullified 1970 elections, Jacob spent years upon his release from prison in exile in other southern African countries, as well as the USSR and East Germany.

Maleseka, on the other hand, settled into Tsoelike Auplas after 1964, raising seven children and seeing them all graduate from at least high school, some going on to

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i The country is today known as Lesotho—the land of the Sotho people. During colonial times, it was officially known as Basutoland, but as this was a colonial creation, I will refer to it throughout this work as Lesotho unless making explicit reference to the legal government.

university study as well. Having secured permanent residence in colonial Basutoland through her parents' Basotho heritage, and his ability to find a chief willing to accept the family as residents, Kena worked tirelessly to support both her family and the political causes in which she believed.<sup>ii</sup> She was no ordinary housewife, however. Apart from raising seven children virtually on her own, Kena was deeply involved in local community groups like the Homemaker's Association, and served as a point of first contact for South African political refugees on the run from the *apartheid* regime. They would seek out her home after slipping across the unguarded, mountainous frontier, receive food, clothing and shelter as well as assistance traveling onward to Maseru, the capital, where all of the major South African political groups had field operations.<sup>iii</sup>

Kena's story is remarkable on a number of levels, not the least being the ability to manage such an active homestead, raise thoughtful children and find a way to make meaningful political contributions to national and international struggles for freedom and equality from rural Lesotho in the 1960s and beyond. However, her story raises a number of important questions about how individuals formed their own and national identities in late colonial and early independence Lesotho, what borders and a national identity meant to people in everyday life and how the experiences of people like Kena complicate wider

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ii Sesotho is one of two official languages in Lesotho, along with English. The people who live in Lesotho call themselves Basotho, but people who have similar cultural identifications, speaking Sesotho, having similar dress and eating patterns, also refer to themselves as Basotho. This study both accepts these efforts by people to self-identify with a larger ethnic/national group, and complicates the story by tracing contestations in the mid-twentieth century over who was able to successfully make claims to this identity. Generally, I will use Basotho when referring to people who claimed ancestry in Lesotho. The singular is Mosotho. I use the orthography common in Lesotho, which differs from South African Sesotho only in its spelling, which was codified under the *apartheid* government and, thus, has little legitimacy in the eyes of most Basotho from Lesotho.

iii All information in this section comes from interview with Maleseka Kena, Tsoelike Auplas, 3/17/09.



stories about decolonization, development, the 1960s and nationalism. Crawford Young, in writing about nationalism and state identification in contemporary Africa noted that there is a “remarkable contemporary paradox...the persistence of an affective attachment to a territorial nationalism even when state institutions are derelict.”<sup>iv</sup> As the stories of Kena and many other young Basotho from the 1950s and 1960s show, this paradox is neither new, nor that remarkable, as young Basotho had been conceiving of nationalism and a national identity in the absence of functioning state institutions throughout the colonial period and into the independence era.



*Map 1: Lesotho Political Map (Map in Public Domain)*

This study covers the period from 1945 to 1970. British colonial administrative reform efforts in Lesotho date to the 1930s, and, of course, there was political

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iv Crawford Young, “Nation, Ethnicity, and Citizenship: Dilemmas of Democracy and Civil Order in Africa,” in *Making Nations, Creating Strangers*, ed. Sara Dorman et al (Boston: Brill, 2007), 241.

contestation among a variety of Basotho individuals and organizations stretching even further back. The real impetus for the reforms in Britain's African empire that would eventually lead to decolonization, however, did not fully take root until after World War II. So I take 1945 as a rough starting date for this study, with the understanding that events of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century will be foregrounded when germane. 1970 marks the end date because the nullified elections of that year marked the end of the most optimistic period following independence. The lack of multi-party democracy in Lesotho from 1970 to 1993 crystallized people's view of how the state did and did not function. This time without representative institutions also highlighted for Basotho the openings and opportunities that had been present during the late colonial and early independence periods for individuals and groups to affect change. One of the goals in writing this study was to narrate some of these possibilities, as a way to get young people in Lesotho thinking about ways that their elders conceived of independence and freedom, in the hope that the contemporary generation will be able to use these examples as a way to frame their own conceptions and dreams for the state and the national community.

However, the most important scholarly reason to periodize the study so that it crossed the actual date of independence was to relieve 1966 of some pressure: to ensure that the formal transfer of power from colonialism to independence is not privileged as the only site of social and political contestation and change in Lesotho mid-century. Being publicly committed to the idea of a Westminster constitutional system, the British government was willing to sacrifice the young King of Lesotho, and the home-grown

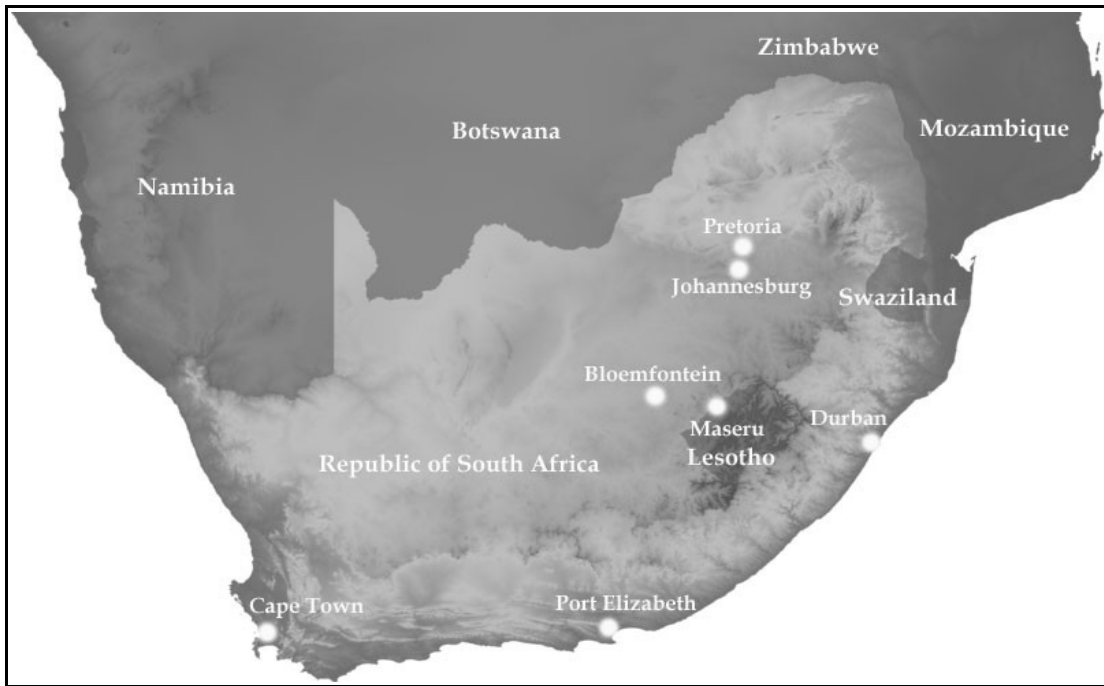
institution of monarchy, to the interests of social stability and managed political transition that allowed them to get out of Lesotho with a functioning government in place. This prioritizing of stability explains Britain's desire to complete the transition from colonialism to independence despite an expressed electoral majority of Basotho not supporting the government of the day. Cooper has noted that the transfer of power in Africa has received much scholarly attention, to the detriment of closer examination of continuities in governance structures and people's lived experience in the late colonial and early independence periods.<sup>v</sup> He has also claimed that the African state was not weak in the realms of policing its border and maintaining itself in power, but was quite weak in its ability to meaningfully integrate citizen feedback into policy.

This study continues Cooper's interrogation of the lack of popular representation in African governments, but also extends Cooper's insight by analyzing what this failure of the state meant for local people's conceptions of the nation and the state. Thus, despite short-term dissatisfactions that many Basotho had with the performance of the state, they were willing and able to maintain faith in the long-term in the ability of the state to meet their needs. This bifurcated consciousness came from Basotho having a more holistic view of nationalism that saw changes in local communities as reflective of the potential in the wider national community, and saw the nation as a national community that functioned beyond the political sphere, an organic whole that could weather the failure of political institutions if other social and economic changes were happening. In other words, it takes the study of nationalism beyond a question of origins (which came first,

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<sup>v</sup> Frederick Cooper, "Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective," *Journal of African History* 49 (2008): 167-96.

the nation or the state), and allows for a middle ground where Basotho were making claims on the institutions of the state at independence, both based on their dreams and understandings of the historical shape of their communities, as well as pre-colonial institutions.<sup>vi</sup>



*Map 2: Southern African Regional Map (Map in Public Domain, Modified by Author)*

Prior studies of nationalism in Africa have inadequately examined how people outside of political parties, especially young people, viewed the process of state-formation and national imagining in the late colonial and early independence period. Young people in Lesotho had strong ideas about what they wanted to see individually and what youth, broadly defined, wanted to achieve at independence. These youth actively worked through non-political youth groups in an attempt to bring these visions to fruition.

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vi Anthony D. Smith provides a neat summary of some of the debates on origins, and their implications. “Gastronomy or Geology? The Role of Nationalism in the Reconstruction of Nations,” *Nations and Nationalism* 1 (1995): 3-23.

This study looks at youth who were not engaged in the youth wings or leagues of political parties, because these young people have been oft-studied in Africa, and their visions tended to fall out along political lines first and foremost, unlike some of their peers.<sup>vii</sup> Young Basotho wanted more economic opportunities at home for themselves and their peers, which was the best educated generation ever in Lesotho. They wanted to avoid the perils of migratory labor to *apartheid* South Africa that generations of Basotho before them had endured. These young people also wanted opportunities for meaningful participation in conversations about political change at the local and national levels, hoping to bring about meritocratic representative structures that would allow those with talents and skills to utilize them free from colonial political interference. The relative freedoms young Basotho enjoyed in youth organizations at the local level allowed them opportunities to remake institutions and social practices at the local level. These successes allowed young Basotho to maintain hope and faith in visions of their ideal state of Lesotho, even while the government of the day did not measure up to these high standards and did not create the meritocratic, egalitarian institutions they hoped to see. Through their actions in situations as diverse as care for the elderly, the provision of reliable supplies of water and access to education, Basotho youth were working at the local level to bring about changes in national culture and practices through the 1950s and 1960s.

Allowing this diverse set of goals and actions to be characterized as nationalist

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vii James Brennan, "Youth, the TANU Youth League and Managed Vigilantism in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 1925-1973," *Africa* 76 (2006): 221-46. LaRay Denzer, "I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson and the West African Youth League," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 6 (1973): 413-52. T.R.H. White, "Z.K. Matthews and the Formation of the ANC Youth League at the University College of Fort Hare," *Kleio* 27 (1995): 124-44.

both expands the definition of nationalism beyond exclusively political institutions, and links the thoughts and actions of young Basotho to wider global currents: youth protest in the 1960s, the Cold War and the concept of economic development. The South African struggle against *apartheid* loomed large in the minds of most young Basotho, because most had experienced its brutal and systematic denial of rights directly or through friends and family, because the question of independence was intimately intertwined in the state-to-state relationship between Lesotho and South Africa, but also because there were so many young South Africans living in Lesotho. These youthful sojourners brought a wide range of new perspectives on politics, styles of dress, music, arts and more to urban and rural Basotho communities, but it was not just to South Africa that young Basotho looked for inspiration. They saw themselves as parts of larger struggles against colonialism and racial discrimination in the world, and they eagerly took ideas they found in newspapers, magazines and gleaned through personal contacts, applying these ideas and strategies to local problems. In doing so, they appropriated the language of the Cold War, global decolonization struggles and development in ways that profoundly influenced the ways in which local practice changed during this time. In youth organizations and as individuals, young Basotho discovered, experimented with and had relatively free spaces in which they re-imagined meritocratic and egalitarian local and national communities as integrated with, but having something unique to offer, the global community.

### **Background on Basotho Nationalism and the Basotho Nation**

The foundation of the Basotho nation was universally dated by my informants and

most history texts to the 1820s, and center on the figure of Moshoeshoe, the founding father of the state of Lesotho and Basotho nationalism.<sup>viii</sup> The son of a local leader, *morena* in Sesotho, Moshoeshoe was an expert cattle raider and military tactician who developed a following in the 1820s because of his access to defensible land in what is now the northern Lesotho district of Butha-Buthe, and his ability to procure the cattle necessary for the prosperity of his group, which consisted mainly of an ethnically heterogeneous population seeking sanctuary.<sup>ix</sup> This time period on the South African Highveld was marked by a period of raiding following the Zulu consolidation on the Natal coast, with many people seeking protection through larger groups, leading to the first major political consolidations in the area.<sup>x</sup> Moshoeshoe moved with his followers in 1824 to a flat-topped mountain called *Thaba Bosiu*, or Mountain of the Night, in what is now the Maseru District of Lesotho, and from here built his control over a group of people that now identify as Basotho.

He set down generous terms for incorporating new arrivals, asking that they render military service when called upon for defense, pay him a small chiefly tribute and use his *khotla*, or court, as an appeal-of-last-resort for their disputes.<sup>xi</sup> This made it easy

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viii Stephen J. Gill, *A Short History of Lesotho* (Moriija, Lesotho: Moriija Museum and Archives, 1993).

ix Martin Hall, *Farmers, Kings and Traders: The People of Southern Africa, 200-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 65.

x While there is some debate over whether this period, the *Mfecane* or *Lifaqane*, was a later historical creation, Moshoeshoe was consolidating control over people who were, for the most part, voluntarily joining his group during the 1820s and 1830s. Norman Etherington, "Tempest in a Teapot? Nineteenth Century Contests for Land in South Africa's Caledon Valley and the Invention of the Mfecane," *Journal of African History* 45 (2004): 203-219.

xi Leonard Thompson, *Survival in Two Worlds: Moshoeshoe of Lesotho, 1786-1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 53. Peter Sanders, *Moshoeshoe: Chief of the Sotho* (London: Heinemann, 1975).

for individuals, families and larger groups to identify, at least in part, with an emerging Basotho identity that was both social and political in nature in the nineteenth century. Leaders like Moshoeshoe attempted, as part of their plans for political consolidation, to mold this identity from the top down, but, like twentieth century Basotho identity, it was also contested by people from the bottom up. These individuals made claims to the identity (and to not be part of it at times) in attempts to get the physical security they desired, or the political control over local affairs. As his number of followers increased, by mid-century Moshoeshoe increasingly moved to consolidate his hold over both people and land. He did this by “placing” his senior relatives and sons as *marena* over outlying peoples and areas, with most people by the 1840s in land that is today Lesotho and parts of the eastern Free State Province of South Africa who professed a Basotho identity referring to Moshoeshoe as *Morena e Moholo*, or the Great Protector or Chief.<sup>xii</sup>

This political consolidation was, however, contested by various African groups, and by the incursions in the region by Afrikaans-speaking settlers and British administrators by mid-century. The area around Black Mountain (*Thaba 'Nchu*) in what is today the Orange Free State was a particularly tricky area, with Tswana-speaking groups unwilling to give allegiance to Moshoeshoe, who was trying to claim them as “his” people, or as Basotho, to increase the land under his control in the face of an influx of Afrikaans-speaking, Trek-Boer settlers who were also attempting to consolidate political control.<sup>xiii</sup> Moshoeshoe also fought the Trek-Boer settlers, and their emerging

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xii *Marena* the plural of *morena*, means chiefs. Scott Rosenberg, *Promises of Moshoeshoe: Culture, Nationalism and Identity in Lesotho* (Roma, Lesotho: Institute of Southern African Studies, 2008), 17.

xiii Colin Murray, *Black Mountain: Land, Class and Power in the Eastern Orange Free State, 1880s-1980s* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1992).



states, as well as the British mid-century over control of land and people. To navigate the confusing and rapidly changing diplomatic landscape of the mid-nineteenth century, Moshoeshoe relied heavily on the advice of a young French missionary named Eugene Casalis, who arrived after Moshoeshoe sent out a personal plea for missionaries, under the auspices of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) in 1833. The PEMS was followed by the arrival of the Catholic Church in 1862, whose first missionaries were from the order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Anglican Church in 1875, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) in the 1890s and other smaller sects.

Despite its current status as a model for the rare “culturally homogenous” state in Africa, the history of the creation of the Basotho nation is one of amalgamation, with ethnic, cultural and social diversity coming together under the welcome and open aegis of Moshoeshoe to create a national community.<sup>xiv</sup> The process of creating Basotho nationality from disparate groups of refugees from the 1820s and 1830s was never a smooth or always agreed upon consensus: people could and did contest the definitions of the nation, and voted, at times with their feet, for acceptable definitions. However, the ability of the Basotho (with British protection from 1868) to stay independent from the emerging South Africa polity, and the creation of institutions like the printing works at Morija from the 1870s that printed many Sesotho-language tracts, but also served as a printing clearinghouse, publishing and creating texts in multiple African languages by the late nineteenth century, made Lesotho a cross-roads for ideas and people, and ensured

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<sup>xiv</sup>David Turkon. “Commoners and Kings and Subaltern: Political Factionalism and Structured Inequality in Lesotho,” *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 31 (2008). Young, “Nation, Ethnicity and Citizenship,” as well as popular sources like the CIA World Factbook.

that the national community could never be as homogenous as current portrays suggest.<sup>xv</sup> Xhosa-speaking groups, trying to get away from the almost constant disruptions of the Cape Colony frontier mid-century, began to settle in what is now the southern Lesotho district of Quthing from the 1840s, acknowledging Moshoeshoe as the *Morena e Moholo*, and this district even today retains cultural practices that differ widely from much of the rest of the country.<sup>xvi</sup> Pedi migrants from what is now Limpopo Province looking to work in Natal or the Cape Colony in the 1860s and 1870s would often come first to Lesotho to get a pass from Moshoeshoe or the French Protestant missionaries that would serve as their work permit.<sup>xvii</sup>

The ability of Moshoeshoe to defend his territory, bring together a disparate group of people, serving as the catalyst for the formation of a coherent Basotho identity in the process, and obtain a treaty of protection from Queen Victoria has been chronicled elsewhere, but the wide range of backgrounds of the people who would come to be part of a Basotho nationality meant that questions of identity have long been central in Lesotho.<sup>xviii</sup> These contestations, so evident in earlier times, became even more salient in

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xv The British were mainly interested in taking on Lesotho, which they called Basutoland, as a Protectorate in the late 1860s because polities like Lesotho seemed to be good buffer states to thwart the expansion attempts by the emerging Afrikaner Republics on the Highveld. After repeated petitions by the Basotho under Moshoeshoe for a treaty of protection, Queen Victoria, in 1868, ended the latest war between the Orange Free State and Moshoeshoe Gill, by giving Basutoland protectorate status. *Short History*, 139.

xvi Gill, *Short History*, 91.

xvii Peter Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us: The Pedi Polity, the Boers and the British in the Nineteenth Century Transvaal* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983), Chapter 3.

xviii For a good summary of Lesotho's nineteenth century history, see Gill, *Short History*. For a background on contention around Basotho identity in late nineteenth century, see Elizabeth Eldredge, *Power in Colonial Africa: Conflict and Discourse in Lesotho, 1870-1960* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007).

late colonial and early independence Lesotho as the potential for a transfer of power back to local hands made the outcome of these debates even more potentially lucrative for participants.

### **The Evidence Base for this Project**

It was with thoughts about the contested nature of the national community in mind that I set out for Lesotho in 2008 to conduct the research for this project. Funded by a Fulbright-Hays Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship, I based myself in Maseru and was also a Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute of Southern African Studies (ISAS) at the National University of Lesotho (NUL), in Roma. My scholarly interest in Lesotho stems from a year I spent teaching at St. Rodrigue High School, an all-girls, Catholic high school nestled in the foothills of the Maluti Mountains in the rural Maseru District.

Grinnell College sent me there in 2002 after my undergraduate graduation to teach, and I soaked up the rural hospitality, as well as the challenges of teaching rural Basotho girls a curriculum designed to prepare them to pass the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) exam. Needless to say, I was in over my head and relied heavily on my Basotho co-workers to help make sense of what I was seeing, feeling and experiencing. My first and still most salient impression was that of a people profoundly proud of their national heritage, wanting to share it with people willing to treat it respectfully.

The question that nagged me back to graduate study was: how could people in Lesotho be so profoundly and outwardly proud of their country, when they decried with equal passion the lack of government engagement in rural communities, its inability to

provide services and the lack of voice for common people. This apparent contradiction ran counter to the literature on failed states in Africa, and seemed an interesting place to test whether Basotho people had in some way failed, or if, perhaps, the theory of failed states was lacking. To get at questions of youth engagement with nationalism and the concept of independence, I scoured the archives in Lesotho and also relied on oral interviews. I made use of, and give great thanks to, archivists at the National Archives in Maseru, the Institute of Education at ISAS, the University Archives at NUL, Morija Museum and Archives and the collections of the Catholic newspaper, *Moeletsi oa Basotho*. The archival collections in Lesotho contain a grab-bag of collected newspapers from Lesotho and South Africa, publications from the main missions in Lesotho, various and sundry artifacts like independence-era posters, photographs and a far-from-complete documentary record of government papers. I also spent some time in the British National Archives in Kew, London, reading the documentary record of the colonial government.

The two categories of evidence that I leaned on most extensively to tease out details of youth consciousness and thinking around the time of independence were photographs, many from the collections of *Moeletsi oa Basotho*, and oral interviews. The photographs were a tricky source because the captioning was quite vague, many did not include dates or locations, so I was left to speculate on the context for many of them. Further, they were all taken exclusively for and by photographers working for the Catholic newspaper, which had a heavy political slant toward the Basuto National Party (BNP) during the 1950s and 1960s. However, keeping in mind the dictum that photographs are neither “a pure trace of the past, nor...a mere invitation to spectacle”

allowed me to better flesh out discussions of the actions and material culture that young people were using to make arguments to each other and older Basotho in the era of independence.<sup>xix</sup>

The interviews I conducted were another important, but theoretically problematic, category of sources. In my initial searches for informants, I relied heavily on people like Stephen Gill, the ever-generous curator of the Morija Museum and Archives, and my contacts at the university to suggest people and places where I should look. I initially wanted to find Basotho who had been young during the 1950s and 1960s, and had also been involved in non-political youth groups. This necessarily meant that my informant pool would consist of a majority of people who had received higher primary and post-primary education. Using this demographic makes this study significantly different from most other historical studies of Lesotho, be they ones like Murray's study of the rural families of migrants, focusing mainly on the impact of migration and mine culture on life in Lesotho, or Weisfelder's and Machobane's political studies that have pursued questions about the role of high politics on the governance structures of Lesotho.<sup>xx</sup> While these were important studies, and they certainly helped frame my own understandings of Lesotho's history, economics and politics, they left unanswered the paradox I had experienced while living in the country: high politics and migrant economics did not adequately explain the national sentiments that most people felt, nor the optimism they

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xix Michael S. Roth, "Why Photography Matters to the Theory of History," *History and Theory* 49 (2010): 103.

xx Colin Murray, *Families Divided: The Impact of Migrant Labour in Lesotho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Richard F. Weisfelder, *Political Contention in Lesotho, 1952-1965* (Roma, Lesotho: Institute of Southern African Studies, 2002). L.B.B.J. Machobane, *Government and Change in Lesotho, 1800-1966: A Study of Political Institutions* (London: Macmillan Press, 1990).

expressed despite failing/failed institutions.

My conversations with informants took the form of anthropological life histories where I asked people broadly about their familial backgrounds, their education, their experiences in youth groups, remembrances of the time of independence and how their own experiences may have been similar to or different from their peers and older family and community members. I did have a script that helped focus my thoughts during the interview, but most of the conversations quickly took on a logic of their own as these older Basotho wove stories and remembrances about the past into wider narratives they have constructed to explain their own lives and the interwoven history of their lives and national history. I thank all of them for their generous displays of Sesotho hospitality, welcoming me into their homes and places of work, many times with a cup of tea and some biscuits to boot.

An issue with using oral sources, however, is that the informants are, at least in part, reading the problems of the present into their narratives of the past.<sup>xxi</sup> This is problematic in terms of disambiguating individuals' ability to remember their thoughts and feelings from a particular time in the past from current political and social contexts. A partial solution to this issue is to read carefully what people say they were thinking during the 1950s and 1960s, and combine this with a careful study of the concrete projects that young Basotho participated in during this time. By focusing on the actions of people, this study eliminates to some extent the presentist bias of oral sources. The photographic record also plays a role in helping understand the concrete actions of young

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xxi Annekie Joubert, "History by Word of Mouth: Linking Past and Present Through Oral Memory," in *Historical Memory in Africa*, ed. Mamdou Diawara et al. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

people at that time, providing confirmation in some cases, complication in others, but speaking to similar issues. I was fortunate to come across a good sampling of both sources in the course of my research that helped me to present a better balanced account of the 1950s and 1960s in Lesotho.

### **Nationalism in Africa**

The study of nationalism in Africa dates to the 1950s and 1960s, with many of the early studies carried out by political scientists on specific countries or regions as African nation-states emerged out of colonial rule to take their place in the Westphalian global system.<sup>xxii</sup> These sorts of studies, written in large part as a reaction against scholarship of nations and nationalism that posited European origins for the concept, sought to show that Africans had national ideals, could run state institutions, and were fully capable of conducting the business of international relations through international organizations like the United Nations.<sup>xxiii</sup> The conception of nationalism that their early studies had, however, was limiting. Looking mainly at formal political parties and their usually male leaders who had played a formative role in the transfer of power, these studies tended to equate nationalism with party politics, and posit these parties as being responsible for creating through sheer force of will, or failing to create, a national community through their thoughts, words and actions.

Scholarship on the concept of nationalism in general received a boost in the 1980s

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xxiiWeisfelder, *Political Contention*. Robert Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa, 1873-1964* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

xxiiiThomas Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa* (New York: New York University Press, 1957).

and 1990s through renewed debate on the origins of nations, and definitions of nationalism. Both Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner put forth influential definitions with Anderson seeing nations as an “imagined political community...both inherently limited and sovereign,” and Gellner seeing nationalism as a “political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.”<sup>xxiv</sup> These definitions expanded the study of nationalism by seeing national communities as entities created and used by people, rather than a timeless phenomenon waiting to be discovered by scholars or groups of people. A later formulation by Anthony D. Smith opened the definition of nationalism even wider to include cultural forms, calling it a “form of community and institutional behavior.”<sup>xxv</sup> All of these formulations, however, retained the limitations of the 1950s and 1960s scholarship, seeing nationalism as a top-down process that explicitly political parties, individuals or state functionaries controlled, to at least a large extent.

In part these limitations stem from the definition of the term state, and the conflation of national communities with citizenship in the nation-state. Tilly, relying on a Weberian understanding, defined the state as “an organization, controlling the principal means of coercion within a given territory.”<sup>xxvi</sup> Thus, the prime role of the state was to police the nation-state, and this referred to the physical borders, but also to the construction of who had the right to be within the national community and who did not. Studies of nationalism and states from this perspective, most focused on nineteenth

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xxivBenedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991 (originally published 1983)), 7.  
Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1.

xxvAnthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), vii.

xxviCharles Tilly, “Western State-Making and Theories of Political Transformation,” in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, ed. Tilly (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 638.



century Europe, came to the conclusion that nationalism was “instrumental for binding the growing middle and lower classes into the body politic and for mobilizing support for [expansion of the state].”<sup>xxvii</sup> Studies of African nationalism tended to follow this sort of pattern: looking for state mobilization of groups of people into a coherent “nation,” and examining how successful state actors and agencies have been in effecting this mobilization.<sup>xxviii</sup>

This study differs in looking at nationalism from the bottom-up, which Hobsbawm has declared to be “exceedingly difficult to discover,” to see that nationalism is more than simply a state-sponsored project.<sup>xxix</sup> Local people in Lesotho saw independence and impending control of state institutions as opportunities to gain rights through their new claims to citizenship in the state of Lesotho, a status not available during the colonial era. But even more importantly, the institutional turnover presented unprecedented opportunity for Basotho, individually and through political and non-political groups, to present their own views of what a unified “national community” should look like, and how state institutions should change with independence to adequately reflect the change in status of individual Basotho from subject to citizen. It was the perceived opportunity to be part of these groundbreaking and important changes that make the period around independence so fertile for study into how people, and especially those who were young and who are, largely, still alive, were thinking about the process of independence, the

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xxvii Wilfried Swenden, *Federalism and Regionalism in Western Europe: A Comparative and Thematic Analysis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 24.

xxviii Rotberg, *Rise of Nationalism*. Hodgkin, *Nationalism*.

xxix Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 11.

importance of state institutions and their relation to conceptions of the national community. Yet, it is also important to note, as Tilly does, that people tend to imagine and create institutions, not out of wholly new ideas, but “by reshaping and piecing together chunks of existing social structure.”<sup>xxx</sup> It was over the question of which pieces to keep, in what order and for whose benefit at independence that captured the attention of so many Basotho, young and old, around independence.

Much of the literature on African nationalism has tended to assume that nationalism in the late colonial period was mainly a reaction against colonial rule. This produced an extreme focus on African political parties as the main site, or at least the only site for contention, of formulations of national ideals.<sup>xxxi</sup> This focus has led to studies that privilege the experience of Africa urban dwellers over rural, and older generations over younger in seeing “militant urban nationalism” as the “social and ideological glue” that held together a “heterogeneous peasant struggle.”<sup>xxxii</sup> The structural limitations of these studies have marginalized groups—the rural, the young, those not directly involved in party politics—to the point that authors dismiss these groups as not being three-dimensional, human political actors and actresses in their own right.

Studying only those directly connected to the political process has led scholars of African nationalism to privilege the unitary conceptions of the nation put forth by these very same

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xxxCharles Tilly, “Citizenship, Identity and Social History” in *Citizenship, Identity and Social History*, ed. Tilly (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 9.

xxxiCrawford Young, “Evolving Modes of Consciousness and Ideology: Nationalism and Ethnicity,” in *Political Development and the New Realism in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Apter et al. (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1994).

xxxiiMahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 290.

political elites, thereby eliding peoples' competing and multiple conceptions of the nation that did not necessarily reach the highest levels of political discourse. Of late some correctives to these elite, male studies have come to the fore, highlighting the role institutional forms or women's groups have played in helping to frame national debates, but these still do not address the fundamental issue of not seeing rural dwellers, the young or those not engaged in explicitly political work as having the ability to construct and act upon national visions.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Some social science theorists have also started to broaden their definitions of nationalism in Africa of late, to examine the role of institutions like schools and print media in the construction of a broad-based nationalism, these portraits tend to lack a historicity or depth, continuing to see nationalism as a struggle between “nationalists” and “traditionalists.”<sup>xxxiv</sup>

This study embraces the contention that nations are imagined communities, but argues that a better definition of nationalism takes into account multiple, contested, imagined conceptions. A complete definition also needs to take cognizance of national aspirations that people have in social and economic sphere, and not merely the political. This broader definition allows the study to better recognize, as Straker and Allman have in West Africa, the multiplicity of national views present in Lesotho.<sup>xxxv</sup> Highlighting

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xxxiiiJoey Power, *Political Culture and Nationalism in Malawi: Building Kwacha* (Rochester, NY: Rochester University Press, 2010). Mueni Wa Muiu, *The Pitfalls of Liberal Democracy and Late Nationalism in South Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). Susan Geiger, *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997).

xxxivChristian Lund, *Twilight Institutions: Public Authority and Local Politics in Africa* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007). Ivor Chipkin, *Do South Africans Exist? Nationalism, Democracy and the Identity of 'the People'* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2007).

xxxvJay Straker, *Youth, Nationalism and the Guinean Revolution* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009). Jean Allman, “The Youngmen and the Porcupine: Class, Nationalism and Asante's Struggle for Self-Determination, 1954-57,” *Journal of African History* 31 (1990): 263-79.

these multiple and contested interpretations of the nation allows a more complete picture of the complexity of Basotho life in the 1950s and 1960s to emerge, as people generally deal with an interconnected reality and do not compartmentalize their lives into the categories often so salient to historians. In addition to allowing for a more complete picture of Basotho experience to come to life, this broad definition of nationalism also allows this study to avoid reading the post-1960s nation-state form backwards into the past as an inevitable creation, an act Cooper cautioned against.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Using sources that focus on the actions of Basotho during this time also allows this study to consider nationalism as a performance, as Askew does in Tanzania—Basotho youth were acting on their ideas about what forms an ideal nation and state should take.<sup>xxxvii</sup> This work also draws on the insight of Straker's work, where he refused to categorize his informants as being simply for or against the 1960s Guinean Revolution, rather allowing their daily life concerns to intermingle with broader nationalist dreams and aspirations through their work in youth organizations.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Similarly, this study assumes that Basotho youth had larger conceptions of the ideal communities they wanted to live in, locally, nationally and internationally. It examines how these young people came to an understanding of and worked for their nationalist dreams and aspirations through their participation in youth groups, school groups and informal groups in their

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xxxviFrederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 26.

xxxviiKelly Askew, *Performing the Nation: Swahili Music and Cultural Politics in Tanzania* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

xxxviiiStraker, *Guinean Youth*, 5-6.

communities. Basotho youth made the political not just personal, but integrated the political with the complexities, successes and failures of daily life.<sup>xxxix</sup>

This grass-roots, bottom-up approach to nationalism has allowed Sahlins, working on borderlands in Europe, and Lonsdale, trying to understand how local people have managed to help reshape power dynamics in East Africa, to better explain how local people shaped and used national identity for personal and group gain.<sup>xi</sup> By changing the frame through which they examined nationalism, these works allowed for a better picture of the complex relationship that individuals have in managing and using both local identities and national aspirations. It is this complexity of identity, and the ability of Basotho not directly involved in formal political groupings to imagine their own versions of the national community that allows my work to dispute Young's characterization of nationalism in Africa as a “banal” sentiment that people feel “lazily.”<sup>xli</sup> Neither did young Basotho ignore the state, as Davidson suggested, nor did they reject the idea of a state because it was an “*un*-African model” that imposed foreign concepts of “autonomous, individual rights-bearing citizens” on individuals, as the Comaroffs argued.<sup>xlii</sup> Rather, in the 1950s and 1960s Basotho youth wholeheartedly embraced the

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xxxix Straker, *Guinean Youth*, 5-6.

xi Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989). Jon Lonsdale, “Writing Competitive Patriotic Histories in Eastern Africa,” in *Recasting the Past*, ed. Derek Peterson and Giacomo Macola (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009).

xli Young, “Nation, Ethnicity, and Citizenship,” 248.

xlii Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1992). John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, “Postcolonial Politics and Discourses of Democracy in South Africa: An Anthropological Reflection on African Political Modernities,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 53 (1997): 127.

concept of a nation, as well as the idea of a state, and actively worked to bring these individual visions to fruition. In this formulation, nationalism was much more than a simple “discourse of protest,” as young Basotho fashioned living nationalisms that allowed them to dream of and act upon their visions for a better future for themselves as individuals and a larger collective national community.<sup>xliii</sup>

### **State Failure in Africa**

Having this broad definition of nationalism allowed individual Basotho to weather the failure of political institutions and their disappointment in the inability of the new government of the state of Lesotho to live up to youthful expectations. This conclusion runs counter to much of the literature on nationalism and state failure in Africa, which puts the onus of blame on individual Africans for failing to become members of a national community under the nation-state model, and laying the onus of blame for failing institutions on common people.<sup>xliv</sup> The other extreme of writing about the failure of the African state placed the blame for the failure to create a national community on the nation-state for being a “social reality of a particular time and space” (ie Europe), exported to Africa and placed onto social systems that were not able to properly support it.<sup>xlv</sup> The experiences of young Basotho in the 1950s and 1960s actively thinking about,

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xliiiCrawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 238.

xlivGeorge K. Kieh, *Beyond State Failure and Collapse: Making the State Relevant in Africa* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007). Jean-Philippe Platteau, “Institutional Obstacles to African Economic Development: State, Ethnicity and Custom,” *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 71 (2009): 669-89.

xlvTatah Mentan, *The State in Africa: An Analysis of Impacts of Historical Trajectories of Global Capitalist Expansion and Domination in the Continent* (Mankon, Bamenda, Cameroon: Langaa Research and Pub. CIG, 2010).

supporting the idea of and working for the creation of the state in Lesotho in forms that met their expectations actively contradicts both of these interpretations. As Dorman noted, the national question in many places “turned on the problems of ensuring the perception of equal treatment, measured in terms of resource allocation and the definition of appropriate values and symbols for all the constituent parts of the nation.”<sup>xlvi</sup> While this egalitarian vision did not come to fruition in Lesotho, it was not because Basotho, and especially young Basotho, either rejected the idea of the nation-state, or failed to support institutions.

The Lesotho government, as was the case with many other African states at independence, fits Cooper's definition of the African “gatekeeper” state, which focused primarily on the international legitimacy that came through international recognition in the “family of nations” and control over the allocation of revenues through patronage channels of an export-and-aid driven economy to maintain its hold on power.<sup>xlvii</sup> The leaders of this type of state were not focused on listening to and incorporating citizen feedback into its policy decisions; rather they used top-down institutions that needed a compliant citizenry. Young Basotho, those who were in schools and working in South Africa from 1945 on, however, rejected the top-down nationalism offered by the state and political parties, working instead to bring about a multiplicity of hybrid political forms and spaces. Similar to Schmidt's work on Guinea, this view of Lesotho privileges grass-

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xlvi Sara Dorman, Daniel Hammett and Paul Nugent, “Introduction: Citizenship and Its Casualties in Africa” in *Making Nations, Creating Strangers*, ed. Dorman et al. (Boston, MA: Brill, 2007), 6.

xlvii Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

roots political thought over top-down conceptions.<sup>xlviii</sup> However, this work goes a step further than Schmidt arguing that much of the thought and action young Basotho had on questions of the national encompassed a wider range of social and economic changes than did work narrowly focused through political organizations. Thus, by allowing for a wider definition of who was thinking about nationalism, this study captures a broader range of imaginings that similar more narrowly focused studies have missed. The willingness of Basotho youth to think outside the standard political process did not preclude, however, using that same system to guide and help form their thinking. Young Basotho borrowed from a wide range of sources in formulating their thinking on nationalism, ranging from domestic political parties, refugees from the wider region, South African liberation movements, 1960s youth movements and their own ideas for improved material, political and social conditions. Again, however, the Lesotho government, before and after independence, was unwilling and/or unable to successfully incorporate the hopes and aspirations young Basotho had within their own top-down conceptions and programs.

Cooper has characterized nationalism around independence as “thin,” for not being able to support sustained pressure for institutional change.<sup>xlix</sup> The evidence from Lesotho suggests that the “thinness” of nationalism was less in the minds of its citizens and more in the conception by politicians and government functionaries of who had the legitimacy to define the term. Young Basotho did not reject the idea of a nation-state, and

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xlviii Elizabeth Schmidt, *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946-1958* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007).

xlix Cooper, “Possibility and Constraint,” 187.



they were willing to give up on older forms of political and social organization to see their dreams of societal transformation take place. The failure of the state and of nationalism came from the government and political parties, which were unwilling to give up their assumed monopolies over defining national boundaries—physical, moral and social—in an attempt to bring about top-down conceptions of the nation.

### **Youth and Generational Tension**

Discussions about the role of young people in African societies have taken on new urgency over the past few decades as crises involving the mobilization of young people as child soldiers make news headlines and are analyzed in academic publications, as HIV/AIDS deaths leave a demographic doughnut in societies, consisting of the old and young with very few middle-aged people, and high rates of population growth produce national populations with a very high percentage of young people.<sup>l</sup> Who exactly constitutes youth, and who gets to define this demographic and social category has loomed large in discussions of political and social change throughout Africa. Common definitions of youth posit it as a social category containing individuals who are in a liminal state between childhood and the achievement of full adult status in their communities.<sup>li</sup> These wide definitions, while allowing for useful analysis of a diverse class of people across a continent, miss much of the nuance and flux of the category of

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<sup>l</sup> Scott Gates and Simon Reich, ed., *Child Soldiers in the Age of Fractured States* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010). Jon Abbink and Ineke van Kessel, ed., *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2005). James D. Tarver, *The Demography of Africa* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1996).

<sup>li</sup> Abbink and van Kessel, *Vanguard or Vandals*. Richard Waller, “Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa,” *Journal of African History* 47 (2006): 77-92.

youth that plays out on the local level. Young people have frequently struggled against the limitations placed on their ability to claim autonomous space, independent thought and action while falling under this categorization, while at other times, they have frequently claimed the potentialities of this in-between space. Studying Botswana, Durham has argued that youth is an “ambiguous” label because the category has “no clear markers” and a long history of contention around questions of who fits within this characterization, and who is left outside it.<sup>lii</sup>

Using youth as both a demographic and social construct, this study defines the category as a liminal state between childhood and adulthood, but also as a contested social category. This allows the definition to cover both people inside the category looking to secure opportunities through their use of the label, and people outside the category looking to place young people into a coherent social grouping for a variety of political and social goals.<sup>liii</sup> Using youth to define a coherent social category, however, is not an attempt to claim that all young people in Lesotho agreed on anything: nationalism, proper state forms, schooling, conflict with their elders, etc. Youth in Lesotho were, however, informed and concerned subjects in the colonial era and citizens in the independence era, and studies of southern Africa, and South Africa, in particular, have sometimes ignored these independent thoughts, seeing youth as being merely one

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lii Deborah Durham, “Empowering Youth: Making Youth Citizens in Botswana,” in *Generations and Globalization*, ed. Jennifer Cole and Deborah Durham (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 118.

liii This is similar to the way that much anthropology literature uses the term. Lesley A. Sharp, *The Sacrificed Generation: Youth, History, and the Colonized Mind in Madagascar* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 15.

constituent part of schools, employment statistics or a wider political crisis.<sup>liv</sup>

A frame that many studies of youth in Africa have used to situate these young people in their political and social settings has been through generational tension. Taking case studies from Zululand at the turn of the twentieth century, Ovamboland in the early twentieth century, the Ciskei in the 1940s and 1950s and the Transkei in the 1950s and 1960s, many authors wrote about the struggle for control over land as part of a struggle with the coming of age process for generations of young southern African men.<sup>lv</sup> Other examples from 1920s to 1940s Buganda, 1940s and 1950s South Africa and 1950s Asante highlight generational tensions in explicitly political contestations.<sup>lvi</sup> Accounts like this, however, risk falling into the trap identified by Waller of being “somewhat structuralist” by assuming conflict between younger and older generations.<sup>lvii</sup> The built-in nature of the generational conflict in these studies comes from their limited focus on the political sphere, almost by definition a space given to zero-sum calculations and contestations. This study examines generational tension in a more holistic manner by looking at the

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liv Jeremy Seekings, *Heroes or Villains? Youth Politics in the 1980s* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993), 16.

lv Benedict Carton, *Blood From Your Children: The Colonial Origins of Generational Conflict in South Africa* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2000). Meredith McKittrick, “Forsaking Their Fathers? Colonialism, Christianity and Coming of Age in Ovamboland, Northern Namibia,” in *Men and Masculinities*, eds., Lindsay et al. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003). Anne Mager, “Youth Organisations and the Construction of Masculine Identities in the Ciskei and Transkei, 1945-1960,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24 (1998): 653-667. Sean Redding, “Faction Fights, Student Protests, and Rebellion: The Politics of Beer-Drinks and Bad Food in the Transkei, South Africa, 1955-63,” *African Studies Review* 53 (2010): 125-147.

lvi Carol Summers, “Young Buganda and Old Boys: Youth, Generational Tension and Ideas of Leadership in Buganda, 1920-1949,” *Africa Today* 51 (2005): 109-128. Edward Feit, “Generational Conflict and African Nationalism in South Africa: The African National Congress, 1949-1959,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 5 (1972): 181-202. Allman, “Youngmen and the Porcupine.”

lvii Waller, “Rebellious Youth,” 90.

social aspirations of young Basotho, comparing these to the hopes, fears and aspirations of their elders. In many cases, rather than finding conflict this model instead found a fundamental convergence around important social, economic and political questions, rather than any inherent generational conflict. Taking the focus off explicitly political processes removed the zero-sum financial calculations of pre-independence politics that made so many early studies find stark generational conflict—moving away from questions of control over government purse strings and patronage jobs. Instead, by focusing on differences in perception of the concept of independence, this study finds more philosophical, abstract differences over visions of the future, with less out-and-out conflict. Differences between younger and older generations in Lesotho often focused on the question of how individuals were going to be able to construct a meaningful and viable life for themselves and their families. Unlike work on explicitly political processes, like those in Asante and Buganda, the generational tension in Lesotho only threatened vital economic interests indirectly, through debates over migrants wages, and was, thus, more illuminative of underlying social tensions than deterministic of social relations.<sup>lviii</sup>

There was a special emphasis on youth in the era of independence as political leaders both tried to co-opt youth into their projects for new nations, and fell back on the rhetoric of youth to frame their ideas about new states for the general populace. As Bay noted, “youth at the time of independence was equated with modernity and hope.”<sup>lix</sup> This

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lviii Allman, “Youngmen and the Porcupine.” Summer, “Young Buganda.”

lix Edna G. Bay, “Introduction,” in *States of Violence*, ed. Bay et al. (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 6.

was certainly the case in Lesotho, with the government making youth the featured entertainers in the actual independence celebrations, as well as working to get them involved with governmental initiatives. In part, this was due to the overwhelmingly large number of youth in Lesotho at the time. At independence, over fifty percent of the population was under the age of twenty, and with the proliferation of schools, over half of these youth people were enrolled at that time. They were not an isolated generation either as the 1966 census estimated that over sixty percent of the population had completed at least some schooling. Thus, educated youth, far from being an minority or an anomaly, represented a sizable percentage of the population, and a stage of life to which most Basotho could relate, understand and aspire.

Young Basotho were making informed decisions about whom they wanted to support and how they wanted to show this support in the independence era. In this, they were similar to their peers across the African continent in the 1950s and 1960s, as movements for independence gathered momentum from the independence of more countries. Basotho youth were also, however, similar to their youthful peers in the rest of the world during the 1960s in their attempts to shape and drive societal change.

### **The Cold War and the Greater 1960s**

Studies of social protest, political and cultural change in the 1960s, defined broadly, have proliferated of late. Focusing on the relationship between the state, society as a whole and individuals' role within both, these studies have presented the 1960s both as a “crisis of political authority,” and as a “cultural war” with young people and

generational tension as the prime movers of change.<sup>lx</sup> These studies have, however, been very Euro- and American-centric with commentators often willing to include large-scale street protests from Mexico, Japan and other “peripheral” areas that meet their criteria for “radical youth,” but often ignoring or giving only a cursory summary of decolonization events in Africa.<sup>lxi</sup> While defining events of the 1960s as “transnational, if not global,” and seeing the connections that youth in Europe and America were making between their own grievances and the “global fight...against colonial rule and imperialist domination,” scholars have only scratched the surface of how the 1960s played out in Africa.<sup>lxii</sup>

Part of this disconnect comes from the desire by scholars of Africa to examine more deeply what independence and the struggle for nationhood has meant in various places on the continent, as a corrective for decades of scholarly neglect on Africa, and has led to some very interesting scholarship.<sup>lxiii</sup> This need to tell these more narrow stories has, however, left little time for those who know the continent intimately to connect stories of the African 1960s to larger global movements. Africa has come into the scholarship on the 1960s, and especially the Cold War, mainly as a site for superpower proxy battles. Many of the scholars examining these interventions have, however, come

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lx Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolutions and the Rise of Detente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 4. Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4.

lxi Philipp Gassert and Martin Klimke, “Introduction: 1968 from Revolt to Research,” *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* Supplement 6 (2009). Robert F. Daniels, *Year of the Heroic Guerrilla: World Revolution and Counterrevolution in 1968* (New York: Basic Books, Inc, 1989).

lxii “Introduction: *AHR Forum*, The International 1968, Part I,” *American Historical Review* 114 (2009). Gassert and Klimke, “From Revolt to Research,” 5.

lxiii For example, Melissa Moorman, *Intonations: A Social History of Music and Nation in Luanda, Angola, from 1945 to Recent Times* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2008).

to the story from an Americanist or Western Europeanist perspective, using Africa mainly as a reflective lens for policy debates and changes in the West or the USSR.<sup>lxiv</sup> This tactic is common in Cold War scholarship, which tends to use “peripheral” areas of the world like Africa, South East Asia, Latin America or the Caribbean simply as sites to better understand superpower struggles.<sup>lxv</sup> This work takes a different tack, placing the 1960s and the Cold War in their Lesotho context, seeing the language of these larger movements as a series of tools that Basotho used to make local political arguments—finding the global at work in local contexts.<sup>lxvi</sup>

Marwick defined the 1960s, which he considered as encompassing the time period 1958-1974, as a revolution in “material conditions, lifestyles, family relationships, and personal freedoms for the vast majority of people” rather than a “fundamental redistribution of political and economic power.” However, he, like many authors, dismissed Africa, Asia and Latin America from discussion because changes in the former colonial world “extended over a much longer period of time.”<sup>lxvii</sup> This omission is striking on one level because there were large-scale student protests similar to and in part inspired by events taking place in Europe and the United States in Tanzania in 1966 and Senegal in 1968.<sup>lxviii</sup> However, including Lesotho and Africa in the story of the 1960s is

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lxiv Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

lxv Peter L. Hahn and Mary Ann Heiss, *Empire and Revolution: The United States and the Third World Since 1945* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2001).

lxvi Similar work has been done in Trinidad. Harvey R. Neptune, *Caliban and the Yankees: Trinidad and the United States Occupation* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

lxvii Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c. 1958-c. 1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 15-6.

lxviii Andrew Ivaska, “Of Students, “Nizers” and a Struggle Over Youth: Tanzania’s 1966 National Service

about more than simply inserting African voices and stories into larger 1960s narratives. The ways that young Basotho learned about, experimented with and used global ideas connect these narratives with the stories of nationalism and decolonization in a more nuanced manner than studies that saw African decolonization merely as a trope Western youth could use to help reconceptualize their own struggles.<sup>lxix</sup>

Brown's call to examine the 1960s to find the global at work in local contexts, and to discover how people imagined themselves as part of a greater global community, presents an opportunity to bring African history into studies of the 1960s. This approach is particularly useful in the southern African context, and Lesotho specifically, because its goal is not merely demonstrating “fundamental similarities across national cases,” but involves situating individuals and nation-states in greater global context.<sup>lxx</sup> Basotho youth viewed the Cold War and the 1960s not, as Westad argues, as “a continuation of colonialism by other means,” but as an opportunity to use global ideologies to advance their own consciousness and political ideals.<sup>lxxi</sup> Lesotho had long been a cross-roads for ideas in southern Africa because of its strong schooling system, its early involvement with the South African migrant labor system, and its deep connections to the missionary and commercial networks of the region. Similar to early Black Consciousness activists in neighboring South Africa, young people in Lesotho knew about and drew heavily on

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Crisis,” *Africa Today* 51 (2005): 83-107. Leo Zilig, “Turning to Africa: Politics and Student Resistance in Africa Since 1968,” in *1968 in Retrospect*, ed. Gurminder K. Bhabra and Ipek Demir (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

lxix Timothy Brown, “1968' East and West: Divided Germany as a Case Study in Transnational History,” *American Historical Review* 114 (2009).

lxx Brown, “1968 East and West,” 69-70.

lxxi Westad, *Global Cold War*, 396.



ideas from the New Left and African-American groups in the United States, among others, to rethink “fundamental questions of human relationships and identity” that would profoundly influence how they, their peers and the wider community thought about nationalism and independence.<sup>lxxii</sup> Using global ideas in a local context, Basotho youth expand the study of the Cold War away from the Superpower model, and serve as a reminder that while ideas may be global, they can have very different meanings in different historical and geographical contexts.

### **Development**

Similarly, young Basotho also used the language of economic development to participate in larger conversations about the form of the national community in Lesotho, and to make arguments for the meritocratic individual opportunities that they hoped to see at independence. Development, defined as attempts to alleviate poverty through statist and/or corporate “concerted intervention” by a variety of governmental and non-governmental organizations, presented another opportunity for young Basotho to integrate international ideas into local and national frameworks.<sup>lxxiii</sup> Much of the literature on development has focused on the post-colonial period with bi-lateral and multi-lateral aid programs and development plans springing up seemingly faster than grass in springtime, but this literature has often merely reflected power relations between

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lxxii Daniel Magaziner, “Black Man, You Are On Your Own!": Making Race Consciousness in South African Thought, 1968-1972,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 42 (2009): 221-240.

lxxiii This definition leans heavily on Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, “Introduction,” in *International Development and the Social Sciences*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 1.

states, and the involvement of the state in the lives of ordinary people.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

Examining how young Basotho viewed and used the rhetoric of development allows this study to better explain why these youth became dissatisfied with governmental development efforts, and the initiatives of the government in general. Most young Basotho wanted development to be a grass-roots, village and people-centered project that would allow individuals to remake their lives. The top-down conception by Lesotho's government, colonial and independent, offered only centralization as the answer to national economic issues, which gave politicians and government officials wide latitude to control processes of social change. The gap that arose between the development young Basotho hoped to see, and the development that their government supported and carried out, caused much disillusion with the state's efforts to support economic development. In their disillusionment, however, rather than rejecting the state, or the idea of a coherent Basotho nation, young Basotho worked to create communities of their own making that would allow them to bring about and achieve some of their development ideas in a constructive manner.

The idea of development in the Anglophone colonial world took off with the passage in 1940 of the British Colonial Development and Welfare Act (and the similar legislation that set up the FIDES structures for French colonies in 1946), which planners hoped would “reinvigorate and relegitimize empire,” but instead led to increasing demands on the colonial state for better wages and services, that the skeletal colonial state was not designed to provide.<sup>lxxv</sup> Other major states who did not have empires in

<sup>lxxiv</sup>Nick Cullather, “Research Note. Development? It's History,” *Diplomatic History* 24 (2000): 641-53.

<sup>lxxv</sup>Cooper and Packard, “Introduction,” 7-8.

Africa, like the United States and the Soviet Union, picked up the theme of development in the post-World War II world in an effort to exert more influence in the former colonial world to solidify their leadership of new economic orders.<sup>lxxvi</sup> Especially after the creation of the Bureau of African Affairs at the State Department in 1958, the Peace Corps in 1961 and a re-invigoration of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the early years of the Kennedy administration, the United States came to play a much larger role in development efforts worldwide.<sup>lxxvii</sup> The opening of new sources for international assistance gave local people in Lesotho, and throughout Africa, opportunities to make new connections and gain assistance from sources other than the old imperial metropolises. These new options, however, came with a price for local people as they had to be able to understand and utilize the language of development and modernization that drove American development efforts.

The 1960s colonial state and the post-independence government in Lesotho both saw representative institutions and development as keys to making Lesotho into a new, “modern” nation-state. Modernization theory posited that Lesotho, like other “underdeveloped” countries, needed a push to get through a “destabilizing yet necessary transition” to show local elites how to transform “traditional” society by using liberal, capitalist institutions that could withstand pressures from communists and those harmed by this new economic and social order.<sup>lxxviii</sup> It was an attempt, based on the Soviet

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lxxvi Larry Grubbs, *Secular Missionaries: Americans and African Development in the 1960s* (Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009).

lxxvii Thomas J. Noer, *Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1985). Grubbs, *Secular Missionaries*.

lxxviii Michael E. Latham, “Introduction: Modernization, International History and the Cold War World,” in *Staging Growth*, ed. David C. Engerman et al. (Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003),

experience of rapid industrialization, to allow countries to “skip” stages of development through aggressive state intervention. This theory, a cornerstone of American and Western European policy during the Cold War, included as a key component, a centralized, top-down form of development that would control, through new administrative structures, the planning and execution of large-scale projects. The bureaucracy needed to oversee this operation, what Ferguson has dubbed the “anti-politics machine,” placed development issues beyond national political debate, protected by buffers of governmental administrators and paperwork. This bureaucracy strove to correct a perceived lack of development through training programs and investment, rather than attempting to fix wider regional inequities that required an underclass of Basotho unskilled laborers.<sup>lxxix</sup> Young Basotho saw these types of top-down systems as constraining their opportunities to benefit from development, because there was little to no change for them to insert their own ideas or visions into the projects.

These difference between how the government and young Basotho viewed development highlights the problematic and slippery nature of the concept of development. British colonial officers (and administrators in the first independent government of Lesotho) saw development as a means of promoting their visions of social reform through the creation of welfare schemes that would raise macro-economic indicators, and lead to a Western-oriented, liberal regime.<sup>lxxx</sup> Young Basotho's hopes for

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lxxix James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: “Development,” Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

lxxx J.M. Lee, *Colonial Development and Good Government: A Study of the Ideas Expressed by the British Official Classes in Planning Decolonization 1939-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 13.

development, following Seer's "Basic Needs Approach," involved bringing government and private investment to meet and improve basic human needs for all citizens, regardless of whether this increased macro-economic statistics.<sup>lxxxix</sup> This fundamental difference in conceptions of who should be the prime mover in development efforts—top-down government leadership or grassroots, local leadership—reminds that while the conclusion that "there are crucial non-material aspects of development" might be new in the academy, it was something well understood by young Basotho using the term in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>lxxxii</sup>

Popular conceptions of development are an illuminating way to interrogate ideas of nationalism because the rhetoric of development carries an implicit "rejection of the past and...aspirations for the future."<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Thus, development was a language which young Basotho utilized to press forward their visions for their ideal national community, and the ways in which they could press for local changes to fix problems.

### **Lesotho in Southern Africa**

Lesotho's geographic location completely within South Africa has made it somewhat of a scholarly anomaly, but it also heightened the sense of nationalism in the territory. The desire of individuals to identify with a Basotho nation came about, in part, because of Lesotho's unique geographical position within South Africa, and the special

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<sup>lxxxix</sup>Dharmika Herath, "The Discourse of Modernity: Has it Reached Maturity?" *Third World Quarterly* 30 (2009): 1449-1464.

<sup>lxxxii</sup>Herath, "Discourse of Modernity," 1462.

<sup>lxxxiii</sup>Cooper and Packard, "Introduction," 30.

threat that the *apartheid* regime posed to political freedom in Lesotho. During the *apartheid* era, Lesotho received an unusually high amount of attention because of the large number of political refugees in the country, and because it was a place where academics who were banned from working in South Africa could do their work in the region.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> It also provided an opportunity for scholars to critique the migrant labor system that supported *apartheid* by studying poverty in the Mountain Kingdom, and it was in this frame of migrant labor and miners, for which Lesotho is best known. Studies of labor in southern Africa often spend considerable time on Lesotho because the percentage of Basotho miners in South African gold and diamond mines ranged from around thirty percent in the early twentieth century to almost fifty percent by the end of *apartheid*.<sup>lxxxv</sup> Other works have branched out from looking exclusively at the mines to examine the social impact of Basotho migrants on South African townships, the impact of returning migrants on home communities in Lesotho and the role of migrant labor in supporting rural households in Lesotho.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> These studies have all helped place Lesotho as a central site for an examination of migrant labor issues since the late nineteenth century.

Other pieces have dealt with Basotho migrants as part of a greater story of how

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lxxxiv Bob Edgar, personal communication.

lxxxv Jonathan Crush, Alan Jeeves and David Yudelman, *South Africa's Labor Empire: A History of Black Migrancy to the Mines* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991). Jeff Guy and Motlatsi Thabane, "Technology, Ethnicity and Ideology: Basotho Miners and Shaft Sinking on the South African Gold Mines," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14 (1988): 257-78.

lxxxvi Gary Kynoch, *We Are Fighting the World: A History of the Marashea Gangs in South Africa, 1947-1999* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005). Eddy Tshidiso Maloka, *Basotho and the Mines: A Social History of Labour Migrancy in Lesotho and South Africa, c. 1890-1940* (Dakar, Senegal: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2004). Murray, *Families Divided*.

individuals coped with the inhumane *apartheid* system. Coplan's work on migrant laborers and bar entertainment is an example.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> Similarly, Glaser's investigation of Soweto youth gangs notes that young people in South Africa's townships, including many Basotho, used similar conceptions of local and wider communities to their peers in 1950s and 1960s Lesotho to cope with an inhumane social, political and economic system.<sup>lxxxviii</sup> By staying narrowly focused on either migrant laborers or social conditions in Lesotho and South Africa, however, these works do not quite capture the trans-national and cross-border importance of Lesotho's existence as a separate, independent entity within the borders of South Africa.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

Studies, like that of Campbell, which examine the impact of international borders that come to have multiple, contested meanings for individuals and groups of people attempting to cross them, underpins this project in terms of thinking about how Basotho in Lesotho and South Africa used nationalism to envision not just a future political kingdom, but also a better social and economic future for themselves.<sup>xc</sup> There has been some recent studies that complicate the idea of the border between Lesotho and South Africa, and highlight the ability of individuals to have multiple, and sometimes conflicting conceptions of the national community. These works, one by Coplan on

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lxxxvii David Coplan, *In the Time of Cannibals: The Word Music of Basotho Migrants* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

lxxxviii Clive Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000).

lxxxix The implications of this for similarly situated countries like Botswana and Swaziland, and to some extent, South West Africa/Namibia and Southern Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, should not be ignored either.

xc James Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

twenty-first century religious pilgrims and another by Rosenberg examining conceptions of the state of Lesotho by young Basotho after the fall of the *apartheid* system, tend to emphasize the shifting nature of this border and the costs and benefits to individuals.<sup>xci</sup> These works, and the insights of the informants in this study, highlight the ambiguous nature of colonial rule in Lesotho. While the British ran the government, many Basotho viewed white South Africans, and Afrikaners in particular, as the real source of colonial oppression.

Studying an enclave country like Lesotho also has great potential to inform stories about South Africa by explaining the connections that individuals and groups were making across the border. Magaziner's work on the roots of Black Consciousness informed this study in its thinking about youth actions that were not explicitly political, but which ended up tied into greater political narratives after the fact. The connections that these young people were making through organizations that gave these consciousness-creating activities meaning were important, but this did not escape the old trap of seeing South African history as exceptional and disconnected from larger African themes by incorporating groups in neighboring countries like Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland that had connections to these groups.<sup>xcii</sup> My study pulls the story of South Africa and South Africans back into larger narratives about 1960s African nationalism through its many informants who were active on both sides of the border. Opportunities

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xci David Coplan, "Land from the Ancestors: Popular Religious Pilgrimages Along the South Africa-Lesotho Border," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29 (2003): 977-993. Rosenberg, *Promises of Moshoeshoe*.

xcii Daniel Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets: Black Consciousness in South Africa, 1968-1977* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010).



like the expansion of the school system in Lesotho during the 1950s and 1960s, and the free and fair elections of 1965 in Lesotho gave hope to populations in South Africa, just as events like the Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa affected local communities in Lesotho and throughout the region. While South Africa was the economic engine of the region, people within its borders did not have a monopoly on regional political thought. Bringing the voices of non-migrant Basotho into the story of nationalism in Lesotho will help present a more complete picture of the intellectual genesis of Black Consciousness in South Africa, of the ability of young Basotho to maintain faith in a national community despite political setbacks and of a wider region integrated by channels of communication that cut across ethnic, class, gender and age lines—processes that continue into the present.<sup>xciii</sup>

### **Organization of the Study**

Chapter two traces the history of political contention and contestation in Lesotho to 1960. It situates Lesotho in the context of larger changes in the British Empire after World War II, and in the southern African regional context, especially focusing on how developments in *apartheid* South Africa affected people and change in Lesotho, showing how these local changes were part of the larger end-of-empire narrative. The process of changing political institutions led to much friction in Lesotho over the proper role of politics in public life, and tied into debates over the proper role for youth in society. With a rising tide of political consciousness, questions of national unity dominated discussions

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xciii Jonathan Crush and Wilmot James, ed., *Crossing Borders: Mine Migrancy in a Democratic South Africa* (Cape Town: Institute for Democracy in South Africa, 1995).

with chiefs and commoners, young and old, attempting to make their ideas of unity dominant to drive changes in the political and social landscape in the years before independence.

Chapter three then traces the rapid expansion of the schooling system in Lesotho that started in the 1950s and continued through the 1960s, and the concomitant expansion of opportunities for young Basotho to join youth organizations. These organizations provided a safe space in which young Basotho could and did discuss the ideas of independence, nationalism and their ideal society. More than just places for talk, however, these groups also allowed youth places to try out their national ideals through group activities as well as providing the platform to make connections with other young Basotho from around the country. These sorts of groups were instrumental sites from which young Basotho could reject the top-down nationalism put forth by political parties, create more holistic conceptions of the changes they wanted to see with independence, and strive to overcome some of the political and social splits of earlier generations to bring their visions to fruition.

Chapter four examines the history of rhetoric around the concept of development in the wider British Empire and in Lesotho specifically. Young Basotho hoped to see economic development in Lesotho that would both benefit them as individuals, and the nation as a whole, while reducing dependence on migration to South Africa as the primary means of support key to this conception. The late colonial and early independence governments also shared this broad goal, but the government and young Basotho differed on who they thought should control this process. The government

wanted to implement large-scale, top-down approaches that would improve the macro-economic climate in Lesotho, create jobs, and help consolidate their political control over rural areas. Young Basotho rejected these top-down approaches as not doing enough to improve everyday material conditions, and as not being responsive to popular demands for local development initiatives. These clashing conceptions of development were symptomatic of the different conceptions that governmental officials and many Basotho youth held about the proper role of the individual in the state, and about who had the power to define national goals and aspirations.

Chapter five explores Lesotho as a site for contestation over international ideas in the 1960s. From the interactions of young Basotho with South African educational migrants in their midst, to their use of the rhetoric of the Cold War to make local political arguments, and interactions with foreign volunteers from organizations like the Peace Corps and the International Voluntary Service, young Basotho were interested in and applied larger global concepts of the 1960s to their situation in Lesotho. Integrating international ideas into local practice was not new in Lesotho, but the urgency of political and social change in the 1950s and 1960s in Lesotho, in Africa and even further afield in places like the United States and Europe, made contemporary efforts to affect change in conversations about the national community even more salient.

Finally, chapter six examines the difference of opinion younger and older Basotho had about the concept of independence. Finding less tension than imagined, the chapter argues that the optimism of Basotho youth for the concept of independence, and their work to bring about communities in line with their visions for the new nation, better

allowed these youth to overcome their disappointment with the failure of the state to live up to their expectations at independence, which helped them keep faith in the national project. The state was grossly unsuccessful at controlling the actions of young Basotho, but its efforts to implement some form of control show how vital youth were to top-down conceptions of the national project as well. Finishing with the political and social turmoil around the disputed 1970 election, this project as a whole places youth in Lesotho during the 1950s and 1960s into wider global conversations about the role of the individual in the nation-state, the role of youth in society and the ability of individuals to hold the seemingly contradictory position of supporting a national project while feeling estranged from their own state.

## Chapter 2: The Unity Question, 1945-60

In late September of 1956 at the Basutoland Council meeting in Maseru, the Regent 'Mantsebo reported that the heir to the position of *Morena e Moholo* (Paramount Chief), Constantine Bereng, had recently returned to England to finish his high school studies at Ampleforth College. She noted in passing that Constantine Bereng had, while home on holidays “paid visits to a number of places to see what was happening in the territory.”<sup>i</sup> A mere year and a half later, supporters of the Regent were up in arms in the same chamber, angry that while home on school holidays this time from Oxford University where he was studying political science and history, Constantine Bereng had gone on a similar tour, but had not informed the chieftaincy in the districts where he was visiting. Chieftainess 'Mamathe Masupha from the Berea District worried about the propriety of these visits. As the highest chief in the district, she wanted to know “with whom and to whom he spoke” as she thought that the heir “should move in accordance with the plan lest he comes into contact with people of wrong ideas.”<sup>ii</sup>

The issue of visits by the presumptive heir to various parts of the country ignited a firestorm of debate in the Basutoland Council as to the proper role of the future *Morena e Moholo*, the proper role of youth in Sotho society and when Constantine Bereng should be installed on the throne in place of his step-mother. It also highlighted a 1950s increase in political tension between various factions within the chieftaincy for control over local

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i *Proceedings of the 52<sup>nd</sup> (1956) Session of the Basutoland Council, 29<sup>th</sup> September to 24<sup>th</sup> October 1956. Volume I*, (Maseru: Government Printing, 1956).

ii *Proceedings of the 53<sup>rd</sup> (1958) Session of the Basutoland Council, February-March, 1958*, (Maseru: Government Printing, 1959).

administration. Along with a heightened religious divide between Catholic and Protestant Basotho, fueled in part by their competing vernacular language newspapers, splits within commoner Basotho also became more evident. In part this was due to an increased emphasis on politics and the growth of political organizations in Lesotho, but it was also heavily influenced by growing political militancy in South Africa, and the fact that up to a quarter of the population of Lesotho at any given time was away in South Africa. When these migrants returned home after stays ranging from days to years, they played an important role in the politicization of Lesotho. Finally, the start of formal political parties and the first vernacular political newspapers during the decade also made public long-simmering local disputes between educated commoners and the chieftaincy over who would lead political and social change in Lesotho.

During the 1950s, calls for Basotho “unity” came from many and varied sources: the chieftaincy, the *Morena e Moholo*, newly formed political parties and older commoner organizations. These calls were attempts by various groups to claim the privilege of debating what constituted unity, the rearrangement of society and the political order, but the increased stakes and improving communications drew a wider segment of the population into debates about political forms and the nation.<sup>iii</sup> A unified Basotho identity was not new, as Rosenberg neatly showed, but his argument that a unified identity, built in large part in opposition to the South African threat of incorporation, also implied unity on domestic political issues. This assumes that unity was a concept that political actors or chiefs would impose from above, instead of being

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iii Similar arguments are made by Magaziner about Black Consciousness movements in South Africa in the 1970s, *The Law and the Prophets*.

defined in many ways by different people within Sotho society.<sup>iv</sup> While debates over unity were not new, the stakes were raised by increased protest in South Africa against the *apartheid* policies the National Party Government was pursuing, moves toward independence taking place across Asia and Africa, and the reordering of government in Lesotho.

The 1950s in Lesotho were a time of politicization for a large segment of the population in Lesotho, especially the young. The 1950s saw the emergence of the first sub-Saharan African states from formerly colonized territories, which produced local debates over political change as some Basotho questioned how they should unite to gain the most advantage from these changes. Politics and political arguments were not new in Lesotho, but a series of haphazard administrative reforms in the 1950s lurched Lesotho closer to self-government and opened new political space for some Basotho. There was no clear path to a political independence by the end of the 1950s, but with the advent of some limited self-rule scheduled for 1960, independence was now among the range of possibilities. Many Basotho, especially those who were in the younger generations, were starting to engage in larger numbers with the process of re-imagining their nation in the forms that they wanted to see from self-rule or independence in the 1950s. Calls by various individuals and groups for unity, coming on the heels of an active decade of ANC protest in South Africa and the rapid expansion of the secondary school system in Lesotho during the 1950s, often used the idea of youth as a way to make their political and social arguments. This rhetorical strategy fit within larger regional and international

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<sup>iv</sup> Rosenberg, *Promises of Moshoeshoe*, 64-5.

trends of seeing youth as vectors for new political energy and ideas, and especially played out in the contestations over the role the young *Morena e Moholo*, Moshoeshoe II, should play in society.

## **The British Empire After World War II**

Basutoland occupied a unique place in the colonial bureaucracy because it was a Crown Colony, and fell under the administration of the Dominions Office from 1925. Most African Crown Colonies fell under the Colonial Office, but Basutoland, without settlers was an oddity under the Dominions Office and, from 1947, its successor, the Office of Commonwealth Relations. In preparation for the final handover of colonial power, in 1960 the Colonial Office took over administration of Basutoland and the other High Commission Territories (HCT). The HCT, consisting of Basutoland, Swaziland and the Bechuanaland Protectorate (modern-day Botswana), were administered by the British High Commissioner for South Africa. While they each had Resident Commissioners who were in charge of day-to-day administrative functions in each territory, the High Commissioner had the power to pronounce law and policy for all three territories jointly.

With a Labour Government in power in metropolitan Britain after World War II, the Colonial Office and the Dominions Office embarked for the first time on a project of putting substantial amounts of British money into development projects and attempting to reform colonial institutions. The new money resulted from the passage of the Colonial Welfare and Development Act of 1940 (CDW), an acknowledgment that colonial governmental of the 1930s was not causing local people to accept colonialism any more



readily.<sup>v</sup> It was also the result of a wartime promise to India for post-war independence, and the Colonial Office, in conjunction with the Treasury, hoping to strengthen economic ties with its African colonies to help support the British economy, fund the post-war reconstruction of the United Kingdom and keep Africa within the British sphere of influence. In the late 1940s, the Labour Government focused on creating trade unions, cooperatives and local governmental institutions that would spur economic development. This also extended the reach of the colonial state further into the countryside. It was the influx of new technical advisers for these programs that earned the post-war years the title of “second colonial occupation.”<sup>vi</sup>

Landlocked and mountainous without easily exploitable natural resources, Lesotho was not a good candidate for the large-scale economic initiatives, like the groundnut scheme in Tanganyika or the Sudanese cotton project, that consumed much of the CDW budget. Like most of Britain's African territories, however, it received small amounts of money in the 1950s to improve subsistence agriculture and education. Lesotho was more fully integrated into the Empire in World War II when over 20,000 Basotho served in the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps in North Africa, the Middle East and Italy. A couple thousand Basotho soldiers even remained in the Middle East on garrison duty through the end of the 1940s.<sup>vii</sup> These soldiers had mainly come from a

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v Paul Keleman, “Planning for Africa: The British Labour Party's Colonial Development Policy, 1920-1964,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 7 (2007): 76-98.

vi D.A. Low and J.M. Lonsdale, “Introduction: Towards the New Order 1945-1963,” in *History of East Africa, Volume III*, ed. D.A. Low and J.M. Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 12-16.

vii Ashley Jackson, “African Soldiers and Imperial Authorities: Tensions and Unrest During the Service of High Commission Territories Soldiers in the British Army, 1941-46,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25 (1999): 645-665.

highly unpopular conscription campaign run by Basotho chiefs and the British District Commissioners in 1942.<sup>viii</sup> These soldiers, despite having a nominal hiring preference from the colonial administration and similarly to their counterparts throughout the region, did not become politicized by their experience.<sup>ix</sup> The only real concession the government made to ensure that these soldiers were reabsorbed into Sotho society was to set up a mechanism for their grievances to be heard at the national level by giving them a seat on the Basutoland Council in 1948.

World War II did, however change the institutions of empire in ways large and small. With Europe in ruin Britain hoped that the empire would be able to help support their precarious currency, and help rebuild the metropolitan core via export earnings.<sup>x</sup> Wartime necessity had forced the British government to make concessions to some colonized subjects, although not in Africa, promising new levels of autonomy or independence after the fighting finished.<sup>xi</sup> Further, the relegation of Britain to a second-rate power behind nominally anti-colonial Superpowers in the post-war period, the Soviet Union and the United States, and the creation of the United Nations put external pressures on imperial systems to live up to their promises of development and progress.

In Lesotho, as in much of colonial Africa, the reform of the institution of chieftaincy loomed central in the minds of colonial administrators. By the 1950s, the

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viii Mary Nombulelo Ntabeni, "Military Labour Mobilisation in Colonial Lesotho During World War II, 1940-43," *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies* 36 (2008): 48-9.

ix Hamilton Siphon Simelane, "Veterans, Politics and Poverty: The Case of Swazi Veterans in the Second World War," *South African Historical Journal* 38 (1998): 144.

x William Roger Louis, "The Dissolution of Empire" in *Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. IV*, ed. Judith Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 330.

xi R. Coupland, *The Cripps Mission* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942).

Colonial and Commonwealth Relations Offices dictated that economic development and decentralization take place in territories in order to increase social, economic and political development. These reforms, along with an increase in the number of educated Africans, called into question the role of chiefs as prime local administrators. The halting and haphazard reforms, however, never articulated exactly how chiefs were to maintain authority while also sharing their responsibilities with local, “decentralized” elected councils.<sup>xii</sup> The tension between central and localized authority, along with the increased presence of colonial technical specialists, especially in the fields of education, agriculture and economic policy after the war, led to rapidly changing political institutions and much uncertainty in British colonies.<sup>xiii</sup>

### **Chieftaincy and Attempts at Administrative Reform**

Efforts to reform chieftaincy in Lesotho started before World War II, and they continued after the war with greater urgency because local administrators needed a more streamlined administration to carry out social and economic development projects. 1950s efforts to reform the chieftaincy had direct roots in the 1930s, as the British attempted to bring the chieftaincy under their direct control for the first time. Viewed mainly as a labor reserve, the colonial administration in Lesotho had always been skeletal as the British focused only on maintaining the peace and the supply of Basotho migrant workers to South Africa. In 1900, there were only about thirty British administrators in the

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xii National Archives of the United Kingdom (hereafter NAUK) CAB/129/45 Cabinet Memo from Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, April 16, 1951.

xiii Jon Lonsdale, “African Pasts in Africa's Future,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 23 (1989): 126-46.

territory, including police officers. In 1953 there were only seventeen non-Basotho policemen out of a total force of 259 officers for the entire 11,000 square mile territory.<sup>xiv</sup> This skeletal administrative and policing presence meant that the British never seriously considered challenging the core power of the chieftaincy—their right to distribute land—at any point in the colonial period, despite legally having the power to do so with Basutoland being a Crown Colony.<sup>xv</sup> Hence, the British relied on the chieftaincy to maintain law-and-order, as well as the social and economic status quo in rural areas. The lack of British administrative personnel meant that the chieftaincy in Lesotho operated mainly free from British oversight, what Hailey termed “parallel rule,” rather than the indirect rule practiced in other British African colonies.<sup>xvi</sup> Thus, administrative reforms threatened the power of the chieftaincy as well as the relative freedom from colonial intrusion non-chiefly Basotho enjoyed, and left the country unsettled politically.

The administrative changes of the late 1940s and 1950s in Lesotho coincided with the radicalization of the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa. The ANC's Defiance Campaign, its first wide-spread protest, and the systematization of *apartheid* in the 1950s combined with administrative reform in Lesotho to bring new groups of people into political discussions for the first time. The concept of a Basotho nation was not new in Lesotho. The senior members of the chieftaincy had for decades appealed to the legacy of Moshoeshe as a uniter of disparate people to justify their positions, and groups

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xiv Machobane, *Government and Change*, 71. Lord Hailey, *An Africa Survey, Revised 1956: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), 272.

xv Hailey, *Africa Survey Revised*, 697.

xvi Hailey, *Africa Survey Revised*, 272-4.

like *Lekhotla la Bafo*, the Council of Commoners, a loose rural, political organization formed around 1920, had contested colonial rule and abuses by the chieftaincy in the name of the Basotho nation. Colonial reform efforts reignited debates about the role the chieftaincy should play in governance, and simultaneously raised the stakes of debates over reform as the possibility of some form of self-government within the Empire, or even independence, became real for the first time.

The Pim Report of 1935, a survey of the economy and administration of the territory, acknowledged that indirect rule, in the sense that Lugard created in Nigeria, never existed in Lesotho, as few chiefs had to answer, directly or indirectly, to the colonial government. The chieftaincy reforms that took effect from 1938 as a result of this report were, thus, the first real effort by the British administration to “advance towards a real system of indirect rule.”<sup>xvii</sup> Similar efforts were taking place simultaneously in the other High Commission Territories (HCT).<sup>xviii</sup> The 1938 reforms allowed the British High Commissioner, in theory the ultimate lawmaker for the HCTs, to declare and revoke chieftaincy privileges for the first time. The key provision, from the perspective of Basotho commoners who supported reform of the chieftaincy, however, was the limitation on the number of chiefs who could hold court—the chiefs' primary source of income.<sup>xix</sup> This limitation on courts succeeded in altering the balance of power

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xvii *Financial and Economic Position of Basutoland: Report of the Commission Appointed by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs*, Presented by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to Parliament by Command of His Majesty May, 1935, 186.

xviii Christian John Makgala, “Limitations of British Control in Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1918-1953,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36 (2010): 60-2.

xix *Financial and Economic Position of Basutoland, 1935*.

in favor of the colonial government for the first time, and set the stage for post-war reforms like the foundation of the Basuto National Treasury in 1946. This institution made chiefs salaried employees of the government, but it also enhanced the power of the *Morena e Moholo* by centralizing authority and placing power into Basotho hands, subject to colonial administrative oversight.<sup>xx</sup> The net result of the 1938 and 1946 reforms reduced the number of chiefs by almost half and brought about a split between a relatively well-off group of 117 senior chiefs who could hold court and the rest who lost status, income and power.

These reforms did not immediately diminish the importance of the chieftaincy at the local level, but the uncertainty over the future of the junior chieftaincy combined with squabbles among senior chiefs about succession to create an overall crisis in the chieftaincy. The question of who would be Regent after the death of *Morena e Moholo* Seeiso Griffith in 1940 split the senior chieftaincy and, paired with the unstable position of junior chiefs, led to an outbreak of ritual killings, called *Liretlo*, or medicine murder. These murders were committed in the main by commoners on other commoners, acting on the orders of their chiefs. The chiefs were looking to strengthen their “medicine horns,” a specific collection of herbs and burnt offerings prescribed by an *ngaka* (doctor), in order to help them maintain their power and influence.<sup>xxi</sup> The killings, fairly widespread in the late 1940s and 1950s, both strengthened and challenged the idea of unity within a Basotho nation. They gave commoners an opportunity to rally against a

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xx Machobane, *Government and Change*, 220-7.

xxi Colin Murray and Peter Sanders, *Medicine Murder in Colonial Lesotho: The Anatomy of a Moral Crisis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).

perceived colonial government threat to the chieftaincy, but also led to strife at the village level caused by the violence. The killings also demonstrated the lack of power that the colonial state possessed, and how little it understood and could influence events on the ground in Lesotho through the state's inability to stamp out the spate of killings.

District Officers, the police and the British Resident Commissioner all feared that the outbreak of medicine murder might stall administrative reform efforts, or lead to the loss of colonial control in rural areas where the colonial presence was weak.<sup>xxii</sup> The British anthropologist G.I. Jones, brought in to investigate the murders, proposed that they would go away if only the colonial administration could get the most powerful chiefs to “appreciate the increased political power given to them by the reforms” and the lesser chiefs to have a greater role “as integral parts of the system of local self-Government.”<sup>xxiii</sup> The crux of the problem, however, according to the report, was a communication gap between senior government officials, British and Basotho, and local people.

This lack of contact came about, in part, because of the placing of so many junior chiefs by the various *Marena a Moholo* (Paramount Chiefs) from the late nineteenth century.<sup>xxiv</sup> This practice, by which the *Morena e Moholo* appointed new chiefs dependent on and loyal to royal patronage in order to increase royal control over specific areas, had added many layers of administration between commoners and the senior chiefs

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xxiiNAUK CAB/129/45 Memo Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to Cabinet, March 27, 1951.

xxiiiG.I. Jones, *Basutoland Medicine Murder: A Report on the Recent Outbreak of “Diretlo” Murders in Basutoland* (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1951).

xxivMoshoeshoe's aims in instituting this practice were discussed in chapter one.

in each District or Ward. Senior chiefs were also split by a feud going back to the death in 1940 of the last *Morena e Moholo* Seeiso Griffith, after only a year in office. His son, Constantine Bereng Seeiso, was born in 1938 to his second wife. With Constantine Bereng too young to take the title of *Morena e Moholo*, a committee of the most senior chiefs, the “Sons of Moshoeshoe,” met to decide who would be Regent and approved Seeiso's first wife, 'Mantsebo Griffith, as Regent. They placed her as Regent because Seeiso's brother wanted to be named *Morena e Moholo* outright, and they feared that Constantine Bereng would meet an untimely demise were his uncle to be Regent. This fear stemmed from the murky circumstances surrounding the death of *Morena e Moholo* Letsie II's infant son in 1913 during another succession crisis, and the fear that if a claimant to the throne was named Regent, a similar situation might result.<sup>xxv</sup> The fact that royal heirs were vulnerable to court intrigue and attempts on their lives in the early 1940s showed the weakness of British rule in Lesotho, and highlights that British influence, in many ways, extended only as far as the door of their administrative offices.

The decision to put a woman in the highest position of authority in Lesotho rankled many senior members of the Basotho chieftaincy, some Basotho commoners, and, of course, those who supported Seeiso's brother.<sup>xxvi</sup> It also highlighted the generations-old religious split in Lesotho between Catholics and Protestants, a seeming lack of unity, that would reappear in the political divide of the 1950s and 1960s.

'Mantsebo was a practicing Catholic, while Constantine Bereng's mother belonged to the Paris Evangelical Mission Society (PEMS) Protestant Church. Constantine Bereng spent

<sup>xxv</sup>Machobane, *Government and Change*, 196.

<sup>xxvi</sup>Jones, *Medicine Murder*, 34.



most of his childhood deep in the remote mountains of the Mokhotlong District working with private tutors because 'Mantsebo wanted him far from his mother and her religious influence.<sup>xxvii</sup> The senior members of the chieftaincy, who all had seats in the Basutoland Council, fell out along lines of those who thought it was within Sesotho custom to have a woman as Regent, and those who felt it violated the spirit of the chieftaincy, as established by Moshoeshoe. The chieftaincy was constantly being “re-invented,” and this re-invention was certainly not a process that lent itself to decisions reached by unanimous consensus, but one filled with contestation, winners, and losers.

By the early 1950s, the junior chiefs, those who did not have seats in the Basutoland Council and faced the greatest uncertainty as to the future viability of their position in their communities, were worried about maintaining their positions of influence and authority at the local level. The senior chiefs, who had seats in the Basutoland Council, were deeply divided on the question of whether a woman should occupy the highest position of authority in the land. The colonial government, in addition to trying to implement reforms and bring in some form of elected structures for local governance, had to deal with the fallout from the Medicine Murders. The Jones report on the killings had advocated a government propaganda campaign to reach out to chiefs, but even before his report came out in 1951, the colonial government had already put on trial, convicted and hung two senior chiefs in 1949 on charges of conspiring to commit murder.

This trial threatened the most powerful chiefs in Lesotho on a personal level, and it also brought about a backlash against colonial rule because many Basotho saw the

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xxviiMachobane, *Government and Change*, 266-71.

convictions as an attack on the chieftaincy as a symbol of the nation.<sup>xxviii</sup> Hailey, relying on the reports of local administrators, noted in his 1938 Africa survey that reform efforts “[have] come to be viewed as an invasion of Basuto authority by an external power” because the Basotho have a “strong sense of nationality, and a firmly fixed ideal of Basutoland as a semi-independent state.”<sup>xxix</sup> The hanging of these chiefs, coming hard on the heels of victory by the National Party in the South African elections of 1948, left many in Lesotho nervous about the independent political future of the territory. With their old enemies, the Afrikaners, in power in South Africa and the British government hanging some of the most powerful chiefs in the land, who would protect individuals or the Basotho nation?

### **The Rise of Party Politics in Lesotho and Conceptions of 'the Nation'**

Widely credited with being the “father of the nation,” Moshoeshe I still loomed large in the minds of Basotho, chiefs and commoners alike, after World War II. The senior chieftaincy, in particular, appealed to his legacy to justify their view of the nation. They fought a proposal placed before the Basutoland Council in 1951 that would have opened the junior chieftaincy to commoners, in an attempt to bring more educated Basotho into the administration. Chief Ntsompe Khoeli argued it was disrespectful to the legacy of Moshoeshe to change this requirement: “[Hereditary Chieftaincy] has been brought about by Moshoeshe who did so for future generations...Let us obey

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xxviiiMurray and Sanders, *Medicine Murder*, 292.

xxixLord Hailey, *An African Survey: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), 399.

Moshoeshoe who brought about this Nation.”<sup>xxx</sup> The senior chieftaincy, especially, consistently made reference to their descent to legitimize their claim to be defenders and definers of national traditions.

Despite popular rallying to the chieftaincy against a perceived colonial threat in the medicine murder cases, the Commonwealth Relations Office in the early 1950s still saw chiefs as “essential” for the successful governing of the territory, as there were no other credible alternatives.<sup>xxxi</sup> The local administration still relied on chiefs to maintain law and order, but a growing segment of Basotho society had been calling for chiefly reforms since the early twentieth century. Both the Basuto Progressive Association (BPA), founded by educated commoners in 1907, and the Council of Commoners, *Lekhotla la Bafu* (LLB), founded by primary-educated subsistence farmers and returned miners in 1919 in the northern, mountain foothills of the Leribe and Berea Districts, had long criticized abuses in the chieftaincy and colonial rule in general.

Both groups put forth their own visions for the nation, which did not necessarily envision chiefs as administrators and final arbiters of policy. As early as 1926, the BPA newspaper *Naledi* published an anonymous column: “Not very long from now [the Basuto] will be asking the Imperial Government to give them their sovereign independence.”<sup>xxxii</sup> The impetus for this push for political reform would come, in the

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xxx *Proceedings of the 47<sup>th</sup> Session of the Basuto National Council, 10<sup>th</sup> September 1951* (Maseru: Government Printing, 1952).

xxxi NAUK CAB/129/45 Memo Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to Cabinet, March 27, 1951.

xxxii “The Failure of Unity,” *Naledi*, December 24, 1926. My thanks to Chris Dunton of NUL for bringing the records of *Naledi* to my attention.

view of the BPA, from educated and “progressive” commoners like themselves, not chiefs. The LLB was suspicious of collaboration between the colonial administration and the chieftaincy, arguing that the chieftaincy had thrown away the independence that Moshoeshe so-desired for a Basotho chieftaincy by agreeing to participate in colonial governance.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The LLB called for Basotho cultural, economic and political independence. To achieve this, they wanted the chieftaincy to cut its ties to the colonial government and return to a consultative style of government in which chiefs had to consult with commoners before deciding on a course of action. The mostly rural LLB was also deeply suspicious of the loyalties of the members of the BPA, who had received their education at mission-run schools in Lesotho and South Africa.

The steady stream of legal cases for medicine murder against chiefs in the 1940s and 1950s, however, caused many Basotho, even those in the BPA and LLB, to rally to the chiefs as an embattled symbol of the nation. In 1952, Ntsu Mokhehle, a charismatic high school teacher, and Potlako Leballo, a Mosotho teaching in South Africa, formed the Basutoland African Congress (BAC). This group brought together members of the teachers' union, older activists from the BPA and LLB, and migrant workers with political experience in South African groups like the ANC.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The leaders of the BAC mobilized support around a platform of self-government in Lesotho and an end to the *de facto* racial discrimination present in the territory. The BAC was quite publicly and vocally critical of the colonial administration, but because of its roots in the BPA and LLB, it was also

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xxxiii Robert Edgar, *Prophets with Honour: A Documentary History of Lekhotla la Bafu* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1988).

xxxiv Weisfelder, *Political Contention*, 2-5.

critical of chiefly collaboration with the colonial government. The increasingly draconian *apartheid* regime in South Africa post-1948, and the Medicine Murder trials, however, caused the BAC to defend the chieftaincy as a symbol of the nation, and attack the British for attempting to covertly hand Lesotho to South Africa.

The leaders of the BAC had strong connections with the ANC and other anti-colonial groups in South Africa, but their main local political inspiration was the rural activism of LLB. Josiel Lefela, the leader of LLB, had been in and out of the Basutoland Council, sitting as a representative of his chief when not barred by the colonial government from the 1920s to the 1950s. Lefela had cultivated wider regional and international contacts over his long career, ranging from the Industrial Commercial Workers Union (ICU), to the South African Communist Party and Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).<sup>xxxv</sup> Another important figure Mokhehle, the BAC co-founder, had briefly been a member of LLB in the 1940s, but decided to part ways and form his own organization because Lefela held a tight rein on the leadership of LLB, and because of the latent suspicion in LLB about those with education. Seeing the usefulness of regional contacts with similar-minded groups that LLB had pioneered, the BAC cultivated its own strong ties to South African groups.

Despite rising to the defense of chiefs over medicine murder, the BAC contested the idea that the chieftaincy or the colonial government should have exclusive say over Basotho identity, drawing limits on who belonged to the nation and setting local policy. Moshoeshoe's Day, celebrated with public gatherings (*pitsos*) on March 12<sup>th</sup>,

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xxxvG.M. Haliburton, "Walter Matitta and Josiel Lefela: A Prophet and a Politician in Lesotho," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 7 (1975): 111-31.

commemorated the day Queen Victoria delivered protection to Moshoeshoe and the Basotho. 1957 saw competing *pitso*s to mark the occasion. The LLB and the BAC held a joint *pitso* at *Thaba Bosiu*, the flat-topped mountain that was Moshoeshoe's capital and the symbolic center of Basotho resistance to foreign incursions, European and African. Fifteen kilometers away, the colonial government held the official national *pitso* in conjunction with senior chiefs at a place called *Thota-ea-Moli*, a site created by the colonial government as a *pitso* ground.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The site at *Thota-ea-Moli* was easy to access by road from Maseru, held plenty of people, and presented no reminder of armed struggle against British domination: a seemingly classic example of British administrators co-opting local institutions for their own needs in an attempt to help define the limits of the Basotho nation and control the population.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

The “invention” at the *pitso* was not limited, however, to the colonial administration. The senior members of the chieftaincy used this *pitso* to cement their standing as representatives of the people through their public appearances. Local people also used the occasion to take a day of leisure, complete with a free feast. The *pitso* was not just an opportunity for chiefs and administrators to give speeches. Non-chiefly Basotho who came expected food and an opportunity to have their say, as was still common at local *pitso*s at this time.<sup>xxxviii</sup> The invention of tradition here was multi-

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xxxviRosenberg, *Promises of Moshoeshoe*.

xxxviiTerence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

xxxviiiInterview Peter Millin, Clarens, RSA, 3/6/09. National University of Lesotho Archives (hereafter NUL) Leribe Collection (hereafter LC) LC 37/1 1936-1957 Soil Conservation Measures—General, Letter Senior Agricultural and Livestock Officer to DC Leribe, 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1955.

layered and focused on maintaining social relations—commoners demanding food from the government and sociability from their peers—as much as political authority. With multiple groups using the space and event for their own purposes, the “invention” runs deeper than even Ranger’s re-conception of “The Invention of Tradition” would suggest. Ranger’s focused on multiple imaginings taking place around political and social institutions. The construction of a system of mutual obligations, in this case, showed how different groups in Sotho society viewed the creation of national unity, with individual commoners and the chiefs negotiating social relations as well as political and institutional change.<sup>xxxix</sup> Unity was a concept that ran deeper than political imagining and social institutions, it was an all-encompassing vision for society.

Similarly, at the *Thaba Bosiu pitso*, the aging leader of LLB, Josiel Lefela, symbolically passed the leadership of the struggle against colonial domination and compliant chiefs to the BAC leadership. This represented a changing of the guard from the rural activism of the LLB to the urban-based BAC, but it was also another attempt to repackage cultural traditions with new meaning. Their *pitso* was a subdued affair attended by only a few Basotho in comparison to the crowds at the official *pitso*, with the LLB/BAC’s sunrise ceremony featuring prayers, songs and speeches at the grave of Moshoeshoe. These odes, dedicated to the memory of Moshoeshoe, portrayed the BAC ideal of a chieftaincy dependent upon and committed to the consultation of commoners for their legitimacy. They argued that the chiefs had strayed from a true vision of the nation: the speeches, bunting, and government sponsored feast of meat and *papa* (maize-

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<sup>xxxix</sup>Terence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Colonial Africa,” in *Inventions and Boundaries*, ed. Preben Kaarsholm and Jan Hultin (Roskilde, Denmark: Roskilde University Press, 1994).

meal porridge) were not national at all, but a case of “the whites, having overcome our Chiefs...using their privileged positions to use our own taxes against our own selves.”<sup>xl</sup>

The LLB/BAC *pitso* took pains to highlight differences between their gathering and the national *pitso*. At both *pitsos*, however, political leaders, be they Basotho chiefs, British administrators or Basotho commoners, attempted to legitimize their claims to national leadership by placing contemporary political aspirations in the context of the traditions of Moshoeshoe and calling for the unity of the nation. All of the leaders were trying to invent a national gathering, calling on and redefining a memory of Moshoeshoe, in the hopes of profiting from their own visions of Basotho unity.

In 1957, full independence was still an option fraught with much uncertainty because of the dominant economic and political position of South Africa, but the growing cadre of politicized Basotho hoped to see rapid administrative change in the direction of self-rule in the near future. Nascent political organizations and the senior chiefs both attempted to position themselves as authoritative spokespeople for the Basotho nation. They maneuvered to gain support from other Basotho in order to maximize their chances of leading political and social change. Lost in these visions and maneuverings were the disparate ideas of non-chiefly, non-elite Basotho and those who were not active members of the BAC. This growing category included many young people, whose political consciousness was aroused in the 1950s. These individuals did not necessarily want to see a top-down colonial system replaced with a top-down Basotho-run system.

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xl Our Political Correspondent, “The 12<sup>th</sup> of March, 1957,” *Mohlabani* 3 (June 1957).



## **The 1950s: Basotho Politics and Ties with South Africa**

Almost parallel with political change in Lesotho, the late 1940s and early 1950s witnessed an increase in the militancy of African politics in South Africa. On the heels of the 1948 National Party victory and the start of organized *apartheid*, the ANC elected former Youth League leaders Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu to the National Executive of the party. This marked the beginning of the most active period of protest yet seen against the *apartheid* government, culminating in the Defiance Campaign of 1952 that led to the arrest of over 8,000, including Nelson Mandela.<sup>xli</sup> The two men who founded the BAC came out of this militant Youth League tradition. Both Mokhehle and Leballo had been members of the Youth League, Mokhehle while studying at Fort Hare in the early 1940s, and Leballo while working on the Witwatersrand. There is an extensive literature on Basotho migrants to South Africa and their effect on township life, youth and adult gangs, and village life back in Lesotho, but these works pay less attention to the implications of this migrancy on politics in Lesotho.<sup>xlii</sup> Migrant Basotho played an important role in helping develop political consciousness and wider regional connections in Lesotho.

The colonial administration in Lesotho did not welcome the formation of the BAC, but because of its relative weaknesses, neither the colonial government nor the chieftaincy could block its formation. This was similar to the situation of political organizations in other non-settler British colonies like Nigeria and Ghana, but was very different from settler colonies like Kenya, where there was a complete ban on African

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xli Feit, "Generational Conflict."

xlii Coplan, *Time of Cannibals*. Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi*. Kynoch, *Marashea Gangs*. Murray, *Families Divided*.

political associations from 1953 to 1960, and South Africa where the ANC and PAC faced banning orders from 1960.<sup>xliii</sup>

The BAC played a key role in bringing political consciousness to a wide segment of Basotho society during the 1950s, especially the young, and also gave a political start to the leaders of the other two major political parties. The political and social connections between South Africa and Lesotho, however, ran deep because people on both sides of the border self-identified as Basotho, due to their shared cultural traditions and language. This connection stretched back into the pre-colonial period, when the land and people Moshoeshoe claimed stretched deep into what is now the Free State. The migration of large numbers of Basotho to South Africa for work from the 1870s was complicated in the late nineteenth century by people, largely claiming a Basotho ancestry, migrating from South Africa to Lesotho in response to the consolidation of white rule and control over the land.<sup>xliv</sup>

This close contact and the continued land claims of Basotho in Lesotho to “the conquered territories” in the Free State led the border to be, at least in part, an artificial political construct.<sup>xlv</sup> The border, which allowed for a political separation from South Africa, and the segregation that many Basotho faced in South Africa mining compounds, based on their shared language, contributed to the construction of a coherent Basotho national identity. Similar creations of identity through opposition to political boundaries

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xliiiGita Subrahmanyam, “Ruling Continuities: Colonial Rule, Social Forces and Path Dependence in British India and Africa,” *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 44 (2006): 66-92.

xlivMurray, *Black Mountain*.

xlvMartin Lelimo, *The Question of Lesotho's Conquered Territory: It's Time for an Answer* (Morija, Lesotho: Morija Museum and Archives, 1998).

have long histories. Sahlins' seminal work showing separate Catalan identities in France and Spain, however, does not translate directly to this context as Basotho identity arose from the threat that Sesotho speakers faced from Afrikaner-speakers and polities, rather than a need to differentiate Sesotho-speakers across a political border.<sup>xlvi</sup> In fact, close ties across the border continue to this day, and many people who identify as Basotho are still unwilling to allow political borders to also define who is in their larger national community.<sup>xlvii</sup>

In terms of concrete political ties in the twentieth century, in 1912, *Morena e Moholo* Letsie II sent his representative to chair the founding of the ANC in Bloemfontein. Many other Basotho played prominent roles in this organization over the ensuing years, as well as other groups like the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), which Leballo co-founded.<sup>xlviii</sup> Even non-political groups within Lesotho like the *Seboka*, the executive leadership council of the the Paris Evangelical Mission Society, had institutional contacts with the leadership of African liberation groups in South Africa. Shortly after the end of the Defiance Campaign in 1953, the *Seboka*, consisting of European missionaries and Basotho ministers, started a local branch of the Christian Council, an organization headed at the time by Albert Luthuli, who also chaired the ANC.<sup>xlix</sup>

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xlviSahlins, *Boundaries*.

xlviiCoplan, *Land from the Ancestors*.

xlviiiFor more on Leballo's career, the connections between the BAC and the PAC, and the PAC in exile in Lesotho during the 1960s, see chapter three.

xlixMoriya Museum and Archives (hereafter MMA) Mabile Collection, Seboka Folder, Minutes of the meeting of the Executive of PEMS and Seboka with Rev. A. Blaxall, June 17, 1953.

Efforts by the PEMS and the Anglican Church, the two largest Protestant Churches in Lesotho, to closer identify with the African struggle for rights in South Africa contrasted with the stance of the Catholic Church in the region. This difference was demonstrated in 1955 when, upon implementation of the Bantu Education Act, missions in South Africa had to decide whether to hand over their school buildings and pupils to the government who would run them or continue to run the schools without governmental assistance. Facing small operating budgets and a lack of large-scale support from Europe or America, most Protestant sects reluctantly turned their schools over to the government while the Catholic Church, with its ability to tap into international financial support, was able to continue running its schools as independent institutions.<sup>1</sup> In Lesotho, this strong financial support allowed the Catholic Church to operate more schools than the Protestant churches, who were more dependent on funding from the colonial government.

Leading Catholic politicians in Lesotho like Leabua Jonathan, a junior chief who served as adviser to the Regent 'Mantsebo and would become Prime Minister of independent Lesotho in 1966, had strong contacts with South African liberals like Patrick Duncan. Duncan, a former civil servant in Lesotho and editor of the South African Liberal Party newspaper *Contact*, supported Jonathan and his Basutoland National Party (BNP) because they worried that Mokhehle and the BAC were too radical. The Catholic Church similarly worried about the radicalism of political parties that were opposed to multi-racial coalitions, as the church feared that it would not be allowed to operate freely

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Hale, "Adapting to Apartheid: The Church of Sweden Mission on the Witwatersrand in the 1950s," *Journal of Church and State* 50 (2008): 451-474.

in a post-independence state run by the BAC or PAC. With much of their financial support coming from overseas, and relying heavily on expatriate priests and nuns to extend their network of mission stations and schools deeper into the mountains than either Protestant group, the Catholic Church feared being labeled an “outside” group and shut down. Catholic bishops and priests, expatriate and local, feared that political victory for “radical” parties would lead to restrictions on church activities in Lesotho and South Africa, and actively worked to thwart their influence among Catholics.

While the Catholic Church tried to present itself as a neutral force, efforts by well-connected expatriate priests and nuns clearly favored the BNP. Most of the expatriate priests in Lesotho came from French-speaking areas of Canada, and were members of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, an order founded in France in the wake of the French Revolution devoted to serving the poor through education. In 1959, the French-Canadian bishop of Basutoland, Bishop J.D. des Rosiers, urged Catholics to become politically interested and advised them to support political parties that “subscribed to Christian principles, and were led by Christians.”<sup>li</sup> This statement was a coded call for Catholics to support the BNP, and contributed to Basotho perceptions that the political parties were split along denominational lines. It deliberately conflated the national aspirations of political parties that the Church feared with the communism that was easy to portray as “anti-national” and opposed to religion. It was also part of the larger Church's role in the Cold War, opposing communist and nationalist groups that threatened to undermine their mission, especially in newly independent countries and Latin America.<sup>lii</sup>

li “Catholics Should be Politically Interested,” *Basutoland News*, January 13, 1959.

lii It was not until the early 1960s that a more radical Catholicism emerged in Latin America. Elizabeth Quay Hutchison, “Many Zitas’: The Young Catholic Worker and Household Workers in Cold War

In contrast to the Catholics, the main Protestant churches in Lesotho did not take an institutional position on politics. Though many members of their churches were in the BAC, the Protestant belief in the primacy of an individual's relationship with Scripture and God led the churches, institutionally, to stay away from political statements. A lack of a formal declaration of support, however, did not stop the identification of the BAC with Protestantism. The political split between the denominations had deep roots as the PEMS had worked hard in the 1860s to keep Catholic missionaries out of the country. Old European denominational rivalries played out in Lesotho through their Basotho converts, and the formation of political parties generally followed these same fault lines.<sup>liii</sup> While religion was not deterministic in terms of political affiliation, there was a strong correlation between the religion of a person's family and the political affiliation of individuals.

### **Political Reform in Lesotho, 1953-1960**

Policy papers like the Jones Report on medicine murder and Lord Hailey's 1953 survey, as well as pressure from the BAC and other Basotho groups, led the Commonwealth Relations Office to support more administrative reform in Lesotho during the 1950s. The threat of incorporation into South Africa was not yet a dead question with South African Prime Minister Verwoerd continuing to insist as late as 1954 that Britain fulfill its obligation from the 1909 Act of Union and hand the High Commission Territories over to South Africa, in the hope of incorporating them into the

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Chile," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 6 (2009): 67-94.

liii Interview Peter Khamane, Ha QhuQhu, 10/29/08.

*Bantustan* system.<sup>liv</sup> In addition to these pressures from southern Africa, the Conservative British government that came to power in 1951 faced, for the first time, criticism from the Labour Party over empire issues. Labour gave organizational and tactical assistance to African politicians and political parties in the 1950s as a means of currying favor on the continent and differentiating themselves from the Conservatives at home.<sup>lv</sup>

As a last gasp of Labour's post-war development policies before leaving office, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations visited southern Africa in 1951 and noted that Britain was going to need to “develop the [High Commission] Territories if we are to hold them,” and this development was not possible without political reform.<sup>lvi</sup> The staggering from one unplanned reform to another, however, showed a lack of coherent vision for how to best accomplish this. Even where a partial road map had been laid out, as in the chieftaincy reforms of 1938 and 1946, the report presciently noted that treading the line between strengthening the authority of the chiefs and getting them to work with elected local councils was going to need “delicate and skillful handling.”<sup>lvii</sup>

Lord Hailey, again mainly paraphrasing local reports when he revisited his famous 1938 survey of British colonial Africa in the early 1950s, called for the formation of a legislative body in Lesotho that would “be the ultimate source of all executive and

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liv NAUK CAB 129/70 Cabinet Memorandum, Commonwealth Relations Office, Transfer of the High Commission Territories, August 31, 1954.

lv David Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics 1945-1961: From 'Colonial Development' to 'Wind of Change'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 2 and 359.

lvi NAUK CAB 129/45 Cabinet Memorandum on visit to Southern Africa, April 16, 1951. The issue of development is dealt with in more depth in chapter 4.

lvii NAUK CAB 129/45 Cabinet Memorandum on visit to Southern Africa, April 16, 1951.

administrative power.”<sup>lviii</sup> This formulation gave reasonable hope to politically-inclined Basotho that they could soon expect some sort of self-government, though British policy makers as late as 1959 still had trouble seeing any of the High Commission Territories gaining self-government without corresponding political change in South Africa.<sup>lix</sup> Local calls for self-governance, however, were strong as the BAC had made this a major plank from its foundation in 1952, and the Basutoland Council passed resolutions in both 1952 and 1953 calling for legislative powers.<sup>lx</sup>

In response to these pressures, the High Commissioner appointed an Administrative Reforms Committee in 1954. The Committee traveled the country, interviewing almost 200 individual Basotho and soliciting written statements from 257 individuals and groups to ascertain views on reform. Their report, known as the Moore Report after its leader, Sir Henry Moore, came out in 1955, and angered almost all segments of Basotho society because of misunderstandings about the purpose of the Committee. The Committee, per its remit from the Office of Commonwealth Relations, only recommended changes to “existing systems of Native administration” and the increase of local governmental powers.<sup>lxi</sup> While these priorities were in line with policy, gradual administrative reform had been greatly overtaken by events on the ground in

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<sup>lviii</sup> Lord Hailey, *Native Administration in the British African Territories: Part V. The High Commission Territories: Basutoland, the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1953), 140.

<sup>lix</sup> NAUK CAB 129/98 Memorandum from Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, July 2, 1959.

<sup>lx</sup> *Proceedings of the 48<sup>th</sup> Session of the Basuto National Council, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1952* (Maseru: Government Printing (?), 1953). *Proceedings of the 49<sup>th</sup> (1953) Session of the Basuto National Council, 26 September 1953* (Maseru: Government Printing (?), 1954).

<sup>lxi</sup> *Basutoland Report of the Administrative Reforms Committee* (N.P: April-July 1954), 1.



Lesotho and the expectations that publications like Hailey's report of 1953 had engendered—that the report would recommend making the Basutoland Council a national legislative body.<sup>lxii</sup>

While a few of the most senior chiefs supported the Moore Report as a means of staving off representative institutions, most of the chieftaincy, who expected to benefit from the expanded legislative powers of the Basutoland Council, were dissatisfied with the resulting proposals. The largest voice of protest against the report, however, came from the BAC and its mouthpiece newspaper, *Mohlabani*. As in the controversy around the medicine murder trials, a colonial misstep had united the interests of the BAC and the chieftaincy, and the 1955 Basutoland Council passed a new resolution calling for legislative powers. The colonial administration worried about the potential for this coalition between chiefs and commoners to result in a failure of law-and-order in Lesotho, a worst-case scenario for the administration.<sup>lxiii</sup> In response, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations asked in 1957 for proposals from the Basutoland Council on how they would choose members for a national legislative body to make laws “in regards to internal matters affecting the Basuto alone.”<sup>lxiv</sup>

In Lesotho, many younger Basotho vividly recalled their reactions to the Moore Report and the ensuing political changes. Tseliso Ramakhula, then a 25-year old teacher in the rural Mafeteng District, remembered it as a document that did not capture “the

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lxii Machobane, *Government and Change*, 257-8.

lxiii Gill, *Short History*, 204.

lxiv *Report on Constitutional Reform and Chieftainship Affairs* (Maseru: Government Printing, 1958).

wishes of the people” because it did not delegate any real powers to Basotho.<sup>lxv</sup> To an extent, however, this was a protest by the small segment of Basotho society actively involved in politics—teachers, civil servants and returned miners—against the colonial government as the report generated no street protest. It did receive some attention in the church-run Sesotho-language newspapers, and helped ensure the success of the launch of the first explicitly political publication, *Mohlabani*, the Warrior.<sup>lxvi</sup> This newspaper, run by Bernard Khakhetla, would be the BAC mouthpiece until Khakhetla's split from the party in 1961.<sup>lxvii</sup> The formation of more media outlets, like *Mohlabani*, was important for the rise in political consciousness among Basotho in the mid-1950s, many of whom were unsure about the possibilities politics held.

Selborne Mohlalisi was a nineteen year old student in 1955 completing a course in Maseru in preparation for a career in the civil service of Basutoland. He was aware of and opposed to colonial rule, but like many other Basotho at the time, felt that “it wasn't quite clear to me what exactly [independence] was.” Mohlalisi and his peers understood the concept of self-governance, but their uncertainty lay in what institutional forms a post-colonial state would take, and what it would mean for him personally. As an inquisitive young man, however, Mohlalisi, and many other young Basotho, “got interested in whatever was happening around,” reading newspapers, going to meetings and talking with friends to better understand what politics and independence might

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lxv Interview Tseliso Ramakhula, Lower Thamae, 3/1/09.

lxvi Commentaries on the Moore Report appeared in the PEMS-published *Leselinyana* on April 11, 1955 and on May 23, 1955. NUL LC 26 1931-1957, Press Clippings.

lxvii “Three Teachers Expelled,” *Mohlabani* 1 (March 1955).

mean.<sup>lxviii</sup>

Some young Basotho, like Mohlalisi, started to learn about politics and the concept of independence from political parties and their outreach efforts, but parties were not the only source of information. Chaka Ntsane remembered that when attending primary school in the remote Maluti foothills of the rural Berea District, only a few people received the mission-published Sesotho-language newspapers, but those who did “used to share [them]...and at school and in the church meetings many issues that came out of the newspapers were discussed.”<sup>lxix</sup> These vernacular newspaper had readership and distribution throughout the country, and played an important role in the politicization of people in Lesotho.

With a literacy rate over sixty percent by 1950, Lesotho had one of the highest of any African country or territory in the post-war period.<sup>lxx</sup> The first printing press came to Lesotho with PEMS missionaries in 1841, and the two main newspapers were still church published: *Moeletsi oa Basotho* by the Catholic Church and *Leselinyana la Lesotho* by the PEMS.<sup>lxxi</sup> The papers enjoyed wide circulation through the various central mission stations and their respective outstations, and ensured that rural Basotho also had access to domestic and international political developments and debates. Many Basotho even had

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lxviiiInterview Selborne Mohlalisi, Morija, 11/10/08.

lxixInterview Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 2/24/09.

lxx “The Mission Press of Basutoland,” *Basutoland Witness* 3: 4-5 (1949).

lxxiThe colonial government in Lesotho did not have the resources or desire to censor the newspapers. They would occasionally complain about an article to the churches, but for the most part left them alone. There was some censorship around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the missionaries, but this dealt mainly with topics of which they did not approve, like parts of Thomas Mofolo's famous novel, *Chaka*, that portray “heathen” customs. Daniel Kunene, introduction to *Chaka: A New Translation*, trans. Daniel Kunene (London: Heinemann, 1981).

access, from time-to-time, to South African papers, and smaller-circulation Maseru-based political papers like *Mohlabani*. Migrant workers traveling to or from their rural homes would often bring newspapers and circulate them throughout the community.<sup>lxxii</sup> The gradual permeation of the ideas of independence and political development throughout Lesotho did not translate into much direct political action during through the 1950s, but the transmission of news played an important role in helping develop a wider and deeper political consciousness.

By the rejection of the Moore Report, and the subsequent offer from the Secretary of State to consider what a legislative body in Lesotho would look like, the Basutoland Council appointed a Constitutional Reform Committee in late 1956 with representatives from each district.<sup>lxxiii</sup> The openness of the Commonwealth Relations Office to this committee was, at least in part, a response to developments in the *apartheid* system in South Africa, as the British government risked opening themselves to charges of colonial negligence if they were seen to be falling behind developments there. These charges came from a South African government still hoping to incorporate Basutoland, as well as from newly-independent states in the UN and a Cold War-focused United States which, after the Suez crisis of 1956, pushed Britain and France for faster democratic reform in their remaining colonies.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

South Africa was still a crucial territory economically and strategically to Britain

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lxxii Interview Tseliso Ramakhula, Lower Thamae, 3/1/09 and Clara Rapholo, Roma, 5/5/09.

lxxiii *Report on Constitutional Reform and Chieftainship Affairs* (Maseru: Government Printing, 1958).

lxxiv John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 607-9.

in the late 1950s, as British capitalists heavily invested in South Africa mines, factories and farms, and the British Navy used Simon's Town Naval Base through 1975. Additionally, South Africa was a key source of uranium for Britain's military and civilian programs. It was South Africa's move toward creating ethnic "Homelands," or *Bantustans*, that tipped Britain's hand in colonial rule in southern Africa. The 1955 Tomlinson Commission report laid out plans for the socio-economic and political development of South Africa's *Bantustans*.<sup>lxxv</sup> The Constitutional Reform Committee in Lesotho came about in large degree because Britain risked being open to charges of colonial neglect if they did not introduce more democratic structures in its African territories.

The Constitutional Reform Committee in Lesotho followed the same pattern as the Moore Report, soliciting public comment from individuals and organizations. In consultation with Denis Cowan, a law professor from the University of Cape Town, the Committee presented a series of constitutional proposals to the Basutoland Council in early 1958. After the Council accepted these, Alan Lennox-Boyd, Secretary of State for the Colonies, invited a small delegation in 1958 to London to discuss the proposals. The delegation consisted mostly of chiefs, including representatives of the *Morena e Moholo* and future Prime Minister Jonathan, in his role as adviser to the Regent, and excluded most commoner politicians, whom the British regarded as being not representative of the majority of Basotho people. A series of intense negotiating sessions took place in London just before Christmas between the delegation and the Commonwealth Relations

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lxxvA.J. Christopher, "South Africa and the Nation State," *Zambezia: The Journal of the University of Zimbabwe* 2 (1972): 23-37.

Office. Lennox-Boyd agreed that most of the recommendations of the Committee would come into effect in early 1959 as the first constitution for Basutoland. The key provision in the document was for elections to District Councils, which would serve as electoral colleges, electing half of the members of a new National Council, a limited legislative body to replace the Basutoland Council.<sup>lxxvi</sup> The other half of the members would consist of senior chiefs and a few British civil servants. Additionally, the constitution changed the role of the *Morena e Moholo* from an executive monarch into a constitutional monarch, and, to decentralize administration, gave more power to District Councils.<sup>lxxvii</sup>

The promise of elections and representative structures created a sense of urgency among politically active Basotho in the late 1950s. The public comment sessions of the Constitutional Reform Committee helped bring major changes to the landscape of political organizations in Lesotho. In 1957, the BAC changed its name to the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) to reflect its reorientation toward winning the upcoming elections, rather than just being a consciousness-raising organization. At the same time, it reoriented itself away from its roots with the multi-racial ANC, toward a Pan-Africanist position.

This reflected the close ties between Ntsu Mokhehle, Potlako Leballo and Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, who came to Maseru in 1957 to deliver a rousing speech at the 1<sup>st</sup> BCP Party Conference.<sup>lxxviii</sup> Mokhehle solidified his own personal Pan-Africanist

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<sup>lxxvi</sup>*Basutoland: Report on Constitutional Discussions Held in London in November and December, 1958* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1959 (?)).

<sup>lxxvii</sup>The change in the status of the *Morena e Moholo* was controversial and will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

<sup>lxxviii</sup>Mangaliso R. Sobukwe, "The Dog and the Wolf," *Mohlabani* 4 (July 1958).

credentials, and the connections between the BCP and this ideology, by attending the All-Africa People's Conference in 1958 in Accra. He was elected to the steering committee, and the BCP started receiving money from Kwame Nkrumah and the Ghanaian government.<sup>lxxix</sup> In addition to the greater financial support available from this Pan-Africanist orientation, Mokhehle and the ANC fell out over the issue of organizing Basotho migrants in South Africa. The ANC wanted migrants to join their organization while living in South Africa, while the BCP only wanted them to join their national party since they were, in theory, temporary sojourners. The BCP's move away from the multi-racialism of the ANC predated the formation of the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) in South Africa, but their ties remained strong and deep through the 1960s, mainly because of Potlako Leballo's role in both organizations.

The active cultivation of links between the BCP, the PAC and Nkrumah's Ghana gave credence to Catholic fears that a BCP victory would result in a diminished role for the church and local Catholics in Lesotho. Declaring that they needed to “counter the anti-religious policy” of the BCP, in 1958 Leabua Jonathan joined with other junior chiefs and Catholic politicians to form the Basutoland National Party (BNP).<sup>lxxx</sup> The BNP received financial, organizational and ideological backing from the Catholic hierarchy in Lesotho, Catholic groups abroad, especially in Canada, Britain and West Germany, and also from South African liberals like Patrick Duncan.<sup>lxxxi</sup> The BNP was also popular with

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lxxix Weisfelder, *Political Contention*, 13.

lxxx “Agents of Disruption?” Quoting Leabua Jonathan from the *London Catholic Herald*, *Mohlabani* 5 (1959).

lxxxi *Mohlabani* 5 (1959).

junior chiefs worried about losing their status, Catholic school teachers fearful of the secularization of the teaching system and many rural Basotho, especially those who lived in the deepest mountain districts where the Catholic mission presence was strong and often unchallenged.

The third political party was a royalist grouping that coalesced in 1957 behind S.S. Matete, a senior chief from the southern district of Qacha's Nek, as the Marematlou Party (MTP). *Marematlou* is a Sesotho idiom meaning, “the people who come together to push the elephant” with the “elephant” in their view being the Regent 'Mantsebo. The primary goal of the party was to place young Constantine Bereng as the *Morena e Moholo*, because Matete and other leaders feared that 'Mantsebo, whom they regarded as a weak leader, had no intention of giving up her title to her step-son. Many of the senior chiefs supported the MTP because the party stood strongly behind the institution of chieftaincy. In addition to being royalist, the MTP (and after its 1961 amalgamation with some smaller parties, the Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP)) also attracted the support of Basotho who aligned with the ANC after the split of the ANC with the PAC/BCP in 1960.<sup>lxxxii</sup> By the 1960s, the MFP was getting most of its operating money from Joe Matthews, an organizer with the South African Communist Party living in exile in Maseru.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> In addition to highlighting different visions for the nation on a domestic level, the formation of multiple parties showed the intertwining of politics in Lesotho and South Africa despite the presence of the international border.

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<sup>lxxxii</sup>Weisfelder, *Political Contention*, 40-6.

<sup>lxxxiii</sup>NAUK CO 1048/561 V.J.G. Matthews (Joe) Political Refugee from South Africa in Basutoland, Basutoland Intelligence Report, February 1965.



The promise of the transfer of some political power after reforms in Lesotho, carry-over from South African political differences and domestic conflicts between chief and commoner, Catholic and Protestant drove much of the political imagining and contention in the late 1950s. The 1959 Constitution mandated elections in early 1960, and all the parties concentrated their efforts on organizing. The franchise was restricted to males over the age of twenty-one, and only those who were present in the territory, as Basotho fear of fraud scuttled, at the last minute, arrangements for proxy-voting.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Despite this limited franchise, the 1960 elections marked the first major coordinated effort to politically mobilize a large-segment of Sotho society, rural and urban, through rallies, articles and speeches against colonial rule. All of the parties argued for Basotho unity in the face of South African incorporation threats, and as part of a campaign to get more self-government concessions from the colonial administration, but these calls for unity also highlighted tensions between Basotho. Unity for Basotho political leaders was a slogan around which to make political arguments. It was also a handy concept for explaining to a population relatively new to party politics the stakes of political arguments, but unity was a complex concept that involved more than political institutions and state forms: it constituted a vision for the form Sesotho society should take in an independent polity and young Basotho, especially, embraced this call.

### **The Experience of Social and Political Change at the Local Level**

Ironically, perhaps, for the founders of LLB, nationalism in the late colonial

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<sup>lxxxiv</sup>Weisfelder, *Political Contention*, 18-20.

period among young Basotho came to resemble the vision they had upheld since the early twentieth century. Critical of individual abusive chiefs, but supportive of the chieftaincy as an institution, looking to present a united Basotho front against threats from South Africa, but also desiring a definition of Basotho broad enough for local variations, LLB and many young Basotho in the late-colonial period desired an inclusive nationalism.<sup>lxxxv</sup> This nationalism was also respectful of rural activism and opposed to colonial policies that LLB members deemed harmful to their individual economic and social well-being.

While the influence of LLB was waning with the rise of political parties by the late 1950s, investments through the Colonial Development and Welfare (CDW) Act aimed at curbing soil erosion inspired a new wave of rural anger at the systems of authority depriving people of their valuable, and increasingly scarce, arable land. This was not a new campaign, as anti-erosion efforts in Lesotho, designed to ensure that rural subsistence agriculture remained viable, had started as early as 1935. The CDW Act put new funding into the program to train officers to enforce changes in plowing to ensure that fields followed the contour lines of the hills, and to construct buffer strips between fields. The purpose behind these strips was to slow down rain water, which typically came in heavy summer thunderstorms, and thereby reduce soil erosion. Showers has shown that these buffer strips actually caused more erosion by “collecting and concentrating” water in the fields, and that those resisting the efforts better understood the effects the strips had on their fields.<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

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<sup>lxxxv</sup>Edgar, *Prophets with Honour*, 206-7.

<sup>lxxxvi</sup>Kate Showers, *Imperial Gullies: Soil Erosion and Conservation in Lesotho* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), 256-7.

Peter Millin, an Agricultural Department officer trained in sheep disease but placed in charge of anti-erosion efforts, recalled that their departmental efforts in the rural areas received “in some areas good cooperation, [while] in other areas we battled.”<sup>lxxxvii</sup> The battles were not always directed at the colonial government, however, as the disputes were as often about which level of the chieftaincy could control local practice. In 1955, Agricultural Demonstrator, M. Pheko, was attempting to implement the buffer strip plowing scheme in the crowded sub-district of Tsikoane, Leribe District. He had the support of sub-ward Chief Mokokoana in his efforts to charge in the local court landowners whose buffer strips had disappeared. The local court, however, was run by the headman of the village who refused to bring charges against the landowners, claiming that local people subcontracted out their plowing and, thus, were not responsible. In order to compel the court to charge the offenders, Pheko had to appeal all the way to the District Commissioner (DC) of Leribe for support, and the DC ordered the court to bring the charges that Pheko and Mokokoana needed to enforce the orders.<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

That representatives of the second highest layer of chieftaincy in the Leribe District could not enforce compliance without getting the highest British administrator in the district to intervene showed the depth of the conflict taking place at the local level. The senior chieftaincy needed local people to participate in the soil erosion campaign to demonstrate their competency for rule, while the junior chiefs, like the Headman in Tsikoane, were stuck in the middle between commoner Basotho who resented the

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<sup>lxxxvii</sup>Interview Peter Millin, Clarens, South Africa, 3/6/09.

<sup>lxxxviii</sup>NUL LC 37/1 1936-1957 Soil Conservation Measures, Letters M. Pheko to Senior Agricultural and Livestock Officer, Leribe District and District Commissioner, Leribe, February 14, 1955.

imposition of new regulations, and the senior chiefs ordering them to enforce unpopular policies. For Basotho commoners, the loss of scarce land in the buffer strips was bad, but the lack of consultation on the part of the senior chiefs was a violation, in their view, of how chieftaincy and governance was supposed to work. The struggle over soil erosion measures showed the very real, tangible effects of the struggle for power and control taking place in 1950s Lesotho. Claiming to speak on behalf of the people and to represent the nation to the colonial government, senior chiefs had the power to dictate local plowing practice, even when their visions ran counter to how local people thought national governance should work.

If the resistance to soil erosion policy was rooted in long-standing political tensions within Sotho society, the 1950s rise of political parties, and the continued influence of the missionary churches played out in similar fashion. Both parties and the churches ran up against some Basotho unwilling to accept top-down dictates, whether they were from chiefs, the colonial government, political parties or churches. The unwillingness of segments of the population to accept dictates, however, did not mean that Basotho were uninterested in politics. To the contrary, there was a sincere curiosity among most Basotho as to the possibilities of organized politics.

In the 1950s, Alexander Sekoli was teaching primary school at St. David's Catholic mission. He had moved there in 1950 after marrying a woman from the nearby village of Mapoteng, the home of LLB leader Josiel Lefela. The strong presence of LLB made the lowland Berea District one of the more politically active in Lesotho, and Sekoli, having been trained at Roma College as a teacher, was the kind of person the BAC was

actively targeting in the 1950s. He, like many others, dated the start of politics to the founding of the BAC in 1952 rather than the advocacy of LLB from another era. In 1954, the BAC held its first political meeting in his area. Ntsu Mokhehle and the BAC leadership, holding their meeting at his school, asked Sekoli to take the minutes. The meeting was well attended as people from the local communities came to hear Mokhehle talk about independence and its potential for “help from other countries.” Sekoli recounted, however, that most people were not very informed and “didn't know what [Mokhehle] was talking about.” The meeting did not garner many instant members for the BAC because “at the time, you see, you had not so many problems. People just continued their lives like anything.” The anti-colonial and pro-self-government rhetoric of the BAC in the 1950s did not lead to an immediate rush to join political parties, but it did generate a new level of interest in political questions and caused many Basotho to think about their own political ideas as they were, by the 1960s, “taking [independence] very seriously.”<sup>lxxxix</sup> Using political parties and the number of people who proclaimed party membership to look at how deep nationalism ran, thus, does not take account of people, like Sekoli and other Basotho commoners who were interested in the ideas of nationalism, but not formal members of political parties.<sup>xc</sup> The increase in political agitation through the 1950s reached many Basotho, especially the young, and caused them to start thinking about independence, nationalism and what these concepts might

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lxxxix All quotations from interview Alexander Sekoli, St. David's Mission, 11/25/08.

xc While early work on nationalism in Africa, like Hodgkin, *Nationalism*, focused mainly on participation in political parties to ascertain the “depth” of nationalism, more recent work has expanded this focus. Much of this work, however, is still narrowly focused on people who actively participate in the political process. See chapter one for a full critique of this, as well as Muiu, *Pitfalls*.

mean for their own lives.

The image of Sekoli, a Catholic teacher taking minutes for the BAC meeting and rally, showed that the characterizations of the main parties as being bound by religion in the 1950s is too simple for the lived reality. While the BNP drew most of its support from Catholics, and the BCP from Protestant churches, at the local level it was more complicated. In part this was individual Basotho taking a pragmatic approach to political developments, but it also showed that from the start most Basotho understood the political choices they faced, and prioritized independent thought on political issues.

Simon Phafane's parents were observant Catholics. His father was a skilled stone mason who had helped build houses at the *Morena e Moholo's* rural home of Matsieng, and had done extensive work on the beautiful sandstone Catholic churches that help define the lowland districts of Maseru, Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek to this day. The Catholic hierarchy took a strict line on Catholic children attending non-Catholic schools. Catholic doctrine held that “unless the Bishop has given his permission, no Catholic may entrust his child to any school but a Catholic School.”<sup>xcii</sup> The PEMS, however, ran the closest primary school to the Phafane home. Rather than have Simon walk extra miles daily to attend a Catholic school, his parents decided to send him to the PEMS school, even though this meant that they “would be excommunicated.” For the entirety of his primary education in the mid to late 1950s, his parents “would go to church but not receive the sacrament simply because [they] knew that [they] would be excommunicated...for the sake of my education.”<sup>xciii</sup> Phafane's story highlights the

xcii “Education in Basutoland: There is Only One Philosophy for All the Nations,” *Naledi* December 24, 1926.

xciii Interview Simon Phafane, Maseru, 11/3/08.

importance of education for many Basotho parents, but it also showed the pragmatism of many Basotho. Some were willing to spend years in quasi-exile from institutions they supported, loved and to which they felt a deep connection when the interests of the institution and their family came into conflict.

Similarly, Raphael Leseli was raised in a Catholic family, but his mother was a strong BCP supporter. In their rural, mostly Catholic village nestled on a small plateau between the deep gorges of the Makhalaneng River and the towering Maluti Mountains, Leseli grew up in the late 1950s and early 1960s with friends who supported all three main political parties. Their political differences, however, did not stop these young Basotho from “jolling [partying] and cards and anything [relaxing together].”<sup>xciii</sup> Even today, Leseli's village of Makhalaneng ha Lekota is only accessible by road when the rivers are low enough to ford, and the dirt and gravel road that leads there is mostly used by cattle. In the 1950s and 1960s, according to the dominant political narrative, this village was supposedly cut off from outside contact. The people there were only supposed to be supporting the party affiliated with the local mission church. However, Leseli presents a very different picture: a village where political affiliation was a part of people's identity, but one that did not exclusively define people. The young people of Makhalaneng ha Lekota had unity within their village, and a collective identity despite their different political affiliations.

Breaches from the political parties' dominant narratives played out all across Lesotho in the 1950s and into the 1960s. While the parties tried to pigeon-hole their

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<sup>xciii</sup>Interview Raphael Leseli, Roma, 1/15/09.

supporters as a way of increasing their own electoral support, like the BCP explicitly appealing to Protestants, the MFP to people who wanted a strong executive monarch and the BNP to Catholics, Basotho played loose with the characterizations, and often crossed the boundary lines laid down by politicians and the newspapers. In part this was a natural outcome of the crude generalizations used to make sense of a burgeoning, confused and rapidly changing political situation. A larger part, however, was a conscious reaction from Basotho, especially the young, against the vested interests in Sotho society that benefited from the continued divisions of individual Basotho. Similar to the situation described by Peterson for young Kikuyu in Kenya, young Basotho attempted to create and use their own definitions of cultural unity. These definitions, however, often came into conflict with definitions of cultural unity put forth by the chieftaincy, the colonial government and political parties.<sup>xciv</sup> The conceptions of unity advocated by many young Basotho were, at the heart, attempts to play a role in changing political institutions as well as social and cultural practice at the local level.

These young Basotho through much of the 1950s found the stark political contention exhibited by the main parties baffling. Most everyone agreed that it was time for Britain to leave, and were working for that end. When asked why the political parties could not exist peacefully on the national level when there were no major problems between their supporters at the local level, Raphael Leseli responded: “I really don't know why...I really don't know.”<sup>xcv</sup> The unity that parties tried to create was based on their

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xcivDerek R. Peterson, *Creative Writing: Translation, Bookkeeping, and the Work of Imagination in Colonial Kenya* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004), 15-20.

xcvInterview Raphael Leseli, Roma, 1/15/09.



claims to speak for a unified Basotho nation that did not exist. Young Basotho identified with a national ideal, but they contested the forms this national unity took, and they wanted more than simply political unity. They attempted to forge their own unities at the local level in order to advance their own desires for economic development, more schools and social unity.<sup>xcvi</sup>

### **The Placing of the King and the Seeds of Constitutional Monarchy**

The struggle to install the heir to the position of *Morena e Moholo* spawned contention within the Basutoland Council and between the Regent and the Marematlou Party (MTP) by the late 1950s. It was, in some ways, a continuation of battles between senior chiefs for control over the office of *Morena e Moholo*, but also part of the struggle over gender and age and Sotho society. Much of the public debate called into question the legitimacy of having a woman acting as Regent, as well as highlighted the tension over when an older generation was willing to, or would be forced to, give way to a younger one. Similar conflicts had played out and continue to play out in politics throughout the region, from the Bhambatha uprising in Zululand in the early twentieth century, through the takeover of the ANC Executive by its Youth League members in the late 1940s, to current debates over the proper role for the ANC Youth League in a democratic South Africa.<sup>xcvii</sup> The debates over the placement of the heir revealed conflicting definitions of unity, as well as the importance of the category of youth to

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<sup>xcvi</sup>For more on this, see chapters four, five and six.

<sup>xcvii</sup>Carton, *Blood From Your Children*. For current ANC Youth League issues, see, for example, “Malema, Mines and the Youth League,” *Africa Confidential* 51 (2010).

political, social and cultural debates in Lesotho, would end with the resolution of the constitutional status of the monarch in 1959.

Constantine Bereng's young age, and the growing dissent within the Basutoland Council in the 1950s against colonial policy combined to make him a volatile symbol and a lightning rod for political contention. Connecting the administrative changes taking place with the future chief administrator of the territory, the Council debated repeatedly what an appropriate education for an heir-apparent would be. Various factions within the chieftaincy used the debates as opportunities to push for their visions of unity and the nation. There were few voices calling for Constantine Bereng to stay in Lesotho and not take higher education, but 'Mantsebo's supporters made their argument for her having the final say in educational matters on a national basis in 1957 saying: “It is the Basuto nation who have decided that Bereng should go to England” and therefore he needs to “comply with the wish of the Basuto.”<sup>xcviii</sup> 1957 was, of course, the year that the MTP formed so there were plenty of voices opposed to this proposal. In 1958, party founder Matete also invoked the nation in countering 'Mantsebo's claims, arguing that she was taking advantage of her high position to thwart the “views of the nation” whose people, he argued, wanted Constantine Bereng placed on the throne now.<sup>xcix</sup> This sort of debate plagued the heir's education, and highlighted how all sides claimed national support for their positions.

Questions regarding the placement of Constantine Bereng revolved, in large part,

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<sup>xcviii</sup>Councillor Maama 'Neko quoted, *Proceedings of the Special (1957) Session of the Basutoland Council, May, 1957* (Maseru: Government Printing, 1957).

<sup>xcix</sup>1958 *Basutland Council*.

around the definition of the age of maturity for youth in Lesotho. A major fear of many senior chiefs was that, in going to England, they risked Constantine Bereng coming back to Lesotho with an English wife, as Seretse Khama had recently done in Botswana. This would have been a major challenge to their conceptions of a united and “pure” Basotho chieftaincy, descended from Moshoeshe.<sup>c</sup> They also feared that a white, English wife would anger South Africa's government unnecessarily, lead to the exclusion of Constantine Bereng from Lesotho, and bring about another contentious and divisive succession crisis in the monarchy.

Concerns over the young age of Constantine Bereng resonated with many Basotho because of the important role migrancy played in their lives. Debates about when young men and women should be allowed to go work in South Africa, and what obligations these young migrants had to their home communities in Lesotho reverberated through families and villages on a regular basis.<sup>ci</sup> 'Mantsebo politicized the issue of the heir's youth in 1957, calling on chiefs and headmen to ignore Matete and his supporters. She was “bringing [Constantine Bereng] up on behalf of the people” and was following the advice of the Basutoland Council, which had “wisely voted [the nation's] money for the education of their future chief to prepare him for modern times.”<sup>cii</sup> Cloaking the debate over Constantine Bereng's education in the language of youth and the nation's desires allowed 'Mantsebo to avoid handing over the reins of power to her step-son for a longer

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c Councillor E.N.Tlale quoted, *Proceedings of the 50<sup>th</sup> (1954) Session of the Basutoland Council (18<sup>th</sup> September--9<sup>th</sup> October 1954)* (Maseru: Government Printers, 1955).

ci Murray, *Families Divided*.

cii NUL LC LC 18/9 1954 and 1957, Paramount Chief's Circulars, Circular No. 11, August 9, 1957.

period of time. It also allowed her to defend the chieftaincy's central role in political administration in the face of increasing calls in the late 1950s for democratic structures and decentralized authority.

Her direct appeals to chiefs and headmen through a Circular, however, showed the pressure 'Mantsebo was feeling from factions in the chieftaincy and commoner political groups agitating for the placement. In addition to warning chiefs against supporting these efforts, she accused the heir's supporters of “canvassing for his placing in the streets and on passenger buses as is done by those who canvas for elections,” effectively calling them political operatives besmirching the institution of chieftaincy.<sup>ciii</sup> By calling for the chieftaincy to close ranks around her authority, 'Mantsebo was looking for a unity in the chieftaincy that had never been present. She expected the chiefs to accede to her calls and rally the people under their control in a similar manner, a top-down conception of the nation in which senior chiefs would lead rather than junior chiefs and commoners in political parties. 'Mantsebo expected all Basotho to trust her and her advisers to place Bereng when they decided the time was proper. It is impossible to gauge exactly how strong sentiment ran for the placement of Bereng outside of the senior chieftaincy, but there was certainly a long-recorded history of conflict between senior chiefs, stretching back to the struggle for primacy and autonomy among Moshoeshoe's biological sons.<sup>civ</sup> There were, however, plenty of Basotho who rejected 'Mantsebo's call for unity and wanted her to step aside to allow the great-great-great grandson of Moshoeshoe to take power.

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ciii NUL LC LC 18/9 1954 and 1957, Paramount Chief's Circulars, Circular No. 11, August 9, 1957.

civ Eldredge, *Power in Colonial Africa*.

The debate over the proper age for Constantine Bereng to take over paralleled regional questions about the role youth should play in struggles for political representation and social change. He was only twenty years old and had just finished his first year at Oxford in 1958. Commoner member of the Basutoland Council Maqoaelane Hlekane argued that the heir would be just what the chieftaincy needed to continue necessary administrative reforms in Lesotho as he was a “younger person with a great deal of activity.”<sup>cv</sup> Coming on the heels of the ANC's active decade of political protest in South Africa, which was led, for the most part, by its Youth League, and the rapid expansion of the secondary school system in Lesotho during the 1950s, calls for a younger *Morena e Moholo* to serve as an “active” administrator and a vigorous symbol of the nation fit within larger regional and international trends of seeing youth as vectors for new political energy and ideas.

Whether youth should play this large of a role in political change was, however, contested vigorously in Lesotho as elsewhere. Supporters of 'Mantsebo referred to Constantine Bereng as a “child,” insinuating that his age and maturity were not yet where they needed to be for him to take up the highest position of authority in Basotho society.<sup>cvi</sup> By appealing strictly to Constantine Bereng's age, 'Mantsebo's chiefly supporters gave Matete an opening to portray the placement in terms of a national culture, arguing that, “there is no mention of the age ceiling of twenty-one” in Sotho custom. The prime determinant, they argued, for placement should be whether he could “differentiate

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cv Councillor Maqoaelane Hlekane quoted, *1958 Basutoland Council*.

cvi Councillor Azeal Makara quoted, *1958 Basutoland Council*.

between good and bad.<sup>cvii</sup>

The question of the placement also returned to the surface tensions over gender and the proper role of women in the chieftaincy in Lesotho. Not content to merely defend the heir, Matete also attacked the Regent for being “not conversant with the actual running of the offices” and not “aware of what is being done by her Advisers.”<sup>cviii</sup> This was part of his larger argument that female chiefs in Lesotho were weak and far more prone to be corrupted by unscrupulous advisers than their male counterparts—a patriarchal view of chieftainship which did not reflect the reality of life as lived experience in Lesotho. Despite this opposition, female chiefs were a central feature of the chieftaincy of Lesotho with at least 12.5% of all chiefs in 1955 being women, this percentage rising to almost a quarter by 1977.<sup>cix</sup> These individuals challenged these top-down, male-centric conceptions of unity daily in their villages and communities.

Despite the fierce pressure from Matete, other Basotho politicians and some Basotho commoners, 'Mantsebo maintained her hold on power until 1960. This was largely due to the unwillingness of the British colonial administration to get involved in succession issues with the chieftaincy, for fear of alienating their key allies at a time of political change. While not strongly supporting the idea of women in the chieftaincy, colonial administrators recognized that 'Mantsebo was capable of maintaining stability, no matter how much Matete and the placing faction argued that the unity of the Basotho nation demanded a younger, male *Morena e Moholo*. Schmidt has argued that colonial

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cvii Councillor S.S. Matete quoted, *1958 Basutoland Council*.

cviii *1958 Basutoland Council*.

cix Epprecht, “Women's 'Conservatism,’”<sup>34</sup>.

administrators solidified patriarchal, male control over women in Southern Rhodesia because they saw control over African women as being key to gaining the labor of African men.<sup>cx</sup> Late colonial Lesotho complicates this argument as the colonial administration showed that it valued stability over patriarchal control. The British were unwilling to displace 'Mantsebo as long as she had the support of enough senior chiefs to maintain law and order. The colonial state did not care who held the reins of power, as long as he or she were willing to meet Britain's demands for social and economic stability—a consideration that would continue to drive British and United States concerns with Africa in the Cold War, post-colonial era.<sup>cxii</sup>

The immediate effect of 'Mantsebo staving off pressure from Matete and his supporters was that she was still Regent at the time of the 1958 Constitutional discussions in London. With her advisers, like Leabua Jonathan, promoting her views in key negotiating positions, 'Mantsebo agreed to a constitution that would limit the powers of the monarchy by placing it in a Westminster-style constitutional arrangement, rather than the executive position it had enjoyed since the days of Moshoeshe I. Constantine Bereng would, thus, be the first Basotho monarch not to have full executive powers.<sup>cxii</sup> This eleventh-hour agreement was the last in a series of political debates and battles over the powers of the *Morena e Moholo* versus the rest of the chieftaincy during the colonial period. The lack of executive powers would remain a political flashpoint for Constantine

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cx Elizabeth Schmidt, "Patriarchy, Capitalism and the Colonial State in Zimbabwe," *Signs* 16 (1991): 732-56.

cxii For more on this, see chapters four and five.

cxii How this handover finally occurred and its ramifications are discussed in more depth in chapter three.

Bereng through the 1960s, both before and after the formal British handover.

Coming to power as a constitutional monarch in 1960 under the title *Motlotlehi*, or His Highness, Constantine Bereng took the name Moshoeshe II. He was appealing to the memory of his more famous ancestor, making his own argument about the form that Basotho unity should take and trying to limit questions about his age and qualifications for office. He spent his first years learning how to navigate domestic and international politics, but he continued to insist that the surest way to safeguard the Basotho nation during political transition was to give his office executive power. While independence was not guaranteed in 1960, the elections and new constitution heralded more political change, with opportunities for individuals and groups to envision a new political future and great changes to society. Arguments around unity would remain salient in the 1960s, and the wide range of visions around this concept showed that, for many Basotho, independence should be a process that encompassed more than simply political change. With a larger part of the population active in thinking about political developments and issues, discussions of independence in the 1960s would lead Basotho of all ages, but especially the young, to search for new ways to think about, act on and convince others of their vision for a unified Basotho nation.



### Chapter 3: Political Difference and the Nation, 1960-66

The 1940s saw the start of large scale decolonization worldwide with major nations like India and Pakistan gaining independence from Britain, but for most of Africa the real possibility of independence did not appear likely until the 1950s. Lesotho was quite late in achieving independence in 1966, but political consciousness for many Basotho was well developed and increasing by the early 1960s. The number of people actively taking part in discussions about nationalism and political change prior to the 1960s was small, but the worldwide sweep of anti-colonial sentiment drew into these conversations many new voices, especially those of the young.

The 1960s were a golden age for youth organizations in Lesotho and this coincided with the rise of multiple political parties and a sharp rise in the number of refugees in Lesotho. These related phenomena resulted in a veritable explosion of energy, publications and public discussion about independence, politics and institutional forms in an independent state. At no time before the 1964 Constitutional Conference in London, however, was there a deliberate path and timetable laid down for independence. This uncertain state of affairs was one of the impetuses for discussions of nationalism and national forms taking place in a wide range of youth organizations. Young Basotho growing up in the shadow of *apartheid* South Africa and its *Bantustans*, some literally bordering Lesotho, had to fear that perhaps their local projects where they were acting out their particular visions of development were as close as they would get to their conceptions of independence.<sup>i</sup>

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i Chapter four takes a deeper look at the relationship between development and nationalism.

Literature attempting to explain nationalism in Africa has often taken as a given that it was merely a reactionary force against colonialism without examining its roots beyond explicitly political parties and institutions, with Young going so far as defining nationalism as a “set of ideas fashioned in the heat of political battles.”<sup>ii</sup> While more recent studies of nationalism have attempted to broaden the discussion beyond the narrow confines of the political party, even studies like Muiu's work on institutional forms and Geiger's work on the role played by women in the development of Tanganyikan nationalism still assume that there was but one nationalism and that political parties were central to its creation and continuation.<sup>iii</sup> Studies by Straker in Guinea and Allman in Asante are more cognizant of the multiplicity of nationalisms at play in different parts of West Africa and also take into account streams of information from outside the particular state under study to better situate their actors in a trans-national context.<sup>iv</sup> Cooper has pointed out the danger in reading the post-1960s nation-state form backwards into the pre-independence era, but his work focuses mainly on the space available to African politicians for enacting their visions of the future. In doing this, he ignores the possibilities of people not directly involved in politics having national sentiments independent of the political process.<sup>v</sup>

Nationalism in Lesotho was actually broad-based and multi-variant. People,

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ii Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*. Young, “Evolving Modes of Consciousness,” 63.

iii Muiu, *Pitfalls*. Geiger, *TANU Women*.

iv Straker, *Guinean Revolution*. Allman, “Youngmen and the Porcupine.”

v Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 26.

especially young Basotho, were not buying into or rejecting a unitary nationalism put forward by political leaders, but were still actively experimenting with national ideals. Showing how multiple nationalisms could co-exist in 1960s Lesotho as state actors came into competition with individuals and groups trying to define the limits of the nation better explains how people can identify strongly with some elements of a nation and state while still feeling estranged from other parts of a national community and government.

Young Basotho were, like their peers across the globe, especially active in dynamic processes of political change.<sup>vi</sup> With a large percentage of Africa's population being young, youth has come to be salient in the literature, and has tended to define a social category of those between childhood and full adult status in their communities.<sup>vii</sup> Youth in Lesotho were constructively engaged in imagining and re-imagining the nation through their membership in youth organizations and in doing so, were engaged in their own style of nation building that could work with the government but could function independently.

Basotho youth actively participating in the formulation of the nation runs counter to claims that the African state has failed because people did not buy into the idea of the state or of nationalism.<sup>viii</sup> Basotho youth rejected the top-down nationalism offered by the political parties and government and worked instead for their own blend of hybrid political forms and space that borrowed ideas from political parties at home, refugees, South African liberation movements, 1960s youth movements and their own ideas for

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vi See chapter five for more on the Cold War and 1960s youth protest.

vii Abbink and van Kessel, *Vanguard or Vandals*. Waller, "Rebellious Youth."

viii Kieh, *Beyond State Failure*. Platteau, "Institutional Obstacles."

improved material, political and social conditions at home. As Cooper has argued, African states look like failures because the government at independence was unable and/or unwilling to incorporate the hopes and aspirations people had for independence with their own top-down program. Cooper's categorization of nationalism among African youth as “thin” does not hold in Lesotho as young Basotho strongly identified with a Basotho nation, but most of their political activity and dreaming took root outside of formal political processes.<sup>ix</sup> Urban or rural, middle-class or the children of subsistence farmers and migrant laborers, young Basotho saw themselves first and foremost as Basotho and were excited to be part of a new Lesotho.

Through their excitement, these youth were not just engaging in idle talk about independence and the nation but were actively forming political and social organizations to help work through their own ideas about state forms. Always in the background of these discussions was the specter of *apartheid* South Africa and its increasingly repressive legislation aimed at non-European populations. Ironically, just as the colonial system began to allow for greater political participation, Basotho across the border in South Africa found their opportunities for political, social and economic benefits threatened. The inter-connections between the two countries played out in the lives of individual Basotho as well as in the halls of high politics—many Basotho lived bifurcated lives split between relative social freedom, but grinding poverty at their homes in Lesotho and oppressive social conditions, but economic opportunities in South Africa. The closeness of the two countries colored every debate of note within Lesotho in the 1960s

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<sup>ix</sup> Cooper, “Possibility and Constraint,” 184-7.

and also was of prime importance to the decision makers in the Colonial Office in Britain when it came to negotiating independence for Lesotho. By 1964, the top goals of the Colonial Office were making sure that independence for Lesotho did not aggravate South Africa and that world opinion did not see Britain delivering a helpless, stillborn state into the arms of *apartheid*.

The concept of independence piqued the interest of many young Basotho, especially those with some schooling and those who had experienced life under *apartheid*. Young Basotho were not content to replace a top-down colonial system with a top-down, elite, Basotho-run system, and they challenged the nationalist visions of political parties not being inclusive enough of divergent views and of replicating damaging domestic social splits. Young Basotho in the 1960s seized the opportunities available to take part in the imagination and re-imagination of 'the nation' around independence and upon this blank slate they hoped to write their own story to overcome the problems they saw with the past.

### **1960: Elections, Refugees and Political Change**

The 1960s dawned with optimism and promise for Africa and the world. Seventeen new countries would emerge before the end of 1960 and the American presidential election that November would feature the country's youngest elected president, John F. Kennedy. In Lesotho, January 1960 marked the first ever elections to District Councils. The novelty of the elections lay in the power of these Councils to select the members of the National Council, which for the first time had legislative

power.<sup>x</sup> The elections gave a victory to the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP), but the elections were just the opening salvo of a busy few months in Lesotho that would impact political thinking and decision-making over the next six years.<sup>xi</sup>

Fast on the heels of the elections, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan made a brief stop in Maseru during his African tour on February 1<sup>st</sup>. The visit was short and largely ceremonial with the Prime Minister only meeting a few select chiefs and politicians, but its significance became apparent on February 3<sup>rd</sup> when Macmillan gave his famous “Wind of Change” speech in Cape Town that dramatically and publicly signaled British opposition to *apartheid*. At almost the exact time Macmillan rose to take the floor in Cape Town, in Maseru, a small town of less than 20,000 people, over 1000 people gathered at the National Council for a public resolution of the long simmering debate over when the heir, Constantine Bereng Seeiso, was ready to take over as the highest chief in Lesotho.<sup>xii</sup> Bereng had not completed his degree at Oxford University, but most of the Principal Chiefs of Lesotho and the vast majority of the large crowd that gathered to watch the proceedings supported his immediate placement and called for the Regent 'Mantsebo to step aside. The meeting dragged into a second day, but on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, 'Mantsebo reluctantly agreed to hand over power to her step-son.<sup>xiii</sup> While the world press focused on the implications of Macmillan's seeming call for support of African nationalist movements, six hundred miles away in Maseru, the people of Lesotho

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x For an in-depth accounting of these constitutional changes in Lesotho, see chapter two.

xi The Basutoland African Congress changed its name to the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) in 1957.

xii For a detailed history of the Regency of 'Mantsebo, see chapter two.

xiii Machobane, *Government and Change*, 271-5.

started preparing for the twenty-two year old great-great-great grandson of Moshoeshoe to ascend to the title of highest chief in Lesotho.

Moshoeshoe's Day was held, during colonial rule, on March 12<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the day Britain gave Moshoeshoe and the Basotho protection from the Afrikaner Republics. Moshoeshoe's Day in 1960 was about more than a celebration of the colonial arrangement as Constantine Bereng assumed his position as highest chief in Lesotho. He took the name Moshoeshoe II in an effort to evoke the memory of his great-great-great grandfather and channel his historical legacy as a uniter of disparate people and strong but fair ruler. His efforts were constrained, however, by being a constitutional, rather than an executive monarch. The constitution dictated that his title be *Motlotlehi*, "His Highness," rather than the title of his predecessors *Morena e Moholo*, "Paramount Chief." As a symbol of these changes, Moshoeshoe II's first official act as *Motlotlehi* was to join with the Resident Commissioner in opening the first session of the National Council.

The political changes taking place were of local significance in Lesotho, but they were not widely noticed outside the borders of the territory. Nine days later, however, on March 21<sup>st</sup>, the political and social situation in Lesotho took on more regional and international significance when South African police opened fire on a peaceful demonstration against the *apartheid* Pass Laws at Sharpeville outside Johannesburg. This action and the subsequent reaction in townships across the country led to the declaration of a State of Emergency in South Africa and the banning of the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and the African National Congress (ANC). Thousands fled South Africa, with some being political dissidents and others just fleeing the township violence

and chaos. Many of these refugees, of both kinds, ended up in Lesotho, as well as Swaziland and the Bechuanaland Protectorate. British government, from the Cabinet through the Colonial Office and the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, suddenly had to reconsider political changes in southern Africa in light of the volatile regional situation.<sup>xiv</sup>

The influx of refugees affected people across Lesotho as new arrivals settled throughout the country and also played a large role in increasing knowledge of political change and possibilities, especially among young Basotho. The refugees acted as alternate conduits for political ideas, especially as many of them after Sharpeville came from the nascent African middle-class, were educated and wanted to continue practicing their occupations as school teachers, lawyers and other professions in Lesotho. Mohlalefi Moteane remembered many of his better high school teachers as being South Africans who wanted to continue their teaching in a more free environment.<sup>xv</sup> A former National Secretary of the ANC Youth League and a member of the South African Communist Party, Joe Matthews fled to Lesotho in 1960 and received permission to not only settle in Basutoland from the government, but also received the right to practice law as there were no trained lawyers at that time in the country.<sup>xvi</sup> Some refugees settled in Maseru, but just as many took up residence with relatives or friends in smaller towns and rural villages.

The political refugees tended to attract the most governmental attention as they

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xiv NAUK CAB 129/101 Cabinet Memorandum from Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations on HCT refugees, May 25, 1960.

xv Interview Mohlalefi Moteane, Maseru, 5/27/09.

xvi NAUK CO 1048/561 V.J.G. Matthews (Joe): Political Refugees from South Africa in Basutoland, Background note on Matthews, January 1965.



had networks of contacts outside Lesotho, sometimes even extending to Britain. Elizabeth Mafekeng was a Trade Union organizer outside Cape Town when she was served with a banning order in 1959. Rather than face internal exile to the Northern Cape, she fled with her eleven children to the rural Mafeteng District of Lesotho. There she raised her children, helped organize the Lesotho Communist Party and received a permanent residence permit, aided in part by letters of support to the Secretary of State for the Colonies from trade unions across Britain and Europe.<sup>xvii</sup>

However, the majority of refugees in Lesotho had no connections beyond South Africa and were not professionals. A significant proportion of those coming across the border were young South Africans looking for educational opportunities and the schools of Lesotho became a site for political discussions and even tentative attempts at political action, like school strikes. Michael Mateka, who would go on to serve as the Educational Secretariat for the Catholic Church in Lesotho in the 1980s, remembered a series of strikes in the late 1950s and early 1960s that were “engineered and held by students from [South Africa] who happened to recruit some of the students from [Lesotho].”<sup>xviii</sup> Chaka Ntsane was a friend of Moeletsi Mbeki, the son of jailed ANC leader Govan Mbeki, who came to Lesotho to live with his Sotho aunt and attend high school. Ntsane paid more attention to South African political events after this friendship started and he even read the one treasured letter Govan was able to send from Robben Island to Moeletsi.<sup>xix</sup>

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xviiNAUK, CO 1048/136 Mrs. E. Mafekeng, Refugee from Republic of South Africa in Basutoland, Background memo to Sir John Martin from Monson, March 28, 1962.

xviiiInterview Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, Leribe District, 11/26/08.

xix Interview Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 2/24/09.

For all the political ideas that these refugees brought, however, the major political concerns in Lesotho were still local in the 1960s. The interplay between older conceptions of the Basotho state under Moshoeshoe and newer ideas for political independence was broadened as it came into contact with the ferment of South African political activism and left many Basotho, and especially the young, thinking critically about the relationship between their own dreams for independence and the platforms of political parties.

Rather than ignoring the state, as Davidson suggests happened throughout Africa, or rejecting the idea of a state based on the “*un*-African model” of “autonomous, individual rights-bearing citizens,” as the Comaroffs suggest, young Basotho were experimenting with nationalism and alternate conceptions of the nation through their own grass-roots, bottom-up actions.<sup>xx</sup> They did not see nationalism merely as a “discourse of protest,” as Young argues, but rather saw it as a constructive force for creating and rebuilding institutions to create opportunities for individual advancement and economic development for the country as a whole.<sup>xxi</sup> The disillusionment of young Basotho came not from their rejection of the state but rather the inability of the new state to adequately respond to the hopes and aspirations of its new citizens, a by-product of top-down nationalism.<sup>xxii</sup> Youth disillusionment did not, however, mean that they stopped caring about their country and the nation; their nationalism was not “thin.”

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xx Davidson, *Black Man's Burden*, 238. Comaroff and Comaroff, “Postcolonial Politics,” 127.

xxi Young, *African Colonial State*, 238.

xxii Again, this echoes the work of Cooper, “Possibility and Constraint.”

## Young People Thinking About Independence

The 1960 elections for the National Council were a victory for the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP), but because half of the chamber still consisted of the Principal Chiefs of Lesotho, members appointed by *Motlotlehi* Moshoeshe II and four British civil servants, the BCP was a minority party, unable to govern. They easily outdistanced, however, the Royalist Marematlou Party (MTP) and the Catholic-supported Basutoland National Party (BNP). The biggest tangible power the BCP received from winning the elections was at the district level, where elected District Councils controlled local road-building and maintenance, had a greater say in education and were responsible for providing some social services.<sup>xxiii</sup> The constitution did not solve or even resolve the administrative conflict between having a locally elected government and a hereditary chieftaincy responsible for local administration. It was merely intended by the Colonial Office to be a medium-term solution to the calls for more local government. Unhappily for many Basotho, who were already envisioning independence, the report stated that Lesotho “cannot in the foreseeable future become a completely independent state.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

The political parties did some campaigning for the 1960 elections, but turnout was low because only men were eligible to vote, migrants did not return home to cast ballots and campaign efforts were largely confined to the small road system in the lowlands. Only 24% of eligible voters cast a ballot, around 35,000 people.<sup>xxv</sup> The elections were still significant as they marked the first public democratic effort in Lesotho. With all

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xxiii *Report on Constitutional Reform*, 56-66.

xxiv *Report on Constitutional Reform*, 58.

xxv Gill, *Short History*, 212-4.

parties arguing for early self-government, the elections brought political consciousness and knowledge about the idea of independence to the attention of many in Lesotho, especially the young.<sup>xxvi</sup> Moeketsi Lesitsi, who was in his late twenties in 1960 and just about to embark on a long career as a teacher, identified those elections as his introduction to the concept and possibilities of independence.<sup>xxvii</sup> This period marked the start of political consciousness for most young Basotho under the age of thirty.<sup>xxviii</sup> Some older Basotho, like thirty-six year old Alexander Sekoli, had already attended political events and had a concept of what independence might entail, but prior to 1960 politics were the preserve of a small segment of the population.<sup>xxix</sup> Still, the intensification of rhetoric in the newspapers and direct exposure to politicians and rallies around the 1960 elections played an important role in getting people thinking about what it might mean for Lesotho to become an independent country. Increased political awareness resulted in many young Basotho searching out information on political matters, which led to their dissatisfaction with the existing political divisions of the country throughout the decade of the 1960s.

In part this was an elite project, as the young Basotho with the best access to information about nationalist movements in other African countries and across the globe were those in secondary schools. Such information was not just restricted to elite

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xxvi Weisfelder, *Political Contention*, 14-23.

xxvii Interview Moeketsi Lesitsi, St. Monica's Mission, 11/26/08.

xxviii This was echoed in an interview with Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, Leribe District, 11/26/08, among others.

xxix Interview Alexander Sekoli, St. David's Mission, 11/13/08.

institutions, however, as primary schools also acted as conduits for information, and the two main church-run, Sesotho-language newspapers frequently ran articles about decolonization taking place elsewhere in Africa and the world.<sup>xxx</sup> However, with many teachers coming to the secondary schools from South Africa and overseas missions, secondary schools were a good access point for learning about events and ideas being discussed elsewhere for the increasing number of young Basotho fortunate enough to have access to them. Mohlalefi Moteane was typical of these students. Starting in 1962 at Peka High School, a school that the Anglicans and Paris Evangelical Mission Society (PEMS) jointly ran, Moteane recalled a fertile environment for learning about politics and experimenting with critical thinking.<sup>xxxi</sup> Students would attend rallies held by all the parties and there was “lots of talk and of course lots of reading materials that we received in the form of newspapers.”<sup>xxxii</sup> The school allowed students to go to rallies, but the headmaster had a policy forbidding the students from asking questions or joining any of the parties. In this way the students could observe the important political events taking place in their country and form their own conclusions without adversely impacting their studies.

Most schools, regardless of their denominational affiliation, prohibited their students from joining political organizations, but this did not keep young Basotho from thinking about their personal futures and the impending independence of Lesotho.

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xxxInterviews with Mohlalefi Moteane, Maseru, 5/27/09 and Tseliso Ramakhula, Lower Thamae, 3/1/09.

xxxiThe PEMS changed its name to the Church of Basutoland when it became an autonomous church in 1964 and then to the Lesotho Evangelical Church in 1966 at independence.

xxxiiInterview Mohlalefi Moteane, Maseru, 5/27/09.

Basotho students saw the potential for independence to “make us one, where we would begin to see that our fate was in our unity as one people” and hoped to “develop the country, be able to manage affairs and do what we thought was good as the people who were born in the country.”<sup>xxxiii</sup> Neither of these goals was incompatible with the programs of the political parties. In fact, they mirrored the main rhetorical and philosophical lines of the major parties quite closely. However, these youth hoped to see opportunity for themselves and their peers to help shape what independence would look like, and they saw the political process as interfering with this goal.

These processes were not taking place in isolation. Young Basotho were thinking about independence at a time that featured the final death throes of the great colonial empires, the 1960s belief in the miracles of modern science and technology to allow for giant leaps in the development levels of countries quickly, and the start of the *Pogo*-led armed struggle and *Umkhonto we Sizwe's* sabotage campaign against the *apartheid* regime in South Africa. Simon Phafane, a committed royalist, and some of his peers sought out Soviet literature in Maseru when he traveled between his home and school in the early 1960s because it was written simply and had a militant language “which young people, many of them, enjoy.”<sup>xxxiv</sup> Prominent South African refugees like Potlako Leballo also helped ensure wider Basotho exposure to worldwide and regional events.<sup>xxxv</sup> Born in Lesotho, though raised in South Africa, Leballo helped co-found both the BCP in 1952

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xxxiiiInterview Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, Leribe District, 11/26/08 and Selborne Mohlalisi, Morija, 11/10/08.

xxxivInterview Simon Phafane, Maseru, 11/3/08.

xxxvSee chapter two for more on Leballo.

and the PAC in 1959. He returned to Lesotho, with much of the PAC leadership, in 1962 after their detention in the wake of the Sharpeville Massacre and subsequent round-up of PAC members. Leballo and the PAC had extremely close ties with the BCP, even sharing office space in the same building near the Maseru bus stop.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Leballo and the PAC's provocations against South Africa, including giving interviews announcing that *Pogo* was going to initiate armed uprisings against whites in South Africa from Maseru in 1963 was the impetus for a crackdown by the South African authorities, using intelligence gleaned from the Basutoland police.<sup>xxxvii</sup> While Leballo left Lesotho on a one-way visa in 1964, never to return to the land of his birth, the PAC and *Pogo* continued to operate from Basutoland. A failed public prosecution by the colonial government in 1965 of the PAC leadership still in Lesotho garnered much local publicity and ensured that many Basotho had exposure to and understood the case for violence against the *apartheid* regime.<sup>xxxviii</sup> So Basotho, young and old, had ample opportunity to gain exposure to political thought and action, and a particularly radicalizing one at that.

Schools, where young Basotho were able to experiment with political ideas, were also places to learn about the limitations of political expression, as their teachers were teaching in an atmosphere of fear and suspicion. Teachers feared being outed as active members of a political party by both foreign missionaries and Basotho who held posts as

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xxxvi Kwandiwe Merriman Kondlo. *'In the Twilight of the Azanian Revolution': The Exile History of the Pan-Africanist Congress, 1960-1990*. D. Litt Thesis, University of Johannesburg, 2003. Chapters 3 and 4.

xxxvii Arianna Lissoni, "The PAC in Basutoland, c. 1962-1965," *South African Historical Journal* 62 (2010): 54-77.

xxxviii The connections between the PAC and BCP and their relation with the BNP government before and after independence was examined in chapter two and will be looked at in more detail in chapter five.

school managers or educational secretaries for the missions. British colonial policy throughout Africa attempted to keep politics out of schools as a way of stifling nationalistic sentiment, but colonial efforts in Lesotho were heightened by the presence of *apartheid* South Africa, and the fear that too much nationalism could lead South Africa to intervene in Lesotho.<sup>xxxix</sup> Moeketsi Lesitsi, who taught at a variety of Catholic schools in the Leribe District, remembered that teachers tried to keep their own political views private, even going so far as to be careful about what color clothing they wore so that administrators could not accuse them of pursuing a political agenda on school grounds.<sup>xl</sup> Rebecca Tlelima, teaching at an Anglican primary school in the rural Mafeteng District, lied to her school manager about her membership in the BCP because “he could have chased me away from the school [fired her].”<sup>xli</sup> These were not just idle fears, as Tseliso Ramakhula discovered. He joined the Youth Wing of the BCP when undergoing training at Fort Cox Agricultural College in South Africa. In 1965 he was teaching at the Agricultural College in Maseru when the Basotho National Party won the pre-independence elections. Shortly after, he was sacked and the only work he could find was in the prisons instructing inmates in agriculture.<sup>xlii</sup> From incidents like this, students understood that the connection between the churches and politics had led to much of the tension they witnessed or heard about.

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xxxix This extended to both expatriate and local teachers. Roger Fieldhouse, “Cold War and Colonial Conflicts in British West African Adult Education, 1947-1953,” *History of Education Quarterly* 24 (1984): 359-71.

xl Interview Moeketsi Lesitsi, St. Monica's Mission, 11/26/08.

xli Interview Rebecca Tlelima, Rothe ha Masite, 4/6/09.

xlii Interview Tseliso Ramakhula, Lower Thamae, 3/1/09.



The colonial government certainly encouraged a climate of suspicion about political parties, with special suspicion reserved for the BCP because of its threatening Pan-African ties. The government fired three teachers in 1955 from the premier institution in the country, Basutoland High School, for publishing criticisms of the colonial government from school grounds. The Education Department went further in 1960, blaming the BCP in all but name for school strikes, despite the official commission returning no direct evidence of political influence on the students.<sup>xliii</sup>

The majority of school managers, ministers and priests in the mission outstations and schools were Basotho, however, and these people, taking their cues from Maseru, were mainly responsible for perpetuating political suspicion. While most young Basotho wanted self-government, they were deeply disappointed by the inability of the political parties and 'nationalism' to bridge social divisions within Lesotho. Michael Mateka, a twenty-seven year old Catholic teacher in 1966, speaking about the battles between political parties, was disappointed that "independence seemed to have hardened what should have been opposition into enemies and enemies is this: you are against me, you are my enemy. When you are my enemy I bring you down by hook or crook."<sup>xliv</sup> Even people who were intimately involved in politics, like Peter Khamane, lamented that the political parties continued and even encouraged a religious split among Basotho: "The politics came to set brother against brother, with clashes against the brother. Which

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xliiiB.M. Khakhetla, "Three Teachers Expelled," *Mohlabani* 1 (1955). NUL Institute of Education (hereafter IE) ED/F43/0022 *Report of the Commission Enquiring Into the Disturbances at the Lerotholi Technical School and Basutoland High School 1960*, August 9, 1960.

xlivInterview Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, Leribe District, 11/26/08.

means that we did not really have any idea what are the politics.”<sup>xlv</sup> Youth disillusion with political parties was not a rejection of nationalism or independence, but their disgust with political elites heightened desires to find a new political way that did not rely on the top-down approaches of their elders.

### **Youth Organizations and Bottom-up Nationalism**

Political change picked up momentum in the 1960s in Lesotho after the National Council gained legislative powers in 1960. They passed a resolution calling for self-government in 1961, the earliest time mandated by the 1959 constitution and, as a result, *Motlotlehi* Moshoeshe II appointed a Constitutional Commission to take oral evidence and draft a report. The Commission returned its report to *Motlotlehi* and the National Council in 1963 and, after a spirited debate about its proposals, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Duncan Sandys, agreed to meet with representatives from all the main political parties in April and May 1964 for constitutional talks. These talks resulted in a tentative timetable for independence with preparations for pre-independence elections supposed to be complete by late 1964 or early 1965, followed by a year in which the British Resident Commissioner would govern in conjunction with the elected Basotho government.<sup>xlvi</sup>

The main sticking point of the negotiations was the status of young *Motlotlehi* Moshoeshe II, who was asking to be the head of the security forces. Sandys was

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xlv Interview Peter Khamane, Ha QhuQhu, 10/29/08.

xlvi *Basutoland Constitutional Conference: Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Colonies by Command of Her Majesty May 1964* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1964).

unwilling to deal with the issue, saying it was a matter to be resolved at the time of final constitutional talks before independence, as this power was being reserved for the interim year in the hands of the Resident Commissioner.<sup>xlvii</sup> By the final independence negotiations in June of 1966, the British government had changed from Conservative to Labour, meaning Sandys was no longer in office and the speed with which Britain was wanting to let go of its remaining colonial possessions had increased. The Colonial Office had trouble finding room for all of its independence conferences in May and June of that year with Basutoland competing for official space and secretaries with delegations from Barbados and St. Kitts, both in London around the same time.<sup>xlviii</sup> Whether through a lack of knowledge from the change in administration or the lack of desire on the part of Britain to delay independence for Lesotho any longer, the promise to re-visit the status of *Motlotlehi* was never kept and he became a constitutional monarch bound by the terms of the 1958 constitution to which his step-mother, the Regent 'Mantsebo, had agreed.

Meanwhile, the Interim Constitution of 1964 called for elections that were scheduled for April, 1965. All three political parties immediately ramped up their campaigning as the stakes were real: the winner would get to take Lesotho to independence. The campaign featured a three-way contest, much mud-slinging at rallies and through the newspapers, and a violent incident in the rural community of Rothe in October 1964 that saw chiefly supporters of the Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP) ambush a convoy of cars carrying BCP supporters to a campaign rally, killing four. This incident really sapped support from the MFP as the violence at a peaceful political rally

xlviiMachobane, *Government and Change*, 297-300.

xlviiiNAUK CO 1048/897 Basutoland Independence Conference.

shocked many Basotho, making the elections a two-way contest between the BCP, representing a stronger link with South African political groups, and the BNP, arguing for the need for closer ties with the South African government while still rejecting *apartheid*. Strong financial support from South Africa and West Germany and a last-minute donation of 100,000 bags of grain from South African Prime Minister Verwoerd to Leabua Jonathan, the leader of the BNP, to distribute to drought-stricken Lesotho, helped turn a close election to the BNP and they won the slimmest majority in the new Parliament with thirty-one out of sixty seats.<sup>xlix</sup>

The South Africans saw in Jonathan a pliant leader who was not a threat to the development of their system of *apartheid*, but also someone who was willing to continue the British policy of not allowing the armed wings of the ANC and the PAC to operate freely from Lesotho.<sup>1</sup> Verwoerd rewarded Jonathan for his tacit support by meeting with him personally, the only independent African head of state with which Verwoerd met, on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1966, only three days before his assassination. The West Germans, on the other hand, were stridently anti-communist and supported Jonathan in hopes of seeing his government win and set up a good business climate that would benefit German companies.<sup>li</sup>

While political interest in Lesotho ran high, the issue of what to do with all the Basotho living in South Africa was of extreme importance. The BCP had established

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xlix Weisfelder, *Political Contention*, 68, 107-8.

1 Lissoni, "The PAC in Basutoland."

li Brigitte Schultz and William Hansen, "Aid or Imperialism? West Germany in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 22 (1984): 287-313.

branches in most of the main migrant townships on the Witwatersrand from its early days and had an organizing edge among these mainly male migrants. However, its leaders were banned from South Africa because of their close connections with the armed wing of the PAC, so the only party that had access to migrant Basotho during the campaign was the BNP, whose leaders were more interested in working with the South African authorities. In the end, while interest ran high among Basotho migrants in South Africa, most could not make it home for the vote, as their jobs would not allow it and the political parties agreed that there was no fair system for proxy votes and so only those Basotho in the country in April 1965 at the time of the election could vote.<sup>lii</sup> Heavy interest, plus the inclusion of women in the electorate, meant that the number of voters increased from 35,000 in 1960 to 260,000 in 1965 as Basotho of all ages, sexes and occupations—farmers and teachers, homemakers and civil servants, herdsman and store clerks—came out to cast their ballots in an election that would determine the immediate future of their new country.<sup>liii</sup>

So on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1965, the BNP took over the reins of government, in the hands of Basotho for the first time since 1868. The colonial government reserved for itself control over defense, internal security, external affairs and the retention of public servants during this time, but otherwise the new government was free to pass laws and set policy.<sup>liv</sup> The British were initially skeptical of the ability of the BNP government to handle the more politically astute BCP in Parliamentary maneuvering and possible street protests or

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lii Interview Motsapi Moorosi, Maseru East, 3/12/09.

liii Weisfelder, *Political Contention*, 113, Part III.

liv NAUK CO 1048/897 Basutoland Independence Conference.

outbreaks of political violence. By the time Jonathan came to London in November 1965 for discussions, the Colonial Office argued that as long as the BNP government could get its independence resolutions through Parliament in Maseru and the internal security system remained calm, Lesotho was on a course for independence in 1966.<sup>lv</sup>

Most young Basotho could only follow these high political machinations as closely as the newspaper coverage allowed. They continued on with their lives—going to school, dreaming of getting good marks on their exams, going to the university, taking up a profession, supporting their family, getting land on which to farm, marrying and other more mundane, daily concerns.<sup>lvi</sup> Instead of relying on political parties and independence negotiations to provide them with economic opportunities, young Basotho turned to social opportunities available to them in larger numbers than ever before in Lesotho to develop their own ideas about the nation. The British colonial system had been pumping money into development projects in the years after World War II to justify its continued existence. This meant an increase in the amount of money put into social engineering and infrastructure projects across Africa and the Caribbean, primarily through the Colonial Welfare and Development (CDW) Act of 1940.

In Lesotho the CDW money was primarily spent on projects to combat soil erosion, rebuild aging primary schools and expand the secondary and tertiary education systems. The final report from colonial Basutoland in October 1966 admitted that these efforts were “late and small” as “Basutoland was for a long period neglected.”<sup>lvii</sup> While it

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lv NAUK CO 1048/867 Visit of Basutoland Delegation to London Nov. 1965 for Constitutional Talks (Nov 22 to Dec 1, 1965), Briefing for Secretary of State for Colonies, November 22, 1965.

lvi Interview Motsapi Moorosi, Maseru East, 3/12/09.

lvii NAUK CO 1048/892 Basutoland: Final Report Before Independence.

was too late to make a large impact on the macroeconomic situation in Lesotho, the late infusion of cash resulted in a golden era for youth organizations in Lesotho. The expanded school system provided fertile ground for established youth groups like the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and Homemakers Association to find a new captive audience and for newer groups like the Lesotho Work Camps Association, Red Cross and Cadets to develop a devoted following. The colonial government, churches, schools and community groups were all eager to reach out to youth, but because these groups did not have a large cadre of trained organizers, young Basotho had much freedom to set policy, organize activities and operate free from strict governmental oversight. The period from about 1955 to 1970 represented a unique period of freedom for young Basotho in youth organizations, with wide latitude to experiment with and act out their own ideas of nationalism through the 1960s.

The churches were only too happy to increase their sponsorship of youth organizations with government assistance in Lesotho. The Catholic Church was a major sponsor of Boy Scout and Girl Guide troops and allowed the government to move Peter Khamane from his position as a primary school teacher to being a full-time Boy Scout organizer in 1957.<sup>lviii</sup> The PEMS and the Anglican Church also sponsored similar youth organizations at their schools, but in the 1950s, the PEMS decided that it needed to do more to reach out to youth than merely building organizations in the schools. They first appointed a Youth Organizer in 1950, but it was the arrival of the dynamic J. Zimmerman, a Swiss PEMS missionary, in 1955 that kick-started their efforts to reach

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lviiiInterview Peter Khamane, Ha QhuQhu,10/29/08.

out into new arenas.

Zimmerman took his new position and attempted to meet youth where they were instead of focusing solely on groups that “follow the example of the State, which often uses Scouting, or some other youth movement, as a means of moulding the citizens it needs.”<sup>lix</sup> The centerpiece of this youth-centered policy was the creation of the *Mophato oa Morija*, an ecumenical youth center that served both as the coordinating center of the PEMS's efforts among youth and as a site for special training camps for youth leaders of all denominations in Morija. The *Mophato*, which is the Sesotho word for initiation school, broke ground and opened its doors in 1956 to serve as a resource center for youth leaders and to “offer training that empowers Basotho youth based on their culture.”<sup>lx</sup> The *Mophato* was designed to operate as an ecumenical center despite being built by the PEMS church and also was quite a popular venue for groups that operated in both South Africa and Lesotho as it was free from *apartheid* restrictions on groups meeting.<sup>lxi</sup> The ecumenical and international focus of the *Mophato* were important as they allowed young Basotho to connect with others of similar interest across denominational and political lines and served as an example of Basotho pulling together for a common cause. The *Mophato* served as an ideal as well as a physical space for young Basotho through the late 1950s and 1960s.

Gabriel Tlaba started his university training at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS) in 1967 as part of his training to be a priest. The

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lix J. Zimmerman, “The Church and Youth,” *Basutoland Witness* 11 (1957).

lx MMA, *Mophato oa Morija*, unpublished history of the *Mophato*, Teboho Mokotjo, trans., no Date.

lxi “Youth Leader's Course at Morija,” *Lesotho News* July 9, 1968.



university, located in Lesotho at Roma, started in 1945 as a small Catholic training school, Pius XII College. The High Commissioner took it over in 1964, with financial assistance from the Ford Foundation, and turned it into one of the best regional opportunities for non-white students looking to get higher education. It attracted students from as far afield as Zambia and Malawi. Tlaba had been part of the Boy Scouts during primary and high school, holding the post of Scoutmaster and earning his Queen's Scout at St. Theresa's Minor Seminary in Roma during his last year of high school. When he arrived at UBLS, however, he left the Boy Scouts behind and became active in the University Christian Movement (UCM), a group of similar minded students looking at “how we could live our Christian life amongst the political situation and struggles that we were in at that time.”<sup>lxii</sup> The UCM at UBLS was an ecumenical, student-led and run Christian group, which had close ties to UCM branches at South African universities. The UCM was formed by the dissolution of the Student Christian Movement in South Africa over issues of racial integration. Many of the future leaders of the Black Consciousness Movement, such as Steve Biko, were active in it.

The UCM worked to “bring about a more equitable and just society, in accordance with the obligations imposed on us as Christians and the opportunities, resources and liberty given to us and all men by the Gospel of Christ” and to foster Christian unity “despite denominational differences.”<sup>lxiii</sup> It was an organization that easily crossed

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lxii Interview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 10/28/08.

lxiii T. Calvin Cook, “From Breakwater to Open Sea,” *Pro Veritate* 6 (1967): 10. Southern Africa Committee of the University Christian Movement in New York, “Student Movements in South Africa: A Study of Three Student Movements Illustrating Student Problems and the Government's Response,” *Notes and Documents*, 16/70 (May 1970). Accessed June 10, 2010. <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/misc/stude123.html>

political boundaries with the students in Lesotho not just interacting with their foreign peers at the university, but actively seeking out contacts with their counterparts in South Africa. It also presented a space for students like Tlaba and his peers to seek out a workable nationalism that they could use in their everyday lives. Tlaba and his peers were not explicit in their public rhetoric about their work being part of a nation-building project, but they were dreaming in terms of national liberation and individual freedoms. They tended to discuss “political ideas...how we were going to conscientize our people that they could still be Christians and feel that type of [political idea].”<sup>lxiv</sup> The idea of a “just and equitable” society for non-white students in 1960s southern Africa was a radical idea and a strong political statement about what these young people saw as the future of their own country and of the region as a whole. They were not mimicking the words of political parties, nor were they content to merely get a secure job as their university education would have allowed, but they were, like their young peers in South Africa, Europe and America, trying to bring about the changes necessary to form their ideal state.<sup>lxv</sup>

The UCM at UBLS was far from the only ecumenical Christian group in Lesotho. Most secondary schools and training institutions had branches of the Student Christian Movement (SCM) that continued to operate because they lacked the racial divisions that had destroyed their South African counterparts. The *Mophato* was a major supporter of these groups, bringing their leaders in for training on a regular basis and giving them

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lxiv Interview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 10/28/08.

lxv The connections between youth in Lesotho, youth protest and the 1960s are explored in more depth in chapter five.

opportunities to liaise with their peers from around the country.<sup>lxvi</sup> An Easter conference in 1964 at the *Mophato* drew over 70 young Basotho to commune and develop strategies for opening their groups to more young people.<sup>lxvii</sup> The strength of these groups was that they were student-run and so the initiatives and agenda evolved in a grassroots fashion. Despite missionary desire for the groups to be non-political, their members saw them as a place to figure out how to blend faith and political action. A missionary account of the Easter conference reported that “while everyone [in Basutoland] is discussing independence and politics...there was, amongst some of the students at least, a very real desire to have a deeper understanding of their Christian faith,” with the clear implication that many, if not most, of the young Basotho who participated in this conference saw the SCM as a place where they could combine their faith and their politics in the lead-up to independence.<sup>lxviii</sup> Magaziner argues that similar groups in the 1970s in South Africa drew on their Christian faith to envision a new political future despite bleak current conditions.<sup>lxix</sup> Their peers in Lesotho were doing this at the same time as, and at times in conjunction with, young South Africans. Though the problems they faced in Lesotho were of a different nature, the basic premise was the same: how to bring about political change using faith-based activities. The ecumenical nature of these groups shows that young Christian Basotho were envisioning a 'nation' free from the denominational

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lxviThe government continued to support the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and SCM even after independence. NUL IE ED/F19/0012 *Lesotho: Ministry of Education and Culture: Annual Report of the Permanent Secretary for the Year 1966 and a General Survey of Progress and Development in the Triennium 1964-66* (Maseru: Government Printing, 1967).

lxviiRuth Schoch, “SCM Easter Conference,” *Basutoland Witness* 67 (August 1964).

lxviiiSchoch, “Easter Conference.”

lxixMagaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*.

rivalries of the past and the political contention this had engendered over the years in Lesotho.

Tlaba claimed that these ecumenical Christian groups were egalitarian, with student participants seeing themselves as “equals.” That a priest-in-training was willing and able to participate in ecumenical groups that blended religion and politics shows that, while the Catholic Church had a reputation for being a radically conservative political force behind the BNP, its adherents had the opportunity to be flexible.<sup>lxx</sup> The members of the SCM and the UCM came together to talk about what a non-racial, post-colonial southern Africa might look like and what their individual roles might be in both bringing these dreams to fruition and taking advantage of them when they came to pass. A major issue for Tlaba and his peers was how to reconcile the injustices of the *apartheid* capitalist system (and its attendant migrant labor issues in Lesotho) without resorting to Marxism, which they saw as being in conflict with their faith.<sup>lxxi</sup> They grappled with the issue of how to stay true to Scripture while also working for economic justice and political change.<sup>lxxii</sup> Being student-led and run, the groups provided a safe space for young Basotho to talk through these ideas without fear of censure from older Basotho more invested in the rigid ideological inflexibility and the top-down nationalism of the major political parties.

Religious groups were not the only places that provided this space for young Basotho to experiment with their own ideas for the future. Another organization that

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<sup>lxx</sup> Interview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 10/28/08.

<sup>lxxi</sup> Chapter four explores development and connections with the nation in more depth.

<sup>lxxii</sup> Interview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 10/28/08.

gave its members space to talk through ideas of independence and put these ideas into action was the Lesotho Workcamps Association (LWA). This group, formed in the mid-1960s by students at the university and funded through the Department of Community Development, organized service oriented trips, bringing together a number of secondary and tertiary students during school holidays to build infrastructure in local communities around the country. Groups like the LWA, in addition to being popular because of the general hope for better prospects following independence, fit well within the rhetoric of youth volunteerism in the 1960s. They were similar in aim to groups like the Peace Corps from the USA and International Voluntary Service from the UK who sent young volunteers abroad to work on development projects and integrate themselves into local communities.<sup>lxxiii</sup> Both of these organizations, and others, were active in Lesotho by 1967.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

Chaka Ntsane finished high school on the eve of independence in 1965 and started his university training in agronomy at UBLS in 1966. He, like many of his peers, hoped independence would bring more economic opportunities for all Basotho. Ntsane joined LWA during high school and became a leader in the group at the university. He participated in many projects including helping to build a health clinic at Liphiring in the rural Mohale's Hoek District. He attributed the willingness of students, sometimes upwards of fifty at a time, to spend their school holidays working in the rural areas to a youthful idealism. They were always “talking about development [and] talking about

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lxxiiiChapter five looks at the relationships between international volunteers and Basotho youth.

lxxiv“International Voluntary Service,” *Leselinyana la Lesotho* June 1967. “A Qualified Teacher is Needed,” *Moeletsi oa Basotho* 36, August 10, 1968. Both translated by Teboho Mokotjo.

responsibility” and they felt a real need to “contribute to the situation in our own land [because] if we didn't start when we were young, we would have to do things in our middle age that we should have done in our youth.”<sup>lxxv</sup>

The LWA gave wings to youthful idealism. Almost all young Basotho, and plenty of older ones as well, expected independence to bring material improvement to the country. Maleseka Kena hoped independence would bring more roads and schools, while Motsapi Moorosi wanted to see “infrastructure, the roads, farms, agriculture, you name it.”<sup>lxxvi</sup> The LWA allowed young Basotho the chance to act out their dreams for the country and put their visions for Lesotho into action through activities like building rural clinics, constructing latrines and erecting windmills in Quthing District and helping to build school rooms in Maseru District.<sup>lxxvii</sup> In the LWA, students came together across denominational and political lines to work for the grass-roots development of Lesotho. This was no mean feat as the university was among the most politically polarized places in the country. All the major churches vied for access to the students and both the colonial government and the post-independence government worried that university students were a source of unrest.<sup>lxxviii</sup> Despite these efforts from the churches for access and the fears of the government, university students like Ntsane and Tlaba bridged the political divide between students and showed dedication to putting their ideals for grass-

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lxxvInterview Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 2/24/09.

lxxviInterviews Maleseka Kena, Tsoelike Auplas, 17/3/09 and Motsapi Moorosi, Maseru East, 12/3/09.

lxxvii“Voluntary Service in Quthing,” *Moeletsi oa Basotho* 36 August 10, 1968. Translated by Teboho Mokotjo.

lxxviii“Students Given Lesotho Warning,” *Rand Daily Mail* December 10, 1968.

roots development and politics into action.

The inclusive attitude of groups like the SCM, UCM and LWA was quite the opposite of the top-down political parties of the time. The willingness of youth to overlook labels and work together across denominational and political lines shows that their visions of nationalism and politics were more inclusionary and grass-roots oriented than the political parties in Lesotho. While young Basotho certainly attended political rallies in good numbers and took home some of the messages from these meetings, they also rejected the partisan view of the nation that the parties put forward. Young Basotho like Chaka Ntsane and Raphael Leseli, who respectively joined the BNP and BCP youth wings, were able to maintain their membership in outside groups, even ones that did not toe a strict political line. The youth organizations did not have the strong disciplinary sanctions in the pre-independence period that they would acquire in later years, as the fledgling parties were just eager to get young people into their organization.<sup>lxxix</sup>

This lack of strong oversight and adult control was common to many youth organizations in pre-independence Lesotho, not just political party youth wings. Prior to 1955, groups like the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides reached so few young Basotho that local priests, ministers and teachers who sponsored the troops could easily maintain close oversight.<sup>lxxx</sup> After 1955, however, these groups expanded rapidly and were joined by a plethora of others like the Junior Red Cross, Cadets, Young Farmers and an expansion of

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lxxix Interviews with Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 2/24/09 and Raphael Leseli, Roma, 1/15/09.

lxxx In 1951, the Boy Scouts numbered about 1100 and the Girl Guides about 1600 and these were the largest youth organizations in the country. NUL IE ED/F19/0006 *Annual Report by the Director of Education for the Year 1951*. Maseru: Government Printing, 1951.

the Homemakers' Association that greatly expanded opportunities for young Basotho.<sup>lxxxix</sup> By joining groups in large numbers, these young Basotho were also identifying strongly with middle-class organizations that, on the surface, were not very radical. Unlike their peers in Europe and the United States, who were occupying university buildings and participating in large street protests, these young Basotho were seemingly docile. However, they were hoping for similar results—social changes that would allow them greater autonomy and opportunity for economic and social advancement.

By the mid to late 1960s, Gabriel Tlaba's Boy Scout troop was self-supporting and the troop and pack leaders would make the decision to take a weekend camping trip, organize it themselves and negotiate basic supplies from local people without much adult oversight.<sup>lxxxix</sup> Rebecca Tlelima, a young primary teacher in the rural Mafeteng District, indirectly confirmed that other groups had similar issues through her work as organizer for the Junior Red Cross and the Girl Guides. She had “many” students coming out for both groups and was unable to find other teachers to help with the groups or get the school manager to assist her groups, leaving her the only adult to supervise both popular groups. When asked if any other teacher would help her, she replied “NO ONE! [emphasis hers] I said, 'can you help me?' Not me, we are not interested about it. I was asking the high school teachers about it and they refused me and [so I said, fine] I will pull up by myself!”<sup>lxxxix</sup> The paucity of adult organizers at the local level combined with

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lxxxixThe expansion of these groups was so rapid that the first National Youth Day rally in April of 1967 was able to draw over 10,000 Basotho from these and other youth organizations. A similar rally held in 1955 might have been able to attract a couple thousand young Basotho only if every member of every group came. “Youth Rally a Success,” *Lesotho Times* April 21, 1967.

lxxxixInterview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 10/7/08.

lxxxixiiiInterview Rebecca Tlelima, Rothe ha Masite, 4/6/09.



the great expansion of government support for schools and youth groups during the late 1950s and 1960s gave these groups and the young Basotho in them autonomy and the freedom to pursue their own activities without much oversight.

Young Basotho participating in this golden age of youth organizations were consciously rejecting the top-down nationalism put forth by political parties and even were accepted, grudgingly, by the colonial administration as easier to control than possible alternatives. Those in school had better access to the youth organizations that offered a space to explore ideas of bottom-up nationalism, but the increasing flow of political and educational refugees from South Africa meant that even many people without access to schools had a better understanding of politics and nationalism than was the case a decade earlier. An ever-increasing number of young Basotho were involving themselves in discussions about independence, meeting with their peers in youth organizations, taking part in political discussions outside of party structures and developing their own ideas about what they wanted to see defined as Basotho identity. The specter of *apartheid* South Africa hung over all these discussions, but the younger generation did not see independence as being incompatible with their precarious geography.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Young Basotho selectively rejected parts of the top-down vision of nationalism their political leaders espoused, but this rejection did not mean that they rejected the idea of nationalism in general or the idea that an independent Lesotho would be a source of economic, social and political improvement for themselves, their peers and older Basotho.

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lxxxiv This was not the case with older Basotho, a contrast that will be explored in chapter six.



## Chapter 4: Development and Youth, 1960-70

Britain's neglect over the past century that has led to Basutoland's complete dependence on the Republic, and that [by] granting independence with insufficient aid Britain is in fact "selling out" the territory to the Republic...impecunious independence will not be true independence at all, and that for this Britain must bear the responsibility.<sup>i</sup>

On the eve of Lesotho's formal independence in 1966, British Government Representative Alexander Falconer Giles penned this indictment, stunning for its stark honesty, of the almost one hundred years of British colonial rule in Lesotho. It came as part of his larger plea to the Colonial Office for as much economic assistance as possible from Britain in the final financial settlements, in order to keep Lesotho independent of the "artificial economy" of the *apartheid* state.<sup>ii</sup> Calls for economic "development" had become the norm for many years in Lesotho by the late 1960s, with all political parties supportive of the idea, as well as the post-independence government of Lesotho and *Motlotlehi* Moshoeshe II. As early as 1962, Moshoeshe II petitioned the High Commissioner in South Africa, the highest authority for Lesotho at that time, calling British efforts "totally inadequate" to "develop the economy of the country."<sup>iii</sup> In October 1966, Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan continued a similar theme by decrying, but also accepting, Britain's offer of twenty-two million rand at independence. Angered that this sum was less than that received by Botswana, a country with fewer people and more

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i NAUK CO 1048/892 Basutoland: Final Report Before Independence, Giles, British Government Representative to Secretary of State for the Colonies, October 3, 1966.

ii NAUK CO 1048/892 Basutoland: Final Report Before Independence, Giles, British Government Representative to Secretary of State for the Colonies, October 3, 1966.

iii NAUK CO 1048/281 Paramount Chief of Basutoland: Petition to High Commissioner about Development of Basutoland, May 25, 1962.

industry, he argued that it was not enough to “allow for development.”<sup>iv</sup>

Development was not, however, merely an issue for the government of Lesotho and for those in positions of political power. 1966 high school graduate Mohlalefi Moteane's vision of an independent Lesotho was metaphorical: a place where he and others would have a chance to “make matches...a box of matches...not to be dependent.”<sup>v</sup> For Moteane, independence would allow him and other Basotho youth to stay home, without the need to migrate to South Africa for work. They wanted employment opportunities within Lesotho, beyond the subsistence farming and teaching options available to their parents, that would enable them to support families. For this to happen, Lesotho needed fundamental change, which would be difficult to effect as *apartheid* South Africa cast a long economic shadow over the country. Perhaps even more difficult, however, was to get various groups within Lesotho to agree on a singular vision for what this development should entail.

Arguments about development were, like arguments about unity and the proper forms for the Basotho nation, attempts by individuals, groups and the government to remake the economic and cultural landscape of Lesotho for their own benefit. Development was a means of signaling individual goals and aspirations at home, but it was also a means to make arguments for starting the new institutional forms and practices that new industries and opportunities would require. The conceptions of development varied widely among people, but the gap was especially wide between a grass-roots, village- and people-centered process that would allow individuals to remake their lives,

iv “Financial Talks, Premier Will Return,” *Lesotho Times* October 28, 1966.

v Interview Mohlalefi Moteane, Maseru, 5/27/09.

as Moteane and other young Basotho envisioned, and the top-down, centralized process envisioned by political figures that would cement their control over changing social processes—gatekeeping. The gap that arose between the development that young Basotho hoped to see, and the development that the government supported and carried out, caused many Basotho youth to become disillusioned with the state and its efforts to support economic development. In their disillusionment, however, rather than rejecting the state or the idea of a coherent Basotho nation, young Basotho worked to create communities of their own making that allowed them to channel their energies into what they saw as productive and constructive outlets.

The 1960s colonial state and the post-independence government saw representative institutions and development as keys to making Lesotho into a new, “modern” nation-state. In order to do this, they relied on modernization theory that said Lesotho needed a push to get through a “destabilizing yet necessary transition” to show local elites how to transform “traditional” society with liberal, capitalist institutions that could withstand pressures from communists and those harmed by the new order.<sup>vi</sup> Modernization theory was intended as a way for African (and other) economies and societies to “skip” steps in the developmental process followed by the West, allowing new states to catch up to the “more developed” world. This cornerstone of American and Western European policy during the Cold War included as a key component, a centralized, top-down form of development that would control, through new administrative structures, the planning and execution of mostly large-scale projects. This

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vi Latham, “Modernization and the Cold War,” 6.

bureaucracy is what Ferguson has dubbed the “anti-politics machine,” because once created, it places development issues as problems that are safe from the national political debate. The bureaucracy strives to correct a lack of development through local training programs and investment, rather than looking at the wider regional inequities that require a class of unskilled laborers.<sup>vii</sup> Moteane and other young Basotho saw this system as constraining their opportunities to benefit from development, and rather hoped to see changes that would bring about more flexibility for people at the village level to drive social change.

The differences between how the government and young Basotho viewed development highlights the problematic and slippery nature of the term. British colonial officers (and the first independent government of Lesotho) saw development as a means of social reform by promoting welfare schemes that would raise macro-economic indicators, and thereby defusing political opposition to their rule.<sup>viii</sup> Opposition politicians in Lesotho, especially after independence, saw this process as too centralizing and benefiting only those who held the reins of power. Consequently, while not decrying state-sponsored development, they wanted more control over the process decentralized to increase their chances of controlling and benefiting from economic growth. Young Basotho, and many other non-politically connected Basotho, used development in the sense of 1970s theorist Dudley Seers's “Basic Needs Approach,” arguing for government and private investment to meet basic human needs.<sup>ix</sup> Finally, international aid

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vii Ferguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*.

viii Lee, *Colonial Development*, 13.

ix Herath, “Discourse of Development.”

organizations and the powerful aid-granting governments of the United States and Britain, saw development as a tool to ensure that places like Lesotho remained stable, did not become susceptible to the influence of communism, and remained within the Western capitalist sphere.<sup>x</sup>

### **1950s Development Efforts: Diamonds, Water and Fear of South Africa**

Efforts by the late colonial Basutoland Government to increase economic productivity in Lesotho in the 1950s had their roots in changes to Colonial Office and Dominions Office policies stretching back into the 1930s. Both ministries became more amenable to the idea of developing a small educated African middle class that could, perhaps someday, help to take on some governance role.<sup>xi</sup> The Fabian Colonial Bureau, led by late 1940s Colonial Secretary Arthur Creech Jones, pushed this policy as a means of heading off anti-imperial criticism and bringing about some economic reform in the colonies. This impetus also led in 1940 to the passage of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act (CDW), which heralded the sweeping administrative changes introduced in Lesotho from the 1930s to the 1960s.<sup>xii</sup> The CDW started funding projects in Lesotho in the late 1940s and early 1950s, with most of the funds going toward rehabbing primary schools, expanding the secondary schooling system and creating a series of measures to fight soil erosion.

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x Diana Hunt, *Theories of Development: An Analysis of Competing Paradigms* (Savage, MD: Barnes and Noble Books, 1989), 45.

xi Robert Pearce, "The Colonial Office and Planned Decolonization in Africa," *African Affairs* 83 (1984): 77-93.

xii For more on this, see chapters 2 and 3.

Lesotho was still, however, a labor reserve in the eyes of colonial administrators in London and Maseru. Investments made through the CDW highlight their fear of ending Lesotho's status as a labor reserve for South Africa, and the almost non-existent prospects they saw for large-scale development in the territory. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the incorporation into South Africa of the High Commission Territories, at some undetermined future date, was still official policy. While many Basotho welcomed the limited capital investment in the school system, colonial administrators were not willing in 1946 to even pursue the full extent of CDW money for the territory because they did not think the territory could support an expanded educational system through its own tax revenues.<sup>xiii</sup>

The colonial administration in Lesotho made some attempts to develop cooperative societies, organizations designed to help people pool savings and make investments at home in the territory during the post-war era.<sup>xiv</sup> These efforts stemmed from the Labour Party coming to power in 1945, and behind Creech Jones, focusing on mitigating the worst effect of colonialism, “the failure of British trusteeship to protect the African peasantry from being uprooted by European capitalist penetration.”<sup>xv</sup> In Lesotho these cooperative societies consisted mainly of wool and mohair cooperatives, with a few farming and consumer cooperatives. They were all slow to develop, however, with the

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xiii *Basutoland: 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 Printer, 1946).

xiv Joey Power, “Individualism is the Antithesis of Indirect Rule: Cooperative Development and Indirect Rule in Malawi,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18 (1992): 317-347.

xv Paul Keleman, “Modernising Colonialism: The British Labour Movement and Africa,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 34 (2006): 225.



British Registrar of Cooperative Societies reporting in 1950 only twenty-seven cooperatives of any kind in the territory.<sup>xvi</sup> The cooperative wool societies would, by the late 1960s, be very popular with a significant percentage of the population who were rural, sheep-owning farmers. They realized that cooperatives offered better profits, through direct marketing, than they were getting by using the largely expatriate traders in Lesotho as middlemen.<sup>xvii</sup> In the 1950s, however, cooperative societies were slow to percolate into the fabric of life in Lesotho.

Part of the problem with making large-scale economic change in Lesotho was that it threatened the structure of communal ownership of land and the last great chiefly power of land distribution. Since the reforms of the 1930s and 1940s, the chieftaincy increasingly felt under pressure from both the colonial government and educated commoners. The 1952 session of the Basutoland Council saw the mostly-chief members reject two separate petitions that had the potential to erode chiefly ability to allocate land and determine its use. A proposal put forth by the BPA to allow people “to cultivate gardens and grow fruit trees at a distance from the villages” was meant to allow for individuals and families to “do a proper trade” in canned fruit or vegetables.<sup>xviii</sup> This modest proposal was voted down by a two-to-one margin because chiefs feared that people would then fence agricultural land, which was used for communal grazing after the cultivation season ended.

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xvi *1952 Basutoland Council.*

xvii Interview Peter Millin, Clarens, RSA, 3/6/09. These wool cooperatives are still popular and present in rural Lesotho, with their cast-iron sheds standing out at a glance from the cinder-block and mud houses so prevalent in the mountains.

xviii Councillor 'Mako Molapo quoted, *1952 Basutoland Council.*

The second motion to come before the council concerned a request from the Butha-Buthe District in the north of the territory to “make general research on industries.” The motion was inspired by seeing South African goods come into Lesotho that were previously produced locally, like leather goods, peaches and handicraft industries. This motion was also voted down, with the chieftaincy arguing that rather than making a survey on industry, those proposing it should organize people into cooperatives to start production.<sup>xix</sup> As seen in the first motion, however, local people often did not have the freedom to take initiative under colonial/chiefly rule to make use of local resources. The chieftaincy was not necessarily opposed to economic activities, but they were opposed to grass-roots efforts that threatened their prescribed role in the nation: their ability to control the distribution of land. Land was the key to wealth production in rural Lesotho, and those who controlled access to land played the prime role in rural development—a top-down development that the chiefs wanted to control.

The impetus for British colonial efforts to develop Lesotho in the 1950s was, in part, renewed efforts by the National Party government of D.F. Malan to incorporate the High Commission Territories, as Homelands or explicit labor reserves, into its plan for grand *apartheid*.<sup>xx</sup> The Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations made a point of emphasizing to the British Cabinet that the British administrators in the three territories already had “close co-operation over a wide range of practical matters, trade, transport, agriculture, health (human and animal), and development generally.”<sup>xxi</sup> Many Basotho

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xix Councillor Patrick 'Mota quoted, *1952 Basutoland Council*.

xx Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The High Commission Territories and the Union of South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957).

xxi NAUK CAB 129/68 Cabinet Memorandum from Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations,

worried that the centralization necessary to complete large development projects, combined with these close administrative ties, would cause the British to abandon Lesotho to South Africa.

Two large-scale macro-economic projects in Lesotho had their roots in the mid-1950s: diamond prospecting and the series of large dams in the mountains that today supply South Africa with water and hydroelectric power.<sup>xxii</sup> Both of these schemes had the support of the colonial administration and the *Morena e Moholo* because they were projects that required either technical sophistication on a level above that which the individual could muster or a level of capital that only government could procure, and promised to provide hefty returns to governmental coffers. These very characteristics, however, made many commoner political activists, local people who would be affected, and minor chiefs suspicious of the projects—part of a wider suspicion of top-down development that young Basotho would play a prominent role in promoting during the 1960s.

Diamond prospecting, organized and run by a South African prospector named Colonel Jack Scott under the auspices of the privately-financed General and Mining Finance Corporation (GENCOR), was an intrusive and threatening enterprise. Scott negotiated directly with the Regent 'Mantsebo, under the persuasion of the colonial administration, to obtain prospecting permission in 1955.<sup>xxiii</sup> The money Scott would pay

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Transfer of High Commission Territories, May 18, 1954.

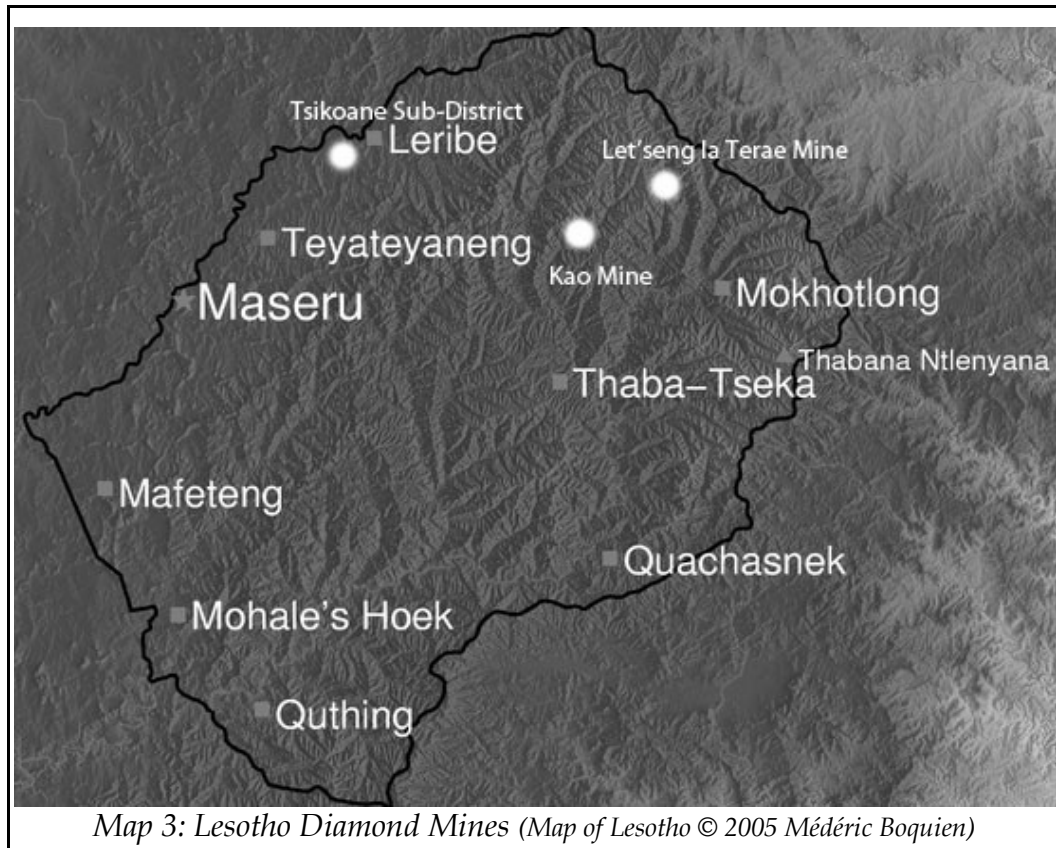
xxiiThis is the current-day Lesotho Highlands Water Project.

xxiiiMotlatsi Thabane, “*Lipokojoe* of Kao: A Study of a Diamond Digger Rebel Group in the Lesotho Highlands,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26 (2000): 105-6.

was split between general government revenue and the funds that the Regent herself controlled. This deal, however, threatened the Basotho who had been conducting low-level diamond mining at a variety of sites within Lesotho since the 1930s. The most profitable sites were near Kolo in the lowland Mafeteng District, and at mountain sites in the Butha-Buthe and Mokhotlong Districts. In addition to threatening the livelihood of the prospectors, Scott's South African background and the negative experiences many Basotho had with miners and mining in South Africa caused many chiefs and the Basutoland African Congress (BAC) to be suspicious of the prospecting.<sup>xxiv</sup>

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xxiv Motlatsi Thabane, *Individual Diamond Digging in Lesotho, 1955-1970: A Study of an Aspect of the Social and Economic History of Lesotho* (Trondheim, Norway: No. 8 Trondheim Studies in History, 1995), 34-47. Guy and Thabane, "Shaft Sinking."



This widespread skepticism toward Scott led to local resistance and non-cooperation with his efforts, and highlighted continued schisms in society, as well as resistance to development efforts directed from the top down. In June, 1956, 'Mantsebo instructed all chiefs to give support to and enforce local compliance with Scott's efforts. She directed them to tell Scott where people had found “diamonds, 'Sekama', garnets, diamond rubies or yellow or blue ground” in order to accrue “the tremendous advantages the Basuto nation would derive if diamonds were discovered and worked in this country of our fathers.”<sup>xxv</sup> By equating economic growth with the good of the nation, 'Mantsebo was again arguing for a unity that did not and could not exist. Basotho mining on a

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xxvNUL LC LC 18/9 1954 and 1957 Paramount Chief's Circulars, Circular No. 12, June 25, 1956.

small-scale would lose profitable ventures if they told Colonel Scott where they were finding diamonds. This project to bring in national revenue relied, in large part, on the efforts of local people, and needed their support. Many Basotho opposed this public-private partnership either because their own interests were threatened, or because of the increasing centralized control that it represented, even if it was in the national interest because it could bring “increased revenue to the country, employment in the country...self-supporting, better communications and trade with other countries.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

In addition to this local resistance to Scott's prospecting, debates in the Basutoland Council also revealed splits between factions in the chieftaincy. Scott had negotiated and signed his prospecting deal only with 'Mantsebo and her advisers, like Leabua Jonathan. Many of the senior chiefs in the Council, already suspicious of the rule of 'Mantsebo and the role her advisers were playing in politics and development, feared that this deal was a way for her to entrench herself in the position of Regent at the expense of the best interests of the nation. In July 1956, The Standing Committee of the Council, five senior chiefs and one commoner member who met periodically to advise the *Morena e Moholo* when the Council was not in session, worried about voting £2,000 to fund road construction for Scott. The Committee wanted Scott to “report on the prospects at a secret session of the [Basutoland] Council” because they had no information on his prospecting and worried that “in the end that there were no diamonds.”<sup>xxvii</sup> The lack of consultation with the senior chiefs and the Basutoland Council helped to drive dissatisfaction with the Regent, and the secrecy of the diamond negotiations gave fuel to

xxvi NUL LC LC 18/9 1954 and 1957 Paramount Chief's Circulars, Circular No. 12, June 25, 1956.

xxvii 1956 Basutoland Council.

critics like Chief S.S. Matete, who in 1957 would form the *Marematlou* Party, partly over such dissatisfactions.

While the political fault lines moved as a result of the debate over diamond prospecting, the conceptions of development among the key political actors was strikingly similar. Matete, the founder of the *Marematlou* Party, did not fear top-down development, only Regent 'Mantsebo's exclusive and unchecked control over it. Likewise, Gabriel Manyeli, soon-to-be-co-founder of the BNP, argued with Ntsu Mokhehle, BAC founder, in 1957 not over whether development should be state-run, but over who within the state should control it. Manyeli argued for South African experts to lead the process because of their technical expertise, while Mokhehle wanted the process nationalized so that “the moneys that accrue from [Basotho] labor should [not] be taken away to foreign countries.”<sup>xxviii</sup> The general agreement among political elites on state control of the development process remained remarkably stable through the late 1950s and into the 1960s, before and after independence.

Part of the backlash from non-political elite Basotho, many of whom were young, came because they saw some chiefs personally benefiting from the prospecting, like Patrick 'Mota of the Berea District and Sloley Molapo of the Leribe District. Another source of resentment was the lack of discussion at the national level about the individual Basotho already working the diggings, who would lose out under this scheme. In 1954, a woman died while digging for diamonds at what came to be known as the Kao Mine, in the Butha-Buthe District.<sup>xxix</sup> This woman was but one of many Basotho illegally digging

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xxviiiCouncillors Gabriel Manyeli and Ntsu Mokhehle quoted, *1957 Basutoland Council*.

xxixThabane, *Diamond Diggers*, 44.

for, finding and selling diamonds throughout the 1950s, despite explicit prohibitions on these practices by the Regent, a practice that would be common-place in West Africa and Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo in the late twentieth century.<sup>xxx</sup> The Chief of Tsikoane, a densely populated agricultural sub-district bordering South Africa in the Leribe District, complained in 1959 about smugglers who “deal in diamonds and firearms at night and cause a lot of noise and disturb his administration.”<sup>xxxii</sup> Diamond digging was clearly more profitable than subsistence farming in a densely populated country where land was scarce, but the individual diggers were also challenging the Regent's conception of a Basotho nation united under her authority. These diggers did not acknowledge the power of the Regent to sell the rights to diamonds in the rocky mountain soils that the chieftaincy had spent eighty years loudly proclaiming to the British colonial Government belonged to the Basotho people.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Suspicion by chiefs and commoners alike of British colonial intentions in dealing with Lesotho's political situation *vis-a-vis* South Africa tainted development efforts throughout the 1950s. This suspicion was reinforced by the unofficial Colour bar in Lesotho that the colonial government condoned. The Colour bar applied at social clubs, hotels and restaurants in Maseru and the other administrative towns, as well as in situations like liquor sales and permits to possess firearms. Colonel Scott, for example,

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xxxPhilippe Le Billon and Estelle Levin, “Building Peace with Conflict Diamonds? Merging Security and Development in Sierra Leone,” *Development and Change* 40 (2009): 693-715. Filip de Boeck, “Domesticating Diamonds and Dollars: Identity, Expenditure and Sharing in Southwest Zaire (1984-1997),” *Development and Change*, 29 (1998): 777-810.

xxxiiNUL LC LC 4 1954-9 Arms and Ammunition Permits, Letter Jonathan Mathealire, Chief of Tsikoane to District Commissioner Leribe, May 15, 1959.

xxxiiThabane, *Lipokojoe*, 120-1.



applied for and received four permits for “Astra automatic pistol[s]” for “self-protection” from the Leribe District Council in May 1956. Later that year, Roland Edward York and George Barton-Bridges, both identified as “European prospectors,” also applied for permits for pistols because they were going to be “handling cash and diamonds” in the prospecting process. They received approval without reservation in August and September of 1956. A respected member of the chieftaincy and the Basutoland Council, Sloley Molapo, also signed on to work with Colonel Scott, and applied for a similar permit in October 1957. Desiring to carry an “automatic pistol (Italian) Beretta” because he would be working “far and outside on the mountains alone,” the Board denied his application on the grounds that Colonel Scott already had four permits and “applicant should refer his application to his employer.”<sup>xxxiii</sup> Molapo's inability to get a permit, which they granted quickly and easily to white members of Scott's team, despite his standing within the chieftaincy and administration, was the sort of soft Colour bar that so infuriated many Basotho. The existence of this Colour bar, with the colonial government concomitantly denying its existence, helped fuel anti-colonial sentiments among educated Basotho and some members of the chieftaincy.

The unofficial Colour bar, and the fact that many colonial administrators were born and raised in South Africa, contributed to popular and chiefly suspicions that the administration was more interested in maintaining good relations with white South Africans than working for the good of the Basotho people. Thus, proposals by the colonial administration to explore the feasibility of constructing dams in the mountains

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xxxiii All quotations in this paragraph taken from NUL LC LC 4 1954-9 Arms and Ammunition Permits, Correspondence, May 1956-October 1957.

that would store and transport water for sale to South Africa were met with reactions ranging from suspicion to hostility from a wide range of Basotho, who feared a backdoor attempt to incorporate Lesotho. The British administration kept a close wrap on plans for the dam, which helped fan fears and suspicions. As early as 1951, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations called the plans for a series of dams “still confidential,” both from South Africa and people in Lesotho.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Once surveying of the upper reaches of the Orange (*Senqu*) River and its tributaries started in 1954, the project generated an uproar in the Basutoland Council, with almost all members worried, fearing a centralization that would leave Basotho sacrificed on the altar of South African capital and water interests. Josiel Lefela, the leader of *Lekhotla la Bafu* and a member of the Council, expressed the worry that if the South African government contributed money to the project, they “would be entitled to a share.”<sup>xxxv</sup> While Lefela was well known for his outbursts against the colonial administration, in this case he was joined by many pro-government chiefs. Sloley Molapo, headman, diamond prospector and usual government supporter, echoed Lefela's concern that the “dams might become later on the property of the Union Government because they are stronger than us.”<sup>xxxvi</sup> In other words, Basotho politicians, echoing Ferguson's conclusions about development work, worried that the centralizing tendencies inherent in such a large project would place a large segment of government work beyond their control.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

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xxxivNAUK CAB 129/45 Cabinet Memo, April 16, 1951.

xxxvCouncillor Josiel Lefela quoted, *1954 Basutoland Council*.

xxxviCouncillor Sloley Molapo quoted, *1954 Basutoland Council*.

xxxviiFerguson, *Anti-Politics Machine*.

Lesotho's was not the first large dam project that Britain had considered in Africa. The British government in the Gold Coast had commissioned a variety of surveys, feasibility studies and proposals in the 1940s to investigate a hydro-electric dam on the Volta River to supply electricity for an aluminum smelter.<sup>xxxviii</sup> While this project, the Akosombo Dam, did not come to fruition in the colonial era, British administrators in the Colonial and Commonwealth Relations Offices did see hydro-electric projects as having great potential to spur economic and political development. The project with the most relevance to Lesotho was the Central African Federation's (CAF) decision to construct the Kariba Dam in the mid-1950s. Kariba was built to supply hydro-electric power to the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, but its greater political aims were to bring the two Rhodesia's into closer political alignment (with Nyasaland as a labor reserve), and to justify the continued minority rule of the Federation through their trusteeship over Africans.<sup>xxxix</sup> The CAF Parliament approved plans for the Kariba Dam in 1954, over the objection of Northern Rhodesian settlers who wanted an alternate, cheaper site on the Kafue River entirely within Northern Rhodesia. African political groupings in all three territories, echoing the concerns of the Basutoland Council, objected to the dam because they saw it as a “cynical device to extend white power.”<sup>xl</sup>

Regional efforts like this, combined with a perpetual, and mainly justified, suspicion of South African motives, made many Basotho wary of the dam project in

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xxxviii James Moxon, *Volta: Man's Greatest Lake. The Story of Ghana's Akosombo Dam* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1984).

xxxix Joann McGregor, *Cross the Zambezi: The Politics of Landscape on a Central African Frontier* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, Ltd., 2009), Chapter 6.

xl McGregor, *Zambezi*, 108.

Lesotho. Chiefs and politicians feared that the project was a ploy to make Lesotho even more dependent on South Africa. Thus these groups came together, arguing that what Lesotho needed to free itself from economic dependence on South Africa was Basotho-driven, state-sponsored projects. In 1958, the BCP newspaper columnist “*Boipuso*” (Independence) called for “co-opera[ti]on with Britain in the projected water conservation schemes” and the Colonial Development Corporation “in the exploitation of any minerals: diamonds, coal, etc” in the territory.<sup>xii</sup> The BCP leaders, long strident critics of colonialism, calculated that it was better to deal with the colonial master they knew than with the unknown influence of capital from *apartheid* South Africa, and this made them stray from their populist roots to advocate for top-down development.

Calls such as these from influential and powerful Basotho drowned out the protests of individual Basotho in the areas that would be affected by these large schemes. At the 1957 session of the Basutoland Council, two commoner members from the Butha-Buthe District raised a protest about the preliminary water survey teams. Sekhonyana Molapo, making reference to the tradition of Moshoeshe I holding consultative *pitsos* with his subjects, said people in Butha-Buthe were worried because they had seen heavy machinery headed up into the mountains and “the people were not notified that there were plans for this scheme,” while Kopano Selema reported that residents feared that they would lose scarce agricultural land in the fertile valleys of the district to the project.<sup>xiii</sup> These protests were ignored then by the members of the council, and continued to be ignored as the project moved from the drawing board to fruition in the xli *Boipuso*, “The Burden of Self-Rule,” *Mohlabani* October 1958.

xlii Councillors Sekhonyana Molapo and Kopano Selema quoted, *1957 Basutoland Council*.

1990s and early 2000s.<sup>xliii</sup> Fears like this from ordinary Basotho reflected the worry that the chiefs, and even commoner politicians, were willing to sacrifice land and local economic practice to pursue projects that would inequitably cause some people to sacrifice more than others in the service of the nation, and drove dissatisfaction with top-down development projects.

However, as the 1950s wore down, calls for development from all sides of the political spectrum and the various segments of Basotho society grew stronger as people came to see economic independence as a crucial piece of greater self-rule, and likely to bring opportunities for well-placed individuals to benefit. The 1956 Census found over 150,000 Basotho out of a total population of around 800,000, or almost one out of every four Basotho, away working in South Africa.<sup>xliv</sup> Basotho, thus, had extensive contacts with large-scale public and private economic projects, and by-and-large, wanted to see similar economic opportunities and social services in their country as well. The struggle going forward would focus on who would get to set, define and control development policy, and how these policies would help shape a national agenda around and after independence.

### **The 1960s: Opportunities on the Road to Independence**

Despite efforts to start economic growth projects like diamond prospecting, water schemes and soil erosion projects, the British government was still wary of full-scale

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xliiiOscar Mwangi, “Hydropolitics, Ecocide and Human Security in Lesotho,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33 (2007): 3-17.

xliv*Basutoland 1956 Population Census* (Moriya, Lesotho: Morija Printing Works, 1958).

investment in Lesotho's economy because of the ramifications for its relationship with South Africa. On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1960, one day after his famous “Wind of Change” speech to the South African Parliament and two days after visiting Basutoland, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillian met his South African counterpart, Hendrik Verwoerd, outside Cape Town. At this meeting, Verwoerd told Macmillian in no uncertain terms that British policy encouraging the “development of European industries within the [High Commission] Territories,” was “a situation inconsistent with the policy of separate development which was being pursued within the Union.”<sup>xlv</sup> While Britain had not encouraged industrial development in Lesotho prior to 1960, Verwoerd was correct to foresee that Britain would place an increasing emphasis on economic development in the 1960s, which would threaten the plan of grand *apartheid*. The planning for industrial and general economic development was slow and tentative, but British and Basotho support for the principles of development meant that people in Lesotho had institutional support that black South Africans did not.

The differing conceptions of development allowed many Basotho to argue for visions of the nation and independence that did not necessarily mesh with the top-down dams and diamond prospecting projects envisioned by the colonial administration and local politicians. The 1959 Constitution had started the process of decentralization, which gave elected District Councils control over local development efforts, and thus gave local people more say in development projects in the areas where they lived. The Councils were in charge of soil erosion and grazing controls, both of which had received

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xlv NAUK CAB/129/101 Prime Minister's African Tour, January-February 1960, Records of a discussion, February 3, 1960.

funding through the Colonial Development and Welfare Act. They were also responsible for maintaining bridle paths, controlling fisheries, building and maintaining health clinics, public sanitation, issuing trade licenses and famine relief.<sup>xlvi</sup> The devolution of these responsibilities to the District Councils showed a desire by the colonial administration and the Colonial Office to hand off thorny (and potentially expensive) questions about local development to locally-elected authorities. While these Councils were underfunded for the amount of work they were expected to carry out, they helped shape local practices, were quite popular and gave people a model to look back upon in later years when they had less of a voice in local efforts.

At the same time more development opportunities were accruing at the local level. Basotho politicians also attempted to co-opt the language of development for their own purposes and place it under a more centralized control, exactly what Western “modernization theory” said they should do. All three major political parties supported the concept in the lead-up to the 1960 elections, with the *Marematlou* Party (MTP) calling for populist-oriented “agriculture, health and educational services.”<sup>xlvi</sup> The Basotho National Party (BNP) called for a slightly more statist “development of industries and water power” with the control “vested in a way that permits the Basotho to share in their control,” while the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) implied a white-collar development by opposing South African attempts to “make the Africans perpetual slaves

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xlviLocal Government Proclamation, 1959 (No. 52 of 1959), in *Basutoland Constitutional Handbook: Containing the Basutoland (Constitution) Order in Council, 1959, and related Legislation and Reports* (Maseru: Government Printing, 1960).

xlvi“New Political Parties, Their Manifestos,” *Mohlabani* 4 (August 1958).

—hewers of wood and drawers of water.”<sup>xlviii</sup> These parties were joined in May of 1962 by the Communist Party of Lesotho (Basutoland), even more strident in its calls for development. Their introductory manifesto decried that in Lesotho, the “land and natural resources are hardly developed at all. There is no industry.”<sup>xlix</sup>

Coming hard on the heels of the South African decision in 1961 to leave the Commonwealth and become a Republic, these calls for development in Lesotho put pressure on the Colonial Office to increase the amount of money invested in the territory.<sup>1</sup> The idea of development also found fertile ground among young Basotho, who were galvanized by the rising tide of political consciousness of the 1950s, and were now reaping the benefits of a greatly expanded secondary schooling system. Tseliso Ramakhula, a primary school teacher, could not understand why the colonial government would or could not encourage agricultural expansion in Lesotho when “just half a mile from the Lesotho border, there is one of the most successful [peach] orchards.”<sup>li</sup> Similarly, Maleseka Kena, a young housewife in the rural Qacha's Nek District, wanted to see more roads and schools so that the country could “develop.”<sup>lii</sup>

However, the colonial administration in Lesotho was so small and inept as to be almost incapable of planning and running economic projects on any sort of scale in the

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xlviii“New Political Parties, Their Manifestos,” *Mohlabani* 4 (August 1958).

xlixJohn Motloheloa, “Lesotho's Road to Independence—The Founding of the Communist Party of Lesotho (Basutoland),” *African Communist* 10 (July/August 1962): 23.

1 As noted in chapter 2, the Colonial Office took control of Basutoland affairs from the Commonwealth Relations Office in 1960 in preparation for a more rapid decolonization.

li Interview Tseliso Ramakhula, Lower Thamae, 3/1/09.

lii Interview Maleseka Kena, Tsoelike Auplas, 3/17/09.



early 1960s, even if they had wanted to. The main Colonial Development and Welfare project, an expansion of the schooling system, was mainly done through granting money to the three major Christian missions, while low-level Basotho administrators and chiefs ran the other big government initiative, the soil erosion campaign.<sup>liii</sup> The inadequacy of the colonial staff to create and oversee large-scale economic projects in Lesotho was underscored by a trip *Motlotlehi* Moshoeshe II took in February 1962 to the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Ghana. There the twenty-four year old monarch visited his old Oxford friends, appealed to the Americans for development assistance through the USAID and Peace Corps programs and searched for potential diplomatic counterweights to South Africa and Britain. US and Canadian officials received him warmly and by the end of the decade, Lesotho was receiving substantial aid from both sources. The trip was an embarrassment for the Colonial Office, however, because they had to report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that Britain had not acted on earlier promises to speed along development applications to sources outside of London: “Practically no applications for American aid for Basutoland have reached London, let alone Washington. In other words, American offers of help are being wasted because of delays by the British officials in Maseru and Cape Town.”<sup>liv</sup>

This brand of neglect was par for the course, and representative of what Alexander Giles referred to in his final assessment of British colonial rule in Basutoland. While most Basotho, like their counterparts across the continent in the late colonial period,

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liii See chapter two for more on the anti-erosion campaign.

liv NAUK CO 1048/284 Visit by Paramount Chief of Basutoland to the United Kingdom, United States and Canada, 1962, Memo for Secretary of State from E.L. Sykes, February 7, 1962.

would not have been able to pinpoint exactly how Britain was short-changing Lesotho, the lack of tangible economic progress in the territory was glaring. This neglect, along with knowledge about South Africa's plans to create *Bantustans* to segregate African “nations” into “Homelands,” caused some Basotho to see independence as a means to gain better access to development assistance, as Moshoeshoe II did in North America. But it was not just powerful figures like Moshoeshoe who were playing Cold War politics. Chaka Ntsane, an organizer for the Lesotho Work Camps Association at the university, recalled his excitement at being “not confined to only British circles” for development assistance, technical assistance and diplomatic relations after independence.<sup>lv</sup> Having access to outside aid and foreign volunteers was a tangible symbol of the shedding of colonial rule that people in Lesotho could and did embrace.<sup>lvi</sup>

The willingness of overseas governments, in particular that of the United States, to help fund projects in late-colonial and early independence-era Lesotho grew out of Cold War concerns. The Americans approved, in the main, of the development strategies of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act as being in line with their own efforts to combat communism through development and nation-building. However, after the Suez Crisis of 1956 and the creation of the Bureau of African Affairs in the State Department 1958, American foreign policy was less inclined to defer to British (or French) colonial interests in sub-Saharan Africa and Lesotho was no exception.<sup>lvii</sup> American development assistance took the form of direct grants from the United States Agency for International

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lv Interview Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 2/24/09.

lvi Connections between Basotho and Cold War ideologies will be taken up in more depth in chapter five.

lvii Noer, *Black Liberation*, 49.

Development (USAID), as well as Peace Corps volunteers helping primarily to develop technical capacity through direct roles in education and government ministries. Other Western countries like Canada contributed to similar programs in Lesotho, with the Canadians promising Moshoeshoe II substantial aid for the university in Lesotho and funding a program which flew doctors to clinics in rural mountain regions.<sup>lviii</sup> Canada was also concerned about communism in Lesotho, especially because of its proximity to South Africa, but as the home country for many of the missionaries in Lesotho, Catholic and Protestant, Canada had a special, personal connection to the territory.

These sorts of aid arrangements, however, would not have been possible if politically active Basotho had not also believed in the connection between foreign aid and development. In a written communique from his 1962 North American trip, Moshoeshoe II argued that Lesotho “will depend on rapid economic growth and educational advancement matching political development” in order to be viable as an independent country.<sup>lix</sup> In an astute political move, he argued that this aid was necessary to counteract the threat posed by Communist operatives who have “realized the strategic importance of Basutoland” and helped form a Communist Party within the country.<sup>lx</sup>

Responding to pressure from the National Council and *Motlotlehi* Moshoeshoe II's recent global travels—Washington, Ottawa and, most disturbingly for Colonial Office

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lviiiNAUK CO 1048/284 Visit by Paramount Chief of Basutoland to the United Kingdom, United States and Canada, Telegram from High Commissioner, South Africa, to High Commissioner, Ottawa, February 14, 1962.

lix NAUK CO 1048/284 Memorandum to the United States Government on Basutoland and Its Immediate Needs, Moshoeshoe II, February 1962.

lx NAUK CO 1048/284 Memorandum to the United States Government on Basutoland and Its Immediate Needs, Moshoeshoe II, February 1962.

efforts to keep Lesotho in the British orbit, Pan-Africanist Accra—the Maseru administration started planning in November 1962 for the tarring of the major lowland road from Hlotse (Leribe) in the north, to Masianokeng, just south of Maseru. While Moshoeshoe II had initially approached the American government for bilateral assistance, the colonial administration ended up taking the proposal to the International Development Association (IDA), an arm of the World Bank, in 1964. By the mid-1960s, American development efforts were increasingly focused on using emerging international agencies like the IDA rather than making large bilateral agreements, to reduce administrative overhead and the need to negotiate directly with a wide variety of new governments.<sup>lxi</sup> With eighty percent of the road project funded by the IDA (and the remaining twenty percent coming from British and Basutoland Government funds), the road was a very tangible symbol of Lesotho's ability to attract significant international aid. It also, however, exposed Lesotho's structural weaknesses that would continue into the independence era: a reliance on expatriate advisers and the occasional incompatibility of local institutions and practices with international donors and investors, conditions certainly not unique to Lesotho.<sup>lxii</sup>

This conflict between the local and the international was a central component in the effort to develop industry in Lesotho. In addition to South African opposition, industrial development was hampered by the land tenure system that did not guarantee security of tenure to individuals, and disallowed non-Basotho from claiming any title to the national land. A partial resolution of this conflict came in 1962 when *Motlotlehi*

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<sup>lxi</sup> Grubbs, *Secular Missionaries*, 128.

<sup>lxii</sup> NAUK CO 1048/322 IDA Assistance to HCT Basutoland.

Moshoeshoe II agreed to set aside a 25-acre block of land in Maseru for industrial development on a fifty-year lease to a new government-run development agency. The colonial government agreed to supply water, electricity, roads, the territory's only railroad siding and drainage to help “encourage manufacturing industries to come to the Territory, in order to stimulate the economy and absorb surplus labour.”<sup>lxiii</sup> Like the water surveys and diamond prospecting, Moshoeshoe and the colonial administration claimed the industrial area to be a project for the benefit of the nation. Both parties, in addition to bringing industrial jobs to Lesotho, were trying to control social and cultural change.

Still, this top-down vision of development held resonance for some people in Lesotho. Thabelo Kebise was quite young at independence, but he recalled that he hoped that independence would allow Lesotho to have “new factories in our country and maybe we were expecting some trains to run through the country, maybe from Butha Buthe to Quthing [from north to south].”<sup>lxiv</sup> Likewise, Maleseka Kena, from Qacha's Nek District in the south, recounted that there was “not enough development” in Lesotho, referring to well-paying jobs.<sup>lxv</sup> With all the political rhetoric about the potential benefits of top-down development, people like Kebise and Kena wanted to see more personal benefit from these governmental development efforts. When they did not see the results they wanted in their own lives, they set out to make their own way, disillusioned with the government, but confident that their vision for the nation could succeed.

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lxiiiNAUK CO 1048/38 Basutoland Development Plan 1963-1968, Executive Council, Report on UK Government Subsidy, 1963-1968, Notes on BAFED (Basutoland Factory Estate Development Scheme).

lxivInterview Thabelo Kebise, Bus Stop Area, Maseru, 4/1/09.

lxvInterview Maleseka Kena, Tsoelike Auplas, 3/17/09.

The 1965 victory of the BNP in the pre-independence elections came about, at least in part, because many Basotho agreed with the argument by Leabua Jonathan and the BNP leadership that they could best deliver on economic development and foreign assistance. Jonathan had bragged during the campaign that the funds his party received from sources in West Germany and South Africa, most controversially, but also Canada and Britain, were proof that he could deliver large-scale development after the elections.<sup>lxvi</sup> To say that development was a bread-and-butter issue would be, quite literally, close to the truth in Lesotho as Jonathan, losing his own constituency in the April, 1965 elections, had to contest a by-election in July to take his position as Prime Minister. Before that election, South African Prime Minister Verwoerd personally gave Jonathan a donation of 100,000 bags of grain to help alleviate famine in Lesotho. Verwoerd saw Jonathan as the less radical and more pliable option, and thus supported his more-conservative brand of nationalism. While the politicized nature of the gift came under fire from the opposition, it did not stop Jonathan from gaining his parliamentary seat.<sup>lxvii</sup> Jonathan gave the food to missions for distribution, as they had the strongest presence in the rural areas the 1964 drought had hit hardest. It was also emblematic of the role that both the South African and Jonathan's first Basotho-led governments saw development playing in the lives of people: material improvements through planned governmental efforts.

Many Basotho distrusted British motives for funding development projects in the late colonial period, but on the eve of independence they still wanted to see beneficial

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<sup>lxvi</sup>Weisfelder, *Political Contention*, 67-8.

<sup>lxvii</sup>Weisfelder, *Political Contention*, 108-9.

economic changes in Lesotho. The increased funding for the educational system in the 1950s had created a larger class of young, educated Basotho who wanted the opportunity to earn a living wage and use their education at home in Lesotho, and as independence loomed in 1966, most wanted to stay at home, excited to see and take part in bringing about a new state and national institutions. Even those without secondary education hoped, in the main, that conditions for farming and unskilled employment opportunities in Lesotho would improve with independence. The Basotho-led transitional government that took power on April 30, 1965, however, continued the colonial view of seeing development as the key to maintaining and consolidating their rather-tenuous electoral victory, rather than as an opportunity to solicit the views of their constituents, a characteristic of the “gatekeeper” state, in Frederick Cooper's formulation.<sup>lxviii</sup> These divergent and conflicting views on development would mark the first years of independence for Lesotho, and contribute to the sense of estrangement that many young Basotho felt from their new state.

### **To Independence and Beyond: Whose Visions for Development?**

After winning the April 1965 elections in an upset, the BNP government and Prime Minister Jonathan wanted to consolidate control of the administrative structures, but they faced structural limitations as Britain still retained ultimate control over issues in Basutoland until October 4, 1966. The BNP struggled to implement policy because many civil servants supported the opposition parties, the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) and

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lxviii Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*.

*Marematlou* Freedom Party (MFP), which harped on the illegitimacy of the minority BNP government, who won with only a forty-two percent plurality.<sup>lxix</sup> The BNP victory came as a surprise to most international and domestic observers, as well as the majority of educated Basotho who assumed the well-funded and organized BCP, or perhaps the chiefly-backed MFP would win. Coming to power without a sweeping mandate, and without the support of most of the civil service, Jonathan's government had promised to deliver “a healthy and dynamic economic programme and development.”<sup>lxx</sup>

Jonathan's government faced the difficult task of trying to deliver on this promise, especially as the civil service was somewhat hostile, a problem for a statist model. He appealed to anti-communist nations like West Germany, Canada and the United States for aid, developed a cozy relationship with Prime Minister Verwoerd's South African government, threatened the civil servants into submission and rolled back the decentralization plans put into place by Britain. This final step entailed a major centralization effort as the government diminished the power of District Councils, dominated by BCP supporters since their inception in 1960. With a remit to work on development, the Councils threatened the BNP strategy of garnering more support through development efforts as they allowed for non-centralized development efforts that did not necessarily give credit to the national government or fall under its plans.

The Jonathan government wanted to “maintain the political unity of the nation” under his rule, and to “force the pace of economic development” through

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lxix Weisfelder, *Political Contention*.

lxx “Chief Leabua Jonathan's Press Conference,” *Basutoland Times* May 7, 1965.



centralization.<sup>lxxi</sup> Pursuing these goals, however, came at the expense of representative structures as Jonathan suspended the elected members of District Councils in 1966, replacing them with government-nominated members, as a prelude to eliminating the Councils entirely in 1968.<sup>lxxii</sup> A United Nations-sponsored report on Local Government that came out in 1966 was deeply sympathetic to Jonathan's program. The report's author, however, had to grudgingly allow that these Councils had managed to produce “some important and large scale development projects” in the early and mid-1960s like a tractor scheme to increase wheat production in the Mafeteng District, the building of markets and the purchase of a hotel to promote tourism. Their efforts to remove elected representatives from the Councils, along with a line in the report disparaging ordinary Basotho as having a “pathetic contentment” on development issues, showed that the BNP government was unwilling to accept opposition to its plans, and felt threatened by local, grass-roots feedback or even initiative.<sup>lxxiii</sup>

Jonathan and the BNP government faced blistering attacks in Parliament and the press in the first years of their rule from the opposition parties. They also faced a hostile constitutional monarch, as Moshoeshe II was still angry at being denied a position as an executive head of state. The regime used development in an attempt to forestall some of these attacks, and to better position the BNP to win more seats in the 1970 elections, especially in the more populous lowland districts the opposition had dominated in 1965.

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lxxiN. Kaul, *Report on Local Government in Basutoland* (Maseru, Lesotho: The United Nations, 1966).

lxxiiNeville Pule, “Politics Since Independence,” in *Essays on Aspects of the Political Economy in Lesotho, 1500-2000*, ed. Neville Pule and Motlatsi Thabane (Roma, Lesotho: Department of History, National University of Lesotho, 2002), 174.

lxxiiiKaul, *Report on Local Government*.

They did this by repeatedly pointing out the successes of the government on prestige development projects, in the hopes of covering over the lack of economic progress most Basotho had experienced since independence. The most obvious manifestation of this strategy was renaming the Maseru airport and the newly-completed road project after the Prime Minister, so that no one could forget who had brought these projects to completion. The road project, stretching over seventy miles, had started under the colonial government in the early 1960s. The first stage reached completion in July 1968, and the government promptly named the main highway headed north from Maseru the “Leabua Highway.” Declaring further infrastructure projects a priority, Jonathan politicized the delivery of these projects, urging all Basotho to support his government and its development decisions as they had “no time to engage in empty political slogans and internationalism.”<sup>lxxiv</sup> Development work was political work, and a centralized state that delivered results like this needed support.

These references to slogans and internationalism were responses to charges that Jonathan was selling out Basotho interests to South Africa in return for very small financial rewards. It was also an attack on charges that the renaming was part of a campaign to take national projects and make them political—Jonathan and the BNP setting themselves up as the exclusive providers of services to the Basotho nation. The BNP government did not only focus on big-ticket projects, but strove to maintain a top-down approach. They partnered with the World Food Program and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to start a “Self-Help” program, wherein the government gave food to

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<sup>lxxiv</sup>“New Road Project Announced at “Leabua Highway” Opening,” *Lesotho Times* 36 July 2, 1968.

people who participated in public works projects like building new gravel roads, digging community latrines and constructing community water supplies.<sup>lxxv</sup>

Moeketsi Lesitsi remembered these programs as being “very popular” because they provided people with “food and a little bit of money for doing some work.”<sup>lxxvi</sup> But the programs were not designed by local people. They were still centrally planned and managed efforts that could only come off with the support of the government. The program was a double win for the government, however, in that rural residents were able to get food after the serious droughts of 1966 and 1967, and their communities ended up with needed infrastructure.

The Self-Help campaign also gave the government an opportunity to highlight its ability to garner foreign assistance. Photograph 1 shows CRS handing out food in the late 1960s, with the bags of maize-meal clearly marked as coming as a “Donation of the People of the United States of America.”<sup>lxxvii</sup> The national government thus proved its worth, and the self-professed value of its centralization campaign, as District Councils would not have been able on their own to solicit donations from CRS and other overseas relief agencies.

While engaging in efforts to distribute food and have local people engage in road-building in the name of development, the BNP government also worked behind the scenes to reward its biggest supporter, the Catholic Church, with resources. Clara

Rapholo was a Catholic nun and an experienced teacher at the time of independence,

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<sup>lxxv</sup>“Lijo tse tsoang America,” *Leselinyana la Lesotho* March 1967. Translated by Teboho Mokotjo.

<sup>lxxvi</sup>Interview Moeketsi Lesitsi, St. Monica's Mission, 11/26/08.

<sup>lxxvii</sup>Archives of *Moeketsi oa Basotho*.

teaching at St. Rodrigue secondary school in the Maluti foothills of the Maseru District. She noted that after independence, the school and clinic at the mission had “more access to funding,” and at one point she went to the Prime Minister's office to ask for money to help fund a new clinic building and received “about 20,000 rand to build it.”<sup>lxxviii</sup>

Jonathan's government was under almost constant pressure in Parliament to build local community infrastructure like clinics, bridges and schools, and by giving money to Catholic missions, the regime sidestepped questions about its commitment to rural development and, at the same time, rewarded its biggest institutional supporter.<sup>lxxix</sup>

The post-independence government's desire to politicize development, and consolidate its centralized control, also spilled over into the youth organizations that had flourished since the early 1950s.<sup>lxxx</sup> The Lesotho government, like many others in Africa, viewed young Basotho as a resource they could mobilize in the service of nation-building, and control. While the BNP, like the BCP, had a strong youth wing from which they groomed young people for political roles, the government also tried to mobilize young Basotho in the name of the nation. They needed youth to help the country achieve “rapid advancement” because they were “versatile, and not so bound by convention.” So the government invested in youth groups as a means of getting young people to cheaply carry out grass-roots development projects in the country, as they hoped youth could, “given the leadership, tackle many problems which hold back progress—problems of soil

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<sup>lxxviii</sup>Interview Clara Rapholo, Roma, 5/5/09.

<sup>lxxix</sup>*Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), First Series, Volume 1* (National Assembly, Official Report, 1965).

<sup>lxxx</sup>For more on these youth movements, see chapter three.

erosion, health education, technical skills in agriculture and industry.”<sup>lxxxi</sup>

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<sup>lxxxi</sup>All quotations from Lester James, “Youth Work in Basutoland,” *Basutoland Quarterly* 1 (March 1966). James was a volunteer with the British Voluntary Overseas Service working with the Basutoland Government. This program, and other overseas volunteer programs, will be discussed in more detail in chapter five.



*Photograph 1: Catholic Relief Services (Courtesy of Moeletsi oa Basotho)*

While the BNP government wanted to bring young Basotho into national service to complete these projects, they also wanted to mobilize youth in development efforts that would promote the government's politicized, centralized, exclusive vision of the nation, as well as muzzle a potential source of political opposition. The government moved swiftly to start Young Pioneer movements, similar to those in Israel, Malawi and Ghana, somewhat ironically because of Jonathan's professed anti-Communism and anti-Pan-Africanism.<sup>lxxxii</sup> This organization, the Lesotho Youth Service, would train young Basotho in residential camps in a “broad programme of skills training, agriculture, and

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<sup>lxxxii</sup>A.S. Wood, “Training Malawi's Youth: The Work of the Malawi Young Pioneers,” *Community Development Journal* 5 (1970): 130-8.

development projects.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Youth leaders including Peter Khamane, who had been an organizer in the Boy Scouts during the 1950s, as well as a co-founder of the anti-communist group *Mesa-Mohloane*, went to Israel and Malawi in 1968 to train with the Young Pioneers in the hopes of starting a similar organization in Lesotho.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> While the residential camps of the Malawian Young Pioneers did not materialize in 1960s Lesotho, the intention of the government to co-opt youth for national development plans was clear from the outset.

Even though the government did not manage to create explicitly political groups in the late 1960s, existing groups took a decidedly political turn as they had to respond to politicization pressures from the government. Youth groups in the 1950s and early 1960s had been sites for young Basotho to openly talk about and experiment with their own ideas of nationalism. By the late 1960s, however, they were sites for proxy political battles with group projects undermined by the politicization of youth groups. Twenty-nine years old in 1968, Michael Mateka was teaching at the Catholic Sacred Heart High School in the rural Leribe District. He led students from the school to plant trees on a government-declared “National Tree-Planting Day” as a means of helping prevent soil erosion and providing local people with firewood—both development aims of the government. However, members of the opposition not only refused to participate, but “uprooted [trees] or sent animals to break them” because the planting had been suggested by the BNP regime.<sup>lxxxv</sup> Whether youth groups came to participate in events like this

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lxxxiii“Lesotho Youth Service Takes Shape,” *Lesotho Times* November 10, 1967.

lxxxivInterview Peter Khamane, Ha QhuQhu, 10/29/08. “Lesotho Youth Leaders Return from Malawi,” *Lesotho Times* August 13, 1968.

lxxxvInterview Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, Leribe District, 11/26/08.

depended, in large part, on the political persuasions of their sponsoring schools or organizations with Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and other youth organizations all affected.<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

The tree-planting events were, however, more than merely part of the government's effort to combat soil erosion. They were also part of the government's campaign to create national spectacle that worked to co-opt old and new national symbols to prove their legitimacy. The centerpiece of the 1968 tree-planting campaign was a public event at Khubetsoana, just outside of Maseru in the Berea District. At the event, Moshoeshe II and Prime Minister Jonathan came together to plant one-thousand tree seedlings, with the help of two-hundred Basotho youth.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> By bringing together the Prime Minister and King, who had publicly feuded, the government was attempting to signal that the government and the monarch were united behind the idea of development for the good of the nation.

Efforts to control development extended to young Basotho in education as well. In May 1965, the South African government denied transit visas to a group of students sent abroad on BCP-sponsored scholarships, claiming that they had gone to China for training in sabotage. The newly elected BNP government lobbied the Colonial Office for the chance to negotiate directly with South Africa, but dragged their feet because the students were opposition supporters.<sup>lxxxviii</sup> The incident did highlight the threat the regime

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lxxxviInterview Peter Khamane, Ha QhuQhu, 10/29/08. This was in contrast to the pre-independence cooperation reported in chapter 3 by most informants in these groups.

lxxxvii“King and Premier to Lead Tree Planting,” *Lesotho Times* August 6, 1968.

lxxxviiiNAUK CO 1048/881 Relations Between the High Commission Territories and the Republic of South Africa, Memo M. Brown, Foreign Office to Campbell, Colonial Office, April 12, 1966.



felt from educated Basotho youth, and the reason they were wary of allowing control over developmental efforts to move away from the center.

The desire of the government to control national development was also seen in the mining sector. The two main mines identified by Scott's explorations in the 1950s were the Let'seng-la-Terai Mine in the Mokhotlong District and the Kao Mine in the Butha-Buthe District.<sup>lxxxix</sup> Both were marginally profitable at best because of their low yield of diamonds per ton of ore, their remote locations in the mostly roadless mountains and the opposition of local diggers to outside exploration. The diggings at Let'seng were opened to individual Basotho prospectors in 1961 because no company was willing to invest in the operation, while DeBeers mined the Kao diggings, operating on a concession from the Basutoland and then Lesotho governments from 1964 to 1967.<sup>xc</sup> DeBeers left Kao in 1967 because it was not profitable enough. At about the same time, however, the Lesotho government signed a contract allowing the international firm Rio Tinto to have mining rights at Let'seng. This was problematic as over 6000 Basotho, male and female, young and old, were mining at Let'seng by 1967, and the total exports from the mine in the 1960s had been over three million rand by 1968 (around four million dollars).<sup>xcii</sup> The contract with the international company, however, meant that the government had to displace the miners at Let'seng, and they did not go easily. In May 1968, they attacked the Minister of Finance, who had gone up to Let'seng to persuade them to leave. While

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lxxxix See map this chapter.

xc Thabane, *Diamond Diggers*, 2-3.

xcii Thabane, *Diamond Diggers*, 53.

offering to allow the miners to move to the recently closed diggings at Kao, the Prime Minister also called into question the dedication of the miners to the nation, saying the government needed to ensure that diamonds were “exploited...to the benefit of the whole nation. [The government] cannot tolerate wasteful and haphazard exploitation by few individuals for their own enrichment.”<sup>xcii</sup>

This tension between competing views of the nation reflected the tension young Basotho felt around the question of how development was going to effect their lives in late colonial and post-colonial Lesotho. Young Basotho like Raphael Leseli wanted to see “many changes, roads, schools...hospitals, clinics,” with independence that would have to be state-driven, but he mostly desired an opportunity to find work in Lesotho. Leseli's father worked for the railroad in Bloemfontein, and was not around much when he was growing up. Leseli remembered being “disappointed” when he had to go to the mines in South Africa because he “wanted to stay in Lesotho and work in Lesotho.”<sup>xciii</sup> Development for Leseli was about more than an abstract national project, it was finding work that would allow him to see his three children grow up, instead of having to spend twenty-seven years as a migrant laborer seeing his wife and children once a month at most.

Similarly, Maleseka Kena was living in a rural village in the southern Qacha's Nek District. She also expressed dissatisfaction with the levels of development in the country at independence, referring to an underfunded educational system and a lack of jobs.<sup>xciv</sup>

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xcii“Statement by the Prime Minister on Let'seng-la-Terai,” *Lesotho Times* May 28, 1968.

xciiiInterview Raphael Leseli, Roma, 1/15/09.

xcivInterview Maleseka Kena, Tsoelike Auplas, 3/17/09.

Contrary to the views expressed in the report on Local Government, however, Kena did not have a “pathetic contentment” toward economic activity, as she raised chickens, sold eggs, sewed dresses for clients locally and as far away as Johannesburg and sold surplus agricultural produce.<sup>xcv</sup> She used her initiative to put her children through school as her husband, an organizer for the Communist Party of Lesotho, was often away on party business.

Efforts such as those made by Kena and Leseli showed how the few showpiece development efforts of the Lesotho government did not affect many people, especially those living in the rural areas. However, their frustrations at not having their development expectations met in the rural areas, starting with the eviction of the miners from Let'seng in 1968, highlight the very real material stakes for being able to define what was a national project and what fell under the rubric of development. It also shows the very real gap that young Basotho felt and experienced between their desire to be the beneficiaries of development policy and the lack of opportunity that the centrally-planned development efforts of the government offered.

### **Experiences of Basotho with Development and its Gendered Nature**

Informant evaluations of the late colonial and early independence period can be tricky to disambiguate from more recent dissatisfaction with the government of Lesotho on development issues, but the concrete projects that young Basotho participated in during this time provide a measure of youth dedication to different visions of

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xcvN. Kaul, *Local Government in Basutoland*.

development than those put forth by the government. Maleseka Kena lamented the lack of schooling and employment opportunities for herself and her children in their rural community in Qacha's Nek. Despite this lack of opportunity, she joined and became heavily involved in the local chapter of the Homemaker's Association to come together with other Basotho women, young and old, to create their own economic opportunities—small scale development. Kena was in many respects a typical young Basotho woman, faced with the responsibilities of organizing and running a rural household in the absence of her husband. With so many Basotho men away in South Africa, female-headed households were the norm in rural Lesotho.<sup>xcvi</sup> The Homemakers' Association, founded in Lesotho in 1945, was focused on “fostering friendship and breaking class barriers” between Basotho housewives, and raising the “social standard” of communities through “personal exertion with a view to self-improvement.”<sup>xcvii</sup> These clubs, founded in the main under colonial and white-minority regimes in southern Africa, started with the objective of securing the social status quo through training African women in domestic tasks so that their husbands could and would provide their labor in the economies of the region.<sup>xcviii</sup>

The rhetoric of Western domesticity obscured, to some extent, the transformative power of these organizations in the hands of local women like Kena. The organization

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xcviMurray, *Families Divided*.

xcviiNUL IE ED/F19/0006 *Annual Report by the Director of Education for the Year 1951* (Maseru: Government Printers, 1952). NUL IE ED/F19/0005 *Annual Report by the Director of Education for the Year 1954* (Maseru: Government Printers, 1955).

xcviiiS. Bain, *Homemakers Training Manual: For Trainers in African Women's Clubs* (Salisbury: Rhodesia Literature Bureau, 1970).

was a cross-border one, with Sesotho-speaking chapters in both Lesotho and South Africa coming together for annual meetings, which allowed members to see that women's needs were “common whether we live in the Union or in Basutoland.”<sup>xcix</sup> This regionalism gave the organization a power that transcended state boundaries, in both the colonial and independence eras, and decoupled identification as a Basotho woman with the state of Lesotho. Women who happened to live in South Africa and identified as Basotho could come together with their counterparts in Lesotho to discuss common issues, especially relating to women's economic prospects. The Homemakers were, along with church women's organizations, a “principle means by which Basotho women organised themselves to cope with migrant labour and related economic and social disruption.”<sup>c</sup>

Kena was attracted to the Homemakers by the strength she saw in its leader, Bernice Mohapelo, but also because in her village “many women joined” because they learned useful skills like “how to cook, prepare foods, sewing, canning fruits and all sorts of things.”<sup>ci</sup> These domestic activities allowed Kena to support her family throughout her husband's absence, and were the same ones the Association's colonial leaders had hoped would breed social contentment. Kena's used her domestic space to create economically useful activities, which helped support her own children, as well as political refugees from South Africa who sought her out because of her husband's political connections.<sup>cii</sup>

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xcix Quoting 'Me Mohapelo. NUL IE ED/F19/0006 *Annual Education Report 1954*.

c Marc Epprecht, “Domesticity and Piety in Colonial Lesotho: The Private Politics of Basotho Women's Pious Associations,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19 (1993): 204.

ci Interview Maleseka Kena, Tsoelike Auplas, 3/17/09.

cii Interview Maleseka Kena, Tsoelike Auplas, 3/17/09.

This use of skills learned in a cooperative environment to both pay school fees for her children and to support political refugees shows that the ideology of contented domesticity did not naturally follow the transmission of domestic skills. It further showed the ability of small-scale, community-run development projects to succeed on a large enough scale to be meaningful to the people who participated in them. If Kena could put seven children through school, while also feeding and clothing escaping refugees through skills she learned, at least in part, from her peers in the Tsoelike Auplas branch of the Homemakers' Association, the belief in the potential efficacy of small-scale, grass-roots development by many young Basotho was, perhaps, not misplaced.

Kena's ability to support her family does not show up in Lesotho's labor statistics or official assessments of development, but was a story that played out throughout Lesotho in the 1950s and 1960s, showing the gendered impact of development rhetoric. The BNP government continued late colonial large-scale development, like road building projects, a brewery in the new Industrial area in Maseru and a candle factory in the lowland town of Kolonyama. Using government revenue, British government grants and money from international aid agencies, the regime promoted male-centric visions of development—men worked in factories, operated the heavy machinery to build the roads and even drank most of the beer. The only real effort made to mobilize women under development initiatives was through a gendered conception of women's work: craft cooperatives that wove local mohair wool into curios, blankets and carpets.<sup>ciii</sup> This development initiative only came about because weaving had been women's work. The

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ciii David Tattersall, "Building the Future," *Lesotho Quarterly* 2 (1968).

BNP government, however, was not willing to see women for what they were, heads of household. Like their peers in the TANU Women's League in Tanganyika, the regime in Lesotho expected women to participate in development work as part of the nation, but only in a supporting capacity—in work that men did not want to or could not do, and as secondary actors.<sup>civ</sup>

The conception of males as the prime movers for development can also be seen in the odd distribution of the school population. Almost from the introduction of formal education into Lesotho in the mid nineteenth century, more female than male Basotho received some education because families expected young boys to herd animals for a good portion of their childhood, and many teenage males left for work in South Africa.<sup>cv</sup> Young men were a distinct minority in the primary schools, but were, by the late 1960s, enrolled at secondary schools in roughly equal numbers, and surpassed the number of girls in high school and university.<sup>cvi</sup> In 1966, for instance, there were over 100,000 girls enrolled in primary schools, compared to only 64,000 boys, while at the secondary level there were 1192 boys and 1358 girls. At the high school level, 251 boys were enrolled, with only 141 girls, and at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, there were 107 Basotho males and twenty-five females.<sup>cvii</sup> Photograph 2 shows a typical

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civ Geiger, *TANU Women*.

cv This trend continues to the present, with UNICEF statistics showing a 75% youth literacy rate for males in Lesotho, with a 91% rate for females.  
[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/lesotho\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/lesotho_statistics.html). Accessed 10 December 2010.

cvi Primary school consisted of eight years in 1966. Secondary was the first three years of post-primary education, leading to the Junior Certificate (JC) exam, while high school was the final two years of post-primary education, leading to the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC).

cvii All numbers courtesy of NUL IE ED/F19/0012 *Lesotho: Ministry of Education and Culture: Annual Report of the Permanent Secretary for the Year 1966 and a General Survey of Progress and Development in the Triennium 1964-66* (Maseru: Government Printing, 1967).

kindergarten class, with far more females than males.<sup>cviii</sup>



Young women in Lesotho had options to participate in the process of development, and to think about and act on their visions for the nation and their local communities, as the experiences of Kena and Homemakers' in Tsoelike Auplas showed. Teaching, especially at the primary level, was another option for young women. Rebecca Tlelima's mother had been a teacher in the 1930s and 1940s. Tlelima went to primary schools in the lowland Mohale's Hoek District and, sometime in the early 1950s, went to the Anglican St. Catherine's teacher-training college in Maseru. After completing her course of study, she took up a variety of teaching positions at Anglican primary schools, eventually ending up near Kolo in the rural Mafeteng District. In addition to teaching, Tlelima led chapters of the Girl Guides and the Junior Red Cross at these schools. Learning from the experience of her own mother, who had supported her children and

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cviii Archives of *Moeletsi oa Basotho*.



infirm husband, Tlelima supported her own family, putting her husband through a teacher training program and earning a diploma in education through a distance-learning program from England.<sup>cix</sup>

Clearly a remarkable woman, Tlelima does demonstrate that young women in Lesotho could gain significant economic status from their education, despite developmentalist assumptions about gender. Though never getting formal high school education, Tlelima was able to better the socio-economic standing of her family through her own efforts and by pushing her husband through school and into a good job as well. She was able to do so in part because she had the support of her family, and the example of her own working mother as head-of-household. Tlelima's work as a teacher was important economically for her family, but her enthusiasm for leading student groups like the Junior Red Cross and Girl Guides also demonstrate the importance of her job as a role model for other young Basotho. In addition to Tlelima, having the Regent 'Mantsebo and other highly placed women, like the Chieftainess 'Mamathe Masupha from Berea, in senior positions of the chieftaincy allowed Basotho women to envision themselves in positions of authority, even if development efforts were largely directed toward Basotho men, and conventionally male jobs.<sup>cx</sup>

As important as having female role models was for young Basotho women, however, were the very real organizational and small-scale, gendered development opportunities that the churches offered Basotho women. Epprecht has chronicled the

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cix All information from interview Rebecca Tlelima, Rothe ha Masite, 4/6/09.

cx See chapter two for more on both 'Mamathe Masupha and 'Mantsebo, and their roles in administration and political change.

important role that Catholic Church *Kopanos* (literal translation, “unions,” but women's societies), Protestant *Bo-'Ma-bana* (“the women's”) Clubs and the Homemakers' Associations played in “development of petty commodity production, cooperative gardening and marketing, building roads and dams and other forms of economic 'self-reliance' for women” in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>cxii</sup> His argument was robustly corroborated by the experiences of Kena, Tlelima and other informants. Another route to act on ideas of development by young Basotho women was through religious orders. Both the Anglicans and the Roman Catholics had strong programs in place by the middle of the twentieth century to train young Basotho women as nuns.

The nuns from both churches were involved in a wide variety of programs, working with young people in and out of schools, in church organizations and helping to run the administrative structures of the churches in Lesotho. Joining religious orders meant a loss of contact with family to some extent, and not all Basotho parents were happy about this. Clara Rapholo's parents were deeply religious, and they fully supported her decision in the late 1950s to join the Catholic Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Armelina Tsiki's father, on the other hand, greatly disapproved of her decision to join the same convent in the late 1960s because he had “educated me and then I wanted to join religious life without any help to the family.”<sup>cxiii</sup> Tsiki's father viewed schooling as an activity that should lead to some sort of economic benefit for the family, either through his daughter being able to take a job and help support the family, or through an increased *bohali* (brideprice) for his daughter when she was married. Joining a religious community took

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cxii Epprecht, “Women's 'Conservatism,’” 34.

cxiii Interview Armelina Tsiki, St. Rodrigue High School, 5/7/09

away both of these development possibilities for families, and instead accrued the benefits of education to the religious institution.

Young Basotho women joined religious orders for a variety of reasons, but the ability to have a career, to act out their own visions of development and to join a community of like-minded individuals where their contributions would be valued were all important reasons.<sup>cxiii</sup> The orders gave young Basotho women the chance to have contact with missionary nuns from overseas, to go abroad for study and to have contact with their peers across the southern African region. Marie Selena, born to Basotho parents in South Africa, joined the Anglican Community of the Holy Name in 1957 in the Transkei, moved to Hlotse in Lesotho in 1964, and spent almost two years in England for further training in the late 1960s. In Hlotse, the largest town in northern Lesotho and an educational center, she ran a boarding hostel for young Basotho girls attending local schools, and also organized a wide variety of youth organizations designed to engage young Basotho in service work for the church as well as social activities.<sup>cxiv</sup> While reluctant to talk about herself, Selena's was as enthusiastic about working with Basotho youth as Tsiki and Rapholo.

These women all had positive experiences with religious women growing up, nuns and lay women, Basotho and missionary sisters. Rapholo noticed the nuns in her rural village of Tlali “teaching and doing lots of other things...and said I wanted to do that.”<sup>cxv</sup>

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cxiii There was a similar diversity of reasons for joining the sisterhood in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Joan F. Burke, *These Catholic Sisters Are All MAMAS!: Towards the Inculturation of the Sisterhood in Africa, An Ethnographic Study* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2001).

cxiv Interview Marie Selena, Hlotse, 11/26/08.

cxv Interview Clara Rapholo, Roma, 5/5/09.

Individual conviction was important in joining the sisterhood for all of these women, but as Epprecht notes, the sisterhood also offered the best route for commoner women to rise to positions of authority and influence in late colonial and early independent Lesotho.<sup>cxvi</sup> This increased status allowed Basotho women a chance to act on their visions of development at a local level, freed from some of the structural impediments their lay peers in the Homemaker's Association, and even other church groups faced. Tsiki joined the Girl Guides at her all-girls school, prior to officially joining the sisterhood, but already firm in her commitment to pursue her calling in the religious order. The Guides gave her a chance to join with like-minded individuals, learn and practice “leadership skills” and make “baskets...sew[ing], knit[ting].” The handicrafts were given to school visitors as a token of appreciation and to members of the local community, especially the elderly, along with useful items like knitted winter hats. In addition to assisting in the community, Tsiki and her peers would also make some small items that, on school holidays at their homes, they could “put...by the side of the road and [people from outside who were visiting the mountains] would buy them,” thereby earning some small cash for themselves.<sup>cxvii</sup> The young women in the Girl Guides and nuns teaching handicrafts were not challenging fundamental societal gender roles, but they were carving out their own spaces for action on their own visions and taking steps to remake their communities along these lines.

Most of the nuns disavowed any interest in politics and the Homemaker's

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cxvi Marc Epprecht, “Women's 'Conservatism' and the Politics of Gender in Late Colonial Lesotho,” *Journal of African History* 36 (1995): 33.

cxvii Interview Armelina Tsiki, St. Rodrigue High School, 5/7/09.

Associations were not explicitly political, but their actions show that the women in these groups were thinking about themselves as part of larger communities, local, national and international. They were acting out of necessity to feed their families in many cases, but also acting on their own visions of development to help support the type of communities they wished to live in and see in an independent Lesotho. To them, development, like nationalism, meant economic and social transformations of rural, religious and family communities, and not just government-run, top-down industrial projects. Education was the backbone to all of their dreams for the future, both for themselves and for their larger communities. Rapholo and the other women in religious orders were “not interested” in politicians or people talking about independence, but she worked hard to ensure that her students in the 1960s had access to “the same experiences” available in her own schooling, and she took the lead in student groups to ensure that this vision of community development came to pass.<sup>cxviii</sup> While Rapholo, Tsiki and Selena did not classify their own work as political, they were participating in a political act: the redefinition of development and community structures as the local level—redefining the nation and the national community. Likewise, efforts by women like Kena and Tlelima in secular organizations had similar impacts on local development in rural areas. These efforts often ran counter to the government plan of centrally planned, top-down development, and did not receive any significant state support. The women who were involved in them, however, did not lose faith in their national community because of this state neglect. Rather, they worked to bring about their visions for local communities that

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cxviii Interview Clara Rapholo, Roma, 5/5/09.

gelled with their conceptions of the nation.

### **Development and the 1970 Elections**

The years between independence in 1966 and the elections of January 1970 were a heady time in Lesotho. The rhetoric of development drove much of the political contention during this time, as Basotho of all political persuasions (and even those who professed disinterest in politics) worked to help define social, political and economic relations in the new Lesotho. The BNP government pushed hard for industrial development that would allow some Basotho to stay home for work, rather than going to South Africa. By 1968, the government was trumpeting its investment in a tire re-treading factory in Maseru, a candle making factory in Kolonyama and a soon-to-be-opened mohair weaving factory in Maseru.<sup>cxix</sup> These efforts, however, were small and centralized. They provided work for a few people, but the opposition parties still denounced them as token and crumbs handed down by South African capital and the government, which was intent on Lesotho continuing to be a labor reserve, a *Bantustan* in all but name.<sup>cxx</sup>

While becoming discontent with the pace of government-sponsored economic development, many young Basotho, however, still hoped to see real economic change.<sup>cxxi</sup> This discontent was a reaction both to the limited scale of governmental efforts, and the inability of the projects to quickly transform local communities. But there was also

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cxix “Lesotho Starts on Road to Good Life,” *The Star* September 5, 1968.

cxx Leo McDuling, “Uneasy Choice Before Lesotho” *Rand Daily Mail* January 23, 1970.

cxxi Interviews Raphael Leseli, Roma, 1/15/09 and Thabelo Kebise, Maseru Bus Stop, 4/1/09.

growing dissatisfaction with the breadth of vision the government showed on economic development, and the limited or non-existent opportunities for Basotho to give input for project selection and design. Tseliso Ramakhula lost his job as an instructor at the Agricultural College in Maseru in 1965 because of his open support for the opposition BCP. He lamented the inability of the government at the time to find development potential in the agricultural sector. Noting that one of South Africa's best regions for growing exportable fruits like cherries and peaches was along Lesotho's northern border, Ramakhula wondered why “that side [of the Caledon (*Mohokare*) River, the international border] they can succeed, this side they can't succeed?” Attributing it to a “colonial oriented” government at independence, Ramakhula charged the independent government of Lesotho with being unable or unwilling to listen to its citizens, and incorporate their input into decision-making processes.

The unwillingness of the government to allow this citizen input played out visibly in the lead-up to the Parliamentary elections of January 1970 in Lesotho. With the constitution mandating a five-year term for Parliament, elections were due by early 1970, and the BNP government was confident that its success in promoting development would lead it to victory again. They had moved to centralize authority throughout their term, taking away power from District Councils and the chieftainship. They gave the central government oversight over land allocation, and the power to discipline chiefs, which reduced the influence of the local chieftaincy and *Motlotlehi* Moshoeshe II.<sup>cxxii</sup> Thus, Prime Minister Jonathan's use of development as the centerpiece of his campaign was a

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cxxii Richard F. Weisfelder, *The Basotho Monarchy: A Spent Force or a Dynamic Political Factor?* (Athens, OH: Ohio U. Center for International Studies, Papers in International Studies, Africa Series No. 16, 1972), 83.

continuation of this centralizing tendency. He campaigned around the country in late 1969, alternately cajoling supporters with a rehash of his government's achievements, and threatening opposition supporters that he would give “development priority” only to those constituencies which “return Government candidates.”<sup>cxxiii</sup> Coupling the provision of development support with electoral support thus completed the politicization of development, and caused many Basotho to lose faith in the government to provide services to all citizens. The centralization campaign, however, was more successful than campaign threats about development, and the BNP government lost the vote. As the vote counting progressed, Jonathan's government refused to concede power to the opposition BCP, announced a State of Emergency (*Qomatsi*), and cracked down on opposition supporters in a string of violence that lasted into May 1970. South Africa, which could have intervened militarily or economically to enforce the electoral outcome, once again tipped its hand by doing nothing—tacitly condoning the BNP coup and Jonathan's status as a client of South Africa.

The posturing of the BNP government around the 1970s elections, however, should not lead to the conclusion that opposition parties would have necessarily acted differently in power with regards to listening to constituents. The main teachers' union for non-Catholic teachers, the Lesotho African National Teacher's Union (LANTA), a key constituent element of the BCP, showed similar centralizing tendencies. In its monthly newsletter in December 1966, LANTA accused the Basotho public of being “inactive and drowsy” toward educational matters, and also took the Catholic teacher's union to task

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cxxiii “Support Me or Else...-Jonathan,” *Rand Daily Mail* October 25, 1969.



because LANTA was “the *only voice* [emphasis mine] of the teaching profession, the only organisation resolved to fight for justice within the profession.”<sup>cxxiv</sup> The BCP leadership had similar authoritarian tendencies, such as opposing female suffrage for the 1965 elections, fearing that women were more easily swayed by influential foreign church personal. There were also personality conflicts within the party that led to several schisms in the 1960s.<sup>cxxv</sup>

In short, Basotho not directly connected to the political parties, especially the young, were right to suspect that the rhetoric of development was mainly a political ploy to ensure that government revenues increased, and that large-scale projects, controllable from the center, were the main avenues for government investment. Even among government supporters, like Michael Mateka, this led to concern in the late 1960s. Working as a high school teacher in the Leribe District, he would go back to his father's village in the rural, lowland Berea District and hear people talking about how they hoped that “politics should be made to disappear so that maybe we can begin to work.”<sup>cxxvi</sup> This sentiment, while certainly anti-politics, was also anti-government, but it was not anti-national. Just as high school students like Armelina Tsiki were acting out their own visions of local and national communities through their work with the Girl Guides, the rural villagers in Mateka's home had clearly defined definitions of what should be part of independence, and they all saw political squabbling as standing in the way of their

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cxxiv Teachers at Catholic schools had their own union, which represented them in salary and terms of service negotiation. “Editorial” and “Freedom of the Teachers,” *LANTA-Echoes: Not By Favour, But By Merit* (Maseru: Khatiso ea Lesotho, 1966).

cxxv B.N. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970: An African Coup Under the Microscope* (London: C. Hurst, 1971).

cxxvi Interview Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, Leribe District, 11/26/08.

visions.

These visions were national in scale, but young Basotho wanted to act them out locally. Moteane's desire for Basotho to be able to make matches, Kebise's dream of railroads crisscrossing lowland Lesotho, Rapholo educating a new generation in preparation for leadership positions, Ramakhula's belief in the ability of Lesotho's soils and people to successfully nurture fruit orchards and Kena's efforts organizing rural women into small-scale cooperative enterprises encompassed some of the principles that modernization theory proposed. Young Basotho wanted industrial expansion, cash-crop agriculture, education to prepare for new jobs and the support of representative government to make these changes come about. The main components missing from having their visions fulfilled were structures that would allow for and incorporate grass-roots participation in development projects. Some, like Kena, had found ways to create their own grass-roots developments, but they wanted government support for locally conceived and run projects. The inability of the government to create representative structures that could help those looking to undertake grass-roots projects, and its heavy-handed centralization tendencies led many young Basotho in the late 1960s to feel uneasy with with the direction of their new state and the future of the national project.

The last British colonial administrator of Lesotho, Alexander Giles, characterized struggles for political control in Lesotho as fundamentally conflicted between “Basotho and European ideas of how a country should be governed.” He feared that “concepts of Western democracy are not deep-rooted...they have not fully been understood or accepted by the mass of the people.”<sup>cxxvii</sup> Giles, like many contemporary theorists on African

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cxxvii NAUK CO 1048/892 Basutoland: Final Report Before Independence, Giles, BGR to Secretary of

development, was correct in thinking that there was a fundamental disconnect between how colonial (and neo-colonial) governments conceived of development, and how local people envisioned these efforts. He was, however, wrong in assigning blame to Basotho people for a lack of democratic understanding. Basotho, especially the young, readily understood and desired a representative, responsive development campaign that would bring wide-spread economic improvement to the country. Basotho politicians and senior chiefs in the 1950s and 1960s were unwilling to construct or use representative structures. In the name of the nation, they conceived of, funded and implemented development projects that would aid their aim of centralizing the power of the state, and limiting chances for popular participation. Young Basotho, who fervently wished for development, understood and wanted to see economic change before and after independence. Unable to rely on colonial or post-colonial governments to bring about the changes they wanted to see in their local communities, young Basotho had to work without state support to bring about their visions for their country and nation. In this process of improvisation, many Basotho youth created communities of their own making that allowed them to channel their energies into locally productive and constructive outlets, moving beyond their frustrations with the national government.

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State for the Colonies, October 3, 1966.

## Chapter 5: Engagement with Global Ideas, 1955-70

“We always had to be careful as to where you were questioning because the moment you crossed the border [to South Africa] you shut your mouth and opened your eyes and ears.”<sup>i</sup>

Michael Mateka was born into a poor family in the rural, lowland Berea District in 1939. He attended primary school off-and-on because, like most young Basotho boys, he had to spend time watching his father's animals in the fields. Once he started attending school regularly he did very well, qualifying for a government bursary to attend high school starting in 1956. Mateka dreamed of becoming a medical doctor, but his admittance to the University of Heidelberg in West Germany was contingent on getting funding, which was not forthcoming from government or private sources. So instead of becoming a doctor, he joined the Brothers of the Sacred Heart and went into teaching, still the main occupation open to educated Basotho in the 1960s.<sup>ii</sup>

In the 1950s and 1960s, however, Mateka was a young man looking to find his way in the exciting, turbulent and sometimes confusing world of late colonial southern Africa. Taking his secondary education and religious training in Roma exposed Mateka, and many other young Basotho, to a multi-ethnic mix of people and ideas as the University of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland (UBBS) was located there, along with the Catholic seminaries that trained Basotho and other southern Africans for the priesthood. Drawing students primarily from the High Commission Territories and

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i Interview Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, Leribe District, 11/26/08.

ii Mateka was spectacularly successful, working his way into the position of Educational Secretariat for the Catholic Church, overseeing every Catholic school in the country by the late 1980s.

southern Africa, but also from places as far afield as modern-day Zambia, Malawi, Kenya and Tanzania, UBBS brought together the highest academic achieving and often most politically aware the region had to offer. However, even before arriving in cosmopolitan Roma, Mateka, like most of his youthful peers, had exposure to the hard reality of *apartheid*, and the capricious and arbitrary nature of international boundaries. Prior to South Africa withdrawing from the Commonwealth in 1961, Basotho could cross the border without any documentation because of the shared British heritage of the two territories, and Mateka would regularly go to the Orange Free State to help his aunt harvest maize near the border town of Ficksburg.

It was in this context that Mateka noted that Basotho had to close their mouths and open their ears and eyes. The conditions for Basotho in Lesotho, even during the colonial period, were markedly different from those experienced by their friends and relatives in South Africa. While being cognizant and wary of *apartheid* restrictions, South Africa was far from the only place that influenced the thinking of young Basotho, however. A 1951 team of Basotho football players headed to South Africa to play a series of matches featured nicknames such as “Atom Bomb,” “British Columbia,” “English Man,” and “Kalamazoo.”<sup>iii</sup> Contact with outside people and ideas was certainly not new in Lesotho, but the independence movements of the 1950s and 1960s in Asia and Africa, covered in detail by widely-read vernacular newspapers in Lesotho, coupled with rapidly increasing opportunities for education among young Basotho, lent a new sense of awareness to the time. Like their peers throughout the world, Basotho youth in the 1960s

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iii NUL LC LC 26/4 Letter General Secretary Caledon Sports Association to Mr. Motsatse, January 6, 1951.

played seminal roles in the process of cultural contestation and change taking place in Lesotho and the wider southern African region.

Young Basotho accessed, experimented with and made use of ideas and ideologies that had wider regional and global resonance to make changes to their own material and family relations. These processes were not new in Lesotho, but the urgency of global change in the 1960s and the promise of impending independence for Lesotho placed young Basotho in a similar situation to their peers across Africa and the globe. Tied into the struggle against colonialism at home, the codifying *apartheid* system in South Africa and greater Cold War rhetoric about communism, youth in Lesotho learned and used the language associated with these ideological conflicts, but they did not feel bound to necessarily support positions in conflict with their nationalistic visions for the state of Lesotho and the Basotho nation.

The processes through which young Basotho interacted with global ideologies was heightened by inequities they experienced in South Africa, by their contact with South African refugees in Lesotho and by increased contact with a growing number of young volunteers from the United States and western Europe coming into Lesotho at this time. Young Basotho did not, however, simply assimilate outside ideas, but they adapted them to their own conditions, fit them with their own dreams and aspirations for their individual futures and the future of the nation, and took their syntheses with them as they explored the world. Basotho youth took ideas in use across the globe from decolonization, youth protest and the Cold War and applied them to argue for more meritocratic and egalitarian cultural change in Lesotho, making the international local,

bringing the 1960s into Lesotho and helping to shape their own nationalistic dreams and aspirations.

### **The 1960s, the Cold War and Lesotho**

Studies of social protest and political and cultural change in the 1960s, defined broadly, have proliferated of late. Focusing on the relationship between the state, society as a whole and individuals' role within both, these studies have presented the 1960s both as a “crisis of political authority,” and as a “cultural war” with young people as prime movers of change.<sup>iv</sup> These studies have, however, been very Euro- and American-centric with commentators often willing to include large-scale street protests from Mexico, Japan and other “peripheral” areas that meet their criteria for “radical youth,” but often ignoring or giving only a cursory summary of events in Africa, where states were either recently emergent or emerging from colonial control.<sup>v</sup> While defining events of the 1960s as “transnational, if not global,” and seeing the connections that youth in Europe and America were making between their own grievances and the “global fight...against colonial rule and imperialist domination,” scholars have only scratched the surface of how the 1960s played out in Africa.<sup>vi</sup>

Marwick defined the 1960s, which he considered as encompassing 1958-1974, as a revolution in “material conditions, lifestyles, family relationships, and personal freedoms for the vast majority of people” rather than a “fundamental redistribution of

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iv Suri, *Power and Protest*, 4. Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*, 4.

v Gassert and Klimke, “From Revolt to Research.”

vi “Introduction: *AHR Forum*.” Gassert and Klimke, “From Revolt to Research,” 5.

political and economic power.” However, he, like many authors, dismissed Africa (and large parts of Asia and Latin America) because changes in the former colonial world “extended over a much longer period of time.”<sup>vii</sup> This omission is striking because there were large-scale student protests similar to and in-part inspired by events taking place in Europe and the United States in Tanganyika in 1966 and Senegal in 1968.<sup>viii</sup> However, including Lesotho and Africa, generally, as a whole in the story of the 1960s is about more than simply inserting African voices and stories into the 1960s narrative. The ways that young Basotho inspired, learned about, experimented with and used global ideas of the 1960s and the Cold War connects these stories with the stories of nationalism and decolonization. These processes were intimately linked in the minds and lives of people in Lesotho, where people were working “actively to create a new world in their homes, workplaces, neighbourhoods, and personal lives,” just as their counterparts were doing in the streets and universities elsewhere.<sup>ix</sup>

Brown's call to examine the 1960s to find the global at work in local contexts, and to discover how people imagined themselves as part of a greater global community, presents an opening to bring African history into studies of the 1960s. This approach is particularly useful for Lesotho because the goal of the reformulation is not merely demonstrating “fundamental similarities across national cases,” but involves situating individuals and nation-states in greater global context.<sup>x</sup> Lesotho had long been a cross-

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vii Marwick, *The Sixties*, 15-16.

viii Ivaska, “National Service Crisis.” Zeilig, “Turning to Africa.”

ix Scott Rutherford et al., “Introduction: The Global 1960s,” in *New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness*, ed. Karen Dubinsky et al. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2009), 3.

x Brown, “‘1968’ East and West,” 69-70.



roads for ideas in southern Africa because of its strong schooling system, its early involvement with regional commerce and its heavy dependence on the migrant labor system in South Africa.<sup>xi</sup>

Basotho had played prominent roles in most of the major protest organizations in South Africa, from then-Paramount Chief Letsie II's serving as chair of the conference that founded the organization that would become the ANC in 1912, through the heavy involvement of Basotho like "Professor" James Thaele in the radical Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU), to Mosotho Potlako Leballo co-founding the PAC in 1959 with Robert Sobukwe.<sup>xii</sup> But Basotho did not need to leave the country to feel the impact of outside ideas in the early twentieth century. In addition to the two main Sesotho-language newspapers published by the Catholic Church and the Paris Evangelical Mission Society, there were vibrant and thriving newspapers that published locally in English and Sesotho from the early days of the twentieth century. These papers, like the independent *Naledi*, which published fortnightly starting in 1904 and went to a weekly format in 1911, provided coverage of and editorials on events in Lesotho and South Africa. It also provided extensive coverage of major world events and news from the African-American community in the United States, reporting, for example, on the lynching of African-Americans in 1924, and on the death of the widow of Booker T. Washington in 1925.<sup>xiii</sup>

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xi For more on these topics, see chapter 2.

xii For more on Thaele, see Amanda D. Kemp and Robert Trent Vinson, "Poking Holes in the Sky': Professor James Thaele, American Negroes and Modernity in 1920s Segregationist South Africa," *African Studies Review* 43 (2000): 141-59. Leballo and the PAC were discussed in chapter two.

xiii NUL David Ambrose, "Introduction," in *Naledi ea Lesotho (The Star of Lesotho)*, ed. David Ambrose

Another important conduit for information was the presence in Lesotho of overseas missionaries. A variety of Protestant and Catholic missions, missionaries and outstations were all well established by the early twentieth century. In addition to the religious ideas these missionaries brought, they were also vectors for the introduction of new crops, material goods, ideas and formalized, western education.<sup>xiv</sup>

It was, however, the open and easy borders with South Africa that provided the opportunity for the vast majority of Basotho to really engage with a wide range of ideas. Atwell Sidwell Mopeli-Paulus, noted Mosotho author of novels like *Blanket Boy's Moon* and *Turn to the Dark*, was born in 1913 in Witzieshoek, the mainly Basotho area on the border of Lesotho that would become the *apartheid*-era Homeland of QwaQwa. A descendant of Moshoeshoe's half-brother, Mopeli-Paulus's chiefly father sent him to live with relatives and attend school in Lesotho in 1927. While living outside the royal village of Matsieng, he was also responsible for watching his host family's cattle. When the cows got into a neighboring village's maize field, rather than face punishment, Mopeli-Paulus and a friend ran away. They went to South Africa by wading across the Caledon River a few miles upstream from the main border post at Maseru.<sup>xv</sup> The ease with which Mopeli-Paulus and his friend could cross the intra-imperial border between South Africa and Lesotho without any identifying papers and find work on the farms and in the small towns of the Orange Free State was representative of how easy it was for

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(2007). Josiel A. Modise, "The Shame of the United States of America," *Naledi* November 28, 1924. "Death of Mrs. Washington," *Naledi* August 7, 1925.

xiv For more on this, see chapter one and Gill, *Short History*.

xv A.S. Mopeli-Paulus, *The World and the Cattle* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 23-4.

Basotho, male and female, young and old, to cross the border into South Africa in the twentieth century.<sup>xvi</sup> It also highlights the paradoxical situation that Basotho faced in respect to borders. With bureaucratic border formalities, Basotho could avoid but not necessarily escape the territorial limitations that the border represented, on one hand. They could and did, however, reject the limitations on individual action and ideas about national communities that the border represented through their actions in crossing legally and illegally.

Border crossing was not relegated to people trying to get into South Africa; it was a two-way street. After being part of a protest in Witzieshoek against new *apartheid* land restrictions in 1950 that left two police officers dead, Mopeli-Paulus again found occasion to slip across the border, this time into Lesotho in the northern Butha Buthe District. Even after being a participant in this violent protest, Mopeli-Paulus and three other wanted men “went over the pass” into Lesotho where they “rode freely in Basutoland, visiting the villages...staying with friends and relatives.”<sup>xvii</sup> While the Basutoland Mounted Police eventually caught up with this group, returning them to South Africa for their trial, the ease with which the fugitives could enter Lesotho and move among the villages shows the transparency of the border, the local understandings that the border created opportunities for people to gain advantage from crossing and the normalcy with which people on both sides crossed the border without regard for bureaucratic formalities.

Thabo Mofutsanyana was another South African of Basotho descent who found

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<sup>xvi</sup>Murray, *Families Divided*. Maloka, *Basotho and the Mines*.

<sup>xvii</sup>Mopeli-Paulis, *World and the Cattle*, 133.

refuge in Lesotho. Born in 1899 in Witzieshoek, Mofutsanyana was a prolific organizer for the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) from the 1920s to the 1950s, acting as the main contact between the Party and various African liberation groups in the region like the ANC, the ICU and even *Lekhotla la Bafo* (LLB) in Lesotho.<sup>xviii</sup> With the CPSA underground in South Africa in the 1950s and fearing the South African police, Mofutsanyana slipped across the border into Lesotho in 1959. Initially staying with relatives, he lived in a village in the Leribe District close to the border with South Africa, and then, still fearing for his safety, moved up into the Maluti mountains sometime in the early 1960s with the help of LLB founder Josiel Lefela. He stayed current with politics in Lesotho, writing occasional articles for the BCP-paper *Mohlabani*, and working at times with members of the nascent Communist Party of Lesotho.<sup>xix</sup> That even such a well-known CPSA organizer could slip into Lesotho and not face deportation to South Africa shows how effective local chiefly protection could be, as well as the limited ability of the police and governmental authorities to really control local events in late colonial Lesotho.

While it was certainly easier for South Africans like Mopeli-Paulus and Mofutsanyana, who had familial connections in Lesotho, to cross the border and gain sanctuary, it was also possible for South Africans with no apparent connections to gain access to Lesotho for sanctuary. Mbuzeleni Fakazi was a thirty-two year old of Zulu descent who escaped to Lesotho in 1954, claiming that the farmer for whom he was

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xviii Robert Edgar, *Edwin Thabo Mofutsanyana and the Communist Party of South Africa 1927-1939* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2005).

xix Thabo Mofutsanyana, "Invisible Thokolosi" *Mohlabani* March 1959. Edgar, *Mofutsanyana*, xi.

working in the Orange Free State threatened to kill him. Upon further examination of his story, Chief Motsoene of Leribe and the British District Commissioner both pronounced him to be “off his head slightly,” and they helped him procure a train ticket back to his home in Natal.<sup>xx</sup> Prior to 1958, people attempting to settle in Lesotho had to either prove birth in Basutoland, birth to Basotho parents or get written permission from a chief to settle in their area.<sup>xxi</sup> This was part of the legal justification for the British holding Basutoland as a Protectorate—protecting the land of the Basotho from those not of Basotho descent. From 1958, the colonial government turned control over residency in Lesotho to the nine District Council Boards, which consisted of the British District Commissioner, the Principle Chief of the District and two members elected by the District Council.<sup>xxii</sup> This system gave great freedom for people to come into Lesotho and settle, as long as they could find a community and chief willing to accept them. Thus decisions defining who was a member of the national community came at the local level, where chiefs, family members and concerned individuals could successfully win arguments for including people they saw would benefit them as individuals and as a community. This made Lesotho a particularly friendly place for refugees and so many came from South Africa into Lesotho during the late colonial period.

Many of these South Africans were individuals looking for better social conditions and more freedom in their daily lives, like Fakazi, but a small but significant

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xx NUL LC LC 23/1 Miscellaneous Old File No. 563.

xxi NUL LC LC 25 1931-1959 Inter-Territorial Transfers of Africans, Union to Basutoland 1950-1959.

xxii NAUK CO 1048/136 Mrs. E. Mafekeng, Refugee from Republic of South Africa in Basutoland, Background note on Mrs. Elizabeth Mafekeng.

portion were political refugees. The most notable included Mofutsanyana, trade union organizer Elizabeth Mafekeng, who arrived in 1959, CPSA and ANC organizer Joe Matthews, who arrived in 1960, and ANC Youth League co-founder and PAC-member A.P. Mda, who arrived along with a wave of recently-released-from-prison PAC refugees in 1963.<sup>xxiii</sup> These high profile refugees, many with connections to the Communist Party, continued long-term debates about how much sanctuary Lesotho should offer these refugees, how much pressure from the *apartheid* government the chieftaincy and the colonial government could withstand, and about the role outside ideas should play in Lesotho and how Basotho society could or should integrate these people and ideas.

### **Outside Influences in Lesotho and the Cold War**

While there was no distinction between a local and an international idea in Lesotho from the nineteenth century, the codification of a migrant labor system in the southern African region from the 1870s, and early and eager Basotho participation in it, hastened the spread of global ideas into Lesotho.<sup>xxiv</sup> Similarly, social pressures resulting from a shortage of arable land, a large migratory population, general growth in the number of people in Lesotho and relatively high levels of education in the populace made political conflicts sharp. Groups like the Basutoland Progressive Association (BPA), LLB and groups associated with the churches were especially eager to bring in outside ideas in their attempts to reform local administrative structures and colonial rule more

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xxiiiNAUK CO 1048/136 Mrs. E. Mafekeng, Refugee from Republic of South Africa in Basutoland. CO 1048/561 V.J.G. Matthews (Joe) Political Refugee from South Africa in Basutoland. Aluka Collection (hereafter AC), Gail Gerhart interview with A.P. Mda, 1/1/1970.

xxivFor more on this, see chapters one and two.

broadly. The most controversial of these contacts were the close relationship that developed between Josiel Lefela, head of LLB, and then-ANC president Josiah Gumede, as well as LLB's decision to publish a semi-regular column in the South African Communist Party newspaper *The South African Worker*.<sup>xxv</sup>

LLB's ties to individual communists and the Party came into public debate as an issue in 1928 and 1929 when Lefela undertook a tour of the territory to raise funds to send a delegation, with Gumede at its head, to the King of England to present LLB's grievances against the *Morena e Moholo* and the colonial government. LLB attempted to bring Gumede into the territory to assist in these fund raising efforts, but Gumede's recent tour of the Soviet Union caused the colonial government to deny him entry to the territory.<sup>xxvi</sup> Their invitation, however, touched off great debate in the Basutoland Council and the religious and popular presses over which ideas and people should be allowed in the country. Gumede's connections with the Soviet Union worried the alliance of senior chiefs and the colonial government, who called him a “communist” who would “do a good deal of harm in a territory like this.”<sup>xxvii</sup> Both factions worried that introducing “radical” African liberation ideas into Lesotho would threaten the stability of the political alliance between chiefs and the colonial government that underpinned social stability in Lesotho. Daniel Makhakhe, a BPA member, on the other hand, attacked LLB for trying to use Gumede, a South African, rather than a Mosotho: “I do not agree to support

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xxvEdgar, *Prophets with Honour*.

xxviEdgar, *Prophets with Honour*, 23.

xxviiLesotho National Archives (hereafter LNA) S3/22/1/1, Letter Chief Qhobela J. Molapo to Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Butha Buthe [1928]. Letter Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Butha Buthe Kennan to Assistant Commissioner, Leribe, July 10, 1928.

Gumede with money as there are many educated young men in Basutoland one of whom could have been sent to Europe re the people's grievances.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Makhakhe and the BPA's criticism was based on the idea that LLB was subsuming its local goals by associating too freely with outside groups from South Africa, which were not in alignment with reforms that they hoped to see within a Basotho cultural framework. LLB, on the other hand, needed the support of the CPSA because the senior chiefs and the colonial government at all levels had stymied their efforts to get their message out through newspapers, mass meetings and individual recruitment. Their association with communists like Gumede and Thabo Mofutsanyana did not mean that LLB was a communist group; rather it saw South African communists as fellow-travelers who could help achieve its own national goals. Both sides found their mutual relationship beneficial, and forged partnerships wherein each benefited from the cross-border connections. The strong connections LLB developed, and the strong reactions that these connections provoked among other interested parties, are representative of how Basotho in the twentieth century took in, debated, developed their own and reacted to international ideas.

This episode from the 1920s also presaged the wide-spread engagement Basotho would have with Cold War ideas in the 1950s and 1960s. It was around the related concepts of communism and the South African influence in Lesotho that much of the political rhetoric in Lesotho turned. This in itself is not surprising because South Africa's National Party government made virulent anti-communism its stated policy after coming

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xxviii Daniel Makhakhe quoted, LNA S3/22/2/1 Lekhotla la Bafo, Report on the meeting of the "Lekhotla la Bafo" at Matsieng on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1929 by Cas. Ntsinyi.



to power in 1949, in order to suppress domestic dissent and to retain the USA and the UK as its strongest overseas backers. Notwithstanding the presence from 1962 of the tiny Lesotho Communist Party, people of all ages and political persuasions in Lesotho used the term communism more as a way to make local political arguments than as a way of trying to insert Lesotho into geopolitics.

Most of the scholarship on the Cold War in sub-Saharan Africa has either focused on the roles of individuals involved in the struggle for African liberation with communism, or has focused on the South African government, its ties to Western governments and the geopolitical implications of independence on international organizations like the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity.<sup>xxix</sup> The story that emerges from Lesotho, however, complicates this picture with Basotho understanding that communism represented both an ideology and a political bogey-man. Young Basotho, especially, rejected labels like communist as deterministic, rather choosing to apply, skirt, ignore and engage with them in an effort to bring about the societal changes they wanted to see.<sup>xxx</sup> This gave them the opportunity to both understand global events, and to use global ideologies to help shape their vision of the nation that they wanted to see come to pass.

### **Youth Engagement with Global Ideas in Lesotho, 1955-1970**

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xxixPiero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). J.E. Spence, "Southern Africa in the Cold War," *History Today* 49 (1999): 43-9. Sue Onslow, "Introduction: White Power, Black Nationalism and the Cold War in Southern Africa," *Cold War History* 7 (2007): 165-8.

xxxThis is explored in greater detail later in the chapter.

Basotho youth came into contact with global ideas in a variety of formats, and through a number of different media, but the fluidity of the international border meant that border-crossing was a common and normal phenomenon. Seeing the border as a sometimes useful buffer to exploit, and a sometimes-harmful artifice to overcome, but not a meaningful determinant of identity helped lessen the always somewhat artificial divide between national and international in Lesotho. Again, many Basotho had to respect the formalities of the border (or find ways to successfully evade it), while not acknowledging its meaning on their individual lives or their definitions of national community. Marie Selena's mother worked as a domestic in Johannesburg, and while Selena considered herself to be Mosotho, she was born and raised in the Orange Free State town of Dewetsdorf. She only moved to Lesotho in 1969, considering it a “return,” even though she had not lived there previously.<sup>xxxii</sup> Similarly, Motsapi Moorosi was born in 1945 in Springs, a mining town outside Johannesburg to Basotho parents originally from Phamong, deep in the southern Lesotho mountains. Moorosi only came to Lesotho in 1962 when he started high school classes at St. Monica's in the Leribe District, but he considered himself a Mosotho and made Lesotho his long-term home.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The stories of Motsapi and Selena show Basotho raised elsewhere moving into Lesotho, highlighting that it was not just outsiders and media sources responsible for bringing outside ideas and influences into Lesotho.<sup>xxxiiii</sup>

With plenty of Basotho, male and female, young and old, crossing the border in

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xxxiiInterview Marie Selena, Hlotse, 11/26/08.

xxxiiiInterview Motsapi Moorosi, Maseru East, 3/12/09.

xxxiiiiFor Basotho in South Africa and the cross-pollination of ideas, Kynoch, *Marashea Gangs*.

both directions, there were many avenues for people in Lesotho to learn of international ideas and of experiences different from their own. Another route to this cosmopolitan understanding was through schools, with many taking trips around Lesotho and into South Africa. A school Headmaster requested governmental permission, needed because of a series of horrific bus accidents involving overloaded school transport, to hire buses in 1956 to take his primary students from rural Pitseng to the District administrative camp of Hlotse for sports. Likewise, the headmaster in the lowland town of Peka requested, and was granted, permission to take his primary school students across the border to the Orange Free State border town of Marquard to play sports and the Pitseng Secondary Headmaster received permission to take students to the provincial capital of Bloemfontein so that his students could visit the zoo, the museum and the observatory, as their school was up in the mountains and “knowledge is altogether isolated.”<sup>xxxiv</sup>

With all of these cross-border contacts and experiences, the differences between life in Lesotho and life in South Africa were well known to all Basotho, but especially to the young, who crossed the border often, and had more opportunities to come into contact with their youthful South African peers coming into Lesotho. Chaka Ntsane, who as a child lived for a time with his parents in Maseru, and for a time with his grandparents in the rural Leribe District, remembered that young Basotho in school had some exposure to world events through their teachers, but that those who went to South Africa also received “better exposure to the world.”<sup>xxxv</sup> So while schooling offered a path to start

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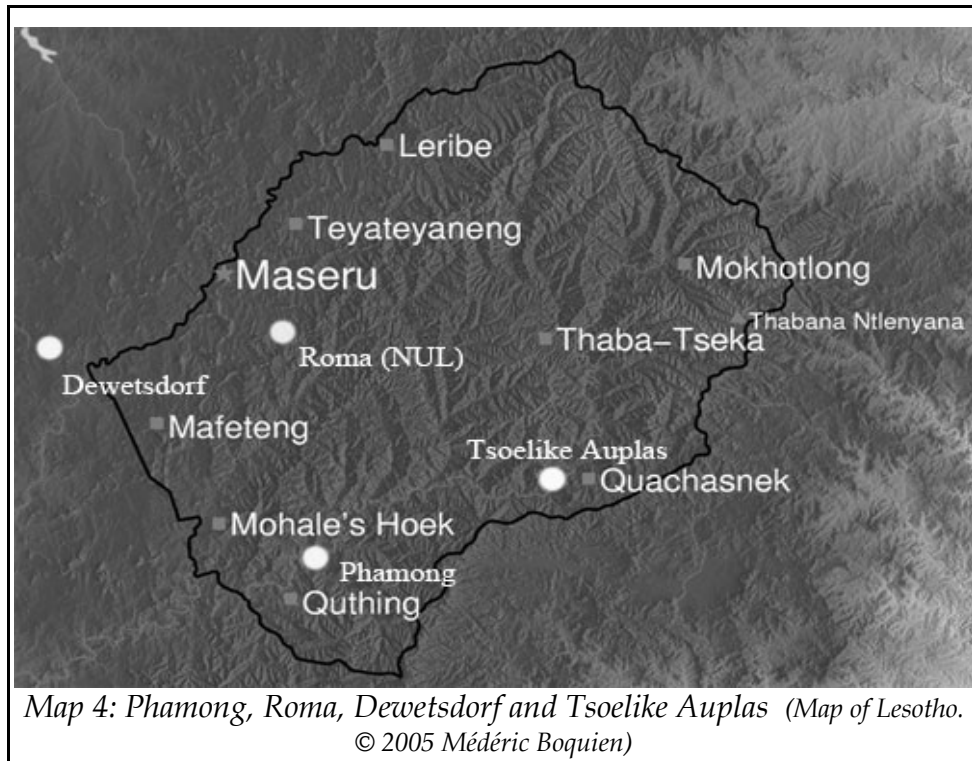
xxxivNUL LC LC 29 Education General, Letter Edgar Sello, Pitseng Mission to District Commissioner Leribe, September 5, 1956.

xxxvInterview Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 2/24/09.

making connections between world events and changes in Lesotho, it was not a prerequisite for understanding or making sense of the Cold War, decolonization, the struggle for political and social rights and independence. Michael Mateka remembered being exposed to the idea of independence specifically through “word of mouth.” It was through his contacts in schools and with migrants in his home in the rural Berea district that he became aware of the “ANC...Pan-African Congress...leaders like Nyerere...and they were talking about African unity.”<sup>xxxvi</sup>

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xxxviInterview Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, Leribe District, 11/26/08.



High literacy rates, combined with the long reach of the two main mission-published papers, *Moeletsi* and *Leselinyana*, throughout rural Lesotho made world news headlines known to many people. This news, when it came from sources other than the mission papers, however, could be controversial, especially when young Basotho were accessing it out of the control of their elders. The 1957 Basutoland Council investigated a strike and riot at Roma College, a secondary school near the university. Councillor Theko Makhaola, a chief from the Qacha's Nek District, reported that the strike came about in part because the students were angry at being banned from reading local political newspapers like *Mohlabani*, as well as popular South African publications like *New Age*, a leftist political paper sympathetic to the ANC, and popular publications dedicated to black arts and society like *The Drum* and *Zonk*. Especially popular was *The Drum*, which from the early 1950s focused on “crime, music, township news, or—as indices of success

—news of Negro America and of moves towards independence in tropical Africa.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

The students wanted to be current with South African clothing and music styles and developments, as well as read about political and social developments taking place across Africa, but the mission authorities feared that these magazines contained “certain bad pictures in them which are not suitable to be read by students.”<sup>xxxviii</sup> While this may have been true for the South African publications, *Mohlabani* was a mimeographed broadsheet with no illustrations or photographs, indicated the school's mission authorities feared the influence that connecting political developments in the rest of Africa to developments in Lesotho might have on students, like an April 1957 article on the recent return of Seretse Khama to Botswana, and the chiefs in the Basutoland Council concurred wholeheartedly in this assessment.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Despite attempts like this by school authorities, church leaders, and even chiefs to restrict the flow of information to young people, these efforts were never particularly well coordinated—the porous borders also allowed publications to flow freely in the hands of migrants. Young Basotho were able to easily and eagerly access local, South African and even some African-American publications like *Ebony* and *Jet* throughout the 1960s. Rebecca Tlelima eagerly read *Makatolle*, an explicitly political newspaper the BCP started after losing its former mouthpiece, *Mohlabani*, when B.M. Khaketla took the

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xxxviiMichael Chapman, ed., *The Drum Decade: Stories from the 1950s* (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: University of Natal Press, 1989), 194.

xxxviiiCouncillor Theko Makhaola quoted, *1957 Basutoland Council*.

xxxixThe issue of generational tension around independence and outside ideas will be explored in more depth in chapter six. G.J. Modikwe, “Is Sertse (sic) Still Chief?” *Mohlabani* 3 (April 1957).

paper to the side of the MFP, in her rural Mafeteng home in the mid-1960s.<sup>xi</sup> Raphael Leseli recounted his mother reading *Mohlabani* in the mountains of the Maseru District at the same time.<sup>xlii</sup> Selborne Mohlalisi looked forward to reading the *Rand Daily Mail* out of Johannesburg and Tseliso Ramakhula and Mohlalefi Moteane both tried to get Bloemfontein's *The Friend* whenever they were near to a town that sold it.<sup>xliii</sup> The South African papers could, for the most part, only be purchased in Maseru or in one of the South African border towns, so these young Basotho did not have regular access to the papers, but they actively sought them out.

It was not merely South African and local publications, however, that young Basotho were accessing. Simon Phafane, a committed royalist, actively sought out communist literature in the mid-1960s that he knew was available in Maseru on his journeys to and from school in the Leribe District after school holidays. While not a communist, or even a sympathizer, Phafane was interested in seeing what communist literature had to offer, and he was not alone as “many of us [students and other young Basotho] had access to this.”<sup>xliiii</sup> Motsapi Moorosi, a high school student at the same time, also remembered having access to all sorts of publications from South Africa and even further afield that he and his classmates would purchase and circulate at their school whenever they found themselves in Maseru or South African border towns.<sup>xliv</sup> By the late

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xi Interview Rebecca Tlelima, Rothe ha Masite, 4/6/09.

xli Interview Raphael Leseli, Roma, 1/15/09.

xlii Interviews Selborne Mohlalisi, Morija, 11/10/08, Tseliso Ramakhula, Lower Thamae, 3/1/09 and Mohlalefi Moteane, Maseru, 5/27/09.

xliiii Interview Simon Phafane, Maseru, 11/3/08.

xliv Interview Motsapi Moorosi, Maseru East, 3/12/09.

1960s, Thabelo Kebise even remembered getting occasional access through his friends to African-American publications like *Ebony*, that carried a series of articles on style, fashion, American race relations and politics, but also reported occasionally on African events.<sup>xlv</sup>

While most Basotho youth only had infrequent access to these publications, that they were actively seeking them out, passing them around their social circles and following world events shows that young Basotho were trying to place political and social changes taking place in Lesotho into a greater context. This context, and a general suspicion of youth, was the cause of much fear in governmental circles, colonial and chiefly. Both groups feared that youth, challenging generational authority, would derail social stability by making demands that these groups could not meet, as was evident in an investigation by the Basutoland Council of a rather small school riot in 1957. A 1960 strike at the two most prestigious non-university educational institutions in Maseru, Basutoland High School (BHS) and Lerotholi Technical School (LTS), caused the government to convene an official inquiry to investigate the causes of the disturbances. LTS was the older institution, having been founded in 1906 through donations from individual Basotho, and enrolled around 120 students in a variety of training programs for manual trades like leather work, carpentry and motor mechanics, among others. BHS, founded in 1939, was the first high school in the territory and, always co-ed, served about 250 students in 1960. The strikes at both school in late April/early May of 1960 were not coordinated, and were mainly focused on quality of life issues: the variety and quality of

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xlv Interview Thabelo Kebise, Maseru Bus Stop, 4/1/09. *Ebony*, for example, ran a feature on and by noted black South African photojournalist Ernest Cole in February, 1968. *Ebony* 23: 4 (1968): 68-72.



food the institutions served, the amount of student voice in the administration of the schools and the amount of personal freedom students at a boarding institution would have.<sup>xlvi</sup>

The British Commission, consisting of outside educational experts, found for the students on their grievances about food and living conditions in the hostels, but was deeply unsympathetic to the minor vandalism and the way in which they made demands on the schools and the government. The commission was unable to pin the strikes on the Basutoland Congress Party, as it clearly hoped to, but their fear of political influence on young Basotho was clear: “The atmosphere of indiscipline created by party politics in this country as a whole no doubt encouraged the students.”<sup>xlvii</sup> Their main recommendation to thwart any further disturbances by the students was to restrict the access of the students to the general public of Maseru. Clearly, young Basotho were impressionable, and “the public” was a negative influence on the minds of these young scholars.

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<sup>xlvi</sup>NUL IE ED/F43/0022 *Commission on School Disturbances*.

<sup>xlvii</sup>NUL IE ED/F43/0022 *Commission on School Disturbances*.



*Photograph 3: John Motloheloa Selling Newspapers (Courtesy of Moeletsi oa Basotho)*

This fear of “town” as a catalyst for Basotho youth to gain exposure to and experiment with a wider variety of ideas than the authorities would have preferred was not unfounded, as earlier evidence about the availability of publications showed. Selborne Mohlalisi, himself a student in the commerce courses at LTS in the mid-1950s, remembered attending political meetings at the Fraser's Memorial Hall in Maseru where he learned “what independence mean[t]...they would have friends from Zambia and from Egypt...and it was so exciting to listen to somebody from Zambia. We didn't even know what Zambia meant or where it was but...it was so enlightening.”<sup>xlvi</sup> Zambia, of course, did not yet exist, but Mohlalisi used it as a metaphor for the excitement around emerging

<sup>xlvi</sup>Interview Selborne Mohlalisi, Morija, 11/10/08.

African nation-states at this time. Maseru was also, as Phafane remembered, where communist literature that was banned in neighboring South Africa was freely available, as Photograph 3, which was published in the Catholic newspaper *Moeletsi*, of Lesotho Communist Party founder John Motloheloa, clearly shows.



The speakers and literature were important in inspiring young Basotho to dream about independence, but it was the spaces that they had available in youth organizations that gave them great freedom to experiment with ideas of nationalism.<sup>xlix</sup> This extended to independent institutions like the Church of Basutoland, which formed in 1964 when the Paris Evangelical Mission Society (PEMS) turned over control of its buildings and administrative control of the church to a local Synod. The PEMS had long integrated its Basotho ministers into the governance structures of the church, through its yearly-meeting *Seboka*, with Basotho ministers were the majority by the early twentieth century,

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<sup>xlix</sup>For more on these youth organizations, see chapter three.

as seen in the photograph of the *Seboka* from 1925 (Photograph 4). The handover of control in April, 1964 completed the long-established mission of the PEMS: to start a church that would take root and grow organically. Though the PEMS and its supporters in Europe would continue to send some funds to the church in Lesotho, they were giving up day-to-day control over operations in Lesotho as the country was on the cusp of political independence.

This act captured the imagination of many Basotho, especially the young. Boy Scouts and Girl Guides were heavily involved in the handover ceremony, from serving as crowd control, to being responsible for lighting and passing the physical torch that served as the symbol of the handover process.<sup>1</sup> As important as the control of church decisions was to Protestant Basotho, especially the influential ministers, the handover also served as a tangible example of the benefits that independence and nationalism could confer for many young Basotho. Selborne Mohlalisi, in his mid-twenties at the time and already working for the colonial government as a low-level administrator, remembered the transfer as “a concrete example of independence” and one which made young, Protestant Basotho more likely to be “pro-change...because they had experienced change themselves.”<sup>li</sup> The contrast between the newly-Basotho run church and the continued presence in Lesotho of so many French Canadian and South African priests in the Catholic Church also heightened what were already somewhat strained relations between Protestants and Catholics, driving home the differences in outlook between the churches and setting up religion as a strong point of division in conceptions of the nation for

l D. Cook, “The Uniting of the Mission and the Church,” *Basutoland Witness* 67 (August 1964).

li Interview Selborne Mohlalisi, Morija, 11/10/08.

individuals.

While this institutional example was certainly important to young, Protestant Basotho, a broader vehicle for the transmission and incubation of ideas of independence, freedom and other international ideas like Pan-Africanism, was the presence in Lesotho of so many young people from South Africa. These young interlopers, educational migrants for the most part, came to Lesotho to access the better schools and relatively free conditions that the white minority regimes in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia did not offer. Mohlalefi Moteane remembered his South African peers as coming from families who wanted “their children not to go over to the Bantu Education” so they sent them to Lesotho for the free primary schools and the fee-demanding secondary schools.<sup>lii</sup> These students were sometimes from famous and politically active families, as Moteane attended high school with Jama Mbeki, and Chaka Ntsane attended high school with Moeletsi Mbeki, both sons of ANC leader Govan Mbeki and younger brothers of future South African president Thabo Mbeki.<sup>liii</sup> However, the majority of the students who came across the border were not connected that intimately with politics, and hoping simply to further their education.

They had, however, come from a racially polarized South Africa and had been raised under the *apartheid* system, bringing their knowledge into the daily experiences of their Basotho classmates. While hard and fast numbers of refugees are not available for the late 1960s, by 1977, the Lesotho government estimated that South African refugees “occupied 1,000 places in secondary schools and a still larger number in primary

lii Interview Mohlalefi Moteane, Maseru, 5/27/09.

liii Interviews Mohlalefi Moteane, Maseru 5/27/09 and Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 2/24/09.

schools.”<sup>liv</sup> While the numbers would likely have been lower for the late 1960s, there was from both anecdotal evidence and extrapolation from these numbers, a clearly significant number of South African students in Lesotho's schools. These young people were not merely attending school, however, but were also living in local communities, rural and urban, with friends and relatives. The influx of so many young people worried a colonial government already on edge from a world turning against the idea of colonialism and the 1960 strikes at Basutoland High School and Lerotholi Technical School. A minor 1962 strike and riot at St. James Secondary School, one of the most remote schools in the country situated at a Catholic mission about fifteen kilometers from the mountain administrative center of Mokhotlong, demonstrated the pervasive fear of these young educational refugees among colonial administrators. The telex from Maseru to London made sure to note, in its limited characters, that: “ Some of those involved [in the riot] came from the Republic [of South Africa].”<sup>lv</sup>

The fear that colonial officials and Basotho chiefs had of South African influence was conditioned in large part because of the colonial fear of communism and other “radical” political ideologies like Pan-Africanism, and the fear of chiefs and colonial administrators that young Basotho would find these ideologies appealing. By giving up their power to issue residency permits to District Council Boards in 1958, however, the colonial administration retained remarkably little control over decisions about who had a legal right to reside in the territory. This policy was tested in the immediate aftermath of

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liv Medard Rwelamira, *Refugees in a Chess Game: Reflections on Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland Refugee Policies* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1990).

lv NAUK CO 1048/249 Telex message, Resident Commissioner, Basutoland to High Commissioner, South Africa, relayed to Secretary of State for the Colonies, May 15, 1962.

the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, with the Commonwealth Relations Office aware of seventeen political refugees in Basutoland, of whom they thought “one-third of the total number is known to be Communist or have communist associations...[even allowing for] the South African propensity to label as Communist persons who would be regarded in this country as no more than Left-Wing Socialists.”<sup>lvi</sup> Many more refugees slipped across the border unnoticed by the colonial authorities, or at least not reported to London.

Some of the refugees, like Joe Matthews, son of famous professor and ANC leader Z.K. Matthews, and an attorney and noted ANC and SACP member in his own right, did take up residence in Maseru. Many others lived in the rural areas, as Mofutsanyana had done when he slipped across the border in 1959, or the smaller administrative towns like Mafeteng, as A.P. Mda would do upon arrival in 1963. Elizabeth Mafekeng, a trade union organizer who fled to Basutoland in 1959, lived with her eleven children in the rural Dikhoele Ward of the Mafeteng District, and Patrick Duncan, the editor of the Liberal Party newspaper *Contact* and member of the banned PAC, came into Basutoland as a refugee in 1962, living at a trading store he purchased in the rural southern Quthing District.<sup>lvii</sup> These high-profile political refugees, scattered around the country, were subject to very little control or oversight from the government, or even the senior chieftaincy, along with the more-prevalent educational refugees to make the presence of South Africans ubiquitous across rural and urban Lesotho.

Combined, the presence of so many South Africans in Lesotho with the culture of

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<sup>lvi</sup> NAUK CAB 129/101 Cabinet Memorandum, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations on South African Refugees in the High Commission Territories, May 25, 1960.

<sup>lvii</sup> NAUK CO 1048/280 Representations about Mrs. Mafekeng and other refugees. CO 1048/136 Mrs. E. Mafekeng, Refugee from Republic of South Africa in Basutoland.

migration among Basotho, made for a free-flow of political ideas into, out of and within the territory. Similarly, the presence of so many outsiders, and those in various stages of assimilation into communities, meant that the difference between a foreign idea and what was a Basotho national idea was often only in the eyes of those making political arguments. This blurring of the international and domestic also meant that the struggle for independence and the nation in Lesotho was intertwined with larger regional developments. While young people in Lesotho were deeply concerned with political and social developments at home, they were also aware of and heavily engaged in the struggle for rights and freedoms in South Africa as well.

### **Basotho Youth and Connections with the South African Struggle, 1960-1970**

Historians have tended to characterize the 1960s in South Africa as a “quiescent” period politically.<sup>lviii</sup> Magaziner's recent work on Black Consciousness has challenged this conception, not by finding new political protests that other scholars have overlooked, but by redefining struggle to encompass acts that do not seem, at first glance, to be political: consciousness raising and questioning the goals of explicitly political groups like the ANC as not having enough of a “human face” toward the struggles of people trying to live under whatever political regime they found themselves.<sup>lix</sup> This subtle rethinking of what constitutes political thought and action finds strong resonance in the actions of youth in Lesotho during the 1960s. There were no widespread protests, and

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<sup>lviii</sup>Jeremy Seekings, *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983-1991* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000).

<sup>lix</sup> Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, 188.



most young Basotho did not join the youth wings of political parties, but they did care deeply about the future forms their new state would take, and they wanted to ensure that their vision for the nation—meritocratic and egalitarian—come to pass. They did this, in part, by engaging with young South Africans, learning about and working for their political, social and economic aspirations as well as their own.

In some cases, these engagements were direct, as in the case of Maleseka Kena. Raised in the Matatiele District of South Africa, which borders the Qacha's Nek District of Lesotho, Kena had relatives on both sides of the border. She married Jacob Kena in 1956 and while they lived for a time in Lesotho in the 1950s, they also lived in South Africa. The Kenas had to move to Lesotho permanently in 1964 because the threat of jail for their political work made life too dangerous in South Africa. Settling in the rural village of Tsoelike Auplas, close to the border, Kena raised seven children while also harboring refugees who were fleeing the South African authorities. These individuals “came from all of the group's...ANC, PAC, Steve Biko's group.” Kena's work was part of a larger informal structure of individuals working in Lesotho to assist people fleeing, as she noted there “were lots of other people in the network” who helped refugees find shelter and transport to other areas of the country or onward in southern Africa.<sup>lx</sup>

Kena would house the refugees in her spare rondavel for a few days, feeding them and waiting until supportive police were working at the nearby town of Qacha's Nek so that they could catch a flight to Maseru, where there was more security and options for the refugees. This, of course, attracted interest in her small, rural village and many in the

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lx Interview Maleseka Kena, Tsoelike Auplas, 3/17/09.

village “didn't want to see those people [the refugees],” including the headman. Part of the reason that Kena could run this operation from the village was a general feeling of sympathy for South African refugees throughout Lesotho, but also came in part because Kena's father was a descendent of the House of Moshoeshoe, and her chiefly connections allowed her more latitude than other refugees like herself might have had.<sup>lxi</sup> Still, even being a descendent of Moshoeshoe would not have stopped the headman and other villagers from putting a stop to her operations if they had really not at least tacitly supported her efforts.

While Tsoelike Auplas was a natural magnet for refugees because of the presence of Kena and her willingness to take in and shelter refugees, most young Basotho had contact with young South Africans in schools and in their communities. As Kena alluded to, there was often tension regarding the presence of refugees in communities, and even young Basotho were not blindly accepting of these young interlopers. While many educational refugees integrated easily into their local communities, as evidenced by the lack of any sort of large-scale protests or expulsions of refugees, they were still a cause of tension. Chaka Ntsane remembered some tension in his high school as the Basotho students found their South African peers to be “very pretentious. They looked like they were the better ones simply because they came from a rich country.” While these tensions played out in the social dynamics of the schools, young Basotho and young South Africans were, for the most part, able to come together and resolve their differences. Ntsane recounted how he had been taught from a young age that he was part

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<sup>lxi</sup> Interview Maleseka Kena, Tsoelike Auplas, 3/17/09.

of “one people,” referring to the border as an artificial construct separating people who shared cultural connections, and so the South African students came to find acceptance as metaphorical, and sometimes actual, brothers and sisters.<sup>lxii</sup> The general lack of backlash against the refugees also suggests that these South African youth were assimilating, at some level, into local communities.

Young South Africans, like their counterparts from Lesotho who ended up in South Africa, were attracted to local politics as a way of integrating into their communities, making sense of the world around them and playing an active role in social and political change taking place around them. So, in addition to the refugees being a source of inspiration and ideas for young Basotho, the relatively free conditions in Lesotho in the 1960s allowed young South Africans to get involved in local politics, blurring yet again the border and raising more questions about what fell within the national purview. This engagement ranged from political activists like Elizabeth Mafekeng, who was reportedly active in discussions in the early 1960s with John Motloheloa in the lead-up to his founding of the Communist Party of Lesotho, to Joe Matthew's fund raising trips abroad for the Marematlou Freedom Party.<sup>lxiii</sup> With the young educational migrants who did not have the extensive, formal political contacts, this engagement often played out in the schools, as this was where the young migrants had the best opportunity. Michael Mateka remembered that, politically, “whatever happened [in

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lxii Interview Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 2/24/08.

lxiii NAUK CO 1048/136 Mrs. E. Mafekeng, Refugee from Republic of South Africa in Basutoland, Security Background to the Case of Mrs. Mafekeng. CO 1048/561 V.J.G. Matthews (Joe) Political Refugee from South Africa in Basutoland, Basutoland Central Intelligence Committee Report, March 1965.

South Africa] always spilled over [into Lesotho]” and a series of “nasty” school strikes in the late 1950s and 1960s “originated in the thinking and philosophy” of South Africa and South African students in Lesotho.<sup>lxiv</sup>

The constant and continuing influx of South African refugees and migrants through the 1960s (and beyond) played a large role in ensuring that young Basotho had ever-changing access to new ideas, receiving different inputs and perspectives. This influx of ideas combined with the rapid evolution of political institutions by the mid-1960s to make independence a concept that virtually all young Basotho understood, and had opinions about. But it was not just students who were helping to influence the debate, as many of the teachers at schools in Lesotho, were also migrants. Mohlalefi Moteane noted that “quite a number” of his teachers at Peka High School in the early and mid-1960s came from South Africa, particularly the areas that would become the *Bantustans*. These teachers came to Lesotho because they were denied the opportunity to “give their best” in South Africa.<sup>lxv</sup> They were usually politically astute, and wanted to make sure that their students understood the world in which they were growing up.

Similarly, the Catholic Church brought in black South Africans to Lesotho to train them for the priesthood, increasingly so in the late 1960s because of *apartheid* restrictions. Lebamang John Sebidi's parents were Basotho from the Mafeteng District who moved to South Africa before his birth in 1939. Sebidi was raised in South Africa, but he came to St. Augustin's major seminary in Roma, Lesotho, to take his instruction.

Sebidi became a co-founder of the Black Consciousness-affiliated Black Priest's

<sup>lxiv</sup>Interview Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, Leribe District, 11/26/08.

<sup>lxv</sup>Interview Mohlalefi Moteane, Maseru, 5/27/09.

Solidarity Group, and would have to leave the church because of his conflicts with the Catholic hierarchy by the late 1970s. Despite Sebidi's familial roots in Lesotho, he never worked there, but his case highlights the ease with which young Basotho had access to people and ideas from South Africa, and the way in that participation in even supposedly conservative institutions like the Catholic Church could serve as a conduit for ideas, radical and otherwise.<sup>lxvi</sup>

This nicely complements the observation by Michael Mateka, himself a Catholic brother, that “those who were running away from the *apartheid* laws always fled to Lesotho so we were a haven for the dissidents, the refugees, the run-a-ways.”<sup>lxvii</sup> Mateka's comments were in reference to the close connections many of the non-student refugees had to banned South African political organizations, especially in the late 1960s, the PAC. In response to the large number of PAC members who fled to Lesotho in the early 1960s, the Basutoland Government had passed the “Prevention of Violence Abroad Proclamation” in 1963, which made it a crime to use Lesotho as a base from which to plan, train for or launch violent attacks.<sup>lxviii</sup> The PAC had formed an armed wing, *Pogo*, in 1962, and this combined with the general anti-white rhetoric of some party leaders, made the colonial government fear that the PAC planned to use Lesotho as a base for its sabotage and violence campaign inside South Africa.

This law led to a crackdown on the PAC, which was then based in Lesotho because of its banning in South Africa following Sharpeville and Potlako Leballo's roots

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lxviAC Gail Gerhart interview with Lebamang John Sebidi, Soweto, 3/7/1989.

lxviiInterview Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, Leribe District, 11/26/08.

lxviiiNAUK CO 1048/648 Prevention of Violence Abroad Proclamation (No 3 of 1963) Basutoland.

in Lesotho.<sup>lxix</sup> In April 1965, the Basutoland Government brought charges against nine alleged PAC members for training saboteurs and planning to incite violence in South Africa, including high ranking leaders like Elliot Mfaha, George Fako and Gasson Ndlovu. The court initially convicted six of the defendants, sentencing them to prison sentences ranging from one to three years, but the High Court overturned these convictions on appeal in September, 1965. The judge did not absolve the six of having been in the PAC, but noted that “although this organisation is banned in the Republic [of South Africa] it is not an illegal organisation in Basutoland,” and that the government had not managed to connect group membership to planned violence.<sup>lxx</sup>

Most refugees and migrants in Lesotho, however, were not headline-making members of banned South African groups, and many of their stories had plenty of tragedy and pathos that highlighted the dehumanizing conditions black South Africans faced in the 1960s. Nathaniel Molaoa was born in South Africa, as was his father, so he did not meet the residency requirements to be a Mosotho in the 1960s, despite having spent some time in Lesotho as a child living with relatives. Declared *persona non grata* in South Africa in 1958, Basutoland in 1959 and South Africa again after his arrest in the Emergency of 1960, Molaoa returned once more to Basutoland and applied for residency. The colonial authorities took note of him and his particular case because he had been found “selling communist literature” in the territory, but found sympathy for him nonetheless because he was living in the rural Quthing District and “wants to go to the

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lxix For more on Leballo, see chapters two and three.

lxx NAUK CO 1048/552 Trial of Pan African Congress Members at Maseru Basutoland 1964/5.

Union for work” but could not because of his stateless status.<sup>lxxi</sup>

Eventually gaining a temporary residency permit in Basutoland in early 1962, Molaoa highlights the difficulties government officials and individual Basotho faced when confronted with South African refugees. While not agreeing with Molaoa's politics, or his penchant for trying to remain illegally in Lesotho—the cause of his 1959 expulsion—the colonial authorities nevertheless noted that his options were limited because of his statelessness.<sup>lxxii</sup> Even in such area where the border was fluid, there were still people who were not able to belong on either side of it. Molaoa, despite his efforts to work with nationalist groups, had no nation that would claim him, and thus no legal citizenship in Lesotho or South Africa.

The Molaoa case case also confirms Gabriel Tlaba's assessment of colonial Basutoland and independent Lesotho as a place that many black South Africans looked to with “envy” as a place that was “quite inspiring to them” because of the relative freedoms available, and the relative willingness of authorities to at least hear out those who would have been summarily placed in prison in South Africa.<sup>lxxiii</sup> Coming to Lesotho was a chance for South Africans like Molaoa to have some of the freedoms denied to them at home, but it was not enough to merely have freedom of movement. Refugees wanted to take part in the changing social and political conditions in Lesotho, some as members of the national community.

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lxxiNAUK CO 1048/137 Mr. N. Molaoa, Political Refugee from South Africa seeking asylum in Basutoland.

lxxiiNAUK CO 1048/137 Mr. N. Molaoa, Political Refugee from South Africa seeking asylum in Basutoland.

lxxiiiInterview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 10/28/08.

For young Basotho, having individuals like Molaoa, the PAC members who went on trial in 1965 and a good number of similarly-aged South African youth who “were never in refugee camps, they got integrated into villages and households” made Lesotho in the 1960s a place to discover how different people lived and experiment with new ideas.<sup>lxxiv</sup> The relative freedom to try meritocratic and egalitarian ideas in youth groups and in the loose social networks at schools and in villages allowed young Basotho to think about independence as a chance to remake society. Their work in these groups allowed Basotho youth to not be constrained by structures the colonial government or Basotho political parties attempted to impose on them. They took in the world around them, and while many of them would end up spending a portion of their adult lives in South Africa working and dealing with *apartheid*-era political and social restrictions, they remained committed to building a national community that allowed people to rise based on talent. The politics that South African refugees brought across the border into Lesotho caused many young Basotho to reevaluate their own situations, and start to apply lessons learned from South Africa to political and social changes they hoped to see at home.

### **Outsiders in Lesotho and the Cold War, 1960-1970**

It was not just South Africans, however, who were in Lesotho in significant numbers during the 1960s, who caused young Basotho to engage with global ideas. A cadre of western volunteers, often young themselves, were increasingly coming into Lesotho, causing young Basotho to again reevaluate their dreams and aspirations, and

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<sup>lxxiv</sup>Interview Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 2/24/09.



question the extent to which they needed to engage with the wider world in their quest for social change. The “crisis of political authority” that defined the 1960s in the West played out in late colonial Basutoland around the elections of 1965 and continued through the disputed and nullified 1970 elections.<sup>lxxv</sup> These disputes over political authority came out of local conditions, and the political battles that marked the late colonial period and the transition from colonial rule to independence. They were, however, heightened by the rhetoric of the Cold War and the influence in Lesotho of outside people and ideas. Young Basotho learned about the wider world and used the language of global struggles like youth protest and the Cold War in their efforts to contribute to national debates about independence and nationalism. They did not, however, feel constrained to use Cold War categories like communist in the same way as they received them. This challenged the contemporary assessment of development planners in the western world that the “Third World” was in some ways a homogeneous place that needed their development efforts, and complicates scholarly characterizations of the 1960s that see superpower struggles as the crux around which historical developments revolve.<sup>lxxvi</sup>

By the late 1960s, foreign volunteers teaching young people and acting as technical advisers to young governments in emergent nation-states were an important part of most Western, and some Eastern, countries' foreign policy. While overseas volunteer

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lxxvSuri, *Power and Protest*, 4. For more on the 1965 elections, see chapter two. For the 1970 elections, see chapter six.

lxxviTina Mai Chen, “Epilogue: Third World Possibilities and Problematics: Historical Connections and Critical Frameworks,” in *New World Coming*, ed. Karen Dubinsky et al. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2009).

programs had existed on a small scale prior to the 1960s, the formation of the American Peace Corps in 1961 represented a massive increase in the scale of these organizations. Dwarfing earlier British and Canadian programs that sent a handful of volunteers abroad from the 1950s, the Peace Corps also pioneered the use of these programs as a large-scale “expression of...foreign policy.”<sup>lxxvii</sup> The Peace Corps, outlined in President John F. Kennedy's first inaugural, sent its first group of fifty-two volunteers to Ghana in 1961 where they taught in village schools and acted as goodwill ambassadors. Rapidly expanding, the Peace Corps was a response to Kennedy's belief that the United States needed to have a program like this to better counter Soviet Cold War efforts to woo emergent countries. The Americans also put pressure on their Western European allies to start or expand similar programs, and it was through these efforts that the British International Voluntary Service also started sending more young British volunteers overseas.

That local groups were receptive to these overtures is shown by Moshoeshoe II's appeals for Peace Corps volunteers in Lesotho as early as his 1962 North American trip, but the first volunteers did not reach Lesotho until after independence in December 1967. By this time, the British International Voluntary Service was already operating in the country, with eleven volunteers serving as teachers, engineering instructors at the university and in the government's Agricultural Department.<sup>lxxviii</sup> The Peace Corps arrival heralded an increase in the number of Basotho who had contact with these youthful

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<sup>lxxvii</sup>Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, *All You Need Is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 97.

<sup>lxxviii</sup>“International Voluntary Service,” *Leselinyana la Lesotho* June 1967.

overseas volunteers, as the initial class of seventy was stationed throughout the country. Their numbers, and Basotho participation in the stark rhetoric of the Cold War, however, also politicized the idea of foreign volunteers in a way that the prior small numbers of British and Canadian volunteers did not. The Peace Corps stationed many of its volunteers in schools as teachers, with others working with cooperatives, community development and health care.<sup>lxxix</sup> They also made a point of making sure that most of the volunteers lived in rural communities to ensure cultural integration and to make the Corps visible.

The opposition BCP attempted to attack the ruling BNP through the issue of Peace Corps volunteers, whom they accused of being a covert arm of the CIA. BCP leader Mokhehle called American policy toward Africa “double-edged” for appearing to “sympathize, in the abstract” with African liberation struggles, but unwilling to weaken its principal allies of Britain and France because “it is engaged in a Cold War.”<sup>lxxx</sup> This broadside, part of a wider attack on the Peace Corps in the late 1960s worldwide because of perceptions of racial problems in America and mounting dissatisfaction with American engagement in Vietnam, was an attempt by the BCP to paint Americans as neo-colonialists, and the BNP government as being in league with them.<sup>lxxxi</sup> This demonstrates how Mokhehle and the BCP leadership attempted to harness the rhetoric of the Cold War for local political advantage. It was also an attempt by Mokhehle to internationalize politics in Lesotho, a tack he hoped would redound to the credit of the

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lxxix “Peace Corps Chief Denies Any Link With CIA,” *Lesotho Times* January 2, 1968.

lxxx Ntsu Mokhehle, “The American Peace Corps (Part I),” *The Commentator* August 1968: 19-26.

lxxxi Ntsu Mokhehle, “The American Peace Corps (Part I),” *The Commentator* August 1968: 19-26.

BCP at the next elections.

Most Basotho, however, did not really care about larger Cold War concerns when they examined the work that the Peace Corps, and other overseas volunteers, did at the local level. Mohlalefi Moteane, a high school and university student in the late 1960s, did not know any Peace Corps volunteers personally, but “knew [about] and did hear about them.” The only volunteer Moteane remembered was one whom the “BCP criticized,” but Moteane, like most Basotho, could not understand why the BCP would single out individual Americans coming to live in Basotho communities, work in the school and help with community development efforts: “I think that was really misplaced criticism.”<sup>lxxxii</sup> That Moteane's assessment of these attacks as “misplaced” was generally agreed upon by most Basotho was evidenced by the dramatic decline in the amount of criticism seen in the newspapers that Peace Corps volunteers faced a year after their arrival. By January 1969, a mere thirteen months after their arrival, and a half year after Mokhehle scathing broadside against them, the BCP annual party conference did not mention the volunteers once as “the ordinary people, among whom the volunteers lived in the lowland towns and mountain villages, were not hostile.”<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

The acceptance of the volunteers by their local communities was notable, but that did not mean that their role as a political foil was done. The BNP government of Leabua Jonathan took up a charge against the Peace Corps, and other volunteers, who were living and working in Lesotho on the eve of elections in late 1969. The Prime Minister warned the volunteers to stay out of local politics in Lesotho and South Africa, and this warning

<sup>lxxxii</sup>Interview Mohlalefi Moteane, Maseru, 5/27/09.

<sup>lxxxiii</sup>“Peace Corps Left in Peace,” *The Star* January 21, 1969.

came again with a Cold War connection. Saying that the volunteers needed to make sure that they did not get involved in politics through “actions or words,” Jonathan warned them that he was afraid they might “jeopardise our interest and our relations with our neighbours.”<sup>lxxxiv</sup> This equating of foreign volunteers with opposition politics, and the ever-present communist menace in Jonathan's late 1960s speeches, was part of his effort to paint his political opponents as firebrands who would deliver Lesotho into a new sort of colonial occupation if elected. He argued that South Africa was not willing to countenance a BCP government that had such close ties to communism, and that took such a strident anti-*apartheid* tone in Lesotho. He assumed that the volunteers were sympathetic to the opposition and to the anti-*apartheid* movements across the border. While this may be true, Jonathan was using the foil of the volunteers in an attempt to score domestic political points, just as the opposition BCP had attempted two years earlier. In a similar fashion, ordinary Basotho rejected this argument as well, with the BCP winning the elections of 1970 before the BNP government nullified the results.

Lost in this rhetoric were the jobs that the volunteers were actually doing at the community level, and how Basotho interpreted the work of the volunteers. These volunteers often arrived with little or no formal training, and this made their usefulness in technical development work limited. Like many of the solutions proposed by Western “experts” on development, the infusion of outside knowledge was not always guaranteed to get measurable results on the ground. Peter Millin, a government agricultural specialist from 1967 to 1973, noted that the volunteers assigned to his section, who had

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lxxxivJonathan quoted, “Keep Off Politics! Jonathan Warns US Peace Kids,” *The Post* October 8, 1969.

degrees in microbiology, history and mathematics were: “Nice chaps but more useless than they were worth...I actually felt sorry for them because they were really willing to help but they were just kind of misplaced.”<sup>lxxxv</sup> The technical assessments of government specialists, however, mattered less to individual Basotho who came into contact with the volunteers on a personal, human level. Mohlalefi Moteane had heard about the work Peace Corps volunteers did locally, and this translated into a positive view of both the volunteers as individuals and the country that would spend the money to send their young people abroad, as similar studies have found for places like Cameroon.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> These volunteers, Peace Corps along with those from other organizations, tended to make their best impressions when they were placed in positions where they could interact with Basotho and help with community projects. Chaka Ntsane and the Lesotho Work Camps Association worked with a group of young American and Canadian volunteers from a small Christian group that brought young North American overseas, Operation Crossroads Africa in the late 1960s.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> These groups brought together Basotho and overseas volunteers to make personal contacts through building projects during school holidays: digging latrines, erecting school buildings and health clinics. Working with these overseas young volunteers was inspiring to Ntsane and the members of the group because it helped underscore the commonalities young volunteers shared, whether

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lxxxvInterview Peter Millin, Clarens, RSA, 3/6/09.

lxxxviJulius A. Amin, *The Peace Corps in Cameroon* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1992). This positive view of Americans in rural Lesotho persists to this day. One of the first questions people would often ask me when I was in rural areas, especially on public transport, was if I were in the Peace Corps. This section of my work owes a particular debt of gratitude to multiple Peace Corps volunteers from 2006-2009 who put me up in the course of my language study and research in the Qacha's Nek and Thaba Tseka Districts of Lesotho.

lxxxviiFor more on the Workcamps, see chapter three.

Basotho, American, Canadian or South African. Ntsane remarked that the members of his group were “encouraged by the fact that others were willing to help us along.”<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

The effect of a small number of youthful international volunteers was large in Lesotho, both because they tended to work with young Basotho in schools and in settings like the Workcamps Association, and because they brought a personal connection to the Civil Rights Movement, youth protest on college campuses and other wider, Western 1960s experiences that even South African educational refugees could not provide. In some cases, this meant money to support for the efforts of young Basotho, as the funding for Ntsane's Work Camps group came from group member contributions and the Lesotho government, but also from the US Embassy. The connections Ntsane and other Basotho leaders of this group forged with the overseas volunteers allowed them to approach American officials stationed in Lesotho for assistance with new-found confidence and legitimacy, and allowed young Basotho like Ntsane who were well-versed in the language of the Cold War to place their requests in the language of modernization theory and development that they knew the Americans would likely support.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

In a similar vein, those involved in the churches also had connections with members of religious congregations and missionaries from overseas, which gave a whole new cohort of young Basotho an opportunity to forge contacts outside their country and the southern African region. Armelina Tsiki and Clara Rapholo both professed their vows in the Roman Catholic Sisters of the Good Shepherd, a denomination based in Ottawa, Canada. Rapholo took her first vows in 1958, at the age of twenty-five, and was a

<sup>lxxxviii</sup>Interview Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 2/24/09.

<sup>lxxxix</sup>Interview Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 2/24/09.

secondary teacher through most of the 1960s. During this time, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd had almost equal numbers of nuns from Lesotho and from overseas: primarily Canada and the United States. The overseas nuns made a particular impression on her through their ability to work in culturally sensitive ways with Basotho women because they were integrated into the communities through their language work and their position living mainly in rural communities: “They had been here so long...they spoke Sesotho, English and French so they were able to work with us very well.” Through their work, these nuns helped break barriers for Basotho women, like a certain “Sister Alice,” whom Rapholo remembered as an inspiration to her personally because she was the first nun to teach at the university, starting in 1946.<sup>xc</sup>

Armelina Tsiki was a bit younger than Rapholo, and had Rapholo as a teacher during her secondary schooling in the later 1960s. While her primary reason for joining the religious order was personal, Tsiki appreciated the perspective that contact with the American and Canadian nuns gave both her secondary education and her later career as a teacher and principal. In addition to being introduced to a wider range of world news, the other nuns used to “talk a lot about America and Canada, 'In America we do this,' and so on.”<sup>xc</sup> Through these interactions, Tsiki was able to better live out her own wider community aspirations—her nationalism—as she broadened her own horizons and had the freedom to experiment with new teaching methods and other work-related tasks that would not have happened without this contact. The simple act of living in community

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xc At the time of this interview, Rapholo had been tasked by the order to write a short history of the order as they were about to celebrate 75 years of service in Lesotho, so she had a book with all of the nuns from this time at hand.

xc Interview Armelina Tsiki, St. Rodrigue High School, 5/7/09.



with and getting to know the people with whom they lived and worked was at the heart of the mission of organizations like the Peace Corps, and even the Catholic Church—human contact. Tsiki, Rapholo, Moteane, Ntsane and others who came into contact with overseas volunteers were not simply imbibing in the rhetoric of these organizations, but were working within the institutions for the gain of both the institutions, and their own ideas about how the societies they wanted to see could come about.

This awareness of global concepts, and their uses in local contexts, was present around the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr in 1968. Young Basotho in the 1960s had only a dim awareness of King, prior to his tragic death, and it was really the post-1970 generation of high school and university students who would start to actively engage with the ideas and actions of Dr. King, Malcolm X and other African-American leaders.<sup>xcii</sup> The Catholic newspaper, *Moeletsi*, however, ran a short announcement of King's death in its April 20<sup>th</sup> issue, noting that a public memorial services took place at the AME Church in Maseru on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April.<sup>xciii</sup> The following week, the entire front page above the fold (Photograph 5) was taken up by a photograph of an American city with smoke wafting over it, with the headline “The Negroes Burn American Cities.”<sup>xciv</sup>

Finally, on May 4<sup>th</sup>, *Moeletsi* published an editorial calling the death of Dr. King “terrible” as he was fighting “peacefully” and had even had an audience with the Pope. The editorial concluded, however, by condemning the American rioters, calling them

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xciiInterviews Thabelo Kebise, Bus Stop Area, Maseru, 4/1/09 and Armelina Tsiki, St. Rodrigue High School, 5/7/09.

xciii“The Braveman Was Killed,” *Moeletsi oa Basotho* 36 (April 20, 1968). Translation by author.

xciv“Ma-Negro a chesa metse USA,” *Moeletsi oa Basotho* 36 (April 27, 1968). Translation by author.

wayward youth: “The communists of China and Russia [the USSR] are the ones who are influencing youth to do such bad things.”<sup>xcv</sup> By linking the disturbances in the United States with young, communist radicals, the Catholic Church in Lesotho was again engaging in domestic politicking. Leabua Jonathan and the BNP had won election in 1965 running on a heavily anti-communist platform. This not-so-subtle editorial took the death of Dr. King and the subsequent rioting, and used it as an opportunity to interject the Church's views into domestic politics.

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xcv“Where Will It End?” *Moeletsi oa Basotho* 36 (May 4, 1968). Translated by Teboho Mokotjo.



Photograph 5: April 27, 1968 Headline in Moeletsi oa Basotho (Courtesy of Morija Museum and Archives)

Young Basotho, however, were not so quick to tacitly accept such ham-handed lectures on political matters, whether they were from the Catholic Church, the Communist Party or another source. Simon Phafane had started working in the offices of *Motlotlehi* Moshoeshe II upon his graduation from Sacred Heart High School in 1965, and believed that the Basotho monarchy needed to be more than just a figurehead. However in high school, he had made a point of seeking out and obtaining communist literature on his journeys through Maseru. In addition to a curiosity about the ideas in the pamphlets, he also found the writing to be “very clear. You [as a reader] don't struggle...you get to understand what is being talked about.”<sup>xvii</sup> He was not the only one reading this literature as most of his peers also read it. These young Basotho were

xvii Interview Simon Phafane, Maseru, 11/3/08.

interested in learning about the ideas around them, but actively searching out the literature did not mean that Phafane, or even most of the other young Basotho, actively subscribed to the ideas that it espoused.

Likewise, Motsapi Moorosi, already in 1968 a budding track and field star who would become Lesotho's first Olympic athlete at the 1972 Munich Games, did the same with the sport he loved. Graduating from high school in Lesotho in 1966, Moorosi moved back in with his parents at the President Brand mine in Welkom, on sponsorship from the mine, to continue with his promising athletics career, competing in regional competitions in South Africa and even getting to go to Europe on a couple of competition tours. Being an aspiring sprinter, he was closely following the 1968 Olympics and noted the protests that African-American sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos made on the victory stand following their first and third place finishes in the 200-meter dash. He thought that the protests that Smith and Carlos made were useful, despite the quick and furious condemnation that they received from many quarters, because Smith and Carlos “got the whole world talking about it...I thought they were doing good...it is about time America gave the blacks a chance also.”<sup>xcvii</sup> The protests resonated with how Moorosi saw the inequities in the world, and so he considered them to be reasonable. At the 1972 Games, Moorosi would meet Carlos and get to discuss the protest in more depth. Moorosi's reaction to this salient event, evaluating it on its merit, in its particular context, was similar to what Phafane and other young Basotho were doing with the various literatures they had access to, and typifies how young people in Lesotho dealt with

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xcvii Interview Motsapi Moorosi, Maseru East, 3/12/09.

international ideas. The ideas were only as important as they were useful in informing the lives and experiences of young Basotho, and in helping them to think about their own dreams for the nation in Lesotho in the context of world events.

This “usefulness” test meant that there were plenty of young Basotho who, evaluated on the ideological positions they staked out, would seem like contradictions. Chaka Ntsane, for instance, was a strong support of the BNP—the more conservative party in Lesotho, which in the late 1960s supported closer ties with *apartheid* South Africa, wanted to limit the activities of ANC and PAC refugees in Lesotho and was stridently anti-communist. Ntsane however, recounted how he was a big follower of both Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. He also spent time with his classmate Moeletsi Mbeki, son of Govan, who possessed a letter his father had sent him from Robben Island. They “kept that very dear and every now and then we would go and [in a whisper, pretending to secretively look at a note] say okay, this is the letter...”<sup>xcviii</sup> Seeing no contradictions in simultaneously supporting the more-radical Black Power views of Malcolm X, the strong anti-*apartheid* ANC of Govan Mbeki and the BNP, which only tepidly supported the ANC, and was anti-Pan-Africanist, Ntsane typifies the blurring of ideological lines, and political hybridism of Basotho youth. He also shows how Basotho youth were taking international ideas and giving them local meaning—there was locally no contradiction in supporting what would have seemed like competing ideas in a different national context.

It was not only on the side of the BNP that these seeming ideological contractions

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xcviii Interview Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 2/24/09.

existed, however. Rebecca Tlelima was a strident supporter of the opposition BCP. The party based many of its arguments on a strong Pan-Africanist line that linked events in Lesotho to decolonizations in Ghana and other African states. In addition to being a primary school teacher, Tlelima had traveled extensively in the southern African region for her involvement with the Girl Guides, Junior Red Cross and the Anglican Mothers' Union, going to Botswana, Swaziland and Cape Town at various times. Despite this worldliness, Tlelima disavowed any interest in affairs taking place in other African countries, saying "really I don't care about the other ones...because I am Mosotho!" The only news that she listened for and professed to have any interest in was news from England, likely because of her strong affiliation and involvement with the Anglican Church.<sup>xcix</sup> By focusing only on political affiliation, Tlelima's story would appear to be a contradiction, but she saw no contradiction in her daily life of being a strong supporter of the BCP, a nationalist and Pan-Africanist party, but only caring to listen to news from England. By focusing only on party affiliation, scholars of nationalism have for too long occluded and denied the complexity of political views behind the proverbial party line.<sup>c</sup>

These examples of young individuals breaking from stereotypes are, of course, true in most historical circumstances, as people maintain their ability to think critically, and have concerns that differ from that of local or national institutions. It is in the context of the Cold War rhetoric in Lesotho during this time that the willingness of Basotho youth to engage with global ideas in new ways becomes significant: the government and other institutions like the Catholic Church, and even the opposition BCP,

xcix Interview Rebecca Tlelima, Rothe ha Masite, 4/6/09.

c Young, *African Colonial State*.

distrusted this active, independent thought, and the connections that young people were making with wider 1960s ideas. These ideas threatened the top-down structures of the institutions—the state, the church and the political parties. Youth who were capable and willing to pick and choose from a grab-bag of international ideas were not likely to follow in lock-step with party dictates, which is why efforts by the government and political parties to create youth wings in the vein of Ghana, Malawi or Kenya, failed.

A particular focus for this fear of youth and their radical ideas in Lesotho, as it was in many countries both in Africa and the wider world in the late 1960s, was on university students. Mohlalefi Moteane started his studies at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS) in 1967, and he noted that the institution was indeed a cosmopolitan place where he met “the South Africans, the Zimbabweans...and other students [from other African countries]” and that the institution was “quite the challenging and interesting place.”<sup>ci</sup> The BNP government had relied heavily on the rural vote to vault into power in 1965, and they particularly viewed young, educated students as a source of protest and unrest even before the wide-spread global protests of the late 1960s made them even more uneasy. The start of major riots and demonstrations in Paris, various United States cities and, closer to home, higher education institutions in South Africa, frightened the government. Following a series of protests, strikes and a riot at Fort Hare, stretching from August until October of 1968, that started after the government appointed Broederbund member Johannes Martinus de Wet as rector, Lesotho's Minister of Education, Anthony Manyeli made a speech at UBLS in December 1968.<sup>cii</sup> Making

ci Interview Mohlalefi Moteane, Maseru, 5/27/09.

cii South African Democracy Education Trust, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa: Volume 2 (1970-1980)* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2006), 107-8.

explicit reference to the events at Fort Hare, he warned the students that he was prepared to rescind their government bursaries if they engaged in acts that crossed the line between “assum[ing] the role of enemies instead of legitimate critics.”<sup>ciii</sup> This speech, and Jonathan's threats against Peace Corps volunteers engaging in politics the next year, combined with the specter of communism in Lesotho that the BNP, BNP-affiliated organizations like Peter Khamane's *Mesa-Mohloane* and the Catholic Church continued to raise shows the depth of the fear the government had in the possible radicalization of Basotho youth. The government worried that a coherent class of educated, radical youth in Lesotho could threaten its own hold on power, and also cause enough internal trouble to cause the *apartheid* government to intervene in the internal security situation. In this context, young Basotho like Moteane, Ntsane and Tlelima, who were thinking independently, were a threat to the government, as they were acting radically by questioning the top-down structures on which the government relied for its legitimacy.

The Lesotho government was far from alone in Africa for feeling threatened by young people within its borders in the late 1960s, and they, like many others made controlling youth a key priority in an effort to maintain control over processes of social and cultural change. The BNP government's plan to build a National Youth Service, modeling on the Young Pioneers that Jonathan found so alluring from Malawi, that would serve as a training ground for young people, and effectively a youth wing for the ruling party, like those that Banda and Nkrumah created in Malawi and Ghana respectively did not materialize in the immediate post-independence period.<sup>civ</sup> Despite this setback, the

ciii “Students Given Lesotho Warning” *Rand Daily Mail* December 10, 1968.

civ For more on this, see chapter four.



BNP government showed its true colors in trying to regulate the behavior of young Basotho, especially young women, in its 1969 campaign against miniskirts. Similar campaigns were already underway in Nyerere's Tanzania, particularly on Zanzibar Island, in Kaunda's Zambia, Kenyatta's Kenya, Nyerere's Tanzania and in Banda's Malawi.<sup>cv</sup> These efforts all attempted to use Pan-African language to declare miniskirts a foreign import, and a threat to national cultures because they represented a freedom and sexuality that were imported from abroad. The campaign in Lesotho was rather tame compared to the laws passed on Zanzibar, with the BNP party newspaper, *Nketu*, simply declaring that they hoped "Basotho girls and women would take heed and refrain from wearing miniskirts."<sup>cvi</sup> In part this was because there were not that many miniskirt wearers in Lesotho, but also because the Lesotho government was weak and unable to regulate its citizens in the way the socialist revolutionary government in Zanzibar did. Still, the appearance of miniskirts represented the threat that independent thinking and acting young people represented to the government as the skirts were a tangible sign of young people "identifying themselves through their appearance as citizens of a transnational youth culture," rather than a national culture the government hoped to control.<sup>cvii</sup>

All this emphasis placed on the proper role for Basotho youth in an independent

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cv Karen Tranberg Hansen, "Dressing Dangerously: Miniskirts, Gender Relations, and Sexuality in Zambia," in *Fashioning Africa*, ed. Jean Allman (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004). Andrew Ivaska, "Anti-Mini Militants Meet Modern Misses': Urban Style, Gender and the Politics of 'National Culture' in 1960s Dar es Salaam, Tanzania," *Gender and History* 14 (2002): 584-607. Thomas Burgess, "Cinema, Bell Bottoms and Miniskirts: Struggles Over Youth and Citizenship in Revolutionary Zanzibar," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35 (2002): 287-313.

cvi "Miniskirts Resented by Basotho," *Nketu* 5 (January 10, 1969).

cvii Burgess, "Bell Bottoms," 288.

society showed the apprehension and fear the government felt toward young Basotho, and their independent political, social and economic visions. The bombastic rhetoric hurled by the Minister of Education, however, showed more the weakness of the government and its inability to control the students at the university. The inability of the government to control the students who, being supported by government scholarships, were susceptible to some level of coercion, highlighted the total lack of control the government had over other young Basotho who could easily slip into and out of South Africa. The BNP government feared these young Basotho precisely because they could not control their thoughts or actions, as their counterparts to the north in Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Kenya were attempting to do with varying degrees of success in the late 1960s. Young people in Lesotho, like their counterparts across the globe, expected to be included in national debates about political, social and cultural change not because they were young, but because they were citizens, a key change that the Lesotho government struggled to acknowledge.<sup>cviii</sup>

By-and-large, young Basotho did not have strong connections with youth organizations or protest networks in America or Europe, but they were thinking internationally, and acting out their international concerns locally. Maleseka Kena dropped out of the Women's League of the opposition BCP because they were a bunch of “sell outs” who were not working well with the ANC, her first and strongest political affiliation. It was more empowering for Kena to leave the party and continue her work with South African refugees because she was getting funding from the Communist Party

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cviii Ronald Fraser et al., *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

of South Africa (CPSA) to help support her safe-house.<sup>cix</sup> Even though she was living in Lesotho, and was occasionally harassed by supporters of the ruling BNP for her work, Kena kept her focus on the kind of wider national and regional community in which she wanted to live, and worked hard to bring it about at the local level. Likewise, Ntsane's engagement with the Lesotho Work Camps Association (LWCA) shows the level of understanding young Basotho had in regards to global ideologies. He, and the other leaders of the group, understood that the United States Embassy in Maseru was eager to help fund their small-scale development projects as part of American Cold War attempts to win hearts and minds on the local level, and keep communism in check.<sup>cx</sup> Ntsane and other youth LWCA leaders using the funds provided by the Americans, however, were taking the money primarily to act out and literally help build the infrastructure they thought necessary to bring about a more meritocratic and egalitarian state that supported education, health care infrastructure and other the type of state and nation in which they hoped to live.

Most young Basotho did not cite the worldwide protest of the 1960s as their inspiration for wanting to bring about meritocratic and egalitarian changes in Lesotho and to Sesotho culture, but rather talked about the changes they wanted to see in their new state after independence. While the largest of these events, like the Vietnam War protests of the late 1960s, Paris uprisings of 1968 and the riots following the assassination of Dr. King's in the United States received some coverage in Sesotho-language newspapers,

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cix Interview Maleseka Kena, Tsoelike Auplas, 3/17/09.

cx Grubbs, *Secular Missionaries*.

events closer to home in South Africa had more resonance for many young Basotho.<sup>cxix</sup> Despite this lack of direct awareness, or explicit connections, young Basotho were participating in similar processes to their peers in the United States and Europe—attempting to redefine and help shape their own ideal national community that would give them opportunities as individuals and as a group of educated, qualified young people. The pressures on young Basotho were different from their western counterparts, not least because the migrant labor system was their primary chance for gainful employment. This economic necessity meant that many of the best qualified Basotho left for South Africa for varying amounts of time, but it also meant that class distinctions between young Basotho mattered little because all but a select few had to leave to find work.

The regional connections and flows of information that this migration back-and-forth into and out of Lesotho helped facilitate place Lesotho, and much of southern Africa, firmly within the global 1960s. Similar to their peers in the United States and Europe, Basotho youth had to come to terms with the fact that their agitation and attempts at “fundamental redistribution of political and economic power” were not successful in Lesotho.<sup>cxii</sup> The political parties continued to be top-down organizations that wanted to limit who had the ability to define the boundaries of the nation, with little room for grass-roots involvement. The government, as well, conceived of development in terms that

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cxix “Ntoa ea Vietnam (War in Vietnam),” *Leselinyana la Lesotho* March 1967. “Ma-Negro a chesa metse USA (The Negroes Burn the American Cities),” *Moeletsi oa Basotho* 36 (April 27, 1968). “De Gaulle o hlotse makomunisi (DeGaulle Has Defeated the Communists),” *Moeletsi oa Basotho* 36 (July 13, 1968). All articles translated by Teboho Mokotjo.

cxii Marwick, *The Sixties*, 15-16.

precluded the fundamental changes Basotho youth wanted to see at the village and local levels. However, the broad international focus of so many young Basotho, and their optimistic interaction with young people from South Africa, the United States, Canada and Britain, makes the history of their struggles to conceive of and bring about a new nation in forms that they wanted an integral, if missing, piece of the story of the 1960s. *Apartheid* South Africa loomed large in the minds of young Basotho because so many had personal experiences with its dehumanizing processes, but these youth were prepared to “open their eyes and ears” to learn about this system, along with many others in their quest to fashion a new nation and state.<sup>cxiii</sup> Drawing on a long history of Basotho engagement with global ideas, young Basotho during the 1960s demanded that their own government and communities take their thoughts, actions and visions seriously because they were citizens of the newly independent Lesotho. Being a citizen meant, however, that these young Basotho were not content to merely accept the cultural, political or social systems in place, but they were prepared to utilize international ideas in the service of their national visions and aspirations.

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cxiii Quotation from interview, Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, Leribe District, 11/26/08.

## Chapter 6: Generational Difference and Independence, 1960-70

People at the time, our parents, they just didn't understand. It was us the young people who thought we understood what was going on. The older generation really were not interested because all they knew was it was the Boer who gave us bread and work.<sup>i</sup>

Selborne Mohlalisi's statement about generational difference in conceptions of independence in Lesotho is insightful on two different levels. First, it highlights the ambiguous nature of colonial rule in Lesotho. While the British ran the government, many Basotho viewed white South Africans, and Afrikaners in particular, as the real source of colonial oppression. Second, it demonstrates the generational tension around thinking about independence with younger Basotho tending to be more optimistic than their elders about the possibility of enacting a new, more meritocratic and egalitarian state and society.

These generational tensions, however, were not just confined to the local communities that Mohlalisi spoke about. In the run-up to the 1970 elections in Lesotho, the main English-language newspaper from Bloemfontein, *The Friend*, reported that “young voters are expected to hold a balance of power,” and so the main political parties were going out of their way to woo those who had been too young to participate in the 1965 elections.<sup>ii</sup> With their emphasis on creating youth wings, attempting to co-opt youth organizations like the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides for political purposes and fearing the consequences of having a younger generation with more formal education than their

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i Interview Selborne Mohlalisi, Morija, 11/10/08.

ii “Party Leaders Woo the Young Voters,” *The Friend* January 20, 1970.

elders, the BNP government and other political groups focused their mobilization efforts to a large degree on young Basotho—who constituted over half of the population at independence.<sup>iii</sup> The political parties and the government needed young Basotho on their side as they attempted to project a youthful and new image of the new state and their place in it. This attempt to control young Basotho reached, perhaps, a new level of urgency in the lead-up to elections in 1970, but it was not a new proposition in Lesotho, anymore than the 1960s were the first period of active youth in the West.

The 1952 Basutoland Council debated a motion to force all young Basotho looking to marry to have parental permission. A strong block of chiefs rallied against marriage performed in the office of the District Commissioners as being antithetical to Sesotho culture as Basotho marriage involved “an agreement between the parents of both parties.”<sup>iv</sup> Edwin Ntsasa, the representative of the Agricultural Union, warned that if the motion did not pass, it would mean that “we do not love ourselves and that we are ruining ourselves.” Those who want to see the age of twenty-one acknowledged as the age of majority in Lesotho, he continued, were practicing “wishful thinking” as “that thing [age of majority] does not exist [here].”<sup>v</sup> It was not just the senior chiefs and older members of the Basutoland Council, however, who were concerned with “wayward” youth in the early 1950s. A 1951 interview with Lukas Kamohi, an eighty-one year old blacksmith instructor at Leloalang Technical School in the southern Quthing District, saw him

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iii *Kingdom of Lesotho 1966 Population Census Report, Volume I* (Moriya: Morija Printing Works, 1969). Timothy Parsons, *Race, Resistance and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004).

iv Councillor Sentle Mojela quoted, *1953 Basutoland Council*.

v Councillor Edwin Ntsasa quoted, *1953 Basutoland Council*.

lamenting the fact that young Basotho in the 1940s and early 1950s wanted merely to go to towns for jobs, and in the process lost knowledge of “what is meant by respect for people and customs.”<sup>vi</sup>

So if these debates about the proper role of youth in society were not new in Lesotho in the 1960s, what had changed? The expansion of the secondary and tertiary schooling systems in the 1950s continued and gained momentum in the 1960s (and would spill over into the 1970s). As seen in earlier chapters, this expansion gave rise to a new sense of both individual goals and aspirations among young Basotho, and a rising sense of connection between these young people into a fluid and contested, yet coherent identity: Basotho youth. The worldwide upheavals of the 1960s and the influx of young migrants from South Africa heightened perceptions among Basotho chiefs and politicians that young people could conceivably be a threat to their control of social, political, economic and cultural change in Lesotho. But above all, the issue that raised the stakes most for attempts to control youth, and attempts by youth to insert their voices into processes of social and political change, was independence for Lesotho in 1966.

The engagement of Basotho youth with ideas of independence, nationalism and social change was met with some skepticism by older Basotho, both those involved in the political process and suspicious of the role young people wanted to play, and those less engaged in the process, many of whom held a healthy degree of skepticism toward the proposition that the end of colonialism was going to bring about much change at all. Basotho chiefs and politicians worked together in the late colonial period to ensure that

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vi P. Couprie, “Lukas Kamohi: Blacksmith,” *Basutoland Witness* 5 (April-June 1951).



these youth did not gain what they saw as undue influence over the process of independence. They worked to channel the energies of young Basotho into actions that would best benefit their top-down conceptions of the state and national community. Older non-politically-involved Basotho worried that young Basotho would upset the social or economic status quo with their ideas about the meanings of independence, and were skeptical of the idea of a national project that would bring about large-scale changes.<sup>vii</sup> Together, this combination of state and party attempts to channel the activities of youth into approved activities, and the skeptical attitudes of their parents and older members of local communities nullified many of the meritocratic and egalitarian changes to society that young Basotho hoped to see. However, the hopes and actions of young Basotho to bring about local change allowed them some sense of persevering through such generational resistance. They helped bring about some changes at the local level, which allowed them to sustain faith and optimism in a better long-term national future, even in the face of the political disenchantment around the elections of 1970, and little change in structural economic conditions.

### **Defining Youth and Generational Tension in Southern Africa**

As noted in chapter one, this work defines youth as a liminal state falling between childhood and full adulthood. The category of people falling within this label was, however, always in flux with young Basotho sometimes claiming the potentialities and limits of the category of youth, while at other times being unwilling to accept these

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vii This sentiment echoes earlier discussions about the meaning of development and debates over how to reform the chieftaincy in Lesotho, as seen in chapters two and four.

limitations on their thoughts and actions. Youth was, as Durham argued similarly for Botswana, an “ambiguous” label because the category has “no clear markers” and a long history of contention around who is within and outside this characterization.<sup>viii</sup> Basotho youth during the 1950s and 1960s saw themselves as being part of a younger generation distinct from their older Basotho peers, in large part because of increased and expanded schooling opportunities. By independence in 1966, over sixty percent of the population of Lesotho had completed at least some schooling. The 1966 census found that Basotho under the age of twenty constituted over fifty percent of the population, and with fifty percent of the demographic cohort stretching from age five to twenty actively enrolled in primary and secondary schools, educated youth constituted a majority of the young people of the country, and a significant minority within the population as a whole.<sup>ix</sup> These young, educated Basotho also saw themselves as part of a larger regional youth cohort because of their contact with South African educational migrants in their communities and schools.<sup>x</sup>

Generational difference also has a long history and historiography in the southern Africa region. Lesotho fits into the regional pattern, outlined by Carton for Zululand at the turn of the twentieth century, McKittrick for northern Namibia in the early twentieth century, Mager in the Ciskei in the 1940s and 1950s and Redding for the Transkei in the 1950s and 1960s, of a shortage of arable land putting pressure on pathways to adulthood

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viii Durham, “Empowering Youth,” 118.

ix Figures come from *1966 Population Census. Ministry of Education and Culture: Annual Report of the Permanent Secretary for the Year 1967* (Morija, Lesotho: Morija Printing Works, 1968).

x For more on this, see chapter five.

for younger men.<sup>xi</sup> These studies have tended to emphasize how young men did or did not become full members of society, thereby gendering the category of youth as a mostly male phenomenon. The Lesotho story complicates this as pressure on land forced most young men to leave for a period to live and work in South Africa. While some young Basotho women also followed this trajectory, a majority stayed at home helping to manage rural homesteads, and creating spaces in Basotho society for young women to take on the responsibilities of adulthood as well.<sup>xii</sup> These young Basotho women were more educated, on the whole than their male peers, with sixty-eight percent of girls aged six to fifteen in school, as compared to only forty-one percent of boys.<sup>xiii</sup> The generation of Basotho that came of age in the 1950s and 1960s was creating new pathways to adulthood because of the increased opportunities for young Basotho to get an education and then obtain non-blue collar work, either in Lesotho or in South Africa. Raphael Leseli, for instance, worked for twenty-seven years in the above-ground administration of a gold mine in South Africa because of his secondary schooling, while Rebecca Tlelima taught and put her husband through school while working as a primary school teacher in Lesotho.<sup>xiv</sup>

Access to education subtly changed the dynamic for young people in Lesotho yearning to earn respect as adults. While older Basotho sometimes attempted to delay

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xi Carton, *Blood From Your Children*. McKittrick, "Forsaking Their Fathers." Mager, "Youth Organisations." Redding, "Faction Fights."

xii For more on this, see chapter four.

xiii 1966 *Population Census*.

xiv Interview Raphael Leseli, Roma, 1/15/09 and Rebecca Tlelima, Rothe ha Masite, 4/6/09.

youth attempts to become fully-fledged adult members of communities, they were invested in the long-term success of integrating young Basotho into society to ensure that as adults aged they would have support from their younger relatives and neighbors, as Shadle also noted for colonial Kenya.<sup>xv</sup> The timing of this transition and who could make the decision on such matters, came up for discussion at the national level, as well as the local. The Basutoland Council in the 1950s took up issues such as when to tax young migrants who were below the twenty-one year age limit for adult taxation, but already working, or what sanctions to apply to young migrants who did not send their wages home to support their families in Lesotho.<sup>xvi</sup> The real significance of these debates, because of the weakness of the colonial state, was at the local level where families and communities had their own negotiating systems in place to name and shame those who did not fulfill their familial obligations, like not sending back money from migrant labor in South Africa.<sup>xvii</sup>

The relative impotence of the central government structures was in contrast to other places in Africa that saw stark and deliberate political confrontation between younger and older generations. Summers detailed clashing conceptions of legitimate rule in 1920s-1940s Buganda, hinging on the proper role for youth, and especially educated youth in positions of authority.<sup>xviii</sup> Allman noted similar processes in 1950s Asante, with

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xv Brett L. Shadle, *"Girl Cases": Marriage and Colonialism in Gusiiland, Kenya, 1890-1970* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2006).

xvi *1953 Basutoland Council. 1958 Basutoland Council.*

xvii This is discussed in greater detail later in the chapter. Interview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 10/28/08.

xviii Summers, "Young Buganda."

the question of nationalism turning on the issue of whether youngmen or elders would lead the charge for political change, and this also played out in South Africa with the ANC Youth League pushing their parent organization into more radical stands from the late 1940s.<sup>xix</sup> During the 1950s and 1960s Lesotho lacked some of the tension of these earlier struggles, as most young Basotho were outside the political process, participating in discussions which lacked the urgency and gravity of zero-sum political calculus seen in Buganda, Asante and South Africa. Generational tension centered more on how individuals and communities could create institutions and processes that allowed youth meaningful access while reassuring older Basotho that these changes would not endanger their support systems in their old age.

### **Worries About and Responses by Youth in 1960s Lesotho**

1960, the year of independence for seventeen African countries, dawned in Lesotho with the first ever elections on January 20<sup>th</sup>, a visit from British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan a day before his famous “Wind of Change” speech in Cape Town in February and the crowning of twenty-two year old *Motlotlehi* Constantine Bereng, under the name Moshoeshe II, as Lesotho's first constitutional monarch in mid-March, on Moshoeshe's Day. The quickening pace of political reform and concurrent social change worried colonial administrators and higher level chiefs, so when almost simultaneous school strikes broke out at Basutoland High School and Lerotholi Technical School in Maseru in late April and early May of 1960, the already-jumpy government of the

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xix Allman, “Youngmen and the Porcupine.” Feit, “Generational Conflict.”

Protectorate moved quickly to close the schools and set up a commission of inquiry to investigate the causes of the strikes. The commission's report declared that the strikes were caused by “the spirit of nationalism” in the territory as a whole, and a “mis-interpretation” by students of this nationalism.<sup>xx</sup>

The report simultaneously accused the students of interpreting “freedom” to mean “freedom from discipline; it does not to them mean liberty but license,” and to accuse them of getting ideas from their parents, as they were the ones “go[ing] about shouting, 'Freedom.’”<sup>xxi</sup> This confusing causality nicely demonstrated the ambiguous position the colonial government had toward young Basotho. On the one hand, they were fearful of a younger generation taking to political nationalism quickly, forcing more rapid change than that with which British administrators and the Colonial Office were comfortable. On the other hand, the government was also looking to this younger, more-educated generation of Basotho to help move their parents and elders in more progressive directions regarding agricultural improvement, economic opportunities and governance. The tension between these two positions highlighted the inability of the colonial government to form a consistent policy toward young Basotho, unable to decide if youth posed a threat or an opportunity to the colonial government.

Having trouble conceiving of the proper role for youth was not just the problem of colonial officials as Basotho politicians struggled with similar debates. In the 1961 session of the National Council, Councillor Poola questioned the tenuous connections the school strike report made between the strikers and political agitation, calling the report an

xx NUL IE ED/F43/0022 *Commission on School Disturbances*.

xxi NUL IE ED/F43/0022 *Commission on School Disturbances*.

“insult to the Basotho nation as a whole” because it “unearthed nothing” in terms of why young Basotho students had struck, merely blaming them for doing so.<sup>xxii</sup> Marematlou Party founder S.S. Matete, on the other hand, believed the report to have good suggestions about combating indiscipline in the schools. Speaking for an older generation of Basotho chiefs, he worried that the schools did not currently have the tools to ensure that “these children should be brought up in the proper way and taught what is right.”<sup>xxiii</sup>

The main tone among the elected representatives toward youth, however, was an antagonistic one because they feared that young Basotho, through actions they could not control, like school strikes, threatened the process of political change directed by the Council that had been started in the 1940s and 1950s. The first Mosotho in charge of the Education Department, B.M. Khaketla, argued precisely this, noting that striking youths threatened the Africanization of the civil service in Lesotho by subverting the process of training and discipline that they were supposed to learn in schools. He appealed to all members of the National Council, regardless of party or chiefly affiliation, to put in a “concerted effort” to “eradicate this evil [school strikes]” by “build[ing] up cooperation between the teachers, the parents and [representatives].”<sup>xxiv</sup> This alliance of older Basotho would work to ensure that young Basotho were under “responsible” control, and could not threaten either the current social and political systems or future gains in the

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xxiiCouncillor M. Poola quoted, *Legislative Council Debates, Official Report (Hansard), Second Meeting, First Session of the Legislative Council, 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1961--14<sup>th</sup> April, 1961, Volume II* (Parow, South Africa: Cape and Transvaal Printers, Limited. 1961).

xxiiiCouncillor S.S. Matete quoted, *1961 Legislative Council*.

xxivCouncillor B.M. Khaketla quoted, *1961 Legislative Council*.

transfer of political power.

In this, young Basotho were part of the much larger African story of youth in the 1950s and 1960s. Like Allman's "Youngmen" in Asante, Basotho politicians saw young Basotho threatening their own security and tenuous political gains, and thus, needed more control and discipline from their political and demographic elders.<sup>xxv</sup> One way to do this was to recruit young Basotho into the structures of political parties, in order to control the activities of youth and to strengthen the structures of the parties—giving them better chances to win present and future elections. Gabriel Tlaba grew up in the politically-active town of Hlotse, the administrative center of the Leribe District in northern Lesotho, and a major transit site for migrant workers leaving for and returning from South Africa. A mere twelve years old in 1960, he knew about the move for independence because of the lively political scene in his home town. A good student, Tlaba also recalled that he and his peers in schools were a prime target of political mobilization as the parties "seemed to like the youth who were in school...because they saw their future." While the temptation to join the youth wing of political parties was strong, and many of Tlaba's young colleagues did, he found it more fruitful not to join because then he could continue to attend the rallies of all the parties, unlike his peers who "would not be accepted" at rival rallies after they joined up.<sup>xxvi</sup>

This choice by Tlaba not to join the youth wings was one made by the majority of Basotho youth in the early 1960s, both because the parties were weak and disorganized, and because, like Tlaba, they enjoyed the freedom of thought and action that came from

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xxvAllman, "Youngmen and the Porcupine."

xxviInterview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 10/28/08.



being unaffiliated. Their freedom and willingness to sample political offerings did not always meet with sympathy from older Basotho. Age was, in fact, often a point of contention, and a way for older Basotho to try to discredit the political ideas of younger Basotho. Prior to the 1960 District Council elections, a Christmas Eve letter from Lebamang Selebalo reached the District Commissioner (DC) of the Leribe District asking him to disqualify a certain Mr. Majoro as a candidate. Selebalo claimed that he had talked to the candidate's father, who had declared him to be “still [a] boy” and thus not qualified to “take over responsibility in the country according to Basuto customs.”<sup>xxvii</sup> The DC dismissed Selebalo's objections saying that “if people do not think he is suitable they will not vote for him.”<sup>xxviii</sup>

While it is impossible to know how much the age of candidate Majoro played in the election campaign, it does not appear that he won his seat. The dispute over his age, however, highlighted the stakes for control over youth in 1960s Lesotho. Clearly Selebalo and Majoro's father felt that the younger Majoro had no business engaging in politics, and they thought that making appeals based on his young age might allow them to control his behavior. But the youth of Majoro was not the only objection that Selebalo had as his post-script rejoined the DC that Majoro was “even not employ[ed] anymore...how can Majoro...be trusted for people?”<sup>xxix</sup> The addition of the economic

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xxviiNUL LC LC 38 1959 Administrative Reforms—elections, List Leribe and Other Districts, Letter Lebamang Selebalo to District Commissioner Leribe, December 24, 1959.

xxviiiNUL LC LC 38 1959 Administrative Reforms—elections, List Leribe and Other Districts, Letter District Commissioner Leribe to Lebamang Selebalo, January 7, 1960.

xxixNUL LC LC 38 1959 Administrative Reforms—elections, List Leribe and Other Districts, Letter Lebamang Selebalo to District Commissioner Leribe, December 24, 1959.

qualifications to questions about Majoro's age showed that Basotho were thinking of youth in terms not only of age, but also in terms of ability to help take on adult economic and social responsibilities within the community.

The debate over Majoro's candidacy, along with earlier heated discussions in the Basutoland Council over youth show that older Basotho, especially older males, were greatly concerned with keeping a strong patriarchal hand on their youthful compatriots in the 1960s.<sup>xxx</sup> Many older Basotho, especially those in positions of authority, saw their role as being parental. This was due in part to the shortage of males in Lesotho at any given time because of migrant labor. But it was also a result of the strong influence of the colonial/mission educational system that saw teachers as being a second set of parents for Basotho youth. In 1966, the headmaster of Peka High School, Tseliso Makhakhe, called on the government to pay teachers a decent salary because it would keep them satisfied in their work. Dissatisfaction, he claimed could lead to a “national disaster” because “disgruntled parents bring up disgruntled children; disgruntled teachers bring up disgruntled children.”<sup>xxxi</sup> Makhakhe's fear of “disgruntled” youth was grounded in this larger suspicion of younger Basotho as a disruptive force that threatened to derail the aspirations of the older generation, the ones who saw themselves as responsible for the hard work that had finally ended colonial rule.

The fear of Makhakhe, who would be elected president in 1967 of LANTA, the Lesotho African National Teacher's Association, and the other teachers was, ironically,

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xxxThis was a common phenomenon in colonial Africa as noted in the second section of this chapter.

xxxiTseliso Makhakhe, “Letters: Why Teachers Deserve the Best Treatment in the Country,” *LANTA-Echoes: Not By Favour but by Merit* (Maseru: Khatiso ea Maseru, December 1966).

similar to that of the first independent government. LANTA had gone out on strike in late 1966 over the issue of teacher pay, and the recognition by the BNP government of the newer, Catholic-dominated BANTA (Basotho African National Teacher's Association) as the official national union for teachers with whom they would negotiate. The policy differences between the BNP government and LANTA, however, converged around the issue of student subordination to teachers in the classroom, and the classroom as a politics-free zone for students. Their rationales, however, for these beliefs came from opposite sides of the spectrum. LANTA worried that the government was giving more support to Catholic schools, and also worried that any signs of student militancy and indiscipline at non-Catholic schools would lead to a Ministry crackdown, with a concomitant withholding of funds.<sup>xxxii</sup> The Ministry, on the other hand, was worried about South African teachers and students, as well as opposition-supporting teachers, bringing ideologies like Pan-Africanism and communism into the classroom. The Ministry worried that students would apply these ideologies to domestic politics, thus radicalizing the students and aiding the political opposition.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

This domestic political split between the government and teachers at non-Catholic schools led LANTA, by 1969, to change its position and actively work for more student engagement in the governance process of schools. This was in stark contrast to the Ministry's policy of teaching to a series of national exams at the end of primary school, at the Junior Certificate level (after three years of secondary school) and the Cambridge

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xxxiiTseliso Makhakhe, "The President of LANTA Comments: Of Recognition of BANTA," *LANTA—Echoes: Not by Favour but by Merit* 4 (July 1967).

xxxiiiFor more on this, see chapter five's discussion of Minister Manyeli's speech at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland in 1968.

Overseas School Certificate (COSC) at the end of high school. LANTA declared at the end of 1969 that it was disappointed that the students in Lesotho faced “rote learning and authoritarian discipline” that has “tightened the screw so much that [students' intellectual and social] voice is never heard.”<sup>xxxiv</sup> This seeming change of heart from LANTA, however, came in the middle of their issue devoted to critiquing the performance of the BNP government in the four years of independence. It was more a reflection of LANTA's efforts to elect the opposition BCP into power, where Protestant teachers would likely have greater sway over educational policy, than of any concerted national efforts to give students more voice, as rote learning is still a large component of contemporary education in Lesotho.

There were, however, some schools that gave students a say in their own governance, and these exceptions demonstrate just how young Basotho envisioned the institutional creation process around independence. Simon Phafane attended Sacred Heart High School, a Catholic school in the rural Leribe District, from 1958 to 1964 because he did a two-year Commercial Course that they offered between completing his Junior Certificate exams in 1960 and starting his high school instruction in 1963. At this school, run by Catholic Brothers of the Sacred Heart, Phafane was elected Deputy and then Head Prefect in 1963 and 1964, meaning that he was in charge of school discipline and was the principal liaison between the students and the school administration. The institution of prefect, coming from the British public school system, was common in Lesotho's schools, but the elections for its offices were not.<sup>xxxv</sup> The elected prefects were

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xxxiv“The Crisis of Youth,” *LANTA-Echoes: Not by Favour but by Merit* 5 (1969).

xxxvInterview Simon Phafane, Maseru, 11/3/08.

in charge of a system of committees that students could sit on dealing with school governance and quality of life issues, such as sports and food. These committees were places for the students to take some control over their own affairs, and forced them to take responsibility for the repercussions of the decisions that they made. This made the student body more content, according to Phafane because the elected prefect system made it so “we never had a strike.”<sup>xxxvi</sup>

A school strike at Sacred Heart that made newspaper headlines in 1969 belies Phafane's claim that the elected prefect system eliminated all problems.<sup>xxxvii</sup> However, the general system of student-involvement in governance at this Catholic school, somewhat ironic in light of Protestant LANTA's 1969 call for more student input, did allow students to get involved in making decisions that impacted their own lives and the lives of their school peers. Phafane noted that Sacred Heart was unusual in allowing this expression of popular sentiment, but the verve with which he and his peers embraced and bought into the system showed that they had a desire to participate in the governance of institutions in Lesotho.

Basotho students who had greater exposure to institutions that had granted them some say in governance and decision-making tended to also express more optimism for the ideas of independence and nationalism. Gabriel Tlaba had been a leader of an autonomous Boy Scout troop at the secondary level, as well as an active participant in the University Christian Movement at the university level. Tlaba, like many other Scouts and Girl Guides in late colonial Africa, highlights the tension in the organization between a

<sup>xxxvi</sup>Interview Simon Phafane, Maseru, 11/3/08.

<sup>xxxvii</sup>“Minister Condemns Sacred High School Strikers,” *Lesotho Times* May 27, 1969.

respect for authority that Scouts/Guides claimed to cultivate, and the independent thought that participation in the groups could also elicit.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Participation in these groups, and deep discussions about the role of the individual in an independent country led Tlaba to be “very hopeful” about independence. He wished to see a country where he could be a part of “direct[ing] ourselves” and bringing development efforts not possible during the colonial period.<sup>xxxix</sup> This included having personal opportunities based on individual merit, rather than a political or religious affiliation. Mohlalefi Moteane, a student at Mr. Makhakhe's Peka High School, echoed the upwardly mobile sentiments of Tlaba saying that he had hoped that independence would allow “younger generations to be able to qualify and become doctors, engineers so that they come back and run their own affairs, to give freedoms to your own people.”<sup>xl</sup>

This youthful optimism in the face of a pernicious political contention that had involved politicians sniping back and forth in the National Council since 1960, and even longer in the local Sesotho-language press, differentiated young Basotho from many of their older peers. They tended to have a more optimistic view that the country could become more meritocratic at independence, meaning that there would be individual opportunity regardless of political affiliation, religious status or parental connections. While most Basotho youth were disappointed that the widespread changes needed to bring this about did not happen in the first few years of independence, their definitions of nationalism that encompassed more than simple political change allowed them to better

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<sup>xxxviii</sup>Parsons, *Boy Scouts*.

<sup>xxxix</sup>Interview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 10/28/08.

<sup>xl</sup> Interview Mohlalefi Moteane, Maseru, 5/27/09.

weather the political disappointments of these years.

### **Generational Differences, Gender and The Nation**

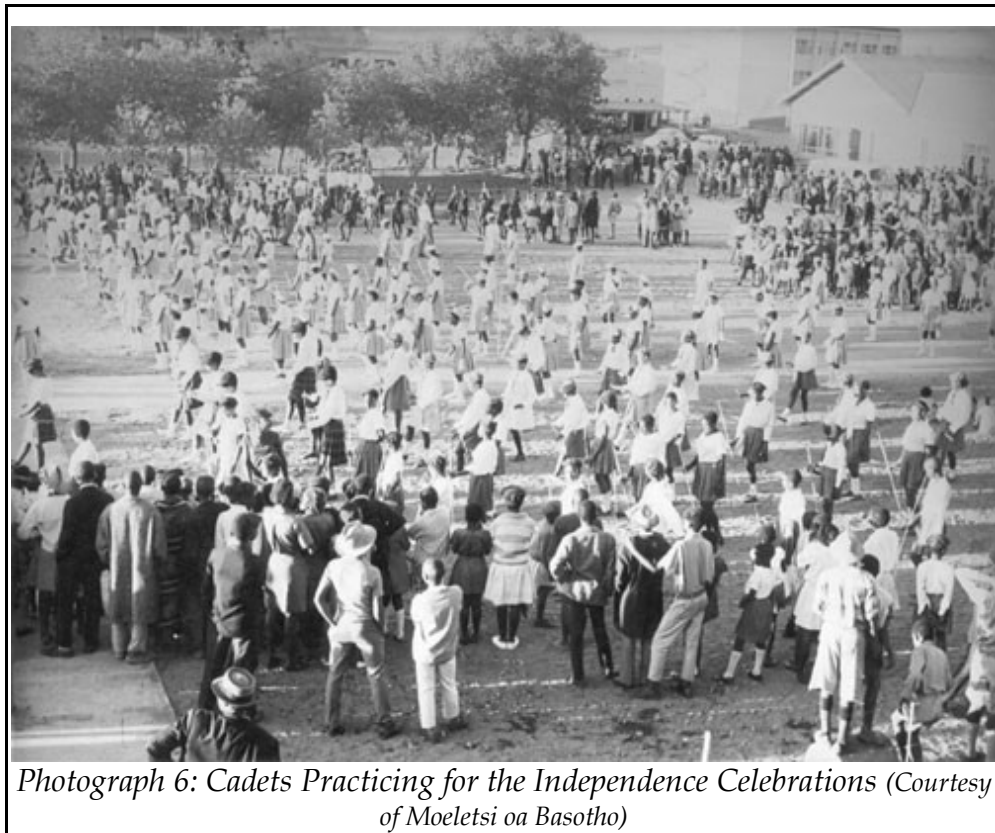
One problem with characterizing an entire age cohort as a coherent “generation,” in reference to young Basotho in the 1950s and 1960s, was the sharp divide between those who stayed in Lesotho and those who moved to South Africa for varying periods of time for work. Gabriel Tlaba noted a split between young men who pursued schooling in Lesotho, and those who went to work in the mines in South Africa. He felt the migrant laborers, especially around Lesotho's independence, blamed the “school people” for the abuse they faced from their white South African supervisors. This divide, however, was at least partly a product of scholarly boundaries around the idea of labor migration. Tlaba noted that when he was still attending school, while many of his peers had gone to the mines, there was still a social coherence in his home village (and other local communities) in Lesotho. Those who did not leave put pressure on these migrants to return home periodically, and to send money to support the relatives, or risk being labeled “one who doesn't come back...it wasn't a nice Sesotho word.”<sup>xli</sup> While there were certainly some who never came back or sent money home, most remained rooted in their local communities and complied with these obligations.<sup>xlii</sup>

As noted in chapter five, many Basotho viewed the border between South Africa and Lesotho during the colonial and independence periods as a bureaucratic obstacle rather than a fixed line dividing national communities. They saw the line as a political

xli Interview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 10/28/08.

xlii Murray, *Families Divided*.

mark drawn by outsiders that divided the Basotho community, and observed its formalities when forced to, while evading them at other times. Therefore, it is wrong to see this divide between young Basotho who stayed in Lesotho and those who went to South Africa as representative of a class division or obstacle to the creation of a coherent category of youth in Lesotho. Even within Lesotho, there were superficial divisions among those who remained, ranging from those who continued into secondary education versus those with only primary education, to urban versus rural and Protestant versus Catholic. These divisions, rather, highlight the variety of experiences young Basotho had, and helped develop a wide range of possibilities they saw for their new nation— young Basotho saw themselves first and foremost as members of the Basotho nation.



*Photograph 6: Cadets Practicing for the Independence Celebrations (Courtesy of Moeletsi oa Basotho)*

Governmental efforts to expand education certainly helped create a larger group



of young Basotho who could identify as youth, but these young people were quite eager to embrace their identity when it fit with their interests. Photograph 6 shows young women from an organization called the Cadets practicing for the Independence Day celebrations in October, 1966. The Cadets, organized through schools, were a group that performed a variety of choreographed movements in unison to the accompaniment of drums, a marching band or some combination of the two. These particular young women came from at least four different schools from around the country, as evidenced by the differences in uniforms, and their work here demonstrates both the governmental emphasis on youth during the independence celebrations and how young Basotho were able to make connections with their peers from around the country through youth organizations.<sup>xliii</sup>

The connections that young Basotho were making in these organizations were allowing them to think beyond the confines of their home communities, and envision the abstract concept of the nation more broadly.<sup>xliv</sup> The proliferation of these groups, and their existence in almost every corner of Lesotho, coupled with accounts of deep political awareness in rural communities, help paint a picture of rural political consciousness that figures detailing party affiliation cannot capture. Selborne Mohlalisi noted that the 1960s were a time when he would go home as a young man to his village of Matalile in the rural Mafeteng District and “it was exciting because you would have new conversations in the villages. You wouldn't discuss weather or the crops anymore but you would talk

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xliiiDeborah Gaitskell, “Upward All and Play the Game: The Girl Wayfarers' Association in the Transvaal 1925-1975,” in *Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans*, edited by Peter Kallaway (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984).

xlivFor more on this, see chapter three.

politics.<sup>xlvi</sup> This heightened rural political consciousness dispels the idea that nationalism was simply a “discourse of protest” among an urban elite, or that “militant urban nationalism” was the “social and ideological glue” that held together a “heterogeneous peasant liberation struggle.”<sup>xlvi</sup> Thinking about politics and talking about national issues were not confined merely to an urban elite, and the elites that existed in Lesotho were not very militant.

In addition to problematizing conceptions of a rural/urban divide in terms of thinking about nationalism, the existence of a coherent category of Basotho youth also calls into question the significance of drawn political borders for determining identity. Motsapi Moorosi, born and raised in South Africa to parents originally from Lesotho, was attending high school in Lesotho in the mid to late 1960s. He did not consider himself a “political man,” in the sense that he did not join parties or follow the minutiae of political events. He did, however, like most Basotho, care who won elections, wanted to see concrete development efforts in Lesotho with independence, and was disappointed when these developments did not come as fast as he hoped. With his parents still living in South Africa, his aspirations for independence also made him fear that he would be cut off from his parents, and his own potential employment in South Africa if the new government in some way jeopardized relations between Lesotho and South Africa.<sup>xlvi</sup> His parents also feared being cut off from the land of their birth and their relatives still in Lesotho.

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xlvi Interview Selborne Mohlalisi, Morija, 11/10/08.

xlvi Young, *African Colonial State*, 238. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 290.

xlvi Interview Motsapi Moorosi, Maseru East, 3/12/09.

Moorosi's story also shows that many of the concerns Basotho youth had dovetailed with those of their parents and other older Basotho. There was no imperative for inter-generational conflict in Lesotho. On a wide range of issues, young and old Basotho saw eye-to-eye on independence, desiring the same meritocratic and egalitarian society that provided opportunities for the skilled. In thinking about nationalism, however, Mohlalisi's argument that young Basotho "thought we understood what was going on" illustrates how many youth conceived of themselves as better informed and better positioned to bring about fundamental change in the country.<sup>xlviii</sup>

This is, of course, not to say that all young Basotho were forging ahead of their parents and moving into uncharted ground with their views on nationalism and politics. Many young Basotho from all sides of the political spectrum reported that their formative views on politics were, in part, shaped by prior parental interest and involvement in politics. Chaka Ntsane, reflecting on the development of his own political views and nationalistic sentiments, remarked that the political inclinations of both his mother and father "had an influence on the way I conducted myself" in terms of thinking about politics and coming to support the BNP.<sup>xlix</sup> On the other side of the spectrum, Raphael Leseli's father was away working in South Africa, but his mother was an active member of the BCP from their rural village in the mountain foothills of the Maseru District. She encouraged Raphael and his siblings to be informed and active about politics, as she was "showing us how important it was [to get involved]."<sup>1</sup> Both stressed, however, that they

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xlviii Interview Selborne Mohlalisi, Morija, 11/10/08.

xlix Interview Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 2/24/09.

1 Interview Raphael Leseli, Roma, 1/15/09.

took their political positions independently after thought and consideration—it was not simply because their parents supported a party that they did the same.

The remembrances of Ntsane and Leseli of a large segment of the population interested in politics, and attending rallies to learn about the process of political change was also corroborated by Maleseka Kena, who was living deep in the rural mountains of southern Lesotho. Kena, long involved in the struggle against *apartheid* South Africa with her husband, recalled that rallies in Qacha's Nek area would draw “everyone” and that attendance at these rallies included young and old: “so many and so happy.”<sup>li</sup> For someone positioned so deeply in liberation struggles, both in Lesotho and in South Africa, Kena's recollections of “everyone” being at the rallies was, at least in part, metaphorical. She also described how political divisions within her own village made her work with refugees difficult at times, so claims about particular party rallies being places for universal participation must be read a bit skeptically—attempts to present current parties, the descendants of the BCP from the independence era, as having had broader support than they enjoyed. However, there is no cause to dispute her contention that both young and old attended these rallies.

Not all Basotho youth remembered this outpouring of support from older Basotho for party rallies or even the concept of independence in general. Tseliso Ramakhula, a primary school teacher in the rural Mafeteng District, remembered opposition to the idea of independence in generational terms. Older Basotho were “satisfied with the situation [the relative lack of colonial control in Lesotho].” They feared political change because

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li Interview Maleseka Kena, Tsoelike Auplas, 3/17/09.

they worried about younger, more radical Basotho coming to power and upsetting the status quo: “If we govern ourselves, whose son is to govern us?”<sup>lii</sup> This generational and gendered worry was, of course, not a new concern either in Lesotho or in the region. Much of the debate and dialogue over migrant labor, and how best to ensure that the wages and earnings of younger, mostly male, Basotho who went off to work in the mines and farms of South Africa returned to Lesotho and to male heads of household, contained similar worries about younger generations getting out of the control of older ones, and not being there to support older Basotho in their retirements.<sup>liii</sup>

Michael Mateka also noted similar sentiment in his home village in the rural Berea District. While his siblings and he were intensely interested in political developments, and in discussing the concept of independence, Mateka would only speak with his father and other older relatives in more general terms and “never as seriously as I might talk [in other places]” as these older Basotho saw politics as “a luxury you can do without when you come to deal with more serious life issues.” This contrasted to Mateka's own view of independence, which he saw as instrumental in achieving his goal of individual opportunity for advancement in the service of a greater common national good. He envisioned independence as a great opportunity, but also one for which he and his peers would have to “work with more dedication,” but the specifics of this vision were “a little nebulous.”<sup>liv</sup>

Simon Phafane also noted the nebulous qualities of his youthful dreams. His

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lii Interview Tseliso Ramakhula, Lower Thamae, 4/1/09.

liii Murray, *Families Divided*.

liv Interview Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, Leribe District, 11/26/08.

great vision for independence was: “The Basotho were going to run ourselves.” Phafane and his youthful peers wanted to run their own affairs free from British control, but they did not know exactly what “that would mean in real life situations!”<sup>lv</sup> Lest we think this uncertainty was confined to young Basotho like Phafane, young American Peace Corps volunteers coming to Africa at the same time had little idea what they were going to do beyond “helping” people.<sup>lvi</sup> Again, however, Phafane's youthful optimism contrasted with a more skeptical attitude from his parents and other older relatives. For the older Phafane family members, growing up in the shadow of the royal village of Matsieng, “independence meant going back to the old structures. To the king in charge, people listening to him and being subject to him.”<sup>lvii</sup> While this was certainly different from the political indifference shown by Ramakhula's elders, and the generational tension inherent in the vision of Mateka's elders, it was still a vision that was as distrustful of contemporary politics and politicians as the other conceptions.

The idea of a strong monarchy was, of course, not shared by all Basotho, as many fully supported political changes. Older Basotho tended to emphasize continuity in community structures, as they feared for social stability in the wake of independence. Thus, they tended to support more power for groups that already held power, like the chieftaincy, or groups that replicated existent structures, like hierarchical political parties. There was strong agreement on the need for a retooling of the domestic economy, to

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lv Interview Simon Phafane, Maseru, 1/28/09.

lvi Jonathan Zimmerman, “Beyond Double Consciousness: Black Peace Corps Volunteers in Africa, 1961-1971,” *The Journal of American History* 82 (1995): 999-1028.

lvii Interview Simon Phafane, Maseru, 11/3/08.

allow more Basotho to work for good wages at home, rather than having to leave for South Africa. If these jobs did not materialize, and most realized that this would be a long process, Basotho of all ages pressed for safeguards against *apartheid* encroaching into Lesotho.

The main difference between Basotho youth and their elders revolved around conceptions of the role of the individual in society. For young Basotho, independence was an opportunity to change societal practices, allowing for a greater emphasis on Basotho with educational qualifications or practical work experience having a significant say in the running of local institutions and the governance of the country. Their efforts resonated historically with efforts by the BPA and LLB to gain greater power for non-chiefly Basotho from the first decades of the twentieth century.<sup>lviii</sup> Young Basotho, however, had a weapon which their earlier compatriots did not have—the vote.

The act of voting was a key memory for many young Basotho, and was one which highlighted the differences between old and young in Lesotho. Most young Basotho could recall the excitement of the pre-independence elections of 1965 in great detail, whether or not they were old enough to cast a ballot. Some, like Michael Mateka, remembered it for partisan differences that threatened to derail the entire endeavor. Claiming that Catholics were made to wait in a long, unmoving line outside the polling place in Matelile, Mateka had to force his way into the polling station to exercise his right to vote.<sup>lix</sup> Most polling, however, was not this confrontational, as Selborne Mohlalisi, tapped to run an uneventful polling station at the lowland village of Ha 'Mantsebo and  
<sup>lviii</sup>See chapter two for more on these organizations.

<sup>lix</sup> Interview Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, Leribe District, 11/26/08.

Moeketsi Lesitsi, working a polling station in the Leribe district, both recalled.<sup>lx</sup>

Many young Basotho, however, when asked about the political affinities of their parents and other older relatives, had difficulty answering the question. Some, like Alexander Sekoli, a primary school teacher in the rural Leribe District, contrasted the excitement his students and he were feeling with the experience of his father who was “so old at that time” that he did not care about independence.<sup>lxi</sup> Most, however, beat a telling retreat, after initially assuming they had voted because of their own optimism and excitement at the time. When asked whether they discussed independence with their parents, many responded like Moeketsi Lesitsi, who claimed that their older relatives were not “very concerned with independence.” When pressed on his father's voting patterns, Lesitsi said that his father “went to vote but didn't talk about it...actually, you know, I don't know if he even voted.”<sup>lxii</sup> Michael Mateka had a similar reaction when asked: “You know, funny enough, I don't even know if my father voted in 1965. And the other subsequent elections I don't even know if he voted. I never asked him.”<sup>lxiii</sup> Having a significant number of abstentions from the voting is to be expected as Weisfelder estimates that only 57% of the adult population of Basutoland voted in these elections, or 62% of the registered voters.<sup>lxiv</sup> The salient point, however, was that Basotho youth were more engaged with the electoral processes than the older generations, because they

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lx Interview Selborne Mohlalisi, Morija, 11/10/08 and Moeketsi Lesitsi, St. Monica's Mission, 11/26/08.

lxi Interview Alexander Sekoli, St. David's Mission, 11/13/08.

lxii Interview Moeketsi Lesitsi, St. Monica's Mission, 11/26/08.

lxiii Interview Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, Leribe District, 11/26/08.

lxiv Weisfelder, *Political Contention*, Table I(B).



believed that the vote could bring about the meritocratic changes they hoped to see with independence.

The general trend of Basotho youth not knowing about their parents' political affiliations and voting patterns is telling on multiple levels. First, it shows that there was a fairly strong generational divide on political matters, with most young Basotho participating in political thought and activity free from parental influence and oversight. Second, it demonstrates Mohlalisi's contention that Basotho youth really were more politically engaged and aware than many older Basotho in the lead-up to and first few years of independence. Finally, it highlights the stronger belief that young Basotho seemed to hold for the prospects of independence and new institutions, and, conversely, confirms a stronger sense of pessimism or fatalism among older Basotho as to the prospect that independence would bring about the societal change that they wanted to see.

Some young Basotho were aware of these issues at the time of independence, and they provided a wide range of explanations and reactions to the more apolitical stance their elders took. Tseliso Ramakhula, for instance, recalled that his father was more interested in his work as a minister with the Church of Basutoland: “I won't say he was opposed [to independence], I will just say that he was indifferent.”<sup>lxv</sup> Gabriel Tlaba recalled that some older Basotho “stayed at home” and did not vote because they worried about the specific people in charge of the political parties. His parents and other older family members tried to impress their fears on Tlaba and other young Basotho saying: “Hey, take care of [any politician]! We know him. Beware! He can promise a lot of

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lxv Interview Tseliso Ramakhula, Lower Thamae, 3/1/09.

things. They would tell us the history of the past...what he did, or what his grandfather did and all types of things.”<sup>lxvi</sup>

This sort of skepticism for politics and for the limits of political change did not, however, dissuade young Basotho like Ramakhula and Tlaba from acting in the pursuit of their own nationalist dreams for the future. Even when independence came and they started to see some of the very results about which their parents and elders had warned, they managed to keep some faith. Tlaba noted that soon after independence, “it became *very clear* [emphasis his] that things were not that rosy. People were just looking out for their own...good and not the common good.”<sup>lxvii</sup> This realization, however, did not sour Tlaba on the possibilities of independence and nationalism, but rather on the ability of those in power to pursue the ends and goals he found important. For Tlaba, this meant redoubling his efforts through youth organizations at the university like the University Christian Movement (UCM). This continued engagement allowed Tlaba to both expand his own personal opportunity for action, and broaden the scope of his gaze, as the UCM was a cross-border organization that brought together young people regionally in an attempt to work through issues like *apartheid* and the failure of the state in Lesotho to deliver on its promises.

Other young Basotho like Ramakhula, who lost his job at the Agricultural College as part of the government's purge of the civil service after their 1965 victory, had to find new meaningful employment. Ramakhula was eventually able to do so as an educator in the prison system. Most Basotho youth, however, were unable to find the work and

<sup>lxvi</sup>Interview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 10/28/08.

<sup>lxvii</sup>Interview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 10/28/08.

fulfillment they were looking for at home despite independence. Raphael Leseli hoped to join the police, but he found that his locally-expressed support for the opposition ruled out this particular career path as local chiefs, on instructions from the government, made political affiliation with the BNP a prerequisite for getting a nomination to the police training school. Instead of staying home, getting a job and raising a family in his newly independent country, Leseli, like generations of Basotho before him, had to settle for the life of a mine migrant in South Africa.<sup>lxviii</sup> This disappointment, however, did not sour him on nationalism or the possibilities of future change in Lesotho. As soon as he got married and saved enough money, he built a house in the university town of Roma, and moved his family out of his parents' rural village to be closer to the developmental trappings of independence—schools, clinics and other infrastructure.

Citing examples such as Leseli, Ramakhula and Tlaba does not naturally lead to the conclusion that all young Basotho were of similar mind in regard to independence. Mohlalefi Moteane noted that October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1966—Independence Day—came and went at his school without much notice, other than a day off school. This was, in part, due to widespread student support for the opposition BCP, but also happened because Moteane and his classmates were within a month of taking the end-of-school Cambridge Overseas School Certificate exams, which would determine their qualification for higher education opportunities.<sup>lxix</sup> Chaka Ntsane recalled a similar situation at the university with a great debate among students about whether they should celebrate Independence Day. The debate at the university was more complex because of the multi-national character of the

<sup>lxviii</sup>Interview Raphael Leseli, Roma, 1/15/09.

<sup>lxix</sup>Interview Mohlalefi Moteane, Maseru, 5/27/09.

student body, with young scholars coming from all over the southern African region. The Basotho students fell out over whether they should support a government run by the BNP that many did not recognize as holding the support of the majority of the population, with others wanting to celebrate a national day. Even those who noted and were saddened by this split between young Basotho, like Ntsane, still had faith in the ability of their country and the people in it to come together: “I felt very elated [by independence]...I thought that was the opening of the door to a lot of opportunities.”<sup>lxx</sup>

A general youth vision for a transformed, independent Lesotho was not strictly an egalitarian movement. Like the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, there was a strongly gendered component to the vision many young Basotho held.<sup>lxxi</sup> Despite Lesotho having a higher percentage of young women in school than almost any other African country, most Basotho, young and old, saw politics and advancement in male-centered ways. This denied Basotho women full opportunities to participate in politics and the political process. While women who managed to persevere through a schooling system that winnowed them out at an ever greater rate than their male peers had some opportunity to go into government work or the tiny private sector, they did not, by and large, have the same outlets their male peers did. Raphael Leseli, for example, was able with his three years of secondary schooling to get a job working in administration at the South African mines, but this was not a viable career option for Basotho women. The only real options for women in South Africa were as domestic servants or in the informal

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lxx Interview Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 2/24/09

lxxi Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith, ed., *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

economy of the townships, neither of which held much appeal to educated Basotho women.<sup>lxxii</sup> Within Lesotho, the primary outlet for educated women to use their skills was as teachers.

The limiting of available roles for women in Lesotho, despite their large numbers in the schools, can also be seen in the roles that young women played in youth groups. Clara Rapholo recalled from her time with the Girl Guides, principals and school managers would often ask both the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides to assist in school functions or to entertain guests. This played out in gendered roles with the Girl Guides helping with “processions...help with the cleaning up and seeing that everything was in order. It was our job to see that things ran properly.”<sup>lxxiii</sup> The same was true of Boy Scouts, as Gabriel Tlaba recalled going to public functions with his fellow Boy Scouts, where they would help direct the crowds and make sure that older guests were seated comfortably.<sup>lxxiv</sup> When both the Girl Guides and the Boy Scouts were participating at an event, however, the Guides would “do the light work like cooking” while the Scouts would “do the heavy work of carrying the poles and these sorts of things.” They were “working together” but the male Scouts would typically get the more public roles, unless it was a function at a single-sex school.<sup>lxxv</sup>

The inability of institutions to view young Basotho women as full-fledged

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lxxiiKynoch, *Marashea Gangs*.

lxxiiiInterview Clara Rapholo, Roma, 5/5/09. Similar processes occurred in South Africa. Tammy Proctor, “A Separate Path!: Scouting and Guiding in Interwar South Africa,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (2000): 605-31.

lxxivInterview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 10/28/08.

lxxvInterview Clara Rapholo, Roma, 5/5/09.

participants played out in the political sphere as well. Basotho women were excluded, with only a few exceptions, from voting in the 1960 elections. The BCP advocated against giving women the franchise in constitutional discussions of the early 1960s, though the colonial government and Basotho representatives in the Constitutional Commission of 1962 overruled these objections. This was in large part due to the relatively large numbers of female chiefs, with women holding 12.5% of all chieftaincy positions in 1955 and almost a quarter by 1977.<sup>lxxvi</sup> The BCP push to keep a male-only franchise came about in part from a general view from their older, male membership that politics was men's work, but also from a perception that the BNP would draw most of its support from women in general (see Photograph 7), and in particular, religious women in the rural areas. The fear of women supporting the opposition was true, to some extent, though it was less because women were more inherently conservative, and more because the BNP program appealed to the values and the rural economic development that Catholic women, a plurality in Lesotho, held dear.<sup>lxxvii</sup>

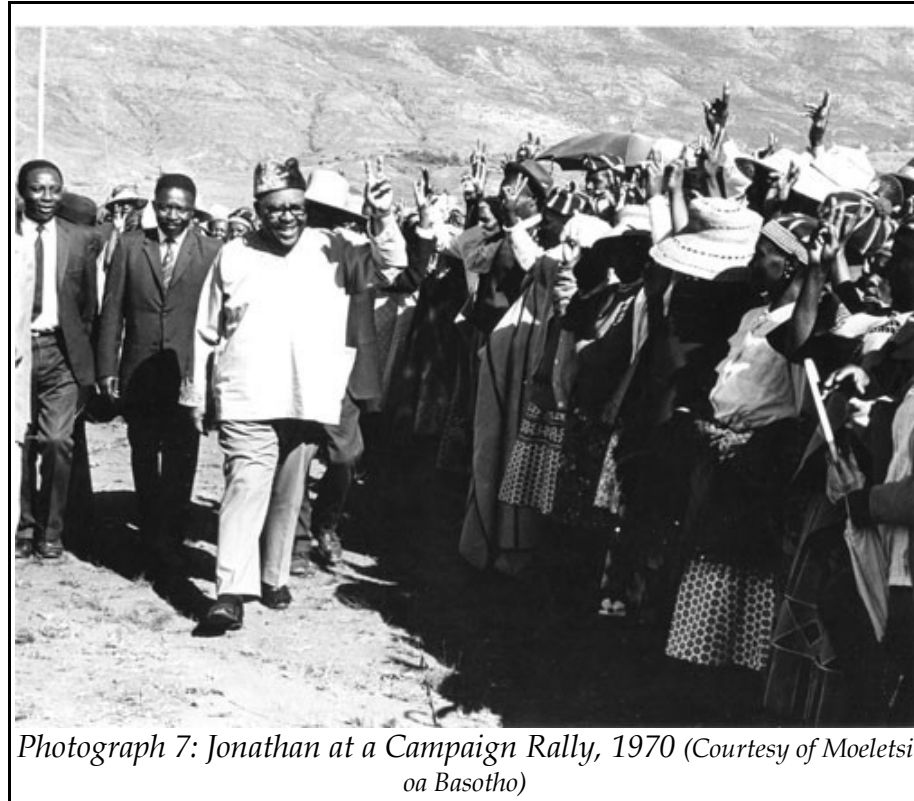
Still, there were spaces for Basotho women within the political sphere, and even opportunities to use their general exclusion from politics as a means of furthering their own political agendas. As Epprecht noted, women's organizations operated by the major churches, like the PEMS/Church of Basutoland *Kopanos*, the Catholic Ladies of St. Anne and the Anglican women's groups, along with the secular Homemakers' Association, were all vehicles through which women could be “fighting to protect [their] economic and social status.” This does not mean that these groups were able to, or even wanted to,

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<sup>lxxvi</sup>Epprecht, “Women's 'Conservatism',” 34.

<sup>lxxvii</sup>Epprecht, “Women's 'Conservatism'.”

challenge the secondary status of women in Sesotho culture, but they provided a space for Basotho women of all ages to gain a “sense of direction, accomplishment and pride.”<sup>lxxviii</sup>



Maleseka Kena, a member of the Homemakers' Association herself, and the wife of a Communist Party of Lesotho organizer, faced some threats in her home village from ruling party activists. The BNP was strongly anti-communist and these activists did not approve of Kena sheltering South African political refugees in her home. She used her connections with the local chieftaincy and her gender to maintain her work. The local chief ended up expelling the young men from the village, saying: “She is not a politician. Her husband is a politician but she is just there taking care of her children. Leave her

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<sup>lxxviii</sup>Epprecht, “Domesticity and Piety,” 223.

alone! What do they want with women and children? This is not their problem.”<sup>lxxix</sup>

Coming on the heels of Kena's assertion that her local chief “didn't want to” know and “it was better for him not to know” about her work sheltering and helping refugees, the incident with the chief evicting the young men threatening her takes on larger significance. The chief clearly knew that Kena was involved in assisting political refugees, but kept up a willful public ignorance on the details of this work. However, both the chief and Kena herself used her position as a woman to allow for her continued participation in local political activities under the guise of being a simple housewife. Despite the aversion at the national level to include women in substantive discourse or positions of authority, at the village level there was ample space for young Basotho women to fully participate in and be accepted as legitimate participants in political debates, discussions and actions.

### **The State and Youth Engagement**

Differences in the degree of optimism felt by younger and older Basotho over the promises of change to political, social and economic conditions in Lesotho were stark. For the most part, this generational difference did not manifest itself in outright conflict. Parents disagreed with the choices their children were making, and younger Basotho wanted to see more engagement from their older relatives and peers on the issues of development, independence and nationalism. The defining conflict of the era, however, was between ideas Basotho youth had of the proper role of the state and how

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<sup>lxxix</sup>Interview Maleseka Kena, Tsoelike Auplas, 3/17/09.



governmental officials viewed the proper role for these same youth in the new country. For most Basotho, this conflict played out at the local level in battles for control over youth organizations and mobilizing young people around the idea of supporting the new nation. The signature conflict of this struggle, however, was at the top of the political system involving the role that the youthful *Motlotlehi* Moshoeshe II would have in the governance of the new state.

This question had come up repeatedly in the various administrative reform efforts of the 1950s and 1960s but there was very little consistency from the major political parties as to what Moshoeshe II's role should be. The party that had the best electoral chances at the time of particular negotiations with the British tended to support less power, while the parties in weaker positions tended to support giving more power to the office of *Motlotlehi*. For instance, in the public comment period leading up to the Constitutional Commission of 1962 and the Constitutional Negotiations of 1964, the BCP, winners of the majority of the seats in the 1960 District Council elections, wanted to turn *Motlotlehi* into a mainly figurehead constitutional monarch. After the victory of the BNP in the April 1965 Parliamentary elections, however, the BCP suddenly became a strong supporter of *Motlotlehi* holding the so-called “Reserve Powers” that the British maintained until independence in October of 1966—control over the police and paramilitary forces, external affairs (including negotiations with South Africa on a range of issues), finance and the civil service.<sup>lxxx</sup> The pro-royalist MFP had long been a supporter of Moshoeshe II, the office of *Motlotlehi* and the senior chieftaincy, but as the

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<sup>lxxx</sup>Weisfelder, *Political Contention*, 110. See also the discussion of political change in the 1960s in chapter two.

smallest and least influential of the three main parties, their support for Moshoeshoe II merely meant that they ended up in alliance with both other main parties at various times.

Just twenty-eight years old at independence, many Basotho politicians and the British colonial government viewed Moshoeshoe II as a young upstart who was not fully capable of taking on the responsibility that he wanted—to be an executive monarch with control over the security forces. Simon Phafane, who from 1965 worked as an adviser in *Motlotlehi's* offices, argued that Moshoeshoe II wanted control over the police and security forces because he was a student of political science and had seen developments in Nigeria, Ghana and other African countries. He worried that if politicians had control over the police and military, “one day the man in power [the Prime Minister], the one with absolute power, will use it to remove...to silence the opposition.”<sup>lxxxix</sup> Most politicians and the colonial government saw Moshoeshoe II's attempt to gain this power as a blatant attempt to usurp powers that belonged to elected politicians, because they firmly believed in a Westminster system.

The Colonial Office saw Moshoeshoe II as a foolish young man who did not understand that his views had lost in the run-up to independence, and they were bound and determined to hand over Basutoland to the elected BNP government by the middle of 1966. Moshoeshoe II held a series of last-ditch public meetings from June to September of 1966, in conjunction with the BCP and MFP opposition, in which he argued that the British government needed to return to the negotiating table over the independence accords. Colonial Office analysts in London called him a “foolish and vain young man,”

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<sup>lxxxix</sup>Interview Simon Phafane, Maseru, 1/28/09.

who was simply embittered because he “finds it very difficult to accept his position of a constitutional monarch.” This opinion stemmed from reports sent from Basutoland by officials there, who reported many times on the theme of the “young Paramount Chief of Basutoland not...behaving well.”<sup>lxxxii</sup> In addition to having a strong preference for turning over British prestige to a Westminster system, administrators in Maseru and London all used the young age of Moshoeshe II as a means of discrediting any plausible arguments he might have been making in these meetings, which turned on his unwillingness to be the first Basotho monarch without executive powers.

But it was not only the British who viewed Moshoeshe II as a young upstart whom they could bully politically. Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan had been an adviser to Moshoeshe's step-mother, the Regent 'Mantsebo, in the 1950s and took the view that Moshoeshe was not his equal, politically or socially. Phafane remembered that when Jonathan would come for meetings with *Motlotlehi*, Jonathan always “wanted to exert himself as a father figure” and did not take it well when the better-educated young King would ask difficult questions of the Prime Minister: “When [Jonathan] came to brief the King, it was always very tense because he was never sure what kind of questions the King would ask him...he had a tendency to ask him very difficult questions. And the old man [Jonathan] wasn't prepared.”<sup>lxxxiii</sup> This generational tension, and the perceived support of Moshoeshe II for the opposition BCP and MFP, would end in the annulment of the 1970 elections where Jonathan ignored the constitutional right of *Motlotlehi* to

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lxxxiiNAUK CO 1048/950 Basutoland Independence Constitution, Letter A.M. Palliser, Esq to Commonwealth Office, September 28, 1966.

lxxxiiiInterview Simon Phafane, Maseru, 1/28/09.

consultation before the declaration of a State of Emergency, and the youthfulness of the King contributed to the political tensions of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The primary concerns of the Colonial Office in the hand-over of power were keeping Basutoland/Lesotho within the British sphere of influence, keeping Lesotho as part of the capitalist system, not allowing it to become a South African *Bantustan* and ensuring that the internal security situation was secure enough that the transfer of power could happen smoothly, without international condemnation. Thus, the active role that Moshoeshe II was playing in the country in the year preceding independence, addressing rallies of people calling for more powers for the office of *Motlotlehi* was not only deeply embarrassing to the ruling BNP, but also threatened to undermine the entire transfer-of-power process from the British standpoint.

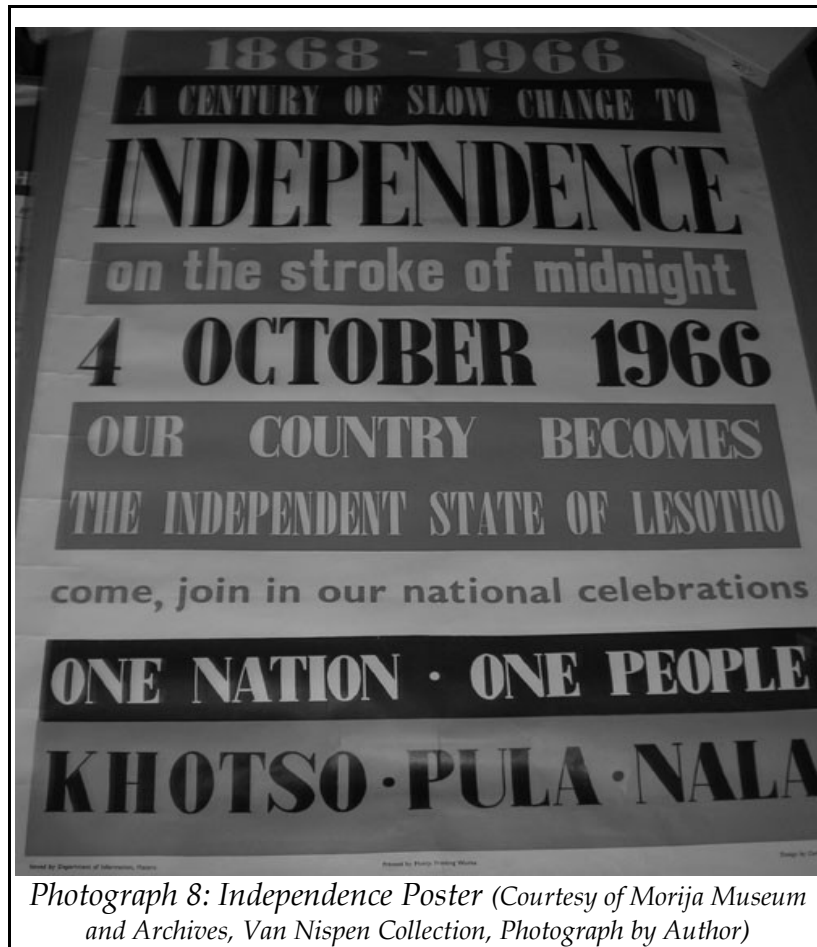
The lack of legitimacy deriving from Moshoeshe II's youthfulness, and the view of local and London administrators that he was merely a foolish young man, gave the Colonial Office enough justification to include secret provisions in the final independence accords that would allow Jonathan's BNP government to force an abdication if Moshoeshe II proved uncooperative. A Colonial Office briefing for British Prime Minister Harold Wilson before the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meeting in September 1966 referred to this provision, calling it a necessary precaution in the "event of the King refusing to act as the constitution requires him to do," but it also noted (emphasis in the original) that: "As the Paramount Chief has not yet seen this new provision its existence should not be disclosed at the Conference."<sup>lxxxiv</sup> While publicly

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lxxxivNAUK CO 1048/950 Basutoland Independence Constitution, Cabinet Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, Supplementary Brief on Basutoland (Lesotho), September 2, 1966.

committed to the idea of Westminster constitutional government, the British Government was willing to sacrifice the young King, and the home-grown institution of monarchy in Lesotho, to the interests of social stability and managed political transition that allowed them to get out of Lesotho with a functioning government in place. This prioritizing of stability, at least in part, also explains Britain's willingness to continue supporting the BNP government after their unconstitutional nullification of the 1970 elections.





*Photograph 8: Independence Poster (Courtesy of Morija Museum and Archives, Van Nispen Collection, Photograph by Author)*

The geopolitics behind political change in Lesotho and their ramifications for the minutiae of political struggle in the national government, however, was not the primary concern of young Basotho in the early independence era. These youth were dealing with central government efforts to consolidate political control by bringing youth organizations under greater governmental supervision, in the hopes of mobilizing youth in support of the government. The BNP regime started off saying all the right things in public to rally support behind the national state. The posters printed by the Department of Information (see Photograph 8) called for “One nation, one people” to come together at midnight on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1966 to celebrate “A century of slow change to

INDEPENDENCE.” Jonathan's speech, broadcast over Radio Lesotho at the celebrations argued, somewhat disingenuously in light of his sharp conflicts with Moshoeshe II in the preceding months, that the Basotho had “never allowed ourselves to be divided by internal conflicts caused by tribalism, and in the same sense we shall resist any attempts to divide by political affiliation.” He then thanked so many for coming out to the celebrations despite “discouragement from certain quarters [the BCP opposition].” Jonathan hoped to bring about “peace, unity and a common understanding” through these efforts.<sup>lxxxv</sup>

BNP governmental efforts to overcome political difference and build national unity failed. When asked about where their awareness of the concept of independence began, most informants started off, like Raphael Leseli did, by dating their first knowledge of the concept to the mid-1960s and linking the concept explicitly to political parties: “I remember those political parties of that time. I think at the time there were only three.”<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Armelina Tsiki, responding to the question of what her remembrances were of the time of independence immediately stated, “at that time there were three political parties...[but] I didn't like the parties at all” because they promoted unnecessary divisions between people.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> This explicit linkage of the idea of independence with political parties shows the salience of party efforts to support independence, but it also highlights deep dissatisfactions with the Lesotho political system in 2008 and 2009, with most people expressing outright contempt for what they saw as crony-capitalism run

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<sup>lxxxv</sup>“The Prime Minister's Independence Broadcast to the Nation,” *Lesotho Quarterly* 1 (1966).

<sup>lxxxvi</sup>Interview Raphael Leseli, Roma, 1/15/09.

<sup>lxxxvii</sup>Interview Armelina Tsiki, St. Rodrigue High School, 5/7/09.



amok. The salience of the parties in memory also illuminates why so much of the academic study of nationalism has focused so explicitly on political parties.

Digging deeper into the question, however, it is clear that even before young Basotho like Tsiki and Leseli understood politics, they had dreams and aspirations for themselves as individuals who were a part of a greater national community. In Leseli's case, this involved government investment in infrastructure that he wanted to see in his rural home village, as well as economic opportunity at home so that he and his peers could avoid the migrant laborer life they saw so prevalently in their communities. In Tsiki's case, it involved the freedom to join a religious community, gain an education and work in schools.<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

The BNP government, on the other hand, was less concerned with the individual and group aspirations of young Basotho like Leseli and Tsiki, and more concerned with consolidating their tenuous grasp on power. This meant mobilizing young Basotho to aid in their efforts to create their version of a homogenous nation. The first move by the BNP government, even before independence, was to purge the civil service of many of its BCP or MFP-leaning members and replace them with BNP members. For young Basotho like Peter Khamane, a founder of the anti-communist group *Mesa-Mohloane* which was a precursor of the BNP, this meant great opportunity. Having served as Field Commissioner for the Boy Scouting movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Khamane took up a position in the Prime Minister's office at independence coordinating the government's youth efforts. They sent him to Israel, Taiwan and Malawi to study the

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<sup>lxxxviii</sup>Interview Raphael Leseli, Roma, 1/15/09 and Armelina Tsiki, St. Rodrigue High School, 5/7/09

Young Pioneers and similar youth organizations with plans to bring this model of government-run, paramilitary youth organizations home.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

The expanded opportunities for Khamane, however, were more the exception than the rule for young Basotho. Most youth in the 1960s were not supporters of the ruling BNP, and those in the civil service who made their political preferences public suffered as a result. Tseliso Ramakhula had started teaching in 1961 at the Agricultural College, the training school in Maseru for agricultural extension officers, but because of his support for the BCP in the 1965 elections, he lost his job shortly thereafter.<sup>xc</sup> Similarly, Selborne Mohlalisi had received a job in the Department of Education in 1956 upon completing the Commercial Course of study at Lerotholi Technical School. In 1968 or 1969 he was due for a promotion into the Prime Minister's office as the officer in charge of recruiting for the civil service. His background as a staunch member of the Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC), however, made him politically suspect as the mainly-Catholic BNP suspected that LEC members were opposition supporters, despite Mohlalisi never being a card-carrying member of any party. His religious affiliation scuttled his chances to take up that post as “the political situation was so tense,” and so he ended up back in the Ministry of Education.<sup>xci</sup>

There was a very real threat to Jonathan and the BNP government of being unable to conduct governmental work if they could not get the civil service, which consisted mainly of opposition BCP supporters, to carry out government policy. They were also

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lxxxix Interview Peter Khamane, Ha QhuQhu, 10/29/08. Wood, “Training Malawi's Youth.”

xc Interview Tseliso Ramakhula, Lower Thamae, 3/1/09.

xci Interview Selborne Mohlalisi, Morija, 11/10/08.

suspicious of the support many educated Basotho had for South African liberation groups, especially more radical groups like the PAC. These individuals threatened to disrupt Jonathan's campaign pledge to engage with the *apartheid* government to get more economic assistance from South Africa. So Jonathan and the BNP purged the civil service. This purge was, however a point of contention for many young Basotho, who considered it an affront to the national unity Jonathan talked so much about. Mohlalisi, for instance, was disappointed because he had skills to offer the new country that he was unable to use to help “develop the country, be able to manage affairs and do what we thought was good.”<sup>xcii</sup> Others, like Raphael Leseli, who were coming out of schools and looking for jobs, found that their opportunities were diminished if they did not profess the correct partisan loyalty. Desiring to join the police or to work in a government office, Leseli claimed that his youthful support for the BCP sabotaged his chance to become a civil servant as those in charge of hiring would “investigate you from the village, which party do you follow.”<sup>xciii</sup> This political vetting, especially for the politically sensitive positions in the police and security forces, often done through local chiefs, was confirmed by Graham Cairns, Assistant Superintendent of Police in the late 1960s.<sup>xciv</sup> Instead of joining the civil service and staying at home as he would have desired, Leseli took the next-easiest option available by going to the TEBA office in Maseru and signing up for mine work.<sup>xcv</sup>

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xciiInterview Selborne Mohlalisi, Morija, 11/10/08.

xciiiInterview Raphael Leseli, Roma, 1/15/09.

xcivInterview Graham Cairns, Malealea, 6/2/07.

xcvTEBA is The Employment Bureau of Africa, which was the hiring arm of the South African Chamber of Mines. Maloka, *Basotho and the Mines*.

Government efforts to politicize the civil service mirrored its attempts to gain control over youth groups, as had happened in Ghana, Malawi, Kenya and other African countries. Both campaigns had the goal of lowering the amount of political opposition the BNP government faced, and were part of larger party goals to build a strong youth wing to help gain support at the local level. Gabriel Tlaba noted that after independence the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides quickly became politicized, with leaders who had joined parties basically trying to make their troops into extensions of their personal political views. This was successful because groups that moved closer to the government's position received material benefits as a group and individually. Tlaba noted that many Boy Scouts from Catholic institutions, for instance, ended up with jobs in the national security forces.<sup>xcvi</sup> Peter Khamane confirmed Tlaba's impressionistic musings about government attempts to co-opt the Scouting and Guiding movements when he tried to downplay the amount of contact the various Scouts had with “political youth organizations...and [what] the government called Youth Movements [the Young Pioneer-like groups the BNP government tried to form in the late 1960s].”<sup>xcvii</sup>

These attempts to politicize youth groups led non-affiliated youth like Tlaba to move away from these groups and search for new ways to liaise with their peers and think about ways to live out their individual and national desires, free from political interference. In Tlaba's case, this search took him to ecumenical Christian groups like the University Christian Movement (UCM). Even this group, which focused on living out

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xcviInterview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 10/7/08.

xcviiInterview Peter Khamane, Ha QhuQhu, 10/29/08.

practical Christian spirituality in a secular world, faced challenges in funding and organization because of the governmental focusing on gaining control of youth groups: “If [the government] supported you, you even got vehicles to organize meetings. If they did not support you, they disrupted your meetings.”<sup>xcviii</sup>

The two Basotho Catholic bishops and one French-Canadian bishop also played a large role in these efforts, as testimony by Tlaba about Catholic Scout leaders like Khamane attested. However, the bishops and the Catholic hierarchy, especially the large number of expatriate priests, cast their nets wider than merely focusing on youth. They saw their role in the country as that of a parent, helping the nascent state of Lesotho, and the Basotho national community, to achieve and maintain independence under its paternal care. A November 1964 statement by the three Catholic bishops of Basutoland on the positive progress of independence negotiations noted that the church “awaits with gladness” self-government because it is the “legitimate aspiration of our people.” The relationship of the church to the nation was not a partnership of equals, however, as “like a loving parent, the Church shares in the triumphal coming of age of the child she has helped to grow to full maturity.”<sup>xcix</sup> The statement was a preemptive strike against a church-feared BCP victory in the elections of 1965, as it called for the state to respect the wishes of parents to send their children to religious schools of their own choosing, and for a strict separation of church and state. It is clear, however, from the statement that the bishops hoped for the opportunity to interject the Church's views into political

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xcviiiInterview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 10/7/08.

xcixMMA Van Nispen Collection (hereafter VNC) Emmanuel Mabothoana, OMI, Archbishop of Maseru, J.D. Des Rosiers, OMI, Bishop of Qacha's Nek and I. Phakoe, OMI, Bishop of Leribe, *The Political Advance of Lesotho: To All the Citizens of Lesotho* 1964.

conversations, and would not shy away from attempting to shape the views of its followers toward independence and nationalism.

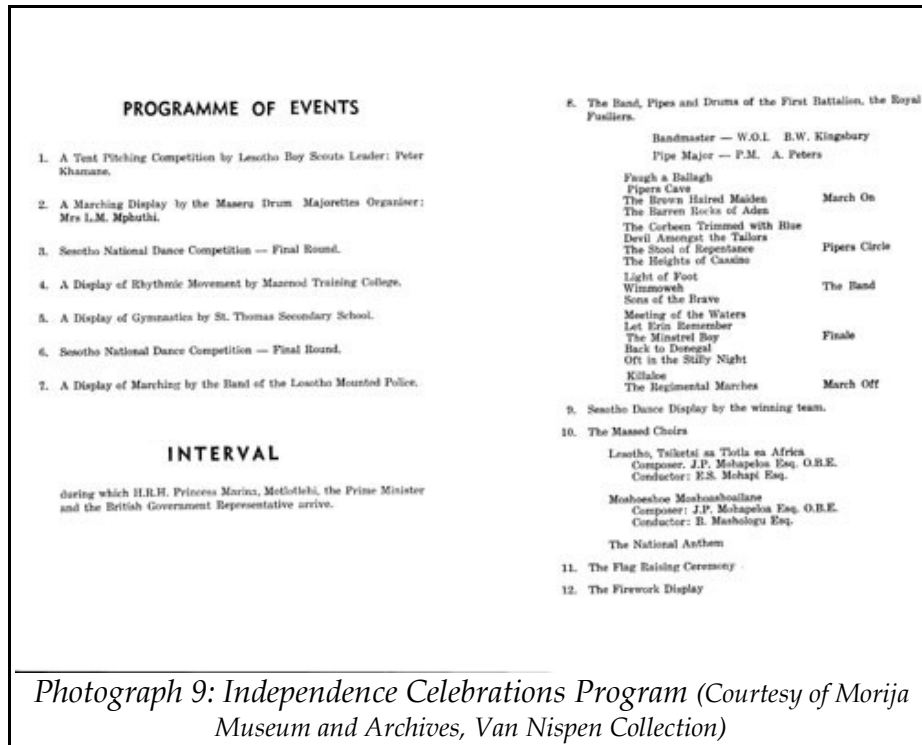
This Catholic vision of nationalism was, again, heavily gendered. In addition to painting the relationship between Church and nation as being a paternal one, it was also a patriarchal one. Appealing for Basotho to work hard to build a new state and nation, the bishops wrote about independence in both generational and gendered terms:

When a young man leaves his father's house, does this mean that he no longer has to work? When a man marries, and has a wife and children to support, does he say, 'Now I no longer have to work?' No he realizes that he has to work harder than ever before...Let us not ask what Lesotho is going to give to us: Let us ask what we are going to give to Lesotho.<sup>c</sup>

The language of the bishops suggests that the Church hierarchy was very concerned about its own prospects at independence, but also concerned for the welfare of the Basotho under its pastoral care. Echoing the language of John F. Kennedy's inaugural, however, the Church attempted to frame its support for independence in a way that would allow it to flourish as an institution under the new government—supportive of the national project, but also attempting to play an important role in the process of framing discussions about this project.

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c MMA VNC, Emmanuel Mabothoana, OMI, Archbishop of Maseru, J.D. Des Rosiers, OMI, Bishop of Qacha's Nek and I. Phakoe, OMI, Bishop of Leribe, *The Political Advance of Lesotho: To All the Citizens of Lesotho* 1964.



*Photograph 9: Independence Celebrations Program (Courtesy of Morija Museum and Archives, Van Nispen Collection)*

When the BNP government went to plan the actual independence celebrations for October 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 1966, it, like the Catholic Church, leaned heavily on youth as a symbol of the vibrancy that the government hoped to project, and as part of an attempt to convince skeptical Basotho that they could represent all segments of Basotho society. The first part of the public entertainment surrounding the actual transfer of power was almost entirely based on youth organizations from schools and community groups, with the Boy Scouts, Drum Majorettes, cultural dance and gymnastics all represented (see Photograph 9). This showcasing of youth groups was in line with the government's plans to use youth to help project vitality to their rule, and to propagate their top-down vision for the nation. This was certainly not unique in Africa or the wider world in the 1960s, but the disconnect between the image the government wanted to portray of happy, mobilized youth in the service of the regime contrasts with the experiences of many

young Basotho. The difference between the lived experiences of Basotho youth and the government's idealization of their participation suggests that Cooper's contention that young people in Africa, especially young men, were easily mobilized by political parties because of their “availability” perhaps needs more interrogation from the local level.<sup>ci</sup>

A further example of the government's continuing attempt to use youth as building blocks and as symbols of their nation-building plan was seen on the first anniversary of independence in October, 1967. Ken Trewren, a British volunteer working at the Agricultural College in Maseru through the International Voluntary Service program, led a group of three Basotho students to Thabana Ntlenyana, the highest peak in southern Africa.<sup>cii</sup> The purpose of this trip, funded through a government grant, was to plant the flag of independent Lesotho on top of the mountain and take some photographs of the event (See Photograph 10). The trip was designed to “symbolise the culmination of Lesotho's struggle to attain political independence” and provide a vantage from which to “get a deep and clear view of [Lesotho's] problems.”<sup>ciii</sup> Similar to efforts by Sekou Toure to mobilize Guinean youth in the service of a government-driven nationalist movement, the Lesotho government wanted its public image to be youthful and vibrant—making good use of the physical and human resources of the country to bring prosperity.<sup>civ</sup> This publicity stunt, however, underlined the insecurities of the government and highlighted its hope that mobilizing youth could be its route to political security under the rhetoric of

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ci Cooper, “Possibility and Constraint,” 193.

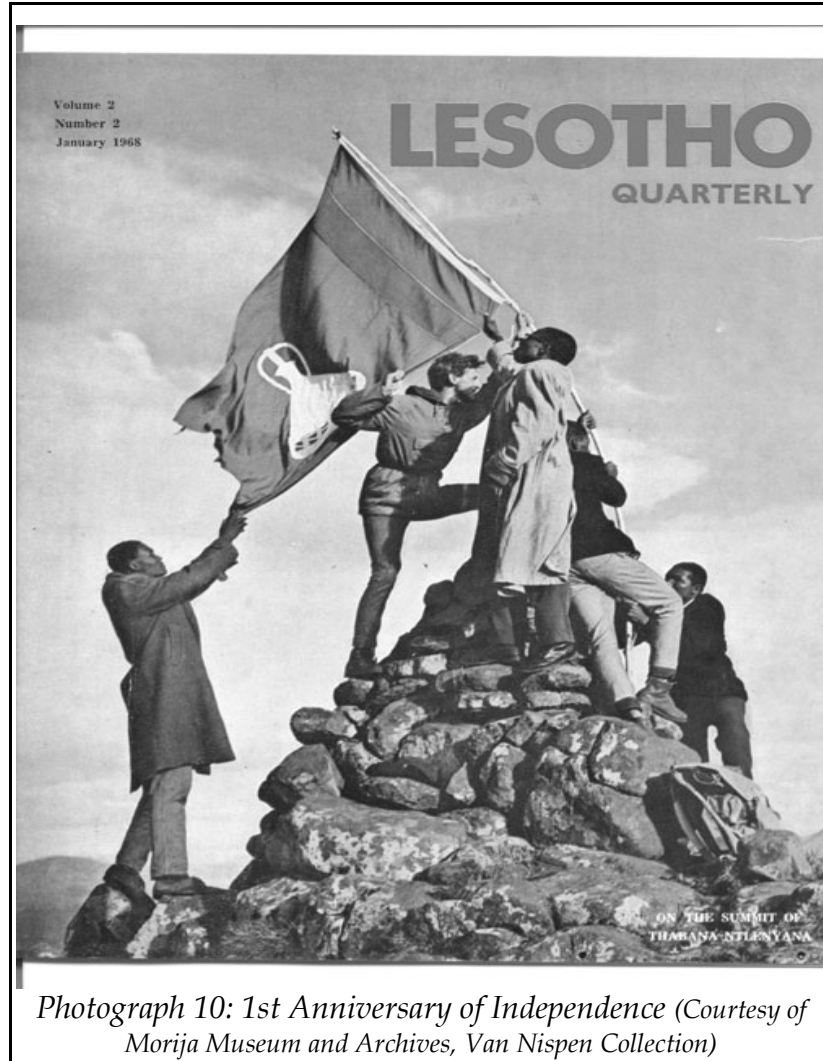
cii For more on overseas volunteers, see chapter five.

ciii Ken Trewren, “Conquest of Thabana Ntlenyana,” *Lesotho Quarterly* 2 (1968).

civ Straker, *Guinean Revolution*.



national unity.



The government hoped that the symbolism of youth raising the flag in difficult circumstances at the summit of Thabana Ntlenyana would highlight the sacrifices young Basotho were supposed to be making for the good of the state and the nation, under the close supervision. Governmental attempts to formalize this system of youth control were not very successful in the short-term. Basotho youth did not turn out in large numbers in the late 1960s to support the BNP government, and they did not vote for them in significant enough numbers in the 1970 elections to carry the party to victory.





*Photograph 11: Cadets Marching in Maseru (Courtesy of Moeletsi oa Basotho)*

In fact, outside of youth who were BNP supporters, young Basotho remained, for the most part, intractably opposed to governmental initiatives designed to control their behaviors.<sup>cv</sup> Thabelo Kebise was born in the village of Motsekuoa in the rural Mafeteng District. After his father died when he was very young, his mother moved with him to the Orange Free State to work on a farm. Returning to Lesotho in time to enroll in primary school, Kebise was eleven years old at independence in 1966. He had vivid memories of the event—the BNP government succeeded in putting on a memorable spectacle at the founding of the new state. The spectacle failed to make him a supporter of the government. Rather, Kebise's most salient memory was being so impressed with the Cadets youth organization that he decided that very day to join when he was old enough. The main draw of the organization—a group which combined a marching band with rhythmic, synchronized motions—was their shiny uniforms: “I only saw the Cadets

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cv See chapter four for an earlier discussion of the disconnect in the lives of Basotho youth between support for the nation, but opposition to the state.

putting on their...colorful uniform, playing some drums and trumpets and bugles...and I joined the Cadets from that time.” The spectacle of the nation that the government hoped to put on was completely lost on Kebise who noted that “all those things that were announced I can't recall any of them,” but the spectacle of other young Basotho clad in resplendent uniforms (see Photograph 11), being part of a group, stuck with him and influenced his behavior in the first years of independence.<sup>cv</sup>

While it may be tempting to dismiss the recollections of a young man who was only eleven at the time, Kebise's experience of focusing on the individuals and groups participating in the event at the expense of the greater nationalist message put forth by the government was common. Rebecca Tlelima was a strong supporter of the opposition BCP, as well as a young primary school teacher in the rural Mafeteng District who organized chapters of the Junior Red Cross and Girl Guides at her school. Despite not supporting the government, and having to hide her own political affiliation for fear of being fired from her teaching job, Tlelima recalled the mood at independence as “very very happy!” She took a busload of Red Cross and Girl Guide students to the National Stadium in Maseru to take part in the celebrations where they were going to “march and greet the [Prime Minister].”<sup>cvii</sup> Tlelima wanted to participate in the celebrations, not because she supported the unity message of the BNP or their policies, but because she felt strongly that independence was a cause that she and her students should support.

While rejecting attempts to link support for the nation with political support for the BNP, Tlelima and Kebise were quite capable of balancing competing notions of what

<sup>cv</sup> All quotations from interview Thabelo Kebise, Maseru Bus Stop, 4/1/09.

<sup>cvii</sup> Interview Rebecca Tlelima, Rothe ha Masite, 4/6/09.

it meant to be a nationalist, and to adjudicate between the top-down conceptions put forth by the government and the bottom-up processes of which they were a part. The desire of individuals to identify with a Basotho nation came about, in part, because of Lesotho's unique geographical position within South Africa, and the special threat that the *apartheid* regime posed to political freedom in Lesotho. However, as Straker notes in his study of revolution-era Guinea, historians need to be careful when writing about oppositional times, when people supposedly had to choose between polar opposites: colonial and anti-colonial, government and opposition, revolution and counter-revolution. Allowing these categories to define local lives can flatten the complexities of the lived experience, and cause historians to miss the nuance that comes with daily life.<sup>cviii</sup> The experiences of Kebise and Tlelima suggest that a similar dynamic was present in Lesotho, with young Basotho able to maintain hope and faith in the creation of their ideal state of Lesotho, while simultaneously being disillusioned with the policies of the current government.

Raphael Leseli provides another example of this difference in ideal and lived experience as he, with much regret, left Lesotho to work in the South African mines. Like most of his peers, educated or not, migrant labor in South Africa represented a failure of the nation-state to adequately provide the economic change Basotho youth so fervently desired, but did not mean a disengagement with the idea of the nation. Leseli's political leanings in Lesotho closed off avenues into the police and civil service, but he remained a proud Mosotho. At the mines, he remembered South African peers as being

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cviii Straker, *Guinean Revolution*, 5-8, 58.

jealous of the freedoms Leseli enjoyed at home in Lesotho. The other miners “just wanted to be like Lesotho” in enjoying political rights, and Leseli himself saw the issues with Lesotho as being manageable problems, rather than insurmountable obstacles.<sup>cix</sup> Likewise, Motsapi Moorosi sympathized with the opposition parties, but did not lose his love for and desire to return to Lesotho, even as he moved back to South Africa in 1966 to be with his migrant Basotho parents. He had hoped for more support from this government for his career as a world-class sprinter, but instead had to rely on sponsorships from the South African mine where his father worked. In 1972, Moorosi proudly represented Lesotho as the country's first ever Olympic athlete, but he had hoped that the government could support him in utilizing his talents at home in Lesotho, something that did not happen until the late 1970s.<sup>cx</sup> Motsapi and Leseli did not let their lack of support for the government temper their expectations for social and economic change from the government, or for fundamental changes in individual opportunity. They considered themselves loyal, patriotic citizens who, despite having to leave for work in the independence era, still saw themselves long-term as citizens of Lesotho, with all the right and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic state.

The new state of Lesotho, however, did not remain democratic for very long. After achieving independence in October of 1966, Basotho went to the polls in January of 1970. The BNP government annulled the election results in the middle of announcing the vote totals, declared a State of Emergency and ruled without a popular mandate until the military staged a coup in 1986 in the wake of a South African blockade of the borders.

cix Interview Raphael Leseli, Roma, 1/15/09.

cx Interview Motsapi Moorosi, Maseru East, 3/12/09.

Democratic rule did not return to Lesotho until the elections of 1993. This twenty-three year period without representative rule helped show young Basotho just what they had in the first years of independence, and caused them to rethink their initial impressions of independence and the nation.

Moeketsi Lesitsi was a model citizen, in the government's eyes, in the first few years of independence. He had started teaching in 1960, and held postings at a variety of Catholic primary and secondary schools, mostly in the rural northern districts. He was not interested in politics and unlike many of his young peers, did not attend any political rallies. He did, however, as an educated man, work for the government census of 1965 and as an election worker for the pre-independence elections. He did not concern himself much with politics, attempting to steer his students clear of political battles, but was broadly supportive of independence, taking a government-sponsored train to the celebrations on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1966 to be part of the festivities and ensure large crowds. However, even in the first few years, he had not thought much about independence, saying he “did not know what it meant” when it arrived in 1966. It was only after the violence of the State of Emergency of 1970 that he started to see the possibilities for gaining foreign aid and assistance that came with independence. But the troubles following the elections also caused him to “hate elections because they cause so much trouble around the country.”<sup>cxi</sup>

The biggest immediate concern for Lesitsi was that his students were so worried about the violence and political impasse that they were unable to focus on their studies.

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cxi Interview Moeketsi Lesitsi, St. Monica's Mission, 11/26/08.

His vision for the state of Lesotho was one of peace, where people would not fight over politics or for any other reason, therefore the disturbances around the elections bothered him greatly. Later in the 1990s, however, Lesitsi was involved with rallies and negotiations calling for peaceful elections and a return to democratic rule. His indictment of elections as being the problem was only true in the specific historical context of 1970. Representative structures were only a hindrance to the fulfillment of his vision for the nation when they led to violence that split apart families and communities—his vision of Basotho national unity.<sup>cxii</sup>

The skepticism that Lesitsi expressed on the subject of national unity and the ability of Basotho to make a national project succeed was shared by some young Basotho. Michael Mateka, for instance, spoke of the failure of nationalism, saying that “we are going backwards because we still don't think in national terms...[politicians] try to enrich their relatives and neighbors. Nothing, nothing, nothing is national.”<sup>cxiii</sup> This intense disillusionment, however, was filtered through Mateka's professional battles with the government over a period of decades, and is more reflective of his feelings toward politicians and political parties than of his views on the national community. He had spent years as a Catholic school administrator, working at the highest administrative levels, battling various Ministers of Education and political appointees over issues of funding and school curriculum.

His actions, however, spoke a different story. His tales of dedicated classroom teaching in the 1960s, to his continued engagement in the present with a student

cxii For more on what unity meant in the context of independence see chapter two.

cxiii Interview Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, Leribe District, 11/26/08.



counseling program in the Leribe District suggested that despite his professed pessimism, he still believed in the efficacy of individual action to bring about local change. So while Mateka was certainly cynical about the long-term prospect for change and reform at the governmental level, his confidence was strong in the ability of individuals to make meaningful contributions, and the optimism he felt for the future of the Basotho nation as he continued to work with the younger generation,

This dual consciousness of pessimism toward the government but continued optimism for the ability of the individual to affect meaningful social change on the local level has played out throughout Lesotho's history, and allowed young Basotho in the 1950s and 1960s to continue to believe in a better future for the national community and themselves in the face of serious political dysfunction. In this, Basotho youth were part and parcel of a 1960s youth optimism around the world, as well as part of an Africa-wide wave of optimism that came with the end of colonial rule. It was also, however, a generational difference. Young Basotho felt, rightfully in many cases, that they were going to have greater opportunities than their parents and other older Basotho because of increased schooling opportunities and the potential for change around independence. Investing themselves in representative processes at the local level, and embracing individual and group action to bring about the changes that they wanted to see, these young Basotho held a stronger hope for the future of their own prospects and the prospects for the national community than their elders. They actively worked to bring about the national community they wanted to see, and found ways to subvert even the pessimism that many of them felt toward the political project after the 1970 coup.



## Chapter 7: Twenty-First Century National Echoes

Moshoeshoe's Day, March 11, 2009, dawned as a perfect Highveld late summer day—deep blue skies, a slight breeze and the strong sun quickly warming away the morning dew. At a small park in Maseru, stuck between bustling Kingsway, the commercial and governmental hub of the capital, and the new bypass road that allows traffic to skirt the central business district, King Letsie III, the great-great-great-great grandson of Moshoeshoe I celebrated the national legacy of his famous ancestor. With a robust but not overflowing crowd on hand consisting mainly of schoolchildren out of class for the day, Letsie and current Prime Minister Mosisili went through a series of public displays meant to affirm their connection with and willingness to uphold the values, beliefs and ideals of the father of the nation. Both men came dressed in brightly patterned blankets that are a marker of Sesotho cultural identity in Lesotho and South Africa. Letsie's arrival was preceded by a contingent of policemen mounted on horseback parading down the street, meant to evoke the skillful defense of Basotho lands in Moshoeshoe's time, and the ceremony started with Letsie accepting a flame to light a torch that a group of Basotho runners had carried that morning from *Thaba Bosiu*, Moshoeshoe's historic mountain fortress that now serves as the resting place for the Kings and Principal Chiefs of Lesotho.

The color, the pageantry and the presence of so many school children remind us that the creation and re-creation of a national community is an on-going process, not just something that happened in the time of independence. Individuals struggling to find economic opportunity in the neo-liberal world of twenty-first century Africa and

politicians in this enclave country have, since independence, continued to wrestle with the national implications of a changing, and then a dying apartheid system in South Africa, and larger global macro-economic trends that have not always been kind to small places like Lesotho. The ceremony in 2009 contained some interesting contrasts that highlight the changing nature of national symbolism, and the ability of people to adapt changing circumstances to their needs. While Letsie's honor guard came down from the palace (barely 200 meters away) on horseback, and arrived to great adulation from the crowd for their coordinated efforts, he himself arrived in a spotless, silver Mercedes sedan. The Basotho runners who carried the torch on the twenty-five kilometer (about fifteen mile) journey from *Thaba Bosiu* to Maseru were not wearing any sort of “traditional” outfits, but were rather clad in the jerseys that advertised Toyota across their breasts—the largest sponsor of athletics, which allows the most talented Basotho runners the financial freedom to train so that they can take home prizes from large regional races like the Soweto Marathon and the Two Oceans Marathon in Cape Town. Finally, the majority of the crowd for the event, those lacking connections to get into the shaded, tented VIP area, was dressed more for a routine day in school uniforms, generic blue jeans, skirts and nondescript skirts—very few of any age were wearing the “traditional” dress of the *mokorotlo* grass hat, the Basotho blanket or Seshoeshoe cloth dresses that are often pointed to as the markers of strong national identity (see Photograph 12).<sup>i</sup>

The same week as Moshoeshoe's Day, the latest incarnation of an English-language newspaper with the name *Lesotho Times* (not to be confused with the one cited

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i Rosenberg, *Promises of Moshoeshoe*.

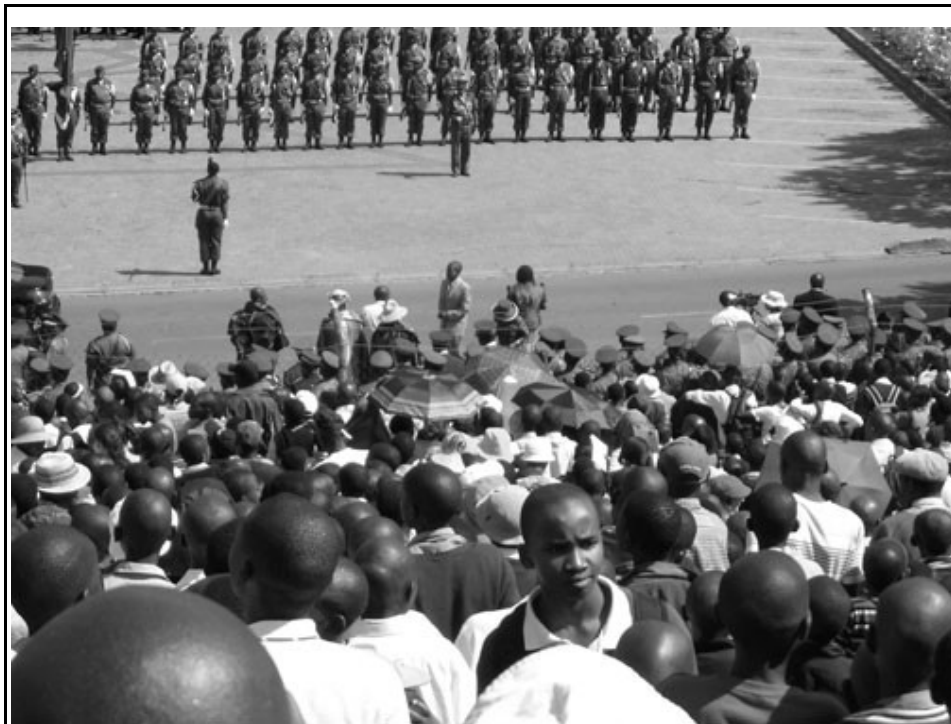
in the 1960s portions of this study), published an editorial by one of its regular contributors entitled, “Lesotho Should Join SA.” Arguing mainly for the better economic opportunities that would accrue to Basotho after such a union, Sithetho's editorial, timed to coincide with the Moshoeshoe Day celebrations, seemed to open a new public space for discussion of this inflammatory, controversial and somewhat taboo topic of debate.<sup>ii</sup> The *Lesotho Times'* rival, the *Public Eye*—a joint venture published in Bloemfontein, South Africa and Maseru—was not to be outdone and quickly joined the conversation with a person-on-the-street feature asking people if Lesotho should incorporate (opinions running strongly in favor for the most part), and running feature stories with independence-era politicians from a variety of parties giving them a platform from which they could trace the history of opposition to any sort of union from the perspective of high politics.

That people in Lesotho are still thinking and re-thinking the idea of a nation, and that the same sorts of bread-and-butter development issues that drove youth in the 1950s and 1960s to imagine the nation are still impelling people to seek alternative solutions to their problems is not in doubt. The Afrobarometer survey project, a joint venture between the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, the Ghana Center for Democratic Development and the Political Science Department at Michigan State University, designed to survey the opinions of Africans in different countries on a wide range of social, economic and political issues, released its latest findings on Lesotho shortly after Moshoeshoe's Day, in April of 2009. Their wide-ranging survey found fifty-six percent

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ii Mzimkhulu Sithetho, “Lesotho Should Join SA,” *Lesotho Times* March 5-11, 2009.

of the population of Lesotho wanting the first national priority to be “improving economic conditions for the poor.” However, the next strongest answer, with a quarter of people picking it most important and another forty percent ranking it second, was a need to “protect people's right to live freely”—a key belief of 1950s and 1960s youth as well.<sup>iii</sup>



*Photograph 12: Moshoeshoe Day Celebration, 2009 (Photograph by Author)*

The issue of living freely has always been, for people in Lesotho, tied up with questions of their individual and state relationship to South Africa, and the present is no different. Whereas Basotho youth in the 1950s and 1960s had very strong and very real reasons to fiercely resist incorporation, today's youth have fewer reasons. The *apartheid* system is gone, and economic opportunities for young, educated Basotho have never been better. In an unofficial survey of university students I came into contact with during my

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iii Sechaba Consultants and Michigan State University, “Summary of Results: Round 4 Afrobarometer Survey in Lesotho,” 17-18. Accessed March 22, 2011. <http://afrobarometer.org/>

research time in the country, almost every one said that they hoped to find work across the border because it paid better and there were more opportunities for career advancement. Rosenberg surveyed Basotho youth in the late 1990s and early 2000s, finding similar sentiment, but he identified these feelings with a diminished sense of Basotho nationality, calling it “evolving and diminishing.” A key point he makes, however, is that this sense of national identity has been “dynamic” throughout Lesotho's history.<sup>iv</sup>

Basotho youth in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century had much to gain in terms of work opportunities, at times, by passing off their identity as South African or Basotho from South Africa. By the 1950s and 1960s, young South Africans were looking to make identity claims in Lesotho in order to access the better schooling opportunities or just get away from the dehumanizing *apartheid* system. Today this pendulum is swinging back in the other direction. The youth of the 1950s and 1960s emerged in a specific historical context—decolonization, 1960s youth movements, a codifying *apartheid* system, widespread belief in the efficacy of technology to help bring about economic development. The story of these particular young people resonates into the present as a newer generation of young Basotho seeks to chart their own path, and a path for their national community into the future.

The most controversial of the Afrobarometer results for Lesotho was the question that asked Basotho what they wanted their official relation to South Africa to be. Thirty-three percent surveyed wanted to keep the status quo, whereby people in Lesotho were

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<sup>iv</sup> Rosenberg, *Promises of Moshoeshoe*, 261.

not legally allowed to hold dual-citizenship with South Africa. Thirty-four percent wanted some sort of dual-citizenship arrangement, a federal system of sorts, while a surprising twenty-nine percent thought Lesotho should give up sovereignty and become part of South Africa.<sup>v</sup> The last option of ceding sovereignty to another government would be unprecedented in post-colonial Africa, and the fact that almost a third of respondents found this a viable option suggests a real groundswell of support for change. The very same survey poll, however, showed that when asked about their own identity, seventy-six percent of identified as Mosotho—a citizen of Lesotho and someone who practices Sesotho culture.<sup>vi</sup> So even in the present we still see an ability by individuals to disassociate their personal and national identity from a strict identification with state structures.

It is these sorts of seeming contradictions in Lesotho that led me to this project in the first place, and which presents a corrective to the broader story of African nationalism. Basotho in Lesotho have a long and complicated history with national identity, stretching at least back to Moshoeshoe. But it is not just in the realm of history that this is relevant, as contemporary politicians and public intellectuals make appeals to events of the 1950s and 1960s to argue for the changes they support, but also to events of the 1850s and 1860s. Current leader of the small Lesotho People's Congress, Kelebone Maope, made a case in April of 2009 for a union with South Africa “which is dignified [for the Basotho people] and achieves the outstanding agenda of Moshoeshoe...[which will] enable the people of Lesotho direct access to resources which they unjustly lost

v “Lesotho Afrobarometer 2009,” 49.

vi “Lesotho Afrobarometer 2009,” 53.



during the colonial period...and for their exploitation during the apartheid era.”<sup>vii</sup>

The complicated nature of nationality, imperial and international borders and a long pre-colonial, colonial and neo-colonial history in Lesotho challenges the idea that Rosenberg put forth, that the current younger generation of Basotho youth are in some way losing their national pride. This conclusion has implications for characterizations of disaffected youth across Africa.<sup>viii</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, many older Basotho felt that the new directions Basotho youth were charting through their use of schooling, education, youth organizations, contact with foreign volunteers, ideologies like Pan-Africanism, Black Pride and even communism, meant that these young people were forsaking the national ideal. And yet, no one today argues that the generations that fought the battles to win independence, and shape the institutions of independent Lesotho did not have national pride, and the best interests of the national community in mind. Quite the contrary, as Maope's newspaper editorial above shows, this time was seen as a formative and important part of Lesotho's history, with Basotho youth playing a key role. There is no contradiction in King Letsie III's arrival on Moshoeshoe's Day, not on horseback like his honor guard, but in a shiny new Mercedes sedan, and Basotho long distance runners can carry the national flame from the symbolic home of the nation in their jerseys paid for by their corporate sponsor, Toyota. If these re-imaginings can find their way into the national symbolic vernacular, surely it is too soon to dismiss today's Basotho youth as being incapable of conceiving of or participating in a national community that has shown a remarkable ability to forge an identity that takes the global, the regional and the local

vii Kelebone A. Maope, “Don't Trivialise Weighty Issues,” *Public Eye* April 17, 2009.

viii Rosenberg, *Promises of Moshoeshoe*, 262. Abbink and van Kessel, *Vanguard or Vandals*.

and molds it into something national, no matter if Lesotho stays independent, becomes part of South Africa or forges another path yet unseen.

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