

**TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES SUFFERED BY
MATHEBE RESIDENTS DURING THE 1970 STATE
OF EMERGENCY IN LESOTHO**

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ABSTRACT

This study documents the traumatic experiences of civilians who were victimised for being supporters of the opposition Basotholand Congress Party (BCP) during the 1970 state of emergency in Lesotho. These traumatic experiences are missing in the published literature which has focused on how the leaders of the opposition parties, the political elites as well as the King suffered. In this study the focus is on the traumatic human suffering visited on these civilians whose crime was to belong to the BCP. Through the use of personal testimonies, the missing voice of these civilians in the history of the state of emergency is documented. Mathebe village (Mafeteng district) is used as a case study because it is where extreme acts of political violence against BCP supporters were perpetrated by the Police Mobile Unit (PMU) and the Basotho National Party (BNP) Youth League. These extreme acts of political violence negatively affected these supporters physically, materially and psychologically. Physically, they were assaulted, arrested and tortured while in detention. Materially, they lost their property through arson while psychologically, they experienced extreme emotions of fear and anxiety and were mentally tortured. The consequences of all these traumatic experiences were many and varied. They include separation/division of families, homelessness, loss of time, job loss leading to loss of income and famine, incurrence of costs such as legal expenses and costs related to the rebuilding of burned houses, political intolerance, and hospitalisation to mention but a few. This study concludes by observing that the authoritarian rule that began in Lesotho with the declaration of the 1970 state of emergency more negatively affected the supporters of the BCP whose only ‘crime’ was not only membership of the party but also the fact that through their vote, they propelled it to victory in the 1970 January general elections. It also draws attention to the need for more localised studies, using oral history, personal testimonies and memory studies in other areas of the country so that, in the future, we will have a full picture of the negative effects of 1970 state of emergency which may help in healing the entire Basotho nation.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my original work. It has not been previously submitted, in whole or in part, for the award of any degree. Each significant contribution in it from the works of other people has been duly acknowledged.

Maneo Eulalia Ralebitso

Date

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the candidate has met all the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in History under the Department of Historical Studies, National University of Lesotho in December 2019.

Supervisor Date

External Examiner Date

Head of Department Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my daughters Neo and Tlotliso Ralebitso. You have been my inspiration to finish this dissertation. To my two beloved grandmothers who I lost during the writing of this work: Mary Maleshoane Ntlhoki and 'Mamatšelisio Leticia Matsoai, who were sisters, you will always be fondly remembered.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACL – Anglican Church of Lesotho

ANC – African National Congress

BCP – Basotho Congress Party

BNP – Basotho National Party

BNPYL – Basotho National Party Youth League

CID - Criminal Investigating Division

LEC – Lesotho Evangelical Church

LECSA – Lesotho Evangelical Church of Southern Africa

LNBS – Lesotho National Broadcasting Service

MFP – Marema-Tlou Freedom Party

MMA – Morija Museum and Archives

NRC – National Recruiting Company

NUL – National University of Lesotho

PAC – Pan Africanist Congress

PEMS – Paris Evangelical Mission Society

PMU – Police Mobile Unit

RAM – Royal Archives and Museum

RCC – Roman Catholic Church

SADF - South African Defence Force

TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UBLS – University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland

USA – United States of America

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

This study documents the traumatic experiences of civilians who suffered because of being supporters of the opposition party, BCP, during the 1970 state of emergency in Lesotho. It specifically focuses on people who resided in the Mathebe village (Mafeteng district). Mathebe is situated approximately sixty kilometres South of Maseru. The study uses the village of Mathebe as a case study because it is one of those places where people were targeted and victimised on account of being members of the opposition party, BCP. The devastation that engulfed this village is reflected in the narratives of these victims, which are documented in this study.

The history of post-colonial Lesotho has been eventful, right from the beginning. This is because just four years into independence, Lesotho was plunged into undemocratic rule. Lesotho's decolonisation was peaceful and constitutional; unlike other Southern African countries whose decolonisation was achieved through an armed struggle, as was the case in South Africa and Zimbabwe. They had exhausted all avenues and resorted to armed struggle as the only option which would bring about change to the status quo. On October 4, 1966, the British colonial government, represented by Princess Marina, handed over the constitutional instruments to His Majesty King Moshoeshoe II and Lesotho's first democratic government. This ceremony which was held at Pitso Ground, Maseru marked the attainment of Independence of Lesotho (formerly Basutoland).¹

The published literature on the history of post-colonial Lesotho focused on two aspects, namely the political and economic position of Lesotho. The political research focused on the central government and its relations with its immediate neighbour, South Africa. Lesotho is completely surrounded by South Africa. In his research, *The Basutoland National Party: Traditional*

¹ Moeletsi oa Basotho, 1966, Vol. 34, No. 1592, p.p. 1, 4 and 7.

Authority and Leadership in Southern Africa, Frank Lawrence Peter² discusses how Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan tolerated the South African repressive government and was thus labelled a ‘sell-out’ by the Lesotho’s opposition parties. Richard Weisfelder maintains that the accommodating attitude of Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan towards apartheid South Africa was the main reason why he was defeated in the 1970 post-independence general elections. This was because he received financial and other forms of aid from South Africa and deployed high ranking civil servants from South Africa in strategic positions in Lesotho.³ For example, Fred Roach, a South African, was placed at the apex of Police administration as the Commissioner of Police. In his *African Westminster? The Lesotho Parliament*, William John Allen Macartney⁴ discusses the similarities and differences of the Lesotho Parliament with the British Westminster model. He holds that although Lesotho displays both the Westminster and the “typical African” models, it is similar to the British Westminster than any other country in Africa.⁵

The economic development was the second significant aspect at the centre of the post-colonial historical studies. The main focus was on economic growth and dependence in an independent Lesotho. Some authors wrote about agricultural productivity: its increase and decline. They hold that in the 1960s and 1970s, agricultural productivity was declining due to poor quality of the soil, soil erosion and migrant labour.⁶ Others focus on the economic dependence of Lesotho on South African with regards to migrant labour and foreign financial aid. They refer to the high numbers of Basotho men who migrated to South in search of jobs in the Mining sector and the financial and other forms of aid which South Africa provided for Lesotho.⁷

² Frank, Lawrence Peter, *The Basutoland National Party: Traditional Authority and Leadership in Southern Africa*, M.A. Dissertation, (Columbia: Columbia University, 1970), p. 35-39.

³ Richard Weisfelder, “Lesotho and South Africa: Diverse Linkages”, in *Africa Today*, Vol. 18, No. 2, April 1971, p. 53.

⁴ W.A.J. Macartney, “African Westminster? The Parliament of Lesotho” in *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 23, No 1969, December 1970, p. 121-140.

⁵ W.A.J. Macartney, “African Westminster? The Parliament of Lesotho”, p. 140.

⁶ Collin Murray, *Families Divided: The Impact of Migrant Labour in Lesotho*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 19.

⁷ Collin Murray, *Families Divided*; John E. Bardill and James H. Cobbe, *Lesotho: Dilemmas of Dependence in Southern Africa*, (London: Westview Press, 1985), Michael Ward, “Economic Independence for Lesotho” in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1967, p.p. 355-368 and Richard Weisfelder, “Lesotho and South Africa: Diverse Linkages”, p.49-54.

The year 1970 marked the turning point in the political history of post-colonial Lesotho. This was the time when Lesotho was expected to enjoy her independence and democratic rule. However, its politics transitioned from fragile democracy to authoritarian rule because instead of handing over the reins to the victor of the 1970 general elections, the then Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan resorted to declaring the state of emergency. The state of emergency, locally known as *qomatsi*, represents one of the darkest times in the political history of the post-colonial Lesotho. It set in motion events that marked the beginning of authoritarian rule characterised by repression and acts of political violence. It led to the human suffering meted out to the opposition: the immediate victims were political leaders of the opposition. Then civilian victimisation soon followed.

Through this study, the repression and acts of political violence that were meted out to those who supported BCP are documented in detail; this is significant because it brings to the surface the traumatic political events that took place and the impact on the civilians' lives, including short-term and long-term traumatic experiences. The questions being addressed are; what were the traumatic experiences of victims and how did they suffer during the state of emergency? Who were the perpetrators of the acts of political violence? What was the nature and character of the traumatic experiences? What were the consequences of the traumatic experiences? More often than not, even in recent times, the traumatic experiences that took place during the state of emergency and in subsequent years are brought up. For instance, these are referred to in speeches by political leaders at political rallies, radio programmes and/or interviews and brought up in conversations, particularly during periods of political instability in Lesotho.⁸ Reference to these experiences is done for various reasons such as to invoke, promote political intolerance or garner sympathy votes and seek amnesty for the wrongs done. Is the time not ripe for the victims, their families, communities and the entire Basotho nation to heal? What would this healing encompass? Would it need openness, truth, forgiveness and prosecution of the perpetrators?

⁸ In an interview with Lesotho Times newspaper, former Deputy Prime Minister Mothejoa Metsing had this to say, "People are very angry out there because they feel we have wronged them as politicians and I only think it's right that they should be given an opportunity to find closure (through a TRC).", Lesotho Times, October 16, 2019.

In South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) became a model through which South Africans sought healing in the post-apartheid era. TRC was established in 1995 through an Act of Parliament.⁹ Its mandate included investigating gross human rights violation committed between March 1960 and 1994 when President Nelson Mandela was inaugurated. This entailed victimization stories including psychological, physical and social consequences on survivors and family members of the victims. Secondly, the commission dealt with issues relating to amnesty. The perpetrators of past political crimes were to be granted amnesty in the event that they came forward and fully disclosed their actions. This became contentious because the families of the victims saw this as an unbecoming a punishment to the perpetrators of political crimes. Lastly, it dealt with formulating reparations and rehabilitation measures. These included symbolic reparations such as headstones, memorials and renaming of public places. Other reparation measures included exhumations, reburial and ceremonies excluding psychological, physical and financial degree cost to the victims and their families. In her journal article, Claire Moon¹⁰ contends that TRC's mandate was not to simply heal the wounds of violence experienced by South Africans and telling the truth but it was foundationally to heal as the country moved into a new post-apartheid regime.¹¹

The work of the TRC was characterised by successes, mixed reactions and failures. Gunnar Theissen¹² provides an assessment into the effectiveness of TRC in *Common Past, Divided Truth: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South African Public Opinion*. Theissen was a member of Transitional Justice project run jointly by the Law Faculties of the University of Western Cape in South Africa and Humboldt University in Berlin. He contends that the successes of the work by TRC include: wide media coverage both on radio and television and the unfolding of the process was seen locally and abroad; most African South Africans were happy with the work done by TRC and most people believed that TRC did good when it

⁹ *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No. 34 of 1995.*

¹⁰ Claire Moon, "Healing the Past Violence: Traumatic Assumptions and Therapeutic Interventions in War and Reconciliation", in *Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2009, p.p. 71-91.

¹¹ Claire Moon, "Healing the Past Violence", p. 78.

¹² Gunna Theissen, *Common Past, Divided Truth: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South African Public Opinion*, Paper presented at the Workshop on Legal Institutions and Collective Memories, International Institute for the Sociology of Law (IISL) Oñati, Spain, 22-24 September 1999.

uncovered past atrocities but all success opinions varied based on racial differences.¹³ The mixed reactions include: ineffectiveness of the TRC's work in rehabilitating the black South Africans as the black majority rule is associated with high crime rates; there were reservations about the matters relating to amnesty. Black and white South Africans viewed amnesty differently as the former tended to disagree with decisions relating to amnesty granted to perpetrators while the latter supported it.¹⁴ The failures include low awareness about public human rights across all population groups as the TRC sought to reinforce that human rights violations are a thing of the past; the use of violence has come to be accepted in domestic settings such as application of violence by the Police. Lastly, although victims and their families expect some form of compensation, the apartheid and the post-apartheid governments are not prepared to share the burden.¹⁵ What lessons can be borrowed from South African TRC and implemented with modifications by Lesotho?

Literature Review

The published literature on the history of the state of emergency and the politically-motivated traumatic experiences is told through primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include newspaper reports while secondary sources are works of historians, politicians and political scientists contained in books and journal articles. It is void of the voice of civilians (the primary sources) and the traumatic experiences they endured during the state of emergency. For this reason, this study sets out to fill this gap and contribute to studies on history method and theory focusing on oral history, testimonies and memory studies. It does this by documenting the traumatic experiences of these civilians who were victimised for being supporters of the opposition party, BCP and residing in opposition-affiliated village of Mathebe. There is silence on the state of emergency as the very first traumatic event in the political history of post-colonial Lesotho and this can be attributed to two main reasons. Firstly, the restoration of democratic rule in Lesotho in 1993 failed to address the trauma that befell the country during the state of emergency. The victims mentioned that they thought their lives

¹³ Gunna Theissen, *Common Past, Divided Truth: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South African Public Opinion*, p.p. 44-45.

¹⁴ Gunna Theissen, *Common Past, Divided Truth: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South African Public Opinion*, p.p. 45-48.

¹⁵ Gunna Theissen, *Common Past, Divided Truth: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South African Public Opinion*, p.p. 48-50.

and communities would improve post the authoritarian and military governments. That did not happen although their political party was the one in government. Secondly, in Lesotho, the political factions have led to disregard in commemorating historic events, whether positive or negative, in this case, the latter. This disregard has contributed to the downplaying of the negative political events that have shaped the history of Lesotho. It has thus led to the reluctance of the victims in narrating their ordeal as they do not see its worth or place in the history of Lesotho.

The study relies on newspaper reports as primary sources in the history of the state of emergency. This is because during this period, the reliable and effective reporting came from weekly newspaper reports published in Lesotho and South Africa. This is attested by Les and Donna Switzer in *The Black Press in South Africa and Lesotho: A Descriptive Bibliographic guide to African, Coloured and Indian newspapers, newsletters and Magazines*.¹⁶ Through this bibliographic guide, they locate, identify and describe South African and Lesotho newspaper publications that dominated news reporting from 1830s to 1970 and contend that they became the crux of protest press during apartheid and the state of emergency respectively.¹⁷ During the state of emergency, *Leselinyana la Lesotho*¹⁸, a Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC) newspaper, provides statistics on the 1970 killings. It was the first newspaper to be published in Lesotho in 1863 by the Parish Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) under Rev. Adolphe Mabile.¹⁹ It was published at Morija, the PEMS mission station. It refers to the invasion by the police at Tšitsong (Quthing) where one police officer died instantly and seven other people were killed.²⁰ At Phamong, in Mohale's Hoek, one police officer and three civilians were killed bringing the total of casualties to fourteen.²¹ The paper goes on to mention that the house of Monyane Ratšiu (who was also killed) was set alight on the suspicion that it had guns inside.²² In 1970, *Leselinyana la Lesotho* was among some of the publications that stopped publishing due to a

¹⁶ Les Switzer and Donna Switzer, *The Black Press of South Africa and Lesotho: A Descriptive Bibliographic Guide to African, Coloured and Indian Newspapers, Newsletters and Magazines*, (Boston: G.K. Hall and Co., 1979).

¹⁷ Les Switzer and Donna Switzer, *The Black Press of South Africa and Lesotho*, p. 23

¹⁸ *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, 20 March 1970, p. 1.

¹⁹ *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, Vol. 98, No. 13, 3 July 1965, p. 3, Scott Rosenberg, Richard F. Weisfelder and Michelle Frisbie-Fulton, *Historical Dictionary of Lesotho New Edition*, (Oxford: Scarecrow Press Inc., 2004), p. 408 and Les Switzer and Donna Switzer, *The Black Press of South Africa and Lesotho*, p.p. 256-257.

²⁰ *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, 20 March 1970, p. 1.

²¹ *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, 20 March 1970, p. 1.

²² *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, 1970, p. 1.

ban imposed on opposition-affiliated newspapers by the authoritarian government.²³ However, the researcher was able to use some information from what the paper managed to publish before it was banned.

Another local newspaper, *Moeletsi oa Basotho*²⁴, a Roman Catholic Church (RCC) newspaper, reports that three people were killed at Ha Tšiu, in Matsieng during the Leepa Rebellion of March 1970. *Moeletsi oa Basotho* began publishing in January 1933.²⁵ It was and continues to be published at Mazenod, the RCC Mission station. Unlike other local newspapers, in 1970, *Moeletsi oa Basotho* continued publishing. This was because it was regarded as being pro-BNP because of its connection with the RCC which preferred BNP over BCP. It further reports that, one of the areas affected was Ha 'Mampiletso in the Quthing district, where the community retaliated by throwing stones at an armed attack by the police. It reports that seven civilians and two police officers died as a result.²⁶

Equally important were the South African newspapers which provided weekly reports of the events that took place during the state of emergency. These include: *Sunday Times*²⁷ and *The Friend*.²⁸ The *Sunday Times*²⁹ is a Johannesburg newspaper that began publishing in February 1906 while *The Friend*, was Bloemfontein-based newspaper was established in 1850 and published on a weekly basis.³⁰ These newspapers published up-to-date reports on arrests of political leaders, speeches by the Prime Minister regarding the state of emergency, King Moshoeshoe II's house arrest and subsequent exile, suspension of international aid and other related news. The researcher has limitedly used the newspaper clippings extracted from the weekly publications of *The Friend* and *Sunday Times* newspapers.

In relation to secondary sources, the published literature in Lesotho on the state of emergency, oral history, testimonies and memory studies includes the work of historians Neville W. Pule

²³ *Moeletsi oa Basotho*, Vol. 38, No. 1764, 21 February 1970, p.3 and Les Switzer and Donna Switzer, *The Black Press of South Africa and Lesotho*, p. 256-257.

²⁴ *Moeletsi oa Basotho*, Vol. 38, No.1765, 28 February 1970, p.1.

²⁵ Scott Rosenberg, Richard F. Weisfelder and Michelle Frisbie-Fulton, *Historical Dictionary of Lesotho New Edition*, p. 409.

²⁶ *Moeletsi oa Basotho*, Vol. 38, No.1765, 28 February 1970, p.1.

²⁷ *Sunday Times*, February to March 1970.

²⁸ *The Friend*, February and March 1970.

²⁹ [www.timeslives.co.za/sundaytimes](http://www.timeslives.co.za/sundaytimes/03/May/2019), 03/May/2019.

³⁰ Michael Green, *Around and About: Memoirs of a South African Newspaperman*, (Claremont: David Philip Publishers, 2004), p. 68.

and Motlatsi Thabane. It is titled *Mooki Leepa's Rebellion of February to March 1970: A preliminary Examination of motives*.³¹ It is perhaps the first and only article to date to give a detailed account of Clement Leepa's rebellion of February to March 1970 in Matsieng. It is based on oral history and memory. It narrates the story through an interlocutor who participated in the Rebellion during the state of emergency. This article explains why Leepa and his fellows resisted the 1970 unconstitutional government during the months of February and March 1970, when the government had gone out to root out any forms of opposition against its authoritarian rule. The article provides an insight into what happened following the declaration of the state of emergency, particularly where the government, through the police, invaded the villages and how some people organised themselves to resist the government. The article argues that there were deeper and personal reasons why people resisted the government in 1970 than merely accepting, at face value, that they were trying to topple the government. It further argues that the Monarch played an underhanded role in the rebellion.³²

The detailed historical source and by far the most informative, on the events of the state of emergency is Bernard Makalo Khaketla's *Lesotho 1970: An African Coup under the Microscope*.³³ Khaketla was the Secretary General of Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP), a member of the Privy Council³⁴ from 1965 to 1970, a politician and an editor of *Mohlabani* Newspaper.³⁵ As a member of Privy Council then, he had intimate knowledge of the state of emergency. He provides a clear sequence of events leading to the state of emergency and how it unfolded. He discusses the background against which the state of emergency came about and its consequences, especially the torture of people by the PMU. The PMU was a special police department or paramilitary unit formed in 1963-64 to deal with issues of maintenance of law and order as well as security in Lesotho.³⁶ Khaketla also discusses retaliation measures, which people adopted against such torturous acts. He refers to places, which were targeted by the

³¹ Neville W. Pule and Motlatsi Thabane, "Mooki Leepa's Rebellion of February to March 1970: A preliminary Examination of motives" in *Journal for Contemporary History*, Vol.35: No. 1, (2010), p.19-37.

³² Neville W. Pule and Motlatsi Thabane, "Mooki Leepa's Rebellion of February to March 1970, p.19-37.

³³B. M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970: An African Coup under the Microscope*, (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, 1971).

³⁴The King's Privy Council was established under Section 80 of the Lesotho Independence Order 1966 to advise him on the exercise of any of his functions as provided for under Section 76 (2) of the Constitution.

³⁵B. M., Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p. x.

³⁶ The PMU was established in 1963 as a special police department, which was meant to control the perceived political conflict expected by colonial administration from the militant Basutoland Congress Party (BCP). Scott Rosenberg, Richard F. Weisfelder and Michelle Frisbie-Fulton, *Historical Dictionary of Lesotho*, p.360 and <http://www.lmps.org.ls/about-us.27/April/2019>.

PMU and the Basotho National Party Youth League (BNPYL). Although Khaketla refers to the experiences of the victims of the state of emergency, his work was not informed or based on victims' oral testimonies. It relied on his knowledge and proximity to the events of the state of emergency and South African newspaper reports.

Another important source emanates from biographical works on politicians such as a book edited by Neville W. Pule and Motlatsi Thabane entitled, *My life in the Basutoland Congress Party: Ntsukunyane Mphanya*.³⁷ In this book, Ntsukunyane Mphanya recounts how he became a victim during the state of emergency. Mphanya was the Deputy Secretary General in the BCP's National Executive Committee and a BCP candidate for the Kueneng No.14 Constituency during the 1970 post-independence general elections. He mentions that he got arrested after the Prime Minister Chief Leabua Jonathan declared the state of emergency.³⁸ In another book, *A Brief History of the Basutoland Congress Party Lekhotla la Mahatammoho: 1952-2002* written by Ntsukunyane Mphanya³⁹, Mphanya refers to incidents of violence against BCP supporters. This took place Maseru, Thaba-Phechela, Baking, Taung, Majaheng and Ha Koasa where disheartening atrocities were carried out.

Another biographical work, *But Give Him an Army Too: Leabua Jonathan a Biography* written by Tšepo Desmond Sixishe⁴⁰ is perhaps the first and only published work which provides a perspective from the government's point of view regarding the state of emergency. Sixishe was a BNP member, a journalist or columnist, who became Chief Leabua Jonathan's Press Secretary, an official spokesperson of the BNP and the first Mosotho to head the Lesotho National Broadcasting Service (LNBS). The book's main argument is that it was the BCP's activities, beginning in 1966, that led to the declaration of the state of emergency.

³⁷Neville W. Pule and Motlatsi Thabane (eds), *My life in the Basutoland Congress Party: Ntsukunyane Mphanya*, (Mazenod: Motjoli Publishers, 2010).

³⁸ Neville W. Pule and Motlatsi Thabane (eds), *My Life on the Basutoland Congress Party*, p. 86.

³⁹Ntsukunyane Mphanya, *A Brief History of the Basutoland Congress Party Lekhotla la Mahatammoho: 1952-2002*, (Morija: Morija Printing Works, 2004), pp.73-74

⁴⁰Tšepo Desmond Sixishe, *But Give Him an Army Too: Leabua Jonathan a Biography*, (Maseru: Mokorotlo Publications, 1984).

An article entitled “*Case Study: The Lesotho General election of 1970*” by William John Allen Macartney⁴¹ provides an analysis of the 1970 general elections. Macartney was a former Political Scientist and a Lecturer at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS), Roma Campus, from 1966 to 1974. He refers to the reports of the mayhem that occurred in villages in Lesotho where BNP Young Pioneers and the BCP Youth Wing fought against each other.⁴² He also mentions that the civil servants were at the receiving end, as they also became victims of Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan’s authoritarian rule; over 600 people lost their jobs and pension rights.⁴³ The civil service consisted of a majority of BCP supporters and became a threat to the 1970 authoritarian government, as they were likely to sabotage the implementation of Chief Jonathan’s policies. For this reason, most of the civil servants were transferred to the remote areas and strategic posts were filled with foreign nationals from South Africa.

The research on the history method and theory with focus on oral history, testimonies and memory studies has firmly found its place in the history of Lesotho. This is because oral testimonies have been used in the historiography of Lesotho. This is true for the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. The pre-colonial history of Lesotho is written by the Europeans, missionaries and Basotho educated elites who wished to provide an understanding into the pre-colonial Lesotho. For instance, Joseph Millard Orpen’s anonymously published *History of Basutos of South Africa* in 1854 is the first literature published on Lesotho which relies on oral sources. “Orpen was born in Dublin in 1828 and emigrated with members of his family to the Cape Colony in 1846. He was a land surveyor.”⁴⁴ He admired Morena Moshoeshe I and later became part of the colonial government.

Another contribution comes from the missionaries. In this regard, the ethnographic work by Eugene Casalis⁴⁵ in *The Basutos: Twenty-three Years in South Africa* provides a pioneering contribution to the oral history studies on Lesotho which includes his interactions with Basotho

⁴¹Macartney W.J.A., “Case Study: The General Election of 1970”, in *Government and Opposition: An International Journal of Comparative Politics*, Vol. 8: No. 4, 1973, p.473-493.

⁴²Macartney W., J., A., “Case Study: The General Election of 1970”, p. 493.

⁴³Macartney W., J., A., “Case Study: The General Election of 1970”, p. 494.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth A. Eldredge, “Land, Politics and Censorship: The Historiography of Nineteenth Century Lesotho”, in *History of Africa*, Vol. 15: 1988, p. 193.

⁴⁵ Eugene Casalis, *The Basutos: Twenty-three Years in South Africa*, (London: James Nisbet & CO. Berners Street, 1861).

while in Lesotho. Another missionary Daniel Frederick Ellenberger⁴⁶ relies on use of interviews of the educated and Christian Basotho who provide information based on their recollection of Basotho's culture and history in pre-colonial period. Ellenberger was the first missionary-turned historian who arrived in Lesotho in 1861 and conducted a historical research on the history of Lesotho which was commissioned by the British colonial government.⁴⁷

Other contributions emanate from the works of Basotho educated elite. For instance, Sekhonyana Nehemiah Moshoeshoe⁴⁸ published letters written to Joseph Millard Orpen detailing the oral history and traditions of Basotho in 1905.⁴⁹

The published literature on oral history of colonial Lesotho has been written by historians. For instance, there were numerous studies on migrant labour and soil conservation. The 1930s and 40s history of Lesotho was populated by environmental studies geared towards soil conservation. One such study was *Oral Evidence in Historical Environment Impact Assessment: Soil Conservation in Lesotho in the 1930s and 1940s* conducted by Kate Showers and Gwendolyn M. Malahleha.⁵⁰ According to Kate Showers and G. M. Malahleha, the knowledge of Basotho on the best soil conservation measures was kept in the memory of those who could narrate how the environment used to be.

There was a decline in published literature on oral history, testimonies and memory studies in relation to the post-colonial history of Lesotho. This is because the post-colonial historians' focus was on the colonial history of Lesotho. A study by Pulane Matsietsi Mahula⁵¹ titled *Memory, Trauma, Silence: Narratives of the 1982 Maseru Invasion* documents the traumatic experiences of witnesses to the 1982 Maseru invasion. This study is important because it directly contributes to the history method and theory focusing on oral history, testimonies and memory studies in Lesotho. In 1982, the South African Defence Force (SADF) violently raided

⁴⁶ D. F., Ellenberger, *History of the Basuto: Ancient and Modern*, (London: Caxton Publishing Company, 1912).

⁴⁷ Scott Rosenberg, Richard F. Weisfelder and Michelle Frisbie-Fulton, *Historical Dictionary of Lesotho*, p. 147.

⁴⁸ Sekhonyana Nehemiah Moshoeshoe was the son of Morena Moshoeshoe I and his third wife 'Masekhonyana. He was educated in Cape Town and later became a Secretary of Morena Moshoeshoe. Scott Rosenberg, Richard F. Weisfelder and Michelle Frisbie-Fulton, *Historical Dictionary of Lesotho*, p. 486.

⁴⁹ Scott Rosenberg, Richard F. Weisfelder and Michelle Frisbie-Fulton, *Historical Dictionary of Lesotho*, p. 486.

⁵⁰ Kate Showers and Gwendolyn M. Malahleha, "Oral Evidence in Historical Environment Impact Assessment: Soil Conservation in Lesotho in the 1930s and 1940s", *Journal of South African Studies*, Vol.18, No.2, 1992, p.p. 276-296.

⁵¹ Pulane Matsietsi Mahula, *Memory, Trauma, Silences: Narratives of the 1982 Maseru Invasion*, M.A. Dissertation, (Cape Town: University of Western Cape, 2017).

the capital town Maseru in search of African National Congress (ANC) operatives who were suspected to have been harboured there. This resulted in the deaths of forty-two South Africans and twelve Basotho. The focus of this study is the witnesses' recollection of this traumatic event and why little has been said about it. Although this event took place twelve years after the state of emergency, it is relevant as it is an oral research into the experiences related to politically-motivated traumatic events in Lesotho.

Another contribution by Motlatsi Thabane in his study *Personal Testimony as an Historical Source in Lesotho*, Motlatsi Thabane⁵² provides a detailed discussion on the use of personal testimonies as a source of history. Thabane is a Mosotho historian whose research interests include land tenure in Lesotho, migrant labour, oral historical studies on individual diamond mining and displacements caused by the construction of big dams in Lesotho. He maintains that the authors of the history of Lesotho have focused on the experiences of great events and great men. They have neglected documenting the day to day experiences of ordinary people. This lacuna has presented the opportunity for a shift in historiographical studies. It emphasises the significance of life experiences of ordinary people, their interpretation and conclusion in the holistic understanding of the history of Lesotho.⁵³ Another shift should be for researchers to be aware of the problems faced in interviewing ordinary people.⁵⁴

In his article, *Fragment of an Oral History of Opposition to 1986 Paramilitary Overthrow of Chief Leabua Jonathan's Government*, Motlatsi Thabane⁵⁵ holds that there were opposing views to the 1986 military coup. He relies on oral evidence from three individuals who were civil servants during Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan's regime. He contends that the stories of the victors in the coup have come to dominate the stories of the opponents of the coup.

⁵² Motlatsi Thabane, *Personal Testimonies as an Historical Source in Lesotho*, M.A. Dissertation (Roma: Lesotho: National University of Lesotho, 1986).

⁵³ Motlatsi Thabane, *Personal Testimonies as an Historical Source in Lesotho*, p. iv.

⁵⁴ Motlatsi Thabane, *Personal Testimonies as an Historical Source in Lesotho*, p. iv.

⁵⁵ Motlatsi Thabane, "Fragment of an Oral History of Opposition to 1986 Paramilitary Overthrow of Chief Leabua Jonathan's Government", in *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2019, p.p.1-23.

Other relevant published literature about the state of emergency, oral history, trauma, testimonies and memory studies has been used in this study. This is done to contextualise, conceptualise and strengthen the knowledge generated on the subject. An article by Jacqueline Demeritt⁵⁶ titled *The Strategic Use of State Repression and Political Violence* discusses the causes of repression and the relation between the repressive governments and those who oppose them. It is important in the contextualization of this study as it discusses authoritarianism and repression as concepts that inform this study.

Another book, *Crime Victims: An Introduction to Victimology* by Andrew Carmen⁵⁷ is used in this study to strengthen the knowledge by drawing from the psychological and criminological concept of victimology.⁵⁸ The concept of victimology is borrowed to show the specific ways in which people suffer as victims of politically motivated repression and violence under authoritarian governments. This study further draws from another South African psychological research by Richard G. Tedeschi and Lawrence G. Calhoun titled *Trauma and Transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of Suffering*.⁵⁹ This book provides an understanding into the characteristics of trauma. It relies on psychological discipline to show how the traumatic experiences affected the victims emotionally. There is lack of psychological documents relating to the state of emergency, due to, first, the fact that victims were fearful of visiting hospitals because of the prevalent political climate then. Secondly because, psychology was not as actively practiced in Lesotho as it is today where people are referred to psychologists or counsellors especially those who have experienced trauma.

A criminological research by Gabriel Lindumusa Ndabandaba's, *Crimes of Violence in Black Townships*⁶⁰ provides definitions of the identified acts of violence which form specific ways in which people are victimised during authoritarian rule. This criminological research into Black

⁵⁶ Jacqueline H. R. Demeritt, "The Strategic Use of State Repression and Political Violence", in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia, Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. unnumbered.

⁵⁷ Andrew Karmen, *Crime Victims: An Introduction to Victimology*, (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2004).

⁵⁸ Andrew Karmen, *Crime Victims: An Introduction to Victimology*, p. 9, defines victimology as a scientific study of the physical injury, emotional trauma, social stigma, political oppression, collective exploitation, personal alienation, manipulation, co-option, neglect, blame, defamation, demean and vilification. "Victimologists examine the extent to which victims are frightened, terrorised, depressed, infuriated and embittered."

⁵⁹ Richard G. Tedeschi and Lawrence G. Calhoun, *Trauma and Transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of Suffering*, (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

⁶⁰ Gabriel Lindumusa Ndabandaba, *Crimes of Violence in Black Townships*, (Durban: Butterworths, 1987).

crime in South Africa is used in this study as it includes details on crimes of violence whose nature and character are documented by this study. They are: assault, arson, arrest and detention.

The Research Problem and Research Questions

The research problem addressed by this study is the lack of documented traumatic experiences of civilians who were supporters of the opposition parties and who consequently suffered and were negatively affected by the state of emergency. By attempting to address this problem, this study is intended to provide first-hand knowledge of how the 1970 authoritarian rule brought human suffering to these civilians. The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What were the traumatic experiences of the victims and how did they suffer during the state of emergency?
2. Who were the perpetrators of the acts of political violence in Mathebe?
3. What was the nature and character of the traumatic experiences?
4. What were the consequences of the traumatic experiences?

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study is to document the traumatic experiences of some of the residents of Mathebe village, who have lived to narrate their trauma suffered for supporting the main opposition party, BCP, in 1970. It relies on their personal testimonies based on their memory and recollection of the traumatic experiences. Its objectives are:

- To document the traumatic experiences of the supporters of opposition party, BCP, who became victims of repression and acts of political violence during the state of emergency;
- To document the nature and character of these traumatic experiences;
- To shed light into who were the perpetrators of the traumatic experiences and
- To document the various consequences that resulted from the traumatic experiences.

Significance of the Study

Historical accounts on the state of emergency in Lesotho have emanated from newspaper reports, personal accounts from political leaders and prominent politicians, studies from historians, political scientists. They focus on the central government and the leaders of the opposition parties to the exclusion of the human suffering experienced by the civilian population. The primary significance of this current study, therefore, sets out to fill this gap by telling the story from the point of view of the victims, thus giving a voice to the voiceless.

Secondly, this study contributes to the studies on history method and theory with specific focus on oral history, testimonies and memory studies about post-colonial Lesotho. It seeks to show the negative civilian experiences as narrated by them about the state of emergency. These experiences of ordinary people are forgotten or neglected in the history of Lesotho. This study brings to the fore the history of the ordinary people viz-a-viz that of political elites. It shows the negative effects on ordinary citizens who became victims of repression and acts of political violence experienced during the transition of the post-colonial government from democratic to authoritarian rule.

Research Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature. This is so because it relates to the testimonies about the traumatic experiences of the interviewees during the state of emergency. Qualitative studies seek to investigate in-depth, a phenomenon, how it affected people and how they interpret their experiences. In addition, it uses historical research to understand the history of the state of emergency. It does this by making use of primary and secondary sources published on the subject. The primary sources include Lesotho and South African published newspapers. This is because the newspapers provide reports of the events as they unfolded during the state of emergency. The Lesotho newspapers relied on are *Leselinyana la Lesotho* and *Moeletsi oa Basotho* while the South African newspapers are *Sunday Times* and *The Friend*.

Other information is sourced from political party-owned newspapers such as *Mohlabani*, *Makatolle* and *Nketu*. In *Historical Dictionary of Lesotho*, Scott Rosenberg⁶¹ refers to *Mohlabani* as initially BCP-owned newspaper which was edited by Ntsu Mokhehle and B. M. Khaketla. In 1960 when Khaketla left BCP he took the paper with him and it became the flagship of MFP. On the other hand, *Makatolle* was established in 1960 and under the custody of the BCP. *Nketu* on the other hand, was a BNP-owned newspaper. It was through these political party-owned newspapers that political leaders provided their views on different issues affecting Lesotho. The relevant legislation is also used in this study.

These sources were accessed from Morija Museum and Archives (MMA), National University of Lesotho (NUL) Archives Records Management Division (AREMDOD) and Royal Archives and Museum (RAM). They are church-run, academic and specialised information resource centres. MMA was established in 1956 by the Lesotho Evangelical Church of Southern Africa (LECSA). It specialises in the collection, management and preservation of archives related to the Paris Evangelical Mission Society (PEMS) as the church denomination was called from its establishment (in 1833 to 1964) and later changed the name to the Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC) and currently to the Lesotho Evangelical Church of Southern Africa (LECSA). This study has relied on MMA for its vast archival sources such as political party manifestos, bound annual issues of local newspapers such as *Leselinyana la Lesotho* and *Moeletsi oa Basotho* to mention but few and the 1970 South African newspaper clippings, with the news on the events that took place during the state of emergency.

AREMDOD specialises in collecting, processing, documenting and preserving published academic studies on Lesotho. It also collects records, students' dissertations and the University staff theses; records emanating from non-governmental organizations in Lesotho, bi-lateral projects such as Lesotho Highlands Water Project. It has been accessed in relation to politically-owned newspapers, government reports, theses and other published literature on Lesotho.

The Royal Archives, Museum and Information Centre (RAM) situated in Matsieng, Lesotho. It was established by the Royal family and officially launched in November 2012 by His Majesty King Letsie III. It became a source of archival records relating to speeches by the late King Moshoeshe II, newspaper clippings highlighting the relations between the government

⁶¹ Scott Rosenberg, Richard F. Weisfelder and Michelle Frisbie-Fulton, *Historical Dictionary of Lesotho*, p.409.

and the King in the late 1960s and the relevant legislation also passed in 1970. This collection is important because it provides the much-needed context and a better understanding of the strained relations between the King and the government. These relations explain the history of the state of emergency.

The study follows the oral history approach because it is based specifically on oral data. It uses oral testimonies to document traumatic experiences of the civilians victimised through repression and acts of political violence. It is based on one specific event: the state of emergency and is not the life-stories research. Thus, it does not include other experiences, good or bad, of the victims throughout their lives.

The oral testimonies were collected through face-to-face, in-depth and open-ended interviews, which allowed the interviewees to speak at length about their traumatic experiences. This technique is important in this study because it yields qualitative knowledge. The interviews allowed flexibility in the collection of knowledge shared by the interlocutors as the researcher could ask follow up questions arising from previously asked questions and issues pertaining to those. They were recorded through a smart-phone with the permission of the interviewees and noted on paper where interviewees expressed reservations regarding the use of the recording device. Out of the seven interviewees, one asked that his interview be noted instead of recording it on the smartphone and the researcher duly obliged. The testimonies have been transcribed, analysed and presented in this study.

The selection of interviewees depended on two points, namely, whether they experienced victimisation as civilians and supporters of the BCP during the state of emergency. This is because although many people from Mathebe seem to know about the history of the state of emergency in their village, some have second-hand testimonies which this study does not make use of. Secondly, it depended on the age of the interviewees in 1970. This is important because, when it comes to memory and recollection, it is essential for a victim to have been at an age when they would have seen, experienced and made sense of the events that took place. With

that said, this study does not include testimonies from people who were children at the time. The interviews were carried out over a period of three years from 2017 to 2019.

One of the key aspects of an interview is language. This is an important mode of communication between the researcher and the interviewee. Language may be a barrier where the two parties in an interview speak different languages and there is need for an interpreter. The researcher and the interviewees are all Basotho and speak the same language. Thus, there was no language barrier. The interviewees' narratives have been presented in this study in English.

In any qualitative research, the researcher is duty-bound to observe and uphold research ethics and protocol. Thus the researcher reported herself at the traditional local authority: the office of the Chief of Mathebe before embarking on the data collection exercise. In relation to anonymity and privacy of the interviewees, the researcher uses pseudonyms instead of the interviewees' real names in this study. This decision was taken even though the interviewees had expressed their consent to the use of their names. This is done to avert any foreseen or unforeseen danger that the interviewees and their family members may face for sharing their stories. Secondly, this is done to avoid victimisation through any acts of revenge that may arise from the interviewees' descendants or from the descendants of the perpetrators of the acts of violence in Mathebe. Thirdly, this is done to avoid political victimisation, by association, of the interviewees' descendants. This is due to the vengeful culture of politics that exist in Lesotho which the researcher would not want to befall these descendants.

The study deploys a case study approach as an aspect of a qualitative research. This is because it relies on the village of Mathebe and specifically its residents, to document the traumatic experiences of the state of emergency. It is important to discuss the challenges encountered in this study. When the researcher embarked on this study, she had planned to use three villages of Mathebe, Matsieng and Thaba-Chitja as cases studies. These were villages which had seen horrible effects of the state of emergency. They were within a fairly short distance from each other, especially the last two. In relation to Matsieng, the researcher had interviewed four

people who were affected by the events of the state of emergency. One of them was a former community leader; two others were residents of Ha Tšilo who were arrested during the raid which was organised by the PMU. This raid was necessitated by the organised resistance which took place in Matsieng. It became evident at one stage that the case of Matsieng did not present a pure victimisation nature. It brought forth the perpetrator-turned-victim aspect. Upon close examination and analysis of the data collected, it emerged that Matsieng men had organised into resistance against the authoritarian government and set up their base at Lehaha-la-likhomo, Ha Tšilo. They had the full support of the local authorities and the political party leaders. The testimony from one of the victims from Matsieng stood out because he had been assaulted by the PMU without provocation because as he put it, he did not have a sign on his door indicating whether he supported the BNP or not. He was consequently hospitalised for two weeks. He showed the researcher the scars which are a testament of his ordeal. However, due to the perpetrator-turned-victim nature and the testimony from only one source, Matsieng was dropped as a case study.

At Thaba-Chitja, the researcher struggled to find living victims who could lend their voices to the traumatic experiences on the state of emergency. Those that could have been interlocutors were second-hand sources, who could tell the researcher what the victims told them. From newspaper reports, Thaba-Chitja had experienced cases of arson and killings during the state of emergency.

Another challenge in this study relates to the time gap. This study comes almost fifty years since the state of emergency was declared in Lesotho. This means that many of the victims have died and what remains are ruins of houses which were burned and second-hand interlocutors. This was specifically the case with Thaba-Chitja. When the researcher arrived at the place of the local chief's aunt, where she was referred to by the Chieftainess, she was told that so and so died four or five years ago which rendered her efforts futile. Even after almost 50 years, people were apprehensive to talk about the state of emergency. This was the case in Matsieng where one interlocutor doubted the researcher and thought that she was a police informant. These challenges compelled the researcher to reconsider her initial intention and remain with Mathebe as the only case study.

Having addressed the issue of time gap, there may be questions then surrounding issues of memory and recollection by the interlocutors in this study. However, the researcher must quell that. The interviewees are in their late 70s and early 80s and were old enough to have retained in their minds what happened to them during the state of emergency. The youngest of the interviewees who is now seventy-two years old was aged twenty-three and not married at the time. The eldest is eighty-five years and was thirty-six years in 1970. These memories and recollections of the interviewees are important in the oral history of the state of emergency because they are memories which are associated with fear, shock, loss, trauma and other feelings of suffering related to the state of emergency at the time. They are memories of what happened to them in their years of youth. These psychological dynamics become useful as signs, which the interviewees associated with the traumatic events that happened in 1970 when they were in their early and late twenties and thirties. Furthermore, at that age, half of the interviewees were married with kids while others were not. With the former, the fear for their children's lives and the wellbeing of their parents is something that is tattooed on their minds. Some people may argue that these memories are subjective as they are associated with certain unique feelings experienced during the state of emergency. Through these testimonies, the interviewees share what they retained in their minds with the help of what they saw, heard, touched, smelt and felt which constitute key aspects of their traumatic experiences.

The researcher did not use other possible sources of information to corroborate or cross-check the validity of the victims' oral testimonies in the analysis and presentation of their experiences. Firstly, because it was never the intention of this study, to validate through corroboration, the victims' narratives. For instance, the use of court papers where the interviewees were charged with murder and/or culpable homicide. Secondly, due to lack of focused studies or detailed records of the victims during the state of emergency, that would not have been achieved. It is the recollection of the interviewees and the sense they made of their traumatic experiences which matter in this study.

An equally important point to mention relates to memory especially precision of numbers and time. The researcher encountered on numerous occasions where interviewees were not able to recall specifically the years or the time on which something related to their life happened,

following the state of emergency. For instance, the women interviewed could not precisely give the researcher the precise dates of birth of their children. This was investigated to ensure that indeed the psychological dimension did happen as they worried over the safety of their children. In responding to this, they gave certain indications relating to the dates of birth of their children. In one instance, one of the interviewees was confusing the years that he lost a job and started working in the mines, with the time that the teachers' salaries were stopped. His wife was able to come to the rescue as far as this was concerned.

The following incidents occurred during the collection of data. In one session, the researcher found one of the interviewees in the company of a younger woman who wanted to collectively relate the interviewee's traumatic experiences. The researcher therefore decided to not go ahead with the interview and left for another interviewee's house and came back later. During another interview, the interviewee was babysitting her grand-daughter who although was a sweetheart disturbed the flow of the interview. At some point she went outside to play with her friend. During the interview, the discussion was disturbed by two neighbours who knocked and made small talk.

This study has relied on the testimonies of the seven residents of Mathebe, four females and three males whose brief profiles appear in table 1 below. The researcher decided not to have a signed consent form regarding the use of interviewees' oral testimonies. She did not want them to have any misgivings about this study and has exercised caution by not revealing their names even though she had permission to do so. Thus, the referencing of the interviews in the footnotes appears as: the pseudonyms of the interviewees and the date of the interview.

Table 1: Brief profiles of the interviewees

Name	Brief profile
MAT-BL	Mosotho man born in 1939 at Aupolasi, Mathebe. He got married around 1972. He was a primary school teacher and like most Basotho men has worked in the South African mines. He is a member of LECSA church. He was arrested and detained in Mafeteng prison. He was a supporter of the BCP.
MAT-MN	Mosotho woman born in 1934 at Mathebe. She got married around 1949/1950. She had three children. She is a subsistence farmer. She is a dedicated member of LECSA church and a supporter the BCP. She was a double victim of assault and arson.
MAT-MB	Mosotho woman born in 1942. In 1970 she was married with two children, one aged 6 while the youngest was a few months old. She stays at <i>Aupolasi</i> . She is a subsistence farmer. She became a victim of arson. She supported the BCP.
MAT-MS	Mosotho woman, born in 1937. She stays at <i>Aupolasi</i> in Mathebe and is a LECSA church member. She supported the BCP. She became a victim of arson.
MAT-RM	Mosotho man, born in 1947. In 1970, he was a teacher fresh out of university. He got married in the 1980s. He was a LECSA congregant. He was arrested and detained. He was sympathetic to the BCP.
MAT-MT	Mosotho man born in 1941 at <i>Aupolasi</i> , Mathebe. In 1970 he was married with two children. He is a LECSA congregant. He worked in South African mines. He was a supporter of BCP. He became a victim of arrest and torture while in detention.
MAT-MM	Mosotho woman born in 1947. She was a member of LECSA Church but now is an Anglican Church of Lesotho (ACL) member. She supported the BCP. She became a victim of arson

The study deploys thematic approach in analysing the personal testimonies and recollection of the seven interviewees. The analysis commences with the documentation of the nature and character of the traumatic experiences based on the specific acts of political violence visited on the interviewees. It further analyses the personal testimonies to document the consequences caused by the specific acts of political violence in the interviewees' lives, in the short and long-term.

The presentation of the interviewees' personal testimonies incorporates the translated testimonies of the interlocutors in the study. Only responses from the interlocutors are provided in the presentation based on their recollection of what happened to each one of them during the state of emergency. This is done so as to avoid interrupting the flow of the stories.

Focus and Summary of Chapters

The study is organised in six chapters. **CHAPTER ONE** introduces the study. **CHAPTER TWO** provides the historical background into the state of emergency. It focuses on the fragile democratic rule of 1966-1970. It shows that this fragility was exacerbated by the marginal majority of the government over the opposition by two seats in the National Assembly and the resulting hostile relations between the political elites, namely: the government and the King on the one hand and the opposition on the other. The government deployed constitutional and unconstitutional measures to deal with the political challenges facing its rule. This period set the tone of the events that followed at the beginning of 1970.

CHAPTER THREE discusses the beginning of the 1970 authoritarian rule, its course, how it manifested in Lesotho and its consequences. It outlines in chronological order, the events of 1970 which include: the declaration of the state of emergency, the suspension of the constitution, immediate arbitrary arrest of the leaders of the opposition parties and prominent politicians, the King's house arrest and subsequent exile, the imposition of the curfew and the banning of independent media. It further shows how each of these events was carried out and ends with a discussion on the consequences resulting from each event. This chapter shows that

the immediate effects of the state of emergency centred on political leaders and prominent politicians of the opposition parties. However, this did not end there, as will be shown in chapters four and five, because the state of emergency gradually spread to ordinary people residing in respective villages affiliated to the opposition parties.

CHAPTERS FOUR and **FIVE** are the focus of this study. They analyse the personal testimonies of the interviewees. **CHAPTER FOUR** commences with a brief description and justification on why Mathebe is used as a case study. It then documents the nature and character of the traumatic experiences of Mathebe residents who became victims of the state of emergency. It focuses on the following dimensions: physical, material and psychological trauma. It cites the following acts of repression and political violence: assault, arson, arrest and detention and torture as specific examples. It does this to show that through these acts, the interviewees suffered at the hands of the perpetrators: the BNPYL and the PMU. **CHAPTER FIVE** documents the consequences resulting from the traumatic experiences. It discusses in detail the consequences of the traumatic experiences which were many and varied. The consequences include social: separation/division of family members, homelessness disruption of studies and loss of time; economic: loss of an income due to job loss, famine, incurrence of costs related to legal expenses and costs for rebuilding of the burned houses; political: political intolerance and health such as hospitalization and mental as well emotional trauma. **CHAPTER SIX** concludes the study.

CHAPTER TWO: 1966-1970 FRAGILE DEMOCRACY

Introduction

In 1966 Lesotho attained, with much euphoria, independence from the British colonial rule. The period from 1966 to 1970 proved to be fragile for Lesotho's newly found democratic rule. This was because of the precarious power that the country's first democratic government had which made it prone to political challenges.

This chapter discusses the causes and effects of the 1966-1970 fragile democracy. The first part discusses the causes of this political quandary which is traceable to three factors. These factors are the marginal majority of the ruling party over the opposition in the National Assembly. Closely related to that, are the political challenges posed by the King's reservations about the Independence Constitution which made him a Constitutional Monarch. Lastly, it relates to the political challenges which emanated from the opposition parties as they vied for power and to unseat the government. These challenges were exacerbated by the growing alliance between the opposition and the King, the threat posed by the strong links that opposition had at village level through the District Councils and key positions in the government which required skills possessed mostly by members of the opposition party, BCP. These matters individually and collectively dominated the politics of Lesotho and, in the opinion of the government, constituted a threat to law and order.

The second part focuses on the measures including constitutional, unconstitutional and underhanded tactics, which the government deployed in dealing with the political challenges referred to above. The constitutional measures included ensuring that the King abided by the provisions of the Independence Constitution. For instance, in 1967 King Moshoeshoe II signed the undertaking to respect the provisions of the Constitution regarding the nature of his power and how he should conduct himself in future. Secondly, the police were deployed to ensure the maintenance of law and order adopted by the government against the political challenges posed by the opposition parties.

The government also adopted unconstitutional measures in order to deal with the political challenges which emanated from the opposition parties. These measures included the use of the *Local Government (Repeal) Act of 1968* to abolish the District Councils and the *Electoral*

Act of 1968, with certain provisions seen to be prejudicial towards the opposition parties. It further includes underhanded tactics such as the persecution of the opposition party leaders in 1969 and the acts of sabotage against the rival political parties as they moved towards the 1970 first post-independence general elections. The effect of the fragile democracy was deepening political factionalism emanating from the animosity between the Prime Minister and the King and political party-affiliations. The chapter concludes that events of the fragile democratic rule have had a direct bearing on the political developments seen in 1970.

The first cause of the fragile democracy can be traced to the marginal majority of two seats, which the government had over the opposition in the National Assembly. This slight majority made the government's position against the opposition, precarious. In April 1965, pre-independence general elections were held in Lesotho and were won by the BNP with 31 seats, BCP with 25 and MFP with 4, as shown on Table 2 below. This meant that the BNP had two seats majority, which put the government in a precarious position, the elimination of which could tip the power scale evenly or in favour of the opposition parties. N. W. Pule mentions that the 1966 pre-independence government's tenuous hold on power rendered it weak and precarious and this was exacerbated by concerted demands by the opposition. Thus this situation presented a fragile democratic government which consequently focused on maintenance of law and order. It further exposed the government to constant political challenges emanating first from the King and the opposition parties individually and collectively thus leading to fragile democratic rule. In his thesis, *Lesotho: The Politics of Development 1966-1993* Kopano Makoa maintains that the pressure on the BNP government was so intense that it hardly had time to deal with developmental aspects of Lesotho, but instead, it spent the period 1966 to 1970, trying to consolidate its tenuous political power.⁶²

⁶² Francis Makoa Kopano, *Lesotho: The Politics of Development 1966-1993*, Ph. D Thesis (London: University of Liverpool, 1994) p. 38.

Table 2 Summary of the 1965 General election results

Political Party	Total Number of votes	National Assembly Seats	Percentage
BNP	108162	31	41.63
BCP	103050	25	39.66
MFP	42837	4	16.48
MTP	5697	0	2.2
INDEPENDENTS	79	0	0.03
TOTAL	259825	60	100

Source: *Lesotho Times*, 7 May 1965⁶³

The second factor relates to the political challenge(s) posed by King Moshoeshoe II.⁶⁴ This emanated from the Westminster Constitution, which was adopted on Independence Day on October 4, 1966.⁶⁵ This constitution established the office of the King as the Head of State under section 32 (1).⁶⁶ In addition, the Independence Constitution effectively rendered him a Constitutional Monarch by providing that he has to act in accordance with the Independence Constitution or any other law and in consultation with the advice of the Cabinet.⁶⁷ King Moshoeshoe II was of the opinion that the spirit of the 1966 Independence Constitution was not in synch with the cultural practices of Basotho. Prior to independence, he enjoyed somewhat unlimited power as the Paramount Chief of Lesotho and this had come to an end with the provisions of the 1966 Constitution. Section 76 (4) and (5) of the Independence Order⁶⁸, provided further that in an event that the King has neglected or declined to conform to the section 76 (1) of Lesotho's Supreme law, the Prime Minister would act, after a period specified by the Prime Minister himself and that act shall be deemed to have been done by the King.⁶⁹ According to Nqosa Leuta Mahao, the Monarchy was *de facto* subordinated to a government headed by politicians.⁷⁰ Following this significant reduction of his power, King Moshoeshoe II, embarked on peaceful and persistent protests questioning the spirit of the Independence Constitution. He did this through, first, convening public meetings and secondly through print media. For instance, on December 11, 1966, the King convened a public

⁶³ *Lesotho Times*, Vol. 111, No. 18, Friday 7 May 1965.

⁶⁴ King Moshoeshoe II, the senior son and heir of Paramount Chief Seeiso Simone Griffith Lerotholi and his second wife, Chieftainess 'Mabereng Seeiso Griffith, was enthroned as the Paramount Chief of Lesotho on 12 March 1960.

⁶⁵ *The Independence Order 1966 Supplement to Gazette No.4*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1966).

⁶⁶ Section 32 (1), *The Independence Order 1966*, p.34.

⁶⁷ Section 76 (1), *The Independence Order 1966*, p. 55.

⁶⁸ *The Independence Order 1966*, p. 56.

⁶⁹ Section 76 (4) and (5), *The Independence Order 1966*, p. 56.

⁷⁰ Nqosa Leuta Mahao, *Constitutionalism, Legitimacy and Political Power: Towards an Understanding of the Problems of good Governance in Lesotho*, Ph.D Thesis, (Cape Town: University of Western Cape, September 1999), p. 126.

gathering at *Ha Ramabanta* to address Basotho. In his speech, published in B. M. Khaketla's *Lesotho 1970*⁷¹, the King lamented the process of acquiring Basotho's views on the position of the King in post-colonial Lesotho and his stance on his position in government. He stated that,

"My loving people in the bag which I carry with me today, is a copy of the new Constitution of an independent Lesotho. We have always told you, and we have always told the British not to grant us a Constitution which accords with their own wishes, but should grant us one which accords with the wishes of the majority of the Basotho people and not one which is in accordance with the wishes of a small group, because by doing so they will be overlooking the feelings of the Basotho."⁷²

In his own defence, the King argued that he was not after executive power but wanted a Constitution which embraced the culture and ideals of Basotho and not one which was adopted as is. Additionally, in relation to print media, according to *The Friend* newspaper, King Moshoeshoe II, maintained that he was not after personal control of external affairs, internal security and civil service. Instead he was concerned about the lack of "safeguards" or checks and balances which would ensure the integrity of the State and observation of personal freedoms. He further wished that the civil service was adequately sheltered from "political" influence and intimidation in performing their duties.⁷³ Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan regarded this as the King's call for executive powers. These differences in opinion over the essence of the Independence Constitution became a bone of contention between the King Moshoeshoe II and the government. This posed a huge problem for the independent democratic government, on the national and international front. Nationally, this led to divisions on loyalty from Basotho from all walks of life between the young King and the government of their choice. This further, undermined unity as symbolised by the Monarch. Internationally, this brought Lesotho under the constant surveillance of the global world especially the Southern African countries and the former colonial power.

Another political challenge, closely related to the first and the second, was posed by the opposition parties. This challenge was political because it related to contention of power emanating from the slim majority of the government which the opposition vied for, based on

⁷¹ B. M., Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p. 134.

⁷² B. M., Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p.130.

⁷³ *The Friend*, Thursday 13 July 1967, *Press Cuttings*, 13.07.1967 to 05.10.1969, Royal Archives, Matsieng.

the contested elections results of 1965. This was influenced firstly by the understanding between the opposition parties and the King. For example, following the granting of independence to Lesotho, the opposition entered into a marriage of convenience with the King to pursue its interests of taking over government. This emanated from the contestation about the 1965 elections results. The second factor was the strong command of power that the opposition parties especially the BCP had at community level. The BCP commanded majority of support at community level because of their widespread representation in the District Councils. Lastly, the occupation of certain positions in the civil service, it was common knowledge that some positions within government which required sought-after skills were occupied by the supporters of BCP. The opposition used various methods to challenge what *Bernard Makalo Khaketla* called “hair-breath majority” of the government. Such methods included provocative columns published in the opposition-owned newspapers such as *Makotolle*⁷⁴. Collectively, King Moshoeshoe II and the opposition parties: BCP and MFP, formed an alliance to pursue their respective interests. The King sought revision of certain provisions of the Independence Constitution as alluded to earlier to align it with the customs of Basotho. The opposition parties sought to challenge the elections results of 1965. According to Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan, the BCP ‘somersaulted’ as soon as it lost the 1965 elections. It began to seek more power for the King.⁷⁵ This joining of forces between the King and the opposition parties culminated in the deadly Thaba-Bosiu prayer meeting which was convened by the King, with the full support of the opposition parties. Upon learning about this prayer meeting, the government decided to give banning orders to the King and his allies. It did this by relying on the provisions of the *Internal Security (General) Act*, which provided that any conspiracy or an attempt to conspire to do, with intention a subversive act shall be guilty of an offence and be liable to a conviction. This ban was communicated to the King and to the public through Radio Lesotho but it was ignored.⁷⁶ According to Desmond Sxishe, the government saw this as a sure sign of defiance and subversion and decided to once and for all, deal decisively with its opponents.⁷⁷ It did this by deploying the police to the scene and on the roads leading to the Thaba-Bosiu National Monument, to what the government referred to as an attempt at overthrowing the BNP government by unconstitutional and forceful methods.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ *Makatolle* was a BCP-owned newspaper which was established in October 1960.

⁷⁵ *Nketu*, Vol. 5, No. 6, 7 February 1969.

⁷⁶ *Lesotho: Report for the Year 1967*, (Maseru: Department of Information, 1968), p.7.

⁷⁷ Desmond Sxishe, “*But Give him an Army Too*” *Leabua Jonathan a biography*, p. 45-47.

⁷⁸ *Nketu*, Vol.4, No. 19, 10 May 1968, p. 3.

According to *Moeletsi oa Basotho*,⁷⁹ about 10 people died in the violent confrontation that ensued while scores were injured, as the Police fired shots to disperse the congregants and 170 people were arrested, among them were political leaders and relatives of the King such as *Morena Mathealira Seeiso*.⁸⁰

In relation to the King, the government deployed the constitutional measures, which entailed ensuring that the King adhered to section 76 subsections (1)⁸¹, (4)⁸² and (5)⁸³ of the Independence Constitution. These sections bound the King to act in consultation with the Cabinet; even in matters which he had reservations about issues. He could not be seen to do, or say things that went against what the Cabinet said. Therefore, by defying the advice of the Prime Minister and forging ahead with the prayer meeting in Thaba-Bosiu, the government decisively dealt with the King by placing him under house arrest. During this time, the King was allowed a limited number of visitors. He was made to sign a declaration in 1967, which brought to an end his public airing of his reservation about the Independence Order 1966 regarding its provisions that clearly stipulated the limits of his powers.⁸⁴ According to its provisions, the declaration obligated the King to work with the Cabinet and his speeches at public forums were to be prepared by the cabinet. Through this declaration, the King, promised to abide by the provisions of the constitution and to support his government, which was led by the Prime Minister of the day. Failure to do so and to convene and address meetings without the government's advice, would amount to automatic abdication.⁸⁵ In his defence, however

⁷⁹ *Moeletsi oa Basotho*, Vol. 35, No.1605, 14 January 1967, p. 1.

⁸⁰ *Moeletsi oa Basotho*, Vol. 35, No.1605, 14 January 1967, p. 1. Morena Mathealira Seeiso is the second senior son of the late Paramount Chief Seeiso Simione Griffith with his second wife Mabereng. He is the Principal Chief of Mokhotlong.

⁸¹ Section 76 (1) provides that, "...the King shall, in the exercise of his functions under this Constitution or any other law, act in accordance with the advice of the Cabinet or a Minister acting under the general authority of the Cabinet, except in cases where he is required by this Constitution or any other law to act in accordance with the advice of any person or authority other than the Cabinet.", *The Lesotho Independence Order 1966*, p. 55.

⁸² S 76 (4) reads, "Where the King is required by this Constitution to do any act in accordance with the advice of any person or authority and the Prime Minister is satisfied that the King has neglected or declined to do so, the Prime Minister may inform the King that it is the intention of the Prime Minister to do the act himself after the expiration of a period to be specified by the Prime Minister, and if at the expiration of that period the King has not done that act the Prime Minister may do that act himself and shall, at the earliest opportunity thereafter, report the matter to Parliament; and any act so done by the Prime Minister shall be deemed to have been done by the King and to be his act.", *The Lesotho Independence Order*, p. 56.

⁸³ S76 (5) provides that, "No act of the King shall be valid to the extent that it is inconsistent with an act deemed to be his act by virtue of subsection (4) of this section.", *The Lesotho Independence Order*, p. 56.

⁸⁴ *Lesotho: Report for the year 1967*, (Maseru, Department of Information, 1968), p.5

⁸⁵ *Lesotho: Report for the year 1967*, p.5.

King Moshoeshoe II denied that he had, at any given time, colluded with the opposition to overthrow the government or to cause chaos. In a written statement to the press, the King stated that there was no truth in the allegations levelled against him by the BNP government that he, in concert with the opposition, intended to cause chaos or take over or overthrow the government by force.⁸⁶ He maintained that this was a smear campaign by some people who were against him as a person and his intentions in order to protect their side.⁸⁷

Having dealt with the political challenges posed by the King, the government then focused on bringing the opposition parties to order. Following the Thaba-Bosiu incident, Ntsu Mokhehle and Chief Reentseng Lerotholi (the then Principal Chief of Matsieng), were arrested. Chief Reentseng Lerotholi was related to King Moshoeshoe II, who was affiliated to the MFP and was an MFP candidate under the *Maletsunyane* No. 22 constituency for the 1970 general elections.⁸⁸ The Maseru Magistrate Court found them guilty of inciting the public to commit violence and sentenced them to twelve months and eighteen months respectively.⁸⁹ These sentences were suspended for two years on condition that they would not be found guilty of a similar crime. On the other hand, Seth Makotoko, the leader of MFP was acquitted.⁹⁰ The ‘guilty’ verdict temporarily reined in the opposition parties. This is because it instilled in them the fear that they need to tread carefully when it comes to government and that the government was willing to do anything in its power to deal with them.

Secondly, the deployment of the police in order to maintain law and order became predominant during the period 1966 to 1970.⁹¹ The police were deployed by the government to deal with political challenges emanating from the opposition parties. This deployment ensured maintenance of law and order on the basis of promulgated legislation which was tailored for the hostile political climate that prevailed in Lesotho during this time. According to *Lesotho*

⁸⁶ Royal Archives and Museum, HM King Moshoeshoe II, RPA, *HM/PITSO/108*, 9 January 1967.

⁸⁷ Royal Archives and Museum, HM King Moshoeshoe II, RPA, *HM/PITSO/108*, 9 January 1967.

⁸⁸ *Moeletsi oa Basotho*, Vol. 38, No. 1762, 7 February 1970, p.1

⁸⁹ Lesotho: *Report for the year 1967*, (Maseru: Department of Information, 1968), p. 7.

⁹⁰ Lesotho: *Report for the year 1967*, (Maseru: Department of Information, 1968), p. 7.

⁹¹ Francis Kopano Makoa, *Lesotho: The Politics of Development 1966-1993*, Ph.D Thesis, (London: University of Liverpool, 1994), p. 40.

*Report for the year 1968*⁹², the police force was charged with maintaining law and order as well as preventing and detecting crime. During this time, the police assumed the responsibility for both defence and national security. Due to the hostile relations between the government and the opposition parties, this rather new and somewhat weak institution was needed to protect the interests of the government of the day.

One of the unconstitutional measures which government used to deal with the political challenges emanating from the opposition parties, especially, BCP, was the abolition of District Councils in 1968. This abolition of the District Councils was achieved through Section 3 (1) of the Local Government Repeal Act of 1968.⁹³ This move was taken in order to weaken the power of BCP at grass-root level. The District Councils were an important component in a democratic dispensation as they were charged with decentralization of power.⁹⁴ Democratically, the District Councils are a symbol of representation through elections. Constitutionally, the masses have a right to be represented by an association of their choice. By abolishing the District Councils and transferring their power to central government, this constituted a violation of democratic and constitutional principles. John E. Bardill and James H. Cobbe maintain that the suspension of District Councils in 1966 and their ultimate abolition in 1968 strengthened the central government at the expense of popular participation which was progressively reduced.⁹⁵

There were other underhanded tactics which the government used to prejudice the opposition parties. These tactics flared up hostile relations between the government and the opposition parties in the latter part of the fragile democratic period. They related, in particular to the few months prior to the conduct of the 1970 general elections. According to the opposition, certain questionable measures were taken by the government to frustrate the efforts of opposition parties during their preparation for the general elections. For instance, the amount for securing

⁹² *Lesotho: Report for the year 1968*, (Maseru, Department of Information, 1968), p.135.

⁹³ Section 3 (1), Local Government (Repeal) Act No. 21 of 1968, *Lesotho Government Gazettes 1968*, (Maseru: His Majesty the King, 1969), p. 376.

⁹⁴ The District Councils were established in 1948 and elected in 1960.

⁹⁵ John E. Bardill and James H. Cobbe, *Lesotho: The Dilemmas of Dependence in Southern Africa*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1985), p. 128.

candidacy for the general elections had been set at 200 Rands in 1970.⁹⁶ This was a phenomenal increase from the 50 Rands which was charged in the 1965 pre-independence general elections.⁹⁷ According to B. M. Khaketla, the government was already beginning to frustrate the opposition as Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan and his Cabinet were aware that the opposition would not be able to raise that much money.⁹⁸ It provided an unfair advantage to government over the opposition. In a democratic dispensation, fair competition is important. The phenomenal increase went against the principles of fair competition, thus indicating the underhanded tactics which government adopted in order to frustrate the preparations by the opposition towards the elections. The elections became a heated contest for power between the two main political parties, BCP and BNP, as the third major political party, the MFP's following had declined by the time the country went for the post-colonial elections. B. M. Khaketla attributed this decline to non-committed attitude of the party's leader. In the few months leading to the elections, the opposition parties complained that the government was doing everything in its power to hinder their chances of winning the elections. Their concerns were as follows: that the government delayed publishing the date of the elections. This affected the timing for their preparation and campaigning for the elections. Furthermore, they complained that the government hindered registration of their supporters.⁹⁹ According to *Makatolle*,¹⁰⁰ people had been denied a chance to register as voters in their villages either because of being absent during the registration or because competent witnesses refused to witness them to ensure that they were registered. This is corroborated by B. M. Khaketla in a chapter entitled "Registration of voters".¹⁰¹ On the basis of these allegations, it would seem that the government was afraid that the opposition parties would win the elections. It tried underhanded tactics to sabotage the oppositions' chances of winning the elections.

⁹⁶ Section 27 (1), The Electoral Act No. 23 of 1968, *Lesotho Government Gazettes 1968*, provided that, "If more than one person has been duly nominated in accordance with section 26, the returning officer shall before the close of the sitting of the nomination court, require that there be deposited with him by or on behalf of each such person, the sum of two hundred rands.", p.14.

⁹⁷ Section 12 (1), The National Assembly (Conduct of Elections) Regulations 1965, *Laws of Basutoland Vol. X*, 1965, p. 663.

⁹⁸ B. M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p. 194.

⁹⁹ B. M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p.p. 194-205.

¹⁰⁰ *Makatolle*, Vol. 8, No. 43, 29 November 1969, p. 7.

¹⁰¹ B. M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p. 200.

In 1969, hostilities between the government and the opposition parties re-emerged due to the heated contest for the 1970 general elections. The opposition accused the government of instilling fear in opposition parties. For instance, the incident in support of this accusation related to the arrest of the leader of BCP, Ntsu Mokhehle in November 1969. In a story published by the *Nketu* newspaper, Ntsu Mokhehle was arrested and twelve others were charged with assaulting and robbing the police at one political meeting held at Qalaheng.¹⁰² This act was seen by the opposition as an effort on the part of the government to frustrate BCP's preparations and campaigning for the upcoming 1970 general elections.¹⁰³

During the latter part of 1969, the government threatened the press. It did this; in particular, against *Leselinyana la Lesotho* accusing it of lack of support to the ruling government alleging that instead, it was fighting it.¹⁰⁴ In a statement made by Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan, which was read on Radio Lesotho, he is alleged to have launched an attack on *Leselinyana la Lesotho*. Following this attack, the media fraternity in the form of print media, represented by patriotic Basotho Journalists who hoped to unionise as Progress journalists, held a meeting to address this matter. They responded in a statement published in *Makatolle* that by threatening *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, the government was actually waging an attack on the freedom of the Press and freedom of expression.¹⁰⁵ As it turned out, these journalists were from the opposition-affiliated newspapers such as the *Range* and *Makatolle*.

The effect of fragile democratic rule in Lesotho was seen through divisions among Basotho due to divisive politics. This is because, from this point on, Basotho were divided along political party lines, political attire and ideologies. The post-colonial government was not resilient to the political challenges it faced thus things degenerated into authoritarian rule. The second factor is attributed to election disputes. The post-colonial political divisions centred on Basotho's loyalty based on political affiliations. The animosity between the government and the King caused deep divisions within the Chieftainship institution where some chiefs supported the King while others supported Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan. Basotho were

¹⁰² *Nketu*, Vol. 5, No. 50, 12 December 1969, p.11.

¹⁰³ *Makatolle*, Vol. 8, No.43, 29 November 1969, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ *Makatolle*, Vol. 8, No. 41, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ *Makatolle*, Vol. 8, No. 41, p. 3.

further divided along the lines of political affiliation. The inability of politicians to rise above their divisive politics, culminated into the events of 1970.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the fragile embryonic 1966-1970 democratic rule in Lesotho. It has shown that this rule was characterised by fragility. At the centre of this fragility were two factors namely the slim majority of two seats garnered by the BNP in the National Assembly and the political challenges posed by King Moshoeshoe II and the opposition parties. The King had reservations about the powers granted to the Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan which did not have checks and balances. The opposition used every chance they got to challenge the power of the government. The government spent the better part of these four years, dealing with these hostilities and used promulgated laws and deployment of the police to ensure maintenance of law and order. It further used unconstitutional measures such as the abolition of the democratically elected District Councils to deal with the opposition. It has shown that as time for holding the 1970 general elections got closer, hostilities between the government and the opposition re-emerged. These events of 1966-1970 fragile democracy provided a background into the authoritarian rule that began in 1970. The beginning of authoritarian rule in 1970 set in motion immediate repression of leaders of the opposition parties, prominent politicians and the King as will be shown in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: 1970: THE BEGINNING OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE¹⁰⁶

Introduction

1970 marked the turning point in the political history of post-colonial Lesotho as the country experienced a political transition from democratic to authoritarian rule because, instead of handing over power to Ntsu Mokhehle of BCP, the victor of the 1970 first post-independence general elections, Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan of the BNP, declared the state of emergency. This was followed by the suspension of the independence constitution, immediate arrest and detention of the leaders of the opposition parties, the King's house arrest and subsequent exile, the imposition of a curfew and the banning of the independent media. These actions marked the beginning of authoritarian rule in Lesotho.

This chapter starts with an outline of how each of the above events was carried out. It shows that these events were carried out through announcements over the national radio broadcaster, deployment of the police to enforce repression, and issuance of a series of repressive laws in the form of Orders which were meant to operationalise the repressive policy of the government. In some instances, it was a combination of two strategies but relating to one event. For instance, the suspension of the Constitution was announced over the radio before an Order to that effect was issued. All these were done by Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan after it became evident that his political party was defeated in the 1970 general elections.

It concludes that the declaration of the 1970 state of emergency set in motion repression aimed at leaders of the opposition parties, prominent politicians and the King. This did not end there, as will be shown in the subsequent chapters that the state of emergency did not negatively affect the leaders of the opposition parties, prominent politicians and the King exclusively but it also, more brutally, victimised the supporters of the opposition party, BCP, residing in their villages such as Mathebe.

¹⁰⁶ David Potter, "Explaining Democratisation" in David Potter, David Goldblatt, Margaret Kiloh and Paul Lewis (eds.), *Democratisation*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), pp. 4-5, defines authoritarian rule as a rule void of competitive elections, citizens are denied the right to criticise the government, its officials and the regime. When they do, they are at the risk of receiving severe punishment from the security forces of the state. There is no access to information, as it either does not exist or is not allowed and organisations that speak for the repressed are usually suppressed.

The first event that marked the beginning of authoritarian rule was the declaration of the state of emergency by Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan on January 30, 1970. He cited election-related violence perpetrated by the opposition as the reason why he took this drastic step. On January 27, 1970, the first post-colonial general elections were held in Lesotho. Interestingly, according to B. M. Khaketla, on the Election Day, when asked about the progress of the elections, Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan mentioned that the elections were proceeding freely and fairly without any hiccups.¹⁰⁷ In a surprising turn of events, as remarked by B. M. Khaketla, when it emerged that his party had been defeated in the elections, Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan, then stopped the announcement of the elections results and declared the state of emergency.¹⁰⁸ The Prime Minister's allegations about acts of violence perpetrated by the opposition during the elections were denied by the opposition. For instance, in a statement made by Koenyama Chakela, the Secretary General of BCP at the time, stated that the reason was that BNP had suffered defeat and lost to BCP in the elections. It had nothing to do with the alleged acts of violence. He stated that this was a blatant lie fed to the press.¹⁰⁹ Numerous reports have provided that upon learning that BCP had become victorious in the elections, Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan, decided to declare the state of emergency when both parties were each standing at 23 constituencies.¹¹⁰ In his *Constitutionalism, Legitimacy and Political Power*, Nqosa Leuta Mahao mentions that the BCP had attained 36 seats, BNP with 23 and MFP got 1 seat.¹¹¹ This act of Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan amounted to unconstitutional usurpation of power and it marked the beginning of authoritarian rule to maintain the status quo. In this regard, this relates to David Potter's definition of authoritarianism, particularly to the characteristic of lack of or absence of competitive elections. In Lesotho, much as the elections took place, the election results did not determine the political party which led the government. Instead, the leader of the defeated party usurped power and 'self-appointed' his political party to lead the government.

¹⁰⁷ B. M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p.p. 208 and 210.

¹⁰⁸ B. M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p. 210.

¹⁰⁹ *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, Vol. 103, No.4, 20 February 1970, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, Vol. 103, No.2, 6 February 1970, p. 1.; *Moeletsi oa Basotho*, Vol. 38, No. 1763, 14 February 1970, p.1.; Ntsukunyane Mphanya, *My Life in the Basutoland Congress Party*, p. 86 and B.M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p. 210.

¹¹¹ Nqosa Leuta Mahao, *Constitutionalism, Legitimacy and Political Power*, p. 241.

The declaration of the state of emergency was followed by the suspension of the Independence Constitution of 1966. Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan maintained that this constitution was not in line with the principles and customs of Basotho and that a new constitution would be drafted.¹¹² Nqosa Leuta Mahao states that this decision by Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan was unconstitutional for two reasons.¹¹³ Firstly, fourteen days after the state of emergency was declared, the Parliament should have been summoned as per the provisions of the Constitution. That did not happen. Secondly that, no provision or article in the Constitution authorized the suspension of the Supreme law of the country, in whole. This rendered the Prime Minister's decision unconstitutional.¹¹⁴ Looking closely at reasons advanced by Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan for suspending the constitution, it came as a surprise. This is simply because in previous years, King Moshoeshoe II had expressed similar reservations about the same legal instrument. To say that the Constitution is suspended because it is not compatible with Basotho traditions by Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan was a justification which was a convenient means to maintain the status quo. Thus it appeared that because of the unfavourable circumstances emerging against his political party, Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan found it necessary to lament the nature or shortcomings of the constitution. Furthermore, he did this without indicating which sections of the independence constitution needed to be reviewed. By implication, his statement meant that the whole constitution needed to be reviewed in preparation for the new one. Little did the opposition parties know that the new one would never see the light of day. This goes further to show that because of his vested interests and the need to deal with the immediate dilemma facing his power, after the initial uproar about the authoritarian rule subsided, the drafting of the new constitution became of little concern to him and his authoritarian government.

The arrest and detention of leaders of the opposition parties and prominent politicians followed. This was done to ensure that the immediate threat or potential threat of resistance to the despotic rule was repressed and neutralised. According to *Leselinyana la Lesotho*¹¹⁵, an hour and a half after the declaration of the state of emergency and the suspension of the constitution, Ntsu Mokhehle, the BCP leader and Khauta Khasu, the Chairman of the BCP Executive Committee

¹¹² B.M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p. 208.

¹¹³ Nqosa Leuta Mahao, *Constitutionalism, Legitimacy and Political Power*, p. 241.

¹¹⁴ Nqosa Leuta Mahao, *Constitutionalism, Legitimacy and Political Power*, p. 242.

¹¹⁵ *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, Vol. 103, No.3, 6 February 1970, p. 1.

were arrested. Prominent politicians such as Ntsukunyane Mphanya, and political parties' followers were arrested thereafter.¹¹⁶ The MFP leaders B. M. Khaketla were placed under house arrest with restricted movement.¹¹⁷ It is evident that these were leaders of the opposition parties and/or prominent politicians who occupied senior positions within respective parties' National Executive Committees. They were arrested because Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan found it imperative to neutralise the leaders against any threat or potential threat that they could cause if they were among their followers. In this way, the government could not fathom having an opposition. Thus the citizens were denied a right to oppose and/or criticise the government, its officials or regime, and when they did, they received severe punishment from government security forces.

Furthermore, King Moshoeshe II was placed under house arrest and subsequently exiled. By doing this, the government effectively dealt with the second political threat as Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan had previously alluded to in his speech.¹¹⁸ Regarding the King as one of the threats of BNP, the government moved swiftly to deal with him during the state of emergency. In his statement made in 1969 and published in the *Nketu* Newspaper, Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan had mentioned that the King's hostility to the BNP was not a secret and that the ruling party would do anything in its power to defend itself against its political enemies. This statement by Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan came to fruition a year later as he had predicted as the King was placed under house arrest.¹¹⁹ By doing this, he was dealing with one of the many enemies of the BNP. The King was still regarded as a threat to the government. According to B.M. Khaketla, Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan accused the King of contravening the terms of the Agreement he signed in January 1967 and that he had held a meeting in Matsieng on January 25, 1970, where he had invited numerous Chiefs. It was alleged that these Chiefs were advised by the King to tell their people which political party

¹¹⁶ Ntsukunyane Mphanya, *My Life in the Basutoland Party*, pp. 86-87 and *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, Vol. 103, No. 3, 6 February 1970, p. 1.

¹¹⁷ B. M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p. 265.

¹¹⁸ Speech by Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan published in *Nketu*, Vol. 5, No.6, 7 February 1969, p. 3, which read, "As far as the ruling Basotho National Party is concerned, it has always been known that the King was hostile to it and therefore any new venture he may embark upon will not probably make much difference except to now enable it to put all restraints which it formerly exercised in deference to the King's constitutional position aside and defend itself with all the attacks within its power against all its political enemies. The BNP is prepared, therefore, for any eventuality and will be ready to face the storm as it has done in the past."

¹¹⁹ B.M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p. 220.

they should vote for.¹²⁰ After all this was done, the authoritarian government being firmly put in place, the task left was to make sure that everyone toed the line.

The imposition of the curfew followed. Through this curfew, movement of Basotho was restricted within certain hours of the day. For instance, a curfew allowing movement of people between 6 am and 6pm was imposed. During this time, people were not allowed to assemble in groups of three or more. Those who were found to disobey this ‘national security policy’ were dealt with severely. A curfew was one of the many ways through which the authoritarian government repressed people.

During the state of emergency, the government banned independent media in what B. M. Khaketla calls ‘gagging the press’.¹²¹ The banning of the media occurred because it was vocal against the unconstitutional and undemocratic seizure of power.¹²² In February 1970, *Leselinyana la Lesotho* published a notice to its readers that due to the state of emergency, it was unable to freely publish the news.¹²³ It resumed its normal publishing five months later in July 1970.¹²⁴ According to the reports from *Moeletsi oa Basotho*, the following newspapers were banned: *Makatolle*, *The Commentator*, *The Range* (BCP-affiliated newspapers), *Majammoho* (Communist Party newspaper), *Mohlabani* (MFP) and *Seboholi* (BCP-affiliated cartoon).¹²⁵ The banning of the media is another characteristic of authoritarianism which relates to lack of access to information.

There were a number of ways through which the afore-mentioned events were carried out by the government. In relation to the declaration of the state of emergency, Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan announced over the national broadcaster, Radio Lesotho. The researcher was however not able to find audio recordings of this announcement and has relied on B. M. Khaketla’s book and local newspapers. According to B. M. Khaketla, Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan

¹²⁰ B.M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p. 245.

¹²¹ B. M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p.p. 226-232.

¹²² Les Switzer and Donna Switzer, *The Black Press of South and Lesotho*, p. 256-257.

¹²³ *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, Vol. 103, No.3, 6 February 1970, p. 1.

¹²⁴ *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, Vol. 103, No.7, 10 July 1970, p. 1.

¹²⁵ *Moeletsi oa Basotho*, Vol. 38, No.1764, 21 February 1970, p. 3.

frequented the national radio. As the election results were being announced on air, there was a sudden pause which left people wondering. A notice was read that the Prime Minister has an important announcement for Basotho. He then declared the state of emergency. This act was formalised through Proclamation No. 1 of 1970, which provided that,

“In exercise of the powers vested in me by section 21 of the Constitution of Lesotho, I, Leabua Jonathan, Prime Minister, after consultation with the King’s Privy Council, do by this Proclamation declare, for the purposes of Chapter II of the Constitution of Lesotho and the Emergency Powers Act 1966, that the State of Emergency exists in the Kingdom of Lesotho, with effect from the date of this Proclamation.”

In order for the State of Emergency to be enforced and observed, the government promulgated the afore-mentioned Proclamation. However, the contents of this Proclamation were vehemently opposed by B. M. Khaketla where the Proclamation cited that the King’s Privy Council was consulted as required. B. M. Khaketla was a member of the King’s Privy Council and maintained that, this was far from the truth as there was never a meeting of that nature.¹²⁶

Similarly, suspension of the Constitution was carried out through an announcement on Radio Lesotho on the same day that the state of emergency was declared. In order to affirm this act of the government, *The Constitution (Suspension) Order No.2 of 1970*¹²⁷ was issued. According to Section 2 of the *Constitution (Suspension Order)*, affirmation of the act of suspending the Constitution was effected and in force.

The immediate arbitrary arrest of leaders of the opposition parties and prominent politicians was achieved through the deployment of the police. The police were an executive organ of the government and they supported the government of the day, despite its usurpation of power. Immediately following the declaration of the State of emergency by the Prime Minister, the police, acting on orders from the government, rounded up leaders of the opposition parties and other prominent politicians, arresting and detaining them. The police descended on the BCP offices to arrest and detain the party leaders, Ntsu Mokhehle and Khauta Khasu, a BCP Executive Committee Chairman and other prominent politicians.¹²⁸ The deployment of the state police was intended to repress the leaders of the opposition parties and prominent

¹²⁶ B. M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p.p. 250-251.

¹²⁷ “The Constitution Suspension Order No. 2 of 1970”, *Laws of Lesotho 1970*, Vol. XV, 1971, p. 9.

¹²⁸ *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, Vol. 103, No.3, 6 February 1970, p.1 and B.M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, pp. 208-209.

politicians so as to maintain quiescence. In her article, *The Strategic Use of Repression and Political Violence*, Jacqueline H. R. DeMeritt, contends that the assumption is that governments repress because they seek quiescence and to quell popular dissent.¹²⁹ It was known that the political party that had won the 1970 general elections was denied the right to take over and in order to maintain quiescence; the leaders of that party were arrested and detained. Repression of the opposition parties was also achieved through the *Lesotho Order of 1970*.¹³⁰ This Order was instrumental in reinstating Leabua Jonathan as the Prime Minister of Lesotho, despite his political party's apparent defeat during the 1970 elections. Section 4(2) of this Order effectively reinstated Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan as the Prime Minister of Lesotho.¹³¹ This disregard for the 1970 general elections meant that the Prime Minister remained in his position without the popular votes. The question regarding the legality of these acts could not be entertained in the courts of law. As a result, the arrest and detention of leaders of the opposition parties was sanctioned by the government and an enquiry into its legality or constitutionality was impossible. This is indicative of how authoritarian rule was repressive towards the opposition.

Similarly, the King was put under house arrest by the authoritarian government and subsequently exiled to the Netherlands. This was achieved through deployment of police to the King's Royal Residence in Matsieng. Subsequent to that, the government issued *The Office of the King Order of 1970*¹³² which specifically addressed the Constitutional Monarch. Section 2 (1) of the Order, made a provision for the King as the Head of State. Through this Order, the King, who was duly recognised as such under the 1966 Independence Order, was to immediately subscribe to the Office of the King, under oath as prescribed in the Order so as to be recognised and confirmed and by implication reinstated to his office.¹³³ The King had two choices. Firstly, for him to accept the unconstitutional government and subscribe on oath to be

¹²⁹ Jacqueline H. R. Demeritt, "The Strategic Use of State Repression and Political Violence", in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia, Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. unnumbered.

¹³⁰ "Lesotho Order No. 1 of 1970", *Laws of Lesotho 1970*, Vol. XV, 1971, p. 5.

¹³¹ "Lesotho Order No. 1 of 1970", *Laws of Lesotho 1970*, Vol. XV, 1971, p. 6.

¹³² Office of the King Order No. 51 of 1970, *Laws of Lesotho 1970*, Vol. XV, 1971, p. 416-424.

¹³³ Section 2 (3), *The Office of King Order No. 51 of 1970*, p.417, provided that, "The person who held the office of King under the Lesotho Independence Order 1966 shall, immediately upon having made and subscribed to the oath of office prescribed in the Schedule to this Order, be recognized and confirmed as the holder of the office of King as from the commencement of this Order.

bound by the Emergency laws as a matter of urgency.¹³⁴ Secondly, that should he refuse or fail to subscribe on oath, he will have forfeited his position as the King and be deemed to have abdicated.¹³⁵ This simply put, the Prime Minister had the power to recognize and confirm the King. This was contrary to the customs of Basotho in relation to succession to the office of the King. According to royal protocol, the family or Sons of Moshoeshoe, in most cases were the ones who confirmed the person who would occupy this higher office. In this case, the implication was that, another authority, the Prime Minister, would then recognise and confirm the holder of the office of the King.

The imposition of a curfew was achieved through the *Emergency Powers Order 1970*¹³⁶ which was one of the numerous repressive laws that were passed by the authoritarian government in 1970. It was passed to deal with public safety and order during the state of emergency. Section 3 (1) of this Order, in effect gave Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan, unchecked power. This power entailed passing of regulations which he deemed necessary at the time. It provided that,

“[The Prime Minister] may by Proclamation declare an emergency and for so long as that proclamation remains in force it shall be lawful for [the Prime Minister] to make, subject to the provisions of this Order, such regulations as are in his judgement necessary or expedient for securing the public safety, the defence of Lesotho, the maintenance of public order and the suppression of munity, rebellion and riot, and for maintaining supplies and services essential to the life of the community.”¹³⁷

This order implied that any acts of repression against the leaders of the opposition parties and supporters were done under the pretext of ensuring public safety as the expectation was that the opposition would rebel or resist authoritarian rule. In order to strengthen this Order, the Emergency Regulations were passed and on the basis on Section 17 of the Emergency Regulations, the curfew was imposed.¹³⁸ Thus, between 06:00 a.m. and 06:00 p.m. people could be detained, searched, put on trial and punished for ‘resisting’ the rule for violating the *Emergency Regulations*.

¹³⁴ Section 9 (1), Office of the King Order No. 51 of 1970, *Laws of Lesotho 1970*, Vol. XV, p. 420.

¹³⁵ Section 10 (1) Office of the King Order No. 51 of 1970, *Laws of Lesotho 1970*, Vol. XV, p. 421.

¹³⁶ “Emergency Powers Order No. 3 of 1970”, *Laws of Lesotho 1970*, Vol. XV, 1971, p. 9.

¹³⁷ “Emergency Powers Order No. 3 of 1970”, *Laws of Lesotho 1970*, Vol. XV, 1971, p. 10.

¹³⁸ Section 17 provides that, “If in the opinion of the Minister it is necessary in order to prevent danger or harm to public safety or public order, he may by order impose a curfew upon the inhabitants of any area specified in the order.”, *The Emergency Regulations No. 5 of 1970*, *The Laws of Lesotho 1970*, Vol. XV, p.446.

The ban on independent media was achieved through the Section 4 of the *Emergency (Amendment) Regulations* which provided that the newspaper or printed work was to be banned by the Minister on satisfaction that the said newspaper contains subversive statements.¹³⁹ Had these newspapers continued publishing, they would have had to pay a harsh fine worth M1000.00 or face five years prison time.

Consequences

The consequences of the events of 1970 were wide and varied for leaders of the opposition parties, prominent politicians and the King. The declaration of the state of emergency by Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan led to the rule by unpopular vote because the Prime Minister had gone as far as to invalidate the election results. This was achieved through the use of the *General Election (Invalidation) Order 1970*.¹⁴⁰ This act marked the era of one-party rule where the democratic choice by the voters was disregarded. It further set in motion acts which undermined principles of democracy. For the duration of the time spent in detention, the leaders of the opposition and prominent politicians were separated from their families and their normal everyday lives.

The suspension of the Supreme law of Lesotho had massive implications for Lesotho and its inhabitants. Firstly, it spelled disregard for the basic human rights and personal liberties and it meant that constitutional rule ceased to exist in Lesotho. This era spelled trouble for the opposition parties because it meant that repression was sanctioned by the government and there was no recourse as all human rights and personal liberties were also suspended. To strengthen this, the *Indemnity Order* was issued.¹⁴¹ This Order was repressive because it indemnified perpetrators of acts of violence from prosecution. In this way it enabled repression of opposition party leaders by the government, its forces or associates. Section 2 (1) provided that,

¹³⁹ Section 4, "The Emergency (Amendment) Regulations, Legal Notice No. 6 of 1970", *Laws of Lesotho 1970*, p. 457.

¹⁴⁰ "The General Election (Invalidation) Order No.4 of 1970", *The Laws of Lesotho Vol. XV, 1970*, p.12

¹⁴¹ "Indemnity Order No. 16 of 1970", *The Laws of Lesotho 1970 Vol. XV*.

“No proceedings, whether civil or criminal, shall be brought in any court of law against- (d) any officer or member of the Lesotho Mounted Police or (f) any person acting under the authority or by the direction or with the approval of any officer, member or person referred to in the preceding paragraphs of this subsection, by reason of any act, announcement, statement or information advised, commanded, ordered, directed, done, made or published by him in good faith on or after the 30th day of January 1970, and before the commencement of this Order, with intent to prevent or suppress internal disorder in any part of Lesotho or to maintain or restore good order to public safety or essential services therein or to preserve life or property therein.”¹⁴²

This section brings to the fore, the repression in the second instance because where one person has been violated upon, the law did not allow for retribution. The *Indemnity Order* promoted violation of human rights. Despite the suspension of the Constitution, the principles of humanity dictate that one treats their fellow human being with respect. It is understood to mean that for people who have been ruthlessly attacked or violated by the police or other authorised or unauthorised personnel, they had no right to institute legal prosecution against such persons. This affected both the leaders of the opposition parties and their supporters. The disregard for basic human rights was further undermined by section 3 of *the Continuation of the state of emergency Order 1970*, which provided that,

“No suit, action for damages, prosecution, or other legal proceedings shall lie against any person or authority for anything in good faith done or ordered to be done pursuant to the Emergency regulations during any period in which those regulations are in force or are deemed to have been in force.”¹⁴³

This is perhaps by far, the section which sought to protect the police from prosecution on the basis of their repressive acts against leaders of the opposition parties and villagers who were supporters of such opposition parties. In the case of Lesotho, the police were the perpetrators of violation of basic human rights which were no longer recognised under the authoritarian rule.

The King’s house arrest and subsequent exile had a huge impact. This affected his family, friends near and far and the Basotho nation. Firstly, this began with the separation or division of the King from his family: wife, children and his mother. B. M. Khaketla refers to this incident and how it had led to the sad separation of the young princes and a few months old

¹⁴² “Indemnity Order No. 16 of 1970”, *Laws of Lesotho*, Vol. XV, 1971, p. 280.

¹⁴³ “Continuation of the State of Emergency Order No. 5 of 1970”, *Laws of Lesotho 1970*, Vol. XV, 1971, p. 12-13.

princess from their father as they were whisked away to Matsieng Royal residence.¹⁴⁴ Secondly, this meant that in the absence of the King, someone had to step up and take over the role of being the Head of State. To this effect, Queen Mamohato Bereng Seeiso became the Regent in the months that King Moshoeshoe II was in exile. This changed things for the princes and the princess as they knew them, because, from that point their mother was now the head of state and busy. Consequently, the office of the Prime Minister became the most powerful authority in Lesotho.

The imposition of the curfew resulted in repression of the opposition parties' followers whose basic human right to free movement was infringed upon. This related to the limitation placed on when people could move at specific times failing which they would be punished. Secondly by imposing the curfew in different areas of the country, this meant that people's freedom of association was under stringent watch. They were under the watchful eye of the police and were not allowed to assemble together in groups of three or more lest they got accused of planning to topple the government.

The banning of independent media led to infringement on free media and a threat to the right to access to information. According to B. M. Khaketla, press freedom ceased to exist in Lesotho during the state of emergency.¹⁴⁵ This action had the desired effect because by banning the media opposed to its undemocratic rule, the government did not want its ruthlessness exposed. This is what these newspapers were doing. As a result, people ended up not knowing what was happening in different parts of Lesotho.

Conclusion

This chapter has focussed on the events of the 1970 state of emergency namely: the declaration of the state of emergency, the suspension of the constitution, the immediate arrest and detention

¹⁴⁴ B. M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p. 220.

¹⁴⁵ B. M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p. 229.

of leaders of the opposition parties, the house arrest and subsequent exile of King Moshoeshoe II, the imposition of the curfew and the banning of independent media. It has outlined how these events were carried out by government. It has shown that they were carried out through three main ways, namely: in public announcements made over the national Radio Lesotho, passed repressive laws which were a series of Government Orders and repressive deployment of the police. The consequences of these acts were immediate and far-reaching. They included the setting in of an authoritarian rule in Lesotho; human rights abuse, division of families such as in the case of leaders of the opposition parties who were detained for a couple of months and the King who was separated from his family, his community and the nation during the few months of his exile; the deployment of the police leading to perpetration of repression against the leaders of the opposition parties and prominent politicians; restricted movement due to the imposed curfew and lack of access to information due to the banning of independent media. The negative experiences of the state of emergency were not confined to the leaders of the opposition parties, prominent politicians and King Moshoeshoe II. They soon spread to civilians, supporters of the opposition parties whose crime was to vote for the BCP, and propelling it to victory in the 1970 general elections. The next chapter analyses personal testimonies of the seven Mathebe residents by focusing on the nature and character the traumatic experiences .

CHAPTER FOUR: THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF THE TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES IN MATHEBE VILLAGE

Introduction

“While the slight changes of atmosphere began to be noticed in Maseru, the Youth League extended its activities to villages outside Maseru. More reports of brutal treatment began to filter in. The Youth League, in conjunction with the P.M.U., began their operations in Mafeteng. There was no stopping the Youth League; they had tasted blood. They had become the embodiment of the law of the jungle. They went from village to village provoking trouble. When they got the worst of it, they immediately appealed to the P.M.U. on the pretext that they had been attacked without provocation by the supporters of the B.C.P. It was this type of behaviour which sparked off violence at Mathebe.”¹⁴⁶

In the two months that followed the declaration of the state of emergency, the government’s repression of the opposition spread to the supporters of the opposition parties residing in opposition-affiliated villages. It did this for the fear that, people residing in such villages would resist its undemocratic rule. This happened in Matsieng (Maseru district) where government had to deal with dissent against its authoritarian rule. Mooki Leepa, the former Assistant Commissioner of Police, who resigned in 1969, led a group of Matsieng men in an organised resistance against the authoritarian government.¹⁴⁷ Like other police officers, especially of a high ranking position, Leepa knew how to use a gun and other guerrilla tactics know-how. He shared this knowledge with the ‘men of the cave’ as they organised into a resistance group. The government responded by sending the PMU into Matsieng and a violent clash ensued leading to loss of lives and detention of the dissenters.

This chapter seeks to document the nature and character of the traumatic experiences of the seven Mathebe residents who became victims during the state of emergency. It does this to show the specific ways through which the interviewees suffered. It introduces Mathebe as a cases study and provides a justification that Mathebe village was affiliated to the BCP. This goes to show the reason why Mathebe village experienced repression and acts of political violence as it did. It then discusses the authoritarian-repression nexus by showing that the type of rule that existed in Lesotho at the time festered repression and political violence. The

¹⁴⁶ B. M. Khaketla, *Lesotho 1970*, p. 277

¹⁴⁷ Neville W. Pule and Motlatsi Thabane, “Mooki Leepa’s Rebellion of February to March 1970”, p. 19-37.

repression that took place in Mathebe was quiescence-related as there was no evidence about resistance to the undemocratic rule. It further discusses agency and explains that the government, PMU and BNPYL were the perpetrators and agents of repression and acts of political violence respectively. This was so because by suspending the supreme law of Lesotho, the government facilitated repression of civilians whose human rights and personal liberties were abused. Additionally, the PMU and the BNPYL carried out acts of political violence in Mathebe. It was through their agency that civilians experienced pain and suffering.

It then documents the nature and character of the traumatic experiences. It presents the three main dimensions of trauma experienced by the victims, namely: physical, material and psychological in nature and the unique human suffering related to each of these three dimensions. It maintains that the physical dimension manifested through assault and arrests and detention; the material trauma was seen through arson and psychologically, trauma cuts across all the specified acts of political violence that occurred in Mathebe. This chapter provides through victims' narratives, detailed description of how repression and the acts of political violence were meted out to them. It concludes that the acts of repression and political violence were meted out, specifically, to the supporters of the BCP in Mathebe.

Mathebe village: a short description

Mathebe is a small rural village situated in the lowlands of Lesotho and currently falls within the *Motsekuoa* Community Council, in the Mafeteng district. It is situated about sixty kilometres from the capital town, Maseru. Traditionally, it is under the local authority of the *Matetes* and falls under the wardship of the Principal Chief of *Matsieng*. Mathebe is made up of four sub-villages namely: Khophocha, Ha Ramosie, Khohlong and Aupolasi. The area which was mostly affected by the acts of repression was Aupolasi, near the Mathebe Lesotho Evangelical Church is, about four kilometres from Khophocha, the point of entry into the village. Similar to most rural settlements in Lesotho, the mode of production is agriculture which is subsistence rather than commercial. Each family owns between one and three portions of arable land. This village is named after the Mathebe Mountain which is adjacent to the village. Mathebe does not boast major developments except perhaps the LECSA Church and the Mathebe Primary and High schools. It has a soccer field situated at Aupolasi area.

Mathebe was a stronghold of the opposition party, BCP. In the pre-independence general elections held in April 1965, BCP won the *Monkhoaneng* Constituency where Mathebe was one of the electoral divisions. The 1965 general election results published in *Leselinyana la Lesotho*¹⁴⁸ reported that Sello Elliot Letšoara was a BCP candidate in that constituency. He was a Mosotho man, born in Bongalla, Ha Mojela (Mafeteng district) in 1924 who joined BCP in 1958 after serving in workers' associations in Morija between 1952 and 1957.¹⁴⁹ In the 1965 pre-independence general elections, BCP got 1598 votes, Victor Mokhachane Maholi of BNP received 1581 votes, Peter Petlane of MFP got 545 votes and MTP's Manare Puseletso Mabela received 585 votes.¹⁵⁰ BCP had won by 17 votes against the BNP. In the 1970 post-independence general elections, Sello Elliot Letšoara, the BCP candidate once again became victorious under the *Monkhoaneng* No. 36 Constituency. He garnered 2362 votes, BNP's M. Victor Maholi got 1715 votes and MFP's Mannex Mabela got 667 votes.¹⁵¹ Out of the seven Constituencies falling under the Mafeteng District, five were won by the BCP, one by BNP and one constituency, 'Masemouse's results was one of the fourteen constituency results that were not announced.¹⁵² It is clear therefore that Mafeteng district was the stronghold of the BCP, which places Mathebe in a special position where BCP was the most voted for political party. Comparatively, BCP had received more votes in Mafeteng in the 1970 general elections than in those held in 1965. The victims, whose testimonies are documented in this study, indicated that they were supporters of the BCP. All the interviewees have indicated that Mathebe was populated by BCP followers with few supporters of MFP and BNP. The latter were not victimised because the then area chief was a supporter of the MFP and supporters of MFP had sought refuge at her home.

The level of participation or activeness in the local politics varied from one interviewee to the next. This takes into consideration the card-carrying membership, the sympathisers and the actively involved members. Some interviewees such as MAT-MT¹⁵³ indicated that they were card-carrying members of the BCP and normally attended local meetings relating to the BCP

¹⁴⁸ *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, Vol. 98, No.11, 5 June 1965, p. 8.

¹⁴⁹ *Baemeli ba Mahatammoho 1965*.

¹⁵⁰ *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, Vol. 98, No.11, 5 June 1965, p. 8.

¹⁵¹ *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, Vol. 103, No.3, 6 February 1970, p. 4.

¹⁵² *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, Vol. 103, No.4, 13 February 1970, p. 4.

¹⁵³ Interview with MAT-MT, 28 March and 18 November 2019.

matters. For others like MAT-BT¹⁵⁴ and MAT-RM¹⁵⁵, being teachers meant that they could not actively participate in political activities despite their preferences. In order to keep their jobs, they had to toe the line.

The events that took place in Mathebe on the Easter Friday of 1970 were indicative of the repression perpetuated under the authoritarian rule. This was because the acts of violence on the victims were not pre-empted by acts of resistance to the authoritarian rule.

I was sitting in my house. Then as I sat, three young men entered. One of them was our neighbour's son. When they arrived they asked me why I was not listening to the radio. I said to them hey! Leave me alone. Can't you see I am working here? They told me I should be listening to the radio. They turned it on and asked me "what are you busy with"? I asked them; "What do you want"? Come and get me! I am here. They took few steps back. My neighbour's son approached me, brandishing a machete. He thought I would be scared of that. I stood my ground. They started attacking me.¹⁵⁶

The unconstitutional and undemocratic rule that existed in Lesotho at the time festered repression and political violence. The authoritarian government had created conditions that enabled repression. It was an undemocratic government which had no popular mandate. The decision of Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan to suspend the constitution, constituted the first act of repression which led to human rights abuse. In human rights studies, the Constitution is a significant legal instrument which enshrines human rights and individual liberties. These must be observed and protected. The suspension of the constitution spelled trouble for the civilians as their human rights and personal liberties were no longer protected and they faced unabated human rights abuse. Section 5 of the *Independence Constitution* provided that no person shall be deprived of a right to life. The constitution is the starting point in relation to matters concerning human rights abuse. The moment it is suspended, as it was in this case, the provisions cease to be effective but humanity prevails. The acts of political violence threatened the lives of Mathebe residents thus infringing on their right to life. The detention of the victims in Mafeteng and Maseru detention centres respectively, each for a period of not less than twelve

¹⁵⁴ Interview with MAT-BT, 08 December 2018.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with MAT-RM, 02 March 2019.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with MAT-MN, 08 December 2018.

months, constituted violation of their right to free movement. They were detained for self-defence against acts of political violence by the perpetrators. Did they pose a danger to the society which necessitated their detention? Were they found in possession of lethal weapons during an authorised search? The answer is no. They were detained to attain political goals. Freedom of assembly and organisation which the Mathebe residents were entitled to, was no longer allowed. The interviewees related that during this time, they were not to be seen to talk or have a discussion as a group of three people because there was constant suspicion that they were plotting to overthrow the government. Their association with the BCP led to their victimisation.

In order that there was no actual or potential threat to the 1970 undemocratic rule, the government condoned acts of repression and political violence. In Mathebe, there was no actual or potential threat to the authoritarian government. This is because there was no dissent in the form of organised and/or armed resistance. The interviewees related how the villagers readied themselves for the imminent attack. They did not initiate it or plot to go to Maseru to overthrow the government. Further, the failure of government to protect the victims and in turn protecting the perpetrators constituted repression. This is because the perpetrators were not prosecuted for their repressive acts. Instead, they were protected by the Emergency regulations. Thus the repression that took place in Mathebe was to maintain the status quo and sought quiescence.

In any given authoritarian rule where repression exists, the question of agency is significant. According to Jacqueline H. R. DeMeritt, government has the luxury of monopolising coercion or physical force, including repression. It achieves this through its agent(s), who are capable and prepared in the short and long term. These may be military forces, militia, mercenaries and others.¹⁵⁷ In Mathebe, the agents or perpetrators of the acts of repression and political violence against civilians were the BNPYL and the PMU. The first agent of repression was the BNPYL. It was an informal extension of the BNP powers that be, which was populated by the young members of the BNP from different parts of Lesotho. Some of the BNPYL members were also members of the PMU who had received training in weaponry and combat. The second agent

¹⁵⁷ Jacqueline H. R. DeMeritt, "The Strategic Use of State Repression and Political Violence", in *Oxford Encyclopedia, Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) p. unnumbered.

was the PMU, which was an arm of government that was inherited at independence from the colonial government. It was formed in 1963/1964 and charged with dealing with maintenance of law and order. It was the para-military unit which was well-trained in relation to the use of weapons, combat and the related. It had the technical skills required in war or conflict in comparison to the villagers. In the case of Mathebe, members of these two agents, clashed with Mathebe villagers. According to the personal testimonies of the victims, this clash was without provocation. They attacked Mathebe residents by using mainly machetes, guns and set on fire, the houses belonging to BCP supporters.

Physical trauma

The first specific dimension of trauma experienced in Mathebe was physical. This denotes pain inflicted on a person's body. The acts of political violence which fall within this dimension were assault, arrests and torture. Torture falls under both physical and psychological trauma, because the measures used by the perpetrators may inflict physical pain but the intention is to make victims suffer emotionally and mentally. This will be discussed later in the text. In *Crimes of Violence in Black Townships*, Gabriel Lindumusa Ndabandaba defines assault as "an unlawful, intentional, direct and indirect application of force to the person of another..."¹⁵⁸ The assault that took place in Mathebe was unlawful, intentional and involved direct application of force on people's bodies. According to MAT-BT, 'On that fateful Easter Friday, as people congregated at the nearby LEC Church for an Easter Friday service, some members of the PMU and the BNPYL waged an unprovoked attack on the villagers, young and old'. It was and still is common practice for Christian Basotho congregate in different churches during Easter to commemorate the passing of Jesus Christ.

The attack was characterised by violence. This is because of the nature of weapons used, their precision, sophistication and the results. MAT-BT recalled that, 'two Mathebe men: one young and the other older, were threatened by the perpetrators. The two men were walking to my home and were stopped by the perpetrators. They asked them why they were carrying

¹⁵⁸ Gabriel Lindumusa Ndabandaba, *Crimes of Violence in Black Townships*, (Durban: Butterworths, 1987), p. 1.

knobkerrie or fighting stick'. It is not uncommon for a Mosotho man to carry a fighting stick or *molamu*. 'Without waiting for a response, they fired shots in the air'. He related how the congregants, alarmed by the sound of gunshots, ran out of the church fearing for their lives. The use of guns was indicative of the violent nature of the repression that the victims faced. In proportion, the villagers used stones and fighting sticks to defend themselves. The guns are sophisticated, precise and deadly. MAT-MT recalled that 'one of the men was hit on the head with a stone by the villagers and died on the spot. He was a member of the PMU and the 'leader' of the perpetrators. Other assailants fled on foot and they were chased by the villagers'.¹⁵⁹ The violent clash led to the deaths of some of the perpetrators. There were no deaths reported on the victims 'side at this stage. It was not clear from the interviewees how many people died as some said six while others said eight and/or ten. One of the perpetrators escaped unharmed and was able to alert the police in Mafeteng about what just happened in Mathebe.

More often than not, men were at the forefront in political activities and related matters. This could be attributed to patriarchy as women were assigned non-risky roles. However, the physical suffering was not confined to men alone as women also became victims of assault. One of the examples of gruesome violence visited against defenceless women was that of MAT-MN, a wife and a mother of three. Similar to other interviewees, she supported the BCP.

I was assaulted by the young members of BNP, one of whom was known to me as he was the son of my neighbour and a relative of my husband within the extended family. Without provocation, these young men attacked me using machetes and knobkerrie. I fought back by using my hands and feet. I shielded my head with my hands and kicked at them with my feet. They targeted by head, knees and hands. I appealed to them to stop assaulting me but my pleas fell on deaf ears. They left me for dead. The next thing I know, I was in hospital.¹⁶⁰

This narrative presents physical suffering of a defenceless woman who received violent assault at the hands of the perpetrators. The type of weapons used to assault her and the extent of her injuries show the brutality with which she was attacked. The scars she showed the researcher, on her head and knees and her maimed hand seen through the loss of a small finger of the right hand, is a constant reminder of what she went through. This was a case of aggravated assault. *Gabriel Lindumusa Ndabandaba* defines aggravated assault as an unlawful, direct application

¹⁵⁹ Interview with MAT-MT, 28 March 2019.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with MAT-MN, 18 September 2018.

of force on another person's body with intention to cause grievous bodily harm or murder.¹⁶¹ In legal studies, aggravated assault is equivalent to attempted murder.

The arrests are the second form of repression through which victims suffered physically during the state of emergency. It is physical because it involved physical movement from one place to another. Generally, though arrests took place, all victims of arrests unanimously mentioned that their arrests were non-violent but politically motivated. Men were mostly arrested because of their participation in the deadly clash between the villagers and the perpetrators on the Easter Friday of 1970. They were charged with murder. This applied to MAT-MT and MAT-BT. However, the testimony of MAT-RN presents an atypical dynamic.

I do not know why I was arrested. It can only be those in power who know why they decided to arrest me because I was nowhere near Mathebe during *qomatsi*. I can only think that I was arrested due to political intolerance because my father was a well-known and powerful member of BCP in Mathebe. When these things happened in Mathebe, I was at UBLIS preparing for my final year examinations. I went home after completing my examinations which was in May 1970. Upon arrival I saw the horrific events that took place in my absence. I was arrested around June 1970 where I was escorted by the members of the Crime Investigating Department (CID). At this time, I had just been employed as a teacher at one High School in Mafeteng and because of this I could not actively participate in politics. I was first taken to Mafeteng Police Station but later transferred to Maseru Maximum prison. I was among the first detainees of Maseru Maximum prison.¹⁶²

In order to ensure arrest of Mathebe people, the government worked hand-in-hand with the local authorities. Every Mosotho is under the authority of a local chief where he/she resides. According to MAT-BT, the chiefs were instrumental in facilitating the arrests.

I had sought refuge in Thaba-Tšoeu, one of the neighbouring villages, where I taught at a local Primary school. The government had released a circular to the chiefs of the villages surrounding Mathebe to the effect that all Mathebe residents who have sought temporary residence in their villages, must return to Mathebe immediately. The chief of Thaba-Tšoeu then wrote a letter which stated that all Mathebe villagers residing temporarily in his village must report themselves at the Mafeteng Police Station. My colleague and I were escorted by the chief's right hand man from Thaba-Tšoeu to Mafeteng Police Station. We were travelling by public transport and were detained upon arrival at the Police Station. Our arrests were not violent.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Gabriel Lindumusa Nbandababa, *Crimes of Violence in Black Townships*, (Durban: Butterworths, 1987), p. 1.

¹⁶² Interview with MAT-RM, 02 March 2019.

¹⁶³ Interview with MAT-BT, 18 November 2019.

The arrest of Mathebe villagers became a matter of international relations between Lesotho and South Africa. The South African government assisted the government of Lesotho to ensure the arrest of the ‘wanted’ Mathebe people who had fled to the neighbouring country.

After taking part in the clash between the BNPYL and the villagers, I ran away three days later because the members of the PMU had threatened me. After the clashes, I fled to Thaba-Tšoeu. On my way back home, I came across members of the PMU, They asked me where I was going. I replied that I am going home to see my mother and my wife as I had learnt that the village was burned and I was worried about them, I said to them I had been to Thaba-Tšoeu to attend a family festivity. They told me I am the right person as they are looking for people like me. I got scared and asked them for a smoke. I smoked that cigarette until the bud started burning my hands. At that point they shoved and escorted me to the village. They asked me where my house was and I showed them. They took me there and told me not to lock the door as they were going to come back and kill me at night. I slept with one eye open that night and the next decided to flee to South Africa. I took the bus through the Mafeteng border post to South Africa and luckily there was a vacant position in one of the mines in Welkom so I joined. On the sixth month, since the *qomatsi* incidents, I was arrested at work. On the day of my arrest, I was told not to go to my normal duty station but was assigned trivial administrative work in the office. As I was working, I saw two South African police officers come into my boss’s office and I was called in. I knew then that it was time. I was arrested and deported under the escort of two vehicles to Mafeteng Police Station. I was then handed over to the Lesotho Police in Mafeteng.¹⁶⁴

Material trauma

The second dimension of the victims’ experiences was material trauma. This relates to the loss and/or destruction of material possessions such as property or assets which the victims were deprived use of. A specific act of political violence relevant in this case was arson. *Gabriel Lindumusa Ndabandaba* defines arson as, “...an unlawful setting of an immovable structure on fire with the intention to injure another or destroy that immovable structure. This crime can only be committed with regard to immovable property.”¹⁶⁵

After one of the perpetrators fled the village and alerted the Mafeteng Police of what happened, the Police came to the village to see what happened especially because the clash had led to loss of lives. This was around four in the afternoon. Just as the Police had entered the village, the

¹⁶⁴ Interview with MAT-MT, 28 March 2019.

¹⁶⁵ Gabriel Lindumusa Ndabandaba, *Crimes of Violence in Black Townships*, p. 3.

PMU members came into the village in their camouflaged vehicles. It was obvious that they too had received word of what transpired in Mathebe.

We saw from a distance, at *Khophocha*, the cloud of dust caused by the vehicles of the soldiers of Leabua as they entered the village travelling at high speed. The people living at Ha Ramosie had put stones in the road to block the vehicles from entering into the village. As soon as we saw the cloud of dust we knew that trouble was coming. One of the people who lost their lives was a member of these soldiers of Leabua and they had come to kill us. The stones which had been laid in the road bought us just enough time to flee.¹⁶⁶

The members of the PMU became the source at the second instance of acts of political violence against the villagers. This is because they invaded the village after the first clash between the villagers and the BNPYL. They fired shots at residents as they fled to the Mathebe Mountain. The next act that the PMU members did was to set the houses of the villagers alight. Out of the seven interviewees, five experienced arson, as their houses were set light by the PMU members.

By this time, it was late in the afternoon, around five or six p.m. Most villagers had fled to the mountain to seek refuge. Few had sought refuge at the local Chieftainess's house. The village was deserted. There were consistent gunshots fired at villagers who were fleeing the onslaught. After this, the arson began. This took place around 6 p.m. From the mountain overlooking the village, a lone figure would be seen, carrying a torch-like item which was used to burn the houses. This light moved from one house to the next as the houses were burned. The thatch roof of our roundavels caught fire easily as it was grass.¹⁶⁷

The arson that took place in Mathebe was violent and deadly. This was because, in some instances, the houses that were set on fire, had people in them whose lives were lost in the process. This was particularly the case at MAT-RM's home. This is the most talked about and tragic incident at Mathebe which took place at that time. One of the interviewees recalled how upon his return to the village he learnt of this horrific act.

I had fled to Thaba-Tšoeu following the clash between the villagers and the BNPYL which I took part in. When I returned to the village I learned of the gruesome killing of four women known to me. One of them was the wife of the local Reverend at Mathebe LEC. These women were locked into the house by the PMU and it was then set alight.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Interview with MAT-MM, 18 November 2019.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with MAT-MM 18 November 2019.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with MAT-MT, 28 March 2019.

On the other hand, MAT-RM learnt about these unfortunate turn of events when he got home in June or July 1970: that his father's two houses were torched. One was completely burned while the other was partially burned. This experience constituted a horrific act of political violence perpetrated against women. The three or four women had sought refuge at his father's house as he was a well-known member of BCP, when they were locked inside the roundavel that was then set alight.

The arson was intentional, patterned and politically motivated. The interviewees explained how when they came back from the mountain, they found that the houses that were burned belonged to supporters of the opposition party, BCP. "We were told by those people who remained at the village because they were either supporters of BNP or MFP, that the arsonists had knowledge of which houses belonged to the supporters of BCP, which were then set alight."¹⁶⁹

Psychological trauma

The last dimension of trauma experienced by the victims was psychological in nature. There is an undisputed link between trauma and shock. This relates to the human suffering by the victims through the negative feelings that they experienced during this traumatic event. The psychological is intertwined with the physical and the material trauma. It includes feelings of fear, apprehension, desperation, frustration, stress as the victims were assaulted, arrested, saw their houses go up in flames and during detention. These are brought up in their narration of the events. In their book, *Trauma and Transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of Suffering*, Richard G. Tedeschi and Lawrence G. Calhoun¹⁷⁰ mention that one of the commonly encountered emotional responses following a major life-threatening traumatic event is *fear and anxiety*. "When the circumstances to which individuals are exposed involve significant threat to life, health or to important property, it is likely that those individuals will feel apprehension, worry and concern for some time following the event."¹⁷¹ These feelings act as stimuli which propelled them to either flee or fight back. This became evident in the decision by the Mathebe villagers to, first, stand and fight back against the unprovoked attack by the perpetrators. They

¹⁶⁹ Interview with MAT-MM, 08 December 2018 and 18 November 2019.

¹⁷⁰ Richard G. Tedeschi and Lawrence G. Calhoun, *Trauma and Transformation: Growing in the Aftermath of Suffering*, p. 22.

¹⁷¹ Richard G. Tedeschi and Lawrence G. Calhoun, *Trauma and Transformation*, p. 22.

felt that their lives were threatened as they had learnt of atrocities that took place in neighbouring villages. The sounds of the gunshots are the signs which the interviewees associate with the unfolding of the events on that day. Secondly, the village was abandoned as a trove of villagers ran for their lives when the PMU came into the village on that late afternoon of the Easter Friday and as the fire raged through the village. The threat to their mortality propelled the villagers to flee their homes and seek temporary refuge in the nearby Mathebe Mountain overlooking the villages and in villages surrounding the Mathebe. The interviewees recall vividly the terrifying sounds and sights of that day.

After the Leabua's soldiers came into the village in their ugly looking *lifariki*, most villagers fled into the Mathebe Mountain for shelter, we were terrified by the unbearable and persistent sounds of gunshots and the chopper. This chopper hovered over the mountain sending a beam of light across the mountain top as the PMU chased people who ran to the mountain. We watched in horror, the village below, as most houses were on fire. Never had we been so scared in our lives.¹⁷²

The sounds and sights of that fateful night were etched on the minds of the victims. So much so, that even months after the incident, whenever they saw cars approaching from *Khophocha* and heard sounds of a passing helicopter, they thought *qomatsi* was back.

Vulnerability is an important aspect in victimology studies. In most cases, women and children are at the forefront on discussions on vulnerability and victimhood. In Mathebe, women and children became victims of repression and acts of political violence. The deaths of the four women who were killed by the fire inside MAT-RM's house was traumatic to their families and the community at large. These were mothers, wives and leaders in their village whose loss devastated different sections of the community. In some cases, relatives of the deceased decided to abandon their homes and relocate to other parts of the country while some relocated to other countries in Southern Africa. This was because of the psychological trauma suffered due to the loss of their family members during the state of emergency.

Additionally, the four female interviewees who were mothers at the time of *qomatsi*, have shared their psychological trauma. MAT-MN was a wife and a mother of two daughters and a son, who died at a young age. She related that, 'I was worried most about the safety and welfare of my children. As I lay on the hospital bed, I would think to myself, what are they eating? Are

¹⁷² Interview with MAT-MM, 08 December 2018. The *lifariki* was the name given by the locals to the vehicles which the PMU members used. They maintained that these vehicles had an outlook of a pig and were ugly.

they okay? Who is taking care of them? Who is feeding them? I was in hospital for five weeks.¹⁷³

At the time of her attack, MAT-MN's husband was in South Africa, where he worked as a miner. He had not come home for the Easter holidays. He was not there to protect her as a husband should. He only came home on the first week of her hospitalisation but had to go back to work immediately after that.

Although she may have recovered from her physical scars, she has not healed psychologically as she has never had a chance to ask her assailants who have all since died, why they attacked her. Will healing be possible when her assailants are no longer alive to present their version of the story? What threat did she pose which led to her near-death experience? These and other questions, haunt MAT-MN. She mentioned that there were times when she came across one of her assailants, who was known to her. She said, she would call him and tell him that she is still alive although he had wanted to kill her.

MAT-MS related how after her only house was set on fire, her living arrangements changed.

Just like other villagers, I had fled from the horror that took place in the village. I ran to the Mathebe Mountain, holding my eldest child by the hand as we ran for our lives. I was afraid that I was going to die. I was afraid that my child would die. I was afraid that my child, whom I was pregnant with, would also die. I was afraid that the PMU was going to shoot us. We stayed in the mountain for two days and started going back on the third day. As I was heavily pregnant, I relied on the assistance of my mother who took the burner stove, pots and cooked for my children and I there at the mountain. Upon our return from the mountain, I found that my house was burned and I had no roof over my head. I had to move back in with my in-laws.¹⁷⁴

She mentioned that because of the shocking turn of events in Mathebe, when her daughter was born, she gave her a name which means disbelief or shock. This indicated a long practiced tradition by Basotho who named their children in association with an event which took place when they were born. She was born just after the shocking *qomatsi* incidents. On the other hand, MAT-MM was a new nursing mother whose child was between two and three months old at the time.

¹⁷³ Interview with MAT-MN 08 December 2018

¹⁷⁴ Interview with MAT-MS, 18 November 2019.

When we fled from Mathebe, I was carrying my infant on my back, who was wrapped in a blanket. My siblings and I, had run and fled into different villages. Some went to my sister's marital home while I fled to *Boleka*. The utmost thing on my mind was, to evade death that starred me and my child in the face. My thoughts were on the safety of my infant and finding a safe place to hide. I was also worried about the safety of my younger sister who was eleven years at the time. Both our parents worked in South Africa then and they had not come home for Easter.¹⁷⁵

In a similar manner, MAT-MB feared for her life.

I was compelled by the fear of death to run for my life. I held my son's hand and carried my daughter on my back as we fled the onslaught of the PMU on our village. I remember vividly at one point; my son fell when a shot was fired. I swiftly picked him up and the bullet hit the spot where he had fallen.¹⁷⁶

Furthermore, psychological trauma was perpetuated through arrests and detention. This was because; the detainees were arrested for the deaths of the perpetrators that resulted from self-defence. The detention of the victims served as a measure through which the government ensured that their movements were curtailed.

While in detention, MAT-RM, MAT-BT and MAT-MT were worried about their families.

I was worried about the well-being of my father who was assaulted by the PMU in Mathebe. My father was a staunch member of the BCP in Mathebe. On the other hand, my mother's frail health worried me. I know that the killings carried out by the PMU when they set our house alight had deeply worried her. The smell that lingered in that place after that horror was enough to make one sick.¹⁷⁷

In a similar manner MAT-BT mentioned that his mother's frail health worried him. He mentioned that he was worried about his sister who was in high school at the time and he missed the cattle that he used to look after.¹⁷⁸ On the other hand, MAT-MT worried over his wife and his family. He explained that his wife was pregnant during this time. He was worried about her, their daughter's and the unborn child's well-being. He further mentioned that he was worried about his siblings as he was the eldest child'.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Interview with MAT-MM, 18 November 2019.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with MAT-MB, 09 April 2019 and 18 November 2019.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with MAT-RM 18 November 2019.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with MAT-BT, 02 March and 18 November 2019.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with MAT-MT, 18 November 2019.

There were varying testimonies about the victims' experiences while in detention. Two of the interviewees, mentioned that they had an uneventful and relatively nice time in detention.

I had a good time in detention compared to the violence that we experienced in the village. We were safe in detention. I became the choir conductor in there as choral music is my passion. I continued enjoying it. It soothed me. We would pass time, singing songs of Lesotho's well-known choral music composer, JP Mohapeloa.¹⁸⁰

One interviewee narrated his traumatic solitary detention experience which left him heartbroken.

When I was younger, I was involved in a car accident and one of my arms was badly injured. This led to the difference in size of my two arms. When I was arrested, I was hand-cuffed together with a criminal and due to the reduced size of my arm, the cuffs would come off and the police thought I was dangerous, not knowing and understanding my physical predicament. For this reason, I was kept in solitary confinement for a week as the wardens feared that I would escape. This caused me heartache because I had no intention of breaking out of detention.¹⁸¹

Another specific psychological trauma experienced was torture while in detention. This type of traumatic experience, although physical in nature, is administered as a psychological strategy used to coerce arrestees to confess during interrogation. MAT-MT was one such victim of torture while in detention.

When I was in detention at Mafeteng Police Station, I was tortured by the wardens. Pain was inflicted on my body. In winter, I was forced to strip naked and was put under a tap dripping of cold water. As the cold water hit my body, I was whipped with a *sjambok*. The wardens used to eavesdrop on our conversations as detainees and we had to be careful what we talked about to spare ourselves this torture.¹⁸²

In this manner, prisons and detention centres became repressive places, where psychologically traumatic acts were carried out against the victims. The act of stripping MAT-MT naked, constituted humiliation as one of the psychological experiences which he faced. The beating was meant to inflict unbearable pain which would propel him to 'talk' or confess.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with MAT-BT, 02 March 2019.

¹⁸¹ Interview with MAT-MT, 28 March 2019.

¹⁸² Interview with MAT-MT, 18 November 2019.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how Mathebe experienced repression and acts of political violence. It has shown that the nature of rule that existed in Lesotho at the time festered repression and acts of political violence. These acts were perpetrated by the PMU and the BNPYL under authoritarian government. It discussed with the assistance of the interviewees' voices, the violent nature of the events that occurred in Mathebe. It has shown that the interviewees suffered physical trauma particularly through assault and arrests. Furthermore, they suffered material trauma as their houses were set alight in acts of arson. It has further shown that the violence that took place brought about psychological trauma to the victims through, assault, detention and torture while in detention. The repression and acts of political violence had severe consequences on the victims' everyday lives, their families and communities. These consequences are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CONSEQUENCES OF TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES IN MATHEBE VILLAGE

Introduction

This chapter documents the consequences of repression and acts of political violence experienced by the seven victims and to some extent their families during the state of emergency. It does this to show that there were many and varied consequences resulting from the traumatic experiences which negatively affected the victims. Not only were the victims affected, but their families and the whole Mathebe community was traumatised.

In order to contextualise these negative consequences, this chapter begins with a definition of a family in the context of Lesotho, the positions and roles of women and men in a family. It does this to demonstrate how the trauma experienced by the victims negatively affected their daily lives as role players in their families and communities. It maintains that these traumatic experiences had adverse social, economic, political and health consequences. It shows that the social consequences that the physical, material and psychological traumatic experiences brought into the victims' social lives included separation of members of the family, homelessness, and disruption of studies and/or educational activities not only of the victims but their siblings as well and loss of time. Economically, the victims' traumatic experiences led to loss of income due to job loss, indirect costs related to legal fees and rebuilding of houses destroyed by the fire. The political consequences led to political discord within the community where the victims were subjected to secondary victimisation by their fellow villagers. The health consequences included hospitalisation and detention leading to separation of one from their family. It concludes that the traumatic experiences associated with the events of the state of emergency hit at the heart of the victims', their families and the Mathebe community's everyday lives.

Family

Numerous authors have written about what a family is, especially in the context of Basotho culture.¹⁸³ For the purpose of this study, a definition by Collin Murray is adopted where he defines family in terms of lineage and not of household. He defines a Basotho family in four-fold as constituting any of the following: a household constituting of a basic unit of co-residence and consumption; homestead or physical space occupied by the household; a 'house' which is part of a property complex associated with a married woman and the wider family lineage which is constituted by a number of houses. Basotho use the term *leloko* (to mean all those people you are relate to through your father or mother including mother's brothers, (*bo-malome*), father's sisters (*bo-rakhali*) and so on."¹⁸⁴ This view is endorsed by Puleng Letuka and others¹⁸⁵ in *Women and Law in Southern Africa*, where they define a family as being a wider group that includes grandchildren, grandparents and their off-springs, their wives and children.

The definition of a family in Lesotho is influenced by numerous factors. The first one being patriarchy. Lesotho is a patrilineal country and as such the father has paternal power of the children and is regarded as the guardian while the mother is a custodian and a caretaker.¹⁸⁶ A family is further defined in terms of belonging. This means that for one to say that a certain family is hers or his, it is because he/she has a sense of belonging to that family. For instance, for a woman to say that this is my family it means that she belongs to that family by virtue of being born from or being married into that family. In their book titled *Family belonging for Women in Lesotho*, Puleng Letuka and others¹⁸⁷ maintain that a person may belong to one or more families for different purposes. These varieties of purposes include a family that one is born from, her marital family, her immediate family that she has established with her husband and children and to the broader lineage. Men on the other hand do not enjoy these varieties. A

¹⁸³ Collin Murray, *Families Divided: The Impact of Migrant Labour in Lesotho*; Debby Gill, (ed) *The Situation of children and Women in Lesotho*, (UNICEF and Government of Lesotho, 1994), p. xii; Hugh Ashton, *The Basuto*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1952 and 1967), p.18; Puleng Letuka, *Family belonging for Women in Lesotho*, (Maseru: Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust, 1998), p. 28; Puleng Letuka et al, *Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Project: Maintenance in Lesotho*, (Maseru: Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Project, 1991), p. xii; and W.C.M. Maqutu, *Contemporary Family Law*, (Roma: Lesotho: National University of Lesotho Publishing House, 2005), p. 129.

¹⁸⁴ Collin Murray, *Families Divided: The Impact of Migrant Labour in Lesotho*, p. 100.

¹⁸⁵ Puleng Letuka et al, *Women and Law in Southern Africa*, p. xii.

¹⁸⁶ W.C.M. Maqutu, *Contemporary Family Law*, p. 129.

¹⁸⁷ Puleng Letuka et al, *Family belonging for Women in Lesotho*, p. 26.

man belongs to his family, that which he was born into and the one that he establishes with his wife.

There are different positions occupied by husbands and wives in a family. The husband becomes the head of his immediate family, the patriarch and one of the decision-makers in the wider sense of the family. In essence, upon marriage, the woman becomes a minor and is defined in relation to her reproductive capabilities.

The roles that men and women play in the family vary. In Lesotho, men are heads of the families. By virtue of a man being the head of the family, he is the provider and protector of that family. This does not apply to his immediate family alone but the wider family where the expectation is that he will take care of the orphans in the family. He provides security and food for the family.¹⁸⁸ A new dynamic has emerged of families headed by women. This happens when a man either deserts the wife or leaves her to raise the children alone or where the husband has died and the wife assumes the role of the leader of the family.

On the other hand, women's roles revolve around bearing, nurturing and taking care of the children and ensuring their socialisation. The nurturing role played by women has economic implications as they give it their time, dedication and labour in ensuring that the children are properly brought up. Women ensure that there is adequate food and shelter especially for their children. In addition, wives are expected to till the soil, plough and harvest agricultural produce from the fields.

Men and women played different roles in relation to families' subsistence. In Lesotho, it is common for Basotho men to work in the mines in South Africa in order to accumulate money for subsistence. Men spent longer periods of time in the mines and would send money home for the wives to purchase necessities for the families. Women on the other hand, were left at home to tend to the fields and engage in subsistence farming.

¹⁸⁸ Puleng Letuka and others, *Family belonging for Women in Lesotho*, p. 39.

Social consequences

The repression and acts of political violence that victims experienced during the state of emergency had devastating, short-term and long-term social consequences in their daily lives, their families and the society. The first significant consequences related to the negative effect that the traumatic experiences had on family structure. The absence of any family member for any reason and length of time, impacts negatively on the whole family not just their household. The detention of men led to separation of members of families. They spent varying lengths of time in detention as their cases dragged on through the Mafeteng Magistrate Courts. MAT-MT, who was already married and had children at this time, was detained for a year. This meant that for the period of time spent in detention, his child missed his guiding values. He recollected that, ‘my being away from my family, made it impossible for me to provide for them. It is the duty of the husband to provide for his family’.¹⁸⁹ A husband not only provides for his children but his wider family. His absence not only impacted on his nuclear family, but the extended family and the community. In many communities, men work together in activities that demand strength and cohesion. These include local initiatives such as fixing roads, digging boreholes for the water supply, repairing houses, kraals and other community development works.

On the other hand, MAT-BT was detained for thirteen months at Mafeteng prison. He was a teacher at one Primary school in Mafeteng. He related that, ‘I was unable to contribute towards providing for my mother whose health had deteriorated as my father was not working’.¹⁹⁰ Additionally, MAT-RM was detained for a period of twenty-one months at Maseru Maximum Prison. He lost time to assist his father in rebuilding their house. This loss of time meant that they were removed from their normal everyday social space, where they interacted with their families and other community members. They were now residents of repressive, social control places such as detention centres where they were allowed visitors but under strict guard and constant surveillance of the wardens. They had no benefits, no privacy and those who were married, were not afforded conjugal rights.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with MAT-MT, 18 November 2019.

¹⁹⁰ Interview with MAT-BT, 18 November 2019.

We were allowed visitors once a week. My wife visited me only once. On that occasion, we were provided chairs to sit on, near the gate under strict surveillance of the warden. There was always an officer hovering near us and listening in on our conversations. We had to be careful what we talked about because we would end up being tortured for words we uttered.¹⁹¹

Homelessness was one of the consequence of the state of emergency in Mathebe. This was due to the destruction of houses from the arson which befell some of the victims as per the following recollection:

When we returned from *Boleka*, after about three days, we discovered to our shock that both our parents' houses were burned down. The thatched roof had caved in and the smoke was seen for a number of days. My four siblings and I, had no place to stay, no beds to sleep on and we became homeless as we had no roof over our heads.¹⁹²

It was during these difficult times that neighbourly relations came into play to save the day. The victims asked for help from their neighbours who had unused houses to provide them with temporary shelter in their unused houses. MAT-MM related that they spent eight months without a place to call home.¹⁹³

Similarly, MAT-MS recalled how her family became homeless. She related that when their house was burned down, her nuclear family became homeless. They then moved back in with her in-laws.¹⁹⁴ She related that, her husband worked in the mines but passed away the same year and she has been staying with her in-laws since. Additionally, MAT-MB mentioned that their house was burned down during the political attacks on Mathebe community. Further that her father-in-law allocated them another house which was not in constant use and her family was able to move into it and have a roof over their heads'.¹⁹⁵

Another social consequence was the disruption to the studies and educational activities. Children were placed into schools from a young age where they gained knowledge and skills to read and write, ultimately better their lives and improve their prospects. Schools became a place where children socialised. Part of the earnings accumulated by the fathers working in the mines was used as tuition fees for children. In most cases, children were placed in local schools

¹⁹¹ Interview with MAT-MT, 18 November 2019.

¹⁹² Interview with MAT-MM, 02 March 2019.

¹⁹³ Interview with MAT-MM, 02 March 2019.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with MAT-MS, 18 November 2019.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with MAT-MB, 18 November 2019.

run by churches which their parents were members of. The season starts in January and ends in December. Due to the arson that took place, some victims lost their clothes in the fire as they were burned and nothing was salvaged. MAT-MS recalls what they lost in the fire and how this affected her children's studies. 'After the fire that ravaged my only house, my eldest child who was in school at the time, lost her school attire and other clothes as we were left with the clothes that we were wearing'.¹⁹⁶

This meant that children in schools did not have school attire, books and shoes.

I had two siblings, a brother and a sister who were in grades five and three respectively. They had to stay at home for the whole month following this incident because they had no school attire and no clothes at all to wear to school or even at home. My brother consequently dropped out of school so as to play a part in raising funds to rebuild our burned house. He left and sought work in South African mines. This proved difficult because he was inexperienced and was only able to get work that attracted low wages. Thus it took longer to raise the needed amount.¹⁹⁷

Similar recollections about children abandoning their studies were collected. MAT-MB recalled that in the same way, her son who was six years old at the time was forced by famine to abandon his studies and work as a herd boy in the village. He was rewarded with food.¹⁹⁸

Another consequence of the state of emergency related to disruption of individual's academic plans that people had to better their lives.

As I had just completed my first degree at UBLS, I had planned to continue with my studies into the post-graduate programme and had been nominated for an international scholarship. However, my arrest and detention from 1970 to 1971 disrupted these plans. I lost two years of study and was only able to resume my post-graduate studies abroad in 1972.¹⁹⁹

The last social consequence was loss of time. For people who were detained, they lost more than twelve months' worth of time. Time which they would have used to improve their lives, be with their families, friends, and their communities.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with MAT-MS, 18 November 2019.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with MAT-MM, 18 November 2019.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with MAT-MB, 18 November 2019.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with MAT-RM, 18 November 2019.

Economic consequences

The first economic consequence was loss of income due to job loss. This is because upon returning from detention, the interviewees lost their jobs which consequently led to loss of income.

When I came out of detention, I was told by the School Administrator that my position had been filled up by someone else. I spent few months without a job and without an income. As an eldest child, a son at that, I had to earn my way. Thus I set out to find a new teaching job and was later employed at another Primary School. I did not spend a long time there as in 1972 the church-run schools defaulted in paying teachers and we had to go back home. Now a married man and faced with another job loss, towards the end of 1972, I decided to join the migrant labour sector and became a miner in South Africa. I had a child on the way and wife and my family to feed.²⁰⁰

In the same manner, MAT-RM who was fresh from tertiary school, had just been employed as a teacher at a Secondary School. He indicated that he had just started work and had only been paid his first or second wages when he was arrested and detained. He lost his job as he was detained for twenty-one months.²⁰¹ This job provided him with the much needed experience in the fi which would go a long way in improving his prospects as a teacher.

MAT-MT also lost income due to the loss of his job in the mines.

This weighed heavily on me because I was a family man who had to provide for his parents, wife and children.²⁰² This was made worse because I got blacklisted in South Africa because I had been listed as a wanted murderer when I fled from Lesotho to South African mines in 1970 following *qomatsi* in Mathebe. I was blacklisted for a period of ten years from 1972 to 1982 and this whole time I was without a paying job. My monthly wages totalled one thousand Maloti as I worked in emergency department at the mines. I was a safety officer. In 1982, I decided enough is enough I had to stand up for myself and sought cancelation of this blacklisting which was having negative economic effect on my life. I approached the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Lesotho and requested them to talk to their South African counterparts. It took them the whole year of 1982 to resolve my case and in 1983 I was able to return to work.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Interview with MAT-BT, 18 November 2019.

²⁰¹ Interview with MAT-RM 18 November 2019.

²⁰² Interview with MAT-MT, 18 November 2019.

²⁰³ Interview with MAT-MT, 18 November 2019.

Politically-motivated famine was another economic consequence. Food is one of the basic needs for human survival. The people whose houses were destroyed were deprived of food through arson and faced famine. This was because they lost their agricultural harvest in the fire. MAT-MN related that she lost twenty bags of sorghum, fifteen bags of maize and another fifteen bags of wheat in the fire.²⁰⁴ On other hand, MAT-MM recalled that her family lost twenty bags of maize. This meant that her family had no food to eat. It was in times like this that the families and communities come together to show humanity by assisting those affected. MAT-MM's family from Mafeteng came to their rescue with some food supplies to make sure that they had something to eat as thier parents were still at work in South Africa.²⁰⁵ This is captured in the Sesotho idiom, *sejo senyane ha se fete molomo*.²⁰⁶ As Mathebe was attacked during the harvesting season, this meant that, families had to purchase some food supplies in order to eat. This became an indirect cost related to insufficiency of food due to arson.

Another economic consequence was incurrence of unforeseen and unplanned costs. The first category of these costs related to legal expenses. For instance, the detainees incurred legal costs as they needed legal representation in their court case. This legal representation was a young lawyer who was fresh from UBLS. He had taken up these political cases as he was sympathetic to the BCP.

There were a total of fourteen people from Mathebe who were in detention.²⁰⁷ We paid our lawyer an amount of money totalling **M3, 000.00**, which we all fourteen of us contributed equally.

That meant that the fourteen each detainee paid M 214.30. As these men were in detention with no source of income, their families, neighbours and their community had to lend a hand to ensure that the required amounts were paid.

As mentioned in earlier passages, the detainees were charged with murder of the perpetrators.

The initial charge sheet read against us was murder as we were accused of having murdered people in Mathebe. This was later changed to culpable homicide because our lawyer was able to convince the magistrate that we had had no intention of killing those people. That in reality, we were defending

²⁰⁴ Interview with MAT-MN, 18 September 2018.

²⁰⁵ Interview with MAT-MM, 18 November 2019.

²⁰⁶ Translated this means that the little that one has, can be shared with others.

²⁰⁷ Interview with MAT-MT, 18 November 2019.

ourselves against their attack. He further argued that the perpetrator had acted unlawfully when they came into Mathebe because their presence was not authorised by a search warrant.²⁰⁸

This case lasted for twelve months and the fourteen accused won the case and charge of murder against them was reduced to culpable homicide after the prosecution was unable to prove beyond reasonable doubt why the perpetrators were in Mathebe and that, they had actually initiated the attack on the villagers, who in turn defended themselves and their properties.

The second category of direct incurred costs related to the rebuilding of the houses which were damaged by the fire. These were all roundavel-structured houses, whose walls were constructed with a mixture of mud and cow dung. The fire had destroyed the roofing in numerous houses as they all had thatched roofing which easily caught fire. The walls were badly damaged as the mud and cow dung mixture became porous following exposure to extreme heat.

MAT-MN mentioned that, she was fortunate because she had two houses and although one of them was destroyed by the fire. Her family still had a roof over their head. She indicated that they built another house a number of years later though she could not remember the exact year.²⁰⁹ Additionally, MAT-MM recalled that,

My parents who were working in South Africa at the time, managed to rebuild one of the two burned houses in December 1970 when they came home for Christmas. They took more than 6 months to raise enough money to be able to rebuild one house and could not afford to rebuild both houses. We tried amongst ourselves as siblings to rehabilitate one of the burned houses, but the mud-walls had become so porous that, the mixture kept falling off and we got discouraged.²¹⁰

None of the victims clearly recalled the costs of rebuilding the houses as these events happened almost fifty years ago but MAT-MB recalled that one bundle of thatch grass cost M10.00 each.

There were other indirect costs caused by these traumatic experiences. These included transport costs of family and community members who visited the detainees in detention centres. MAT-BT mentioned that, 'Once every week, we were visited by our family members and members of Mathebe community. They used to bring us food. In order to get there, the visitors used

²⁰⁸ Interview with MAT-BT, 02 March 2019.

²⁰⁹ Interview with MAT-MN, 02 March 2019.

²¹⁰ Interview with MAT-MM, 18 November 2019.

public transport and they incurred costs related to bus fares once every week to us'.²¹¹ The interviewees could not recall the exact amount of the bus fare for one person.

Political consequences

The traumatic events that took place in Mathebe were an example of political marginalisation of the supporters of the opposition party, BCP by the agents of the repressive dispensation. Their crime was supporting and casting their votes in favour of the BCP, which propelled it to victory during the 1970 general elections. They were thus marginalised through repression. This marginalisation resulted in political divisions as people began to assume identities depending on which side they stood. According to MAT-MM the people whose houses were damaged by arson were humiliated by those who were not affected. Those who supported BNP or MFP would call them names, such as children of ma-congress as if they were wrong by supporting BCP.²¹² This was done to humiliate them so that they would feel worthless for supporting the BCP. This speaks to political identity such that, those supporting the BCP were shunned while those that supported the BNP were the favourites and those that supported MFP were accommodated or tolerated by the BNP supporters. MAT-BT lamented their lack of understanding of politics back then.

People hated each other as residents of the same village as they supported different political parties. There was political intolerance which is not the case these days. This does not happen in Lesotho these days. People supporting different political parties are tolerant of each other's preferences and live in harmony.²¹³

Health Consequences

The events that took place in Mathebe had a bearing on the health of the victims. For instance, hospitalisation became a consequence of assault for MAT-MN due to the extent of the injuries she sustained during the vicious attack by members of the BNPYL. She had deep cuts on her head, her knees and her hands. This resulted in maiming as she lost the last finger on her right

²¹¹ Interview with MAT-BT, 18 November 2019.

²¹² Interview with MAT-MM, 08 December 2018.

²¹³ Interview with MAT-BT, 18 November 2019.

hand. Her hospitalisation lasted for five weeks. The five weeks' hospitalisation involved a move between two hospitals namely Mafeteng Hospital where she spent the first week and the remaining four weeks she spent at Scott Hospital in Morija. Being in hospital, meant eating food she was unfamiliar with. She related that while she was in hospital in Mafeteng, one lady from Mathebe tried to poison her. "I heard her while I slept that she was going to 'finish' me by giving me food poison. Indeed, the same woman brought me food and I refused to eat it".²¹⁴

From this narration, it is evident that there was lack of trust between villagers based on their political preferences. A hospital although meant to alleviate one's pain and suffering, has the potential to achieve the opposite and may lead to stress or depression on the patient. A mother and a child's bond is one of the most special relationships in any given society. For a mother to be away from her children for that long, for reasons beyond her, took a toll on MAT-MN psychologically. A mother sees to it that her children are well prepared to go to school, are wearing clean clothes and have their lunch boxes ready. For her, she could only stress over that. This was exacerbated by the fact that her husband was working in the mines and that meant her children now took care of themselves. Being in hospital can be daunting. It means one is in a place which is foreign to them with medication being administered every now and then. MAT-MN preferred home cooked meals over hospital meals. This meant that her family had to come and see her and bring food for her every now and then. The hospitalisation does not only affect the patient negatively; it affects their family. The toll that her hospitalisation had on her husband was massive.

My husband was so worried about me especially after an attempt on my life in Mafeteng Hospital which prompted him to request that the hospital transfer me to another hospital. At the end of April, he quit his job, came back home and looked after our children and property. After my release in hospital, he looked after me and never went back to work in the mines. It took me a year to finally feel better.²¹⁵

Her hospitalisation also affected the community as well. The injuries that she sustained and the time that she spent at hospital left the community members worried. They worried about her and whether she would make it. They put her in their prayers at Church. They checked up on her children every now and then to make sure that she was recovering well. MAT-BT narrated that,

²¹⁴ Interview with MAT-MN, 18 September 2018.

²¹⁵ Interview with MAT-MN, 18 September 2018.

On the day of *qomatsi* at Mathebe, I saw MAT-MN and she was badly injured. There was blood all over. I went to neighbouring village to search for her children to let them know that their mother was injured badly, as they had fled to this village. During the weeks that she was in hospital, I was so worried if she would make it because due to loss of blood she had lost consciousness.²¹⁶

However, in the short term, MAT-MN mentioned that she had developed illness related to fainting which could have been related to the extent of her head injuries. She mentioned that she did not incur expenses while in hospital as she was released without being required to pay.

Secondly, the traumatic events affected the interviewees and Mathebe at large, mentally and emotionally. Although there are no psychological and psychiatric studies done and the victims never received psychological or psychiatric analysis, these events shook the residents to the core. The lack of psychological studies does not wipe away the fact that these shocking and horrific events took place. Most of them had related how, they recalled with shock the scene at MAT-RM house where four women died inside. They recalled how those women were maimed with machetes and locked inside that house to burn to death. The interviewees' facial expression when they narrated the horror of the four women burned in MAT-RM's house, is still evident. They spoke in dismay about the smell that lingered in that place for weeks that followed the incidents.

They recalled with trepidation how they looked on from the mountain as their houses were burned, the fire engulfing the *Aupolasi* area, as the smoke rose and covered the whole village. This had an impact on their mental health. With this shocking images etched on their minds, one is left with questions. How do they find healing? What form should this healing process take? How does the government of any day develop Mathebe and other villages that faced the same ordeal? Are the perpetrators willing to come to the table, relate their side of the story and ask for forgiveness?

I thought when our party ruled, our lives, our community would change. I thought that, we would have nice roads and live better. But it would seem we are forgotten.²¹⁷

²¹⁶ Interview with MAT-BT, 08 December 2018.

²¹⁷ Interview with MAT-MN 18 November 2019.

Conclusion

This chapter has documented the consequences of repression and acts of violence which the interviewees experienced. It has shown how these traumatic experiences struck at the core of the day to day lives of the interviewees. It discussed the social, economic, political and health consequences resulting from repression and acts of violence on Mathebe residents as narrated by the interlocutors. The interviewees lost time, jobs, incurred costs, were humiliated by their fellow community members, and their mental health were imprinted with horrific sights of charred bodies and their houses burning. The next chapter concludes by showing the findings of this study. It then recommends the way forward to facilitate and ease healing of these and other victims of similar acts of political violence.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This study has documented the experiences of seven residents of Mathebe who became victims of repression and acts of political violence during the state of emergency. Their crime was that they supported and stayed in a village affiliated to the opposition party, BCP. It has shown that there is lack of ordinary people's personal testimonies in the history of the state of emergency as the available literature has focused on the repression of political leaders, the King and the political elites. The reality is that repression and horrific acts of violence were visited on the supporters of BCP who were not authors of the crisis. It draws attention to the need for more studies on history and theory focusing on oral history, testimonies and memory studies in Lesotho so that, in future, there will be a full picture of the traumatic experiences in post-colonial Lesotho.

This study started by tracing the history of the State of emergency from the fragile embryonic democratic period of 1966-1970. It began at this point because this marked the beginning of the Prime Ministerial role of Leabua Jonathan. It held that this period was characterised by fragility in a newly-independent Lesotho. The two main causes of this fragility were the slim majority of the seats that the BNP had in the National Assembly in comparison to the opposition parties. Secondly the political challenges posed by the King's reservations on the unchecked power awarded to the Prime Minister by the constitution and constant political challenges from the opposition which from time to time, sought to unseat the government because of its slim majority. It held that the deployment of police featured high during this period and that maintenance of law and order was government's top priority. It discussed measures which the government used to deal with the political challenges to its authority and argued that some of these measures were undemocratic such as the abolition of the democratically elected District Councils.

It then discussed the beginning of authoritarian rule in Lesotho. It showed that this was set in motion by Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan when he refused to hand over the reins to the victor, Ntsu Mokhehle of BCP, in the 1970 general elections. The events of 1970 which set in motion

the authoritarian rule in Lesotho were outlined in this study. These events or actions were carried out through public announcements made on air, at Radio Lesotho, passing of repressive laws in the form of Orders and deployment of the police. There were many and varied negative consequences of these events on the leaders of the opposition, prominent politicians and the King.

This study has shown through the analysis and presentation of the voices of the interlocutors that as the supporters of the opposition party, BCP, they suffered through assault, arson, arrest and detention. The trauma experienced by the victims of acts of political violence at the hands of the two agents of repression namely: the BNPYL and the PMU, was physical, material and psychological in nature. It has further shown that the traumatic experiences were characterised by violence. This violence was seen by the mode through which it was carried out, its proportionality, its necessity under the circumstances and its impact. Both men and women became victims of the discussed acts of political violence. The current study has illustrated through the analysed personal testimonies that the consequences of these traumatic experiences were many and varied. They included social, economic, political and health consequences.

The study has brought to the fore, questions that linger on the minds of the residents of Mathebe and probably others, in villages that suffered the same fate. The answers to the questions that the victims have about why they had to endure such horrific suffering may help in healing them, their families, communities and the entire Basotho nation. The healing of the nation means that the traumatic past is addressed to avoid repetition of past mistakes and build a nation that is void of political violence. The healing process will involve a dialogue between the victims and those who perpetrated violence in order to make peace with what happened. What then happens if the perpetrators do not come to the table? By having a dialogue, clearly captured in the Sesotho idiom, *ntoa ke ea malula-'moho*²¹⁸ it is possible for the victims and perpetrators to come to terms with what happened, heal and forgiveness will be achieved. This does not mean that they will forget but their experiences will become less painful when the perpetrators admit to wrongdoing and own up to their mistakes.

In building a reconciled post-apartheid South Africa, the post-apartheid government used the TRC to investigate the past in order to reconcile the nation. The successes and the failures of TRC which were gauged on racial difference were highlighted in Chapter one. The experiences of TRC in South Africa boiled down to the willingness of two parties to come forward and disclose their victimisation and perpetration in human rights violations. The victims or their families were willing to relate their stories while the perpetrators of violent acts during apartheid did so reluctantly and some even refused to come before the Commission because they felt it favoured black over white South Africans. This study therefore, recommends that lessons learnt through the work of South African TRC should be considered by Lesotho. The TRC as a model may be adopted in Lesotho, with modifications in order to acclimatise it to Lesotho's challenges and work towards the healing of traumatic past.

Appendices

Interview Questions

Theme 1 – Assault

1. What are your full names?
2. How old are you? Date of birth can be provided if known.
3. What is the name of the village where you reside?
4. In 1970 which political party did you support?
5. How active were you in politics? Were you a member of any structure within the political party in your village?
6. How did you become a victim during the 1970 state of emergency?
 - (a) **Assault**
 - (b) Arson
 - (c) Arbitrary Arrest and detention
7. If (a) why were you assaulted?
8. How were you assaulted? (violent, sexual or other types of assault)
9. Provide a recollection of how it happened.
10. Who assaulted you?
11. What did they use to assault you?
12. Which area of your body was mostly targeted during the assault?
13. Was the assault inflicted upon you due to provocation on your part?
14. Did you fight back?
 - (a) If yes, what did you use?
 - (b) If no, why did you not fight back?
15. What happened to you after you were assaulted?
16. If you went to hospital, for how long were you hospitalized?
17. Did you adjust well after you were released from hospital?
18. What worried you about being in hospital?

Interview Questions

Theme 2 – Arson

1. What are your full names?
2. How old are you? Date of birth can be provided if known.
3. What is the name of the village where you reside?
4. In 1970 which political party did you support?
5. How active were you in politics? Were you a member of any structure within the political party in your village? (Were you an active or passive supporter of the opposition?)
6. Were you a victim of
 - (a) Assault
 - (b) Arson?**
 - (c) Arrest and detention
7. If (b),
 - a) How was arson carried out on your property?
 - b) Which type of property did you lose?
8. If you lost a house above,
 - i) How many houses did you lose?
 - ii) How did this affect you?
 - iii) Was there any property in that house?
 - iv) What type of property was it?
9. What else did you lose when you property was burned?
 - i) Where was the agricultural harvest stored?
 - ii) Can you quantify the amount of harvest you lost due to arson?
 - iii) How did the loss of this harvest affect you and your family?
10. Who burned your house and/or agricultural produce?
11. What did they use?
12. Do you know why they burned your house?
13. Where were you when your house was burned?
14. How did the burning of your house affect your lives?
15. Did you rebuild your house?

16. If yes, how many weeks/ months/ years after qomatsi did it take for you to rebuild your house?
17. What worried you most when your house was burned?

Interview Questions

Theme 3 – Arrest and Detention

1. What are your full names?
2. How old are you? Date of birth can be provided if known.
3. What is the name of the village where you reside?
4. In 1970 which political party did you support?
5. How active were you in politics? Were you a member of any structure within the political party in your village?
6. How did you become a victim of the 1970 state of emergency?
 - (a) Assault
 - (b) Arson
 - (c) **Arrest and detention**
7. If (c) why were you arrested?
8. Can you recall the events which led to your arrest on that fateful day?
9. WHY were you arrested?
10. Did you,
 - a) Participate in the fight that took place in Mathebe?
 - i) Were these members of the BNP Youth League known to you or the villagers?
 - ii) Were they alone or did they have any assistance?
 - iii) What led to the fight?
 - iv) Was the fight provoked or unprovoked?
 - v) For how long did the fight last?
 - vi) What kind of weapons did they use? And what kind of weapons did you use to fight back?
11. Narrate how you got arrested.
12. After your arrest, what happened? Were you detained?
13. If yes, why were you detained?
14. Which prison did they take you?
15. For how long were you in detention?
16. Why were you detained for that long?

17. How were your experiences during your detention? (Were you tortured or ill-treated?)

Why?

18. What consequences resulted from your detention?

19. What worried you while in detention?

Lipotso

Mokhahlelo oa pele – Lehlasipa la ho khakhathoa

1. Mabitso a hau ka botlalo ke mang?
2. U Lilemo li kae? Letsatsi la tlhaho ka botlalo le ka boleloa ha le tsejoa.
3. Lebitso la motse oo u lulang ho ona ke mang?
4. Ka 1970 u ne u tšehetsa mokha ofe oa lipolotiki?
5. U ne u nka karolo hakae lipolotiking? Ana u ne u le setho sa Komiti ea motse oa Mathebe sa mokha o joalo?
6. U bile lehlasipa ka tsela efe ka qomatsi?
 - (a) Ho khakhathoa
 - (b) Ho chesetsoa thepa
 - (c) Ho tšoaroa u ba u koallosa chankaneng
7. Haeba karabo ke (a), lebaka leo u ileng oa otloa ka lona ke lefe?
8. U ile oa hlokofofatsa joang? (ho otloa/khakhathoa, peto, kapa mofuta o mong oa tlhokofatso?)
9. U ka hopola lietsahala tsa letsatsi leo. Ak'u name ha leletsana ka tsona.
10. Ke mang ea neng a/bo mang ba neng ba u khakhatha?
11. U ne a/ba ne ba sebelisa eng ho u khakhatha?
12. Ke karolo efe ea 'mele oa hau eo a/ba ileng ba u khakhatha haholo ho eona?
13. Ana ho khakhathoa hoo ho ne bakiloe ke uena?
14. Ana u ile oa itoanela?
 - (a) Haeba karabo ke ho joalo, u ne u sebelisa eng ho itoanela?
 - (b) Haeba karabo ke che, hobaneng u s aka oa itoanela?
15. Ho ile hoa etsahalang kamor'a hore u khakhathoe?
16. Haeba u ile oa kene sepetlele, u nkile nako e kae moo?
17. U ile oa fola ka pele hakae kamora hore u lokolloe kokelong?
18. Ke eng e neng e u tšoenya haholo maikutlong ha u le sepetlele?

Lipotso

Mokhahlelo oa bobeli – Lehlasipa la ho chesetsoa thepa

1. Mabitso a hau ka botlalo ke mang?
2. U Lilemo li kae? Letsatsi la tlhaho ka botlalo le ka boleloa ha le tsejoa.
3. Lebitso la motse oo u lulang ho ona ke mang?
4. Ka 1970 u ne u tšehetsa mokha ofe oa lipolotiki?
5. U ne u nka karolo hakae lipolotiking? Ana u ne u le setho sa Komiti ea motse oa Mathebe sa mokha o joalo?
6. U bile lehlasipa ka tsela efe ka qomatsi?
 - (a) Ho khakhathoa
 - (b) Ho chesetsoa thepa**
 - (c) Ho tšoaroa u ba u koallosa chankaneng
7. Haeba karabo ke (b),
 - (a) thepa ea hau e ile ea chesoa joang?
 - (b) U ile oa lahlehela ke thepa ea mofuta ofe?
8. Haeba u senyehetsoe ke ntlo/matlo,
 - (i) U ile oa senyehela ke matlo a makae?
 - (ii) Se se ile sa u ama joang?
 - (iii) Na ho ne ho ena le thepa e ka ntlong eo/matlong ao?
 - (iv) E ne e le thepa ea mofuta ofe?
9. Ke efe thepa e 'ngoe hape e u senyehetsoeng ka lebaka la ho chesoa hoo?
 - (i) Chai u ne u e behile kae?
 - (ii) Na u ka hakanya palo ea chai e u lahlehetseng?
 - (iii) Tahlehelo ee ea chai e ile ea u ama joang uena le ba lelapa la hau?
10. Ke mang ea chesitseng thepa ea hau 'moho le chai ea hau?
11. Ba ne ba sebelisa eng?
12. Ana u tseba sesosa se bakileng hore thepa/ntlo ea hau e chesoe?
13. U ne u le kae ha thepa/ntlo ea hau e chesoa?
14. Ho chesoa hoa ntlo ea hau ho ile hoa u ama joang uena le ba ntlo ea hau?
15. Ana u ile oa boela oa tsosa ntlo eo/matlo ao?
16. Haeba ho joalo, ho u nkile libeke, likhoeli ka pa lilemo tse kae kamora hore qomatsi e fete ho tsosa ntlo/matlo a hau?

17. Ke eng e neng e u tšoenya haholo maikutlong ha thepa/ntlo/matlo a hau a chesitsoe?

Lipotso

Mokhahlelo oa boraro – Lehlasipa la ho tšoaroa le ho hlahleloa chankaneng

1. Mabitso a hau ka botlalo ke mang?
2. U Lilemo li kae? Letsatsi la tlhaho ka botlalo le ka boleloa ha le tsejoa.
3. Lebitso la motse oo u lulang ho ona ke mang?
4. Ka 1970 u ne u tšehetsa mokha ofe oa lipolotiki?
5. U ne u nka karolo hakae lipolotiking? Ana u ne u le setho sa Komiti ea motse oa Mathebe sa mokha o joalo?
6. U bile lehlasipa ka tsela efe ka qomatsi?
 - (a) Ho khakhathoa
 - (b) Ho chesetsoa ntlo/matlo
 - (c) Ho tšoaroa u ba u koalloa chankaneng**
7. Haeba karabo ke (c), lebaka leo u ileng oa tšoaroa ka lona ke lefe?
8. Ana u ka hopola liketsahala tse lebisitseng ho tšoaroeng hoa hau?
9. HOBANENG, u ile oa tšoaroa?
10. Na u ile oa,
 - (i) Nka karolo ntoeng kappa toants'anong e ileng ea eba teng moo Mathebe ka nako eo?
 - (ii) U/le ne le loana le mang/ bo mang?
 - (iii) Bao le neng le loana le bona, ba ne ba le bang kappa ba ena le tlatsetso?
 - (iv) Sesosa se bakileng ntoea ke sefe?
 - (v) Ntoa ee le ne le e latile latailana kapa?
 - (vi) Ntoa ee e ile ea nka nako e kae?
 - (vii) Ho ne ho sebelisoa libetsa tsa mofuta of eke bao le neng le loana le bona? Lona le ne le sebelisa libetsa tsa mofuta ofe ho loana?
11. Ak'u nhlalose tse ka botlalo ka mohla u tlo tšoaroa.
12. Kamor'a hore u tšoaroa, ho ile hoa etsahala joang? Na u ile oa koalloa chankaneng?
13. Haeba ho joalo, hobaneng u ile oa koalloa chankaneng?
14. U ile oa koalloa chankaneng efe?
15. U ile oa koalloa moo nako e kae?
16. Hobaneng u ile oa koalloa nako eo e kaalo?
17. Ho ile ha eba joang chankaneng?
18. Ke litla-morao life tse ileng tsa bakoa ke ho koalloa chankaneng hoa hau?

19. Ke eng e neng e u tšoenya haholo maikutlong ha u le chankaneng?

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MAT-MM. Tapes. Interviewed at Mathebe, 08 December 2018, 02 March 2019 and 18 November 2019. 72 years old. Self-employed.

MAT-RM. Notes. Interviewed at Mathebe, 02 March 2019 and 18 November 2019. Retired lecturer and civil servant.

MAT-MN, Tapes. Interviewed at Mathebe, 18 September 2018, 02 March 2019 and 18 MAT-MS. Tape. Interviewed at Mathebe, 18 November 2019. 82 years old. Housewife and subsistence farmer.

MAT-BT. Tapes. Interviewed at Mathebe, 08 December 2018, 02 March 2019 and 18 November 2019. 80 years old. A former teacher and ex-miner.

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