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**AUTOCHTHON, STRANGERS, MODERNISING EDUCATIONISTS,  
AND PROGRESSIVE FARMERS: BASOTHO STRUGGLES FOR  
BELONGING IN ZIMBABWE 1930s-2008**

**BY**

**JOSEPH MUJERE**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis uses belonging as an analytical tool to analyse the history of the Basotho community in the Dewure Purchase Areas in Zimbabwe. The thesis analyses how Basotho's migration history and their experiences with colonial displacements shaped and continue to shape their construction of a sense of belonging. It also examines how Basotho's purchase of farms in the Dewure Purchase Areas in the 1930s and their establishment of a communally owned farm have played a key role in their struggles for belonging. It also explores the centrality of land, graves, funerals, and religion in the belonging matrix. The study, however, avoids projecting the Basotho community as a monolithic and cohesive unit by analysing the various internal schisms and cleavages within the community and examining their impacts. Although, Basotho have seemingly managed to integrate into the local community, a more critical analysis reveals that they have also continued to maintain a level of particularism. The central dynamic in this thesis, therefore, is how the Basotho, in their different struggles and strategies to belong, over the last century, have fundamentally been caught between being seen and treated as the same as the other people around them and being seen (and seeing themselves) as different. It is arguably this ambivalence or delicate balancing between integrating and remaining 'outsiders' that has shaped Basotho's sense of belonging and determined the strategies they have deployed in different historical contexts. The thesis concludes that, since it is relational and always in a state of becoming, strategies deployed in constructing and articulating belonging constantly change to suit particular historical contexts.

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## Abbreviations

APA	African Purchase Area
BMS	Berlin Missionary Society
BSAC	British South Africa Company
CNC	Chief Native Commissioner
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
FES	First Ethiopian Church
ICA	Intensive Conservation Area
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers Union
LAA	Land Apportionment Act
LDO	Land Development Officer
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NAD	Native Affairs Department
NADA	Native Affairs Department Annual
NAZ	National Archives of Zimbabwe
NC	Native Commissioner
NDP	National Democratic Party
NLB	Native Land Board
NLHA	Native Land Husbandry Act
NPA	Native Purchase Area
NRB	Natural Resources Board

PES	Paris Evangelical Society
PF	Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
PNC	Provincial Native Commissioner
RCZ	Reformed Church in Zimbabwe
RLB	Rural Land Board
RF	Rhodesian Front
SRBVA	Southern Rhodesia Bantu Voters Association
SRNA	Southern Rhodesia Native Association
TTL	Tribal Trust Land
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African Nation Union-Patriotic Front

### **Note on spellings**

Names of a number of Basotho discussed in this thesis are spelt in various ways in the archival record. This is mainly a result of the fact that the colonial officials who generated the files had been used to dealing with Shona groups thus they often used Shona versions of the spellings. For consistence I have standardised spellings of names of people by using the versions of spellings I obtained from my informants as much as possible. The only exception for this is where I make direct quotations from archival files. Below is a list of some Sotho names and their various versions in the archival record.

Basotho	Basuto, Basutu
Cornelius Mmakola	Cornelius Magoba, Cornelius Makula
David Molea	David Muliya
Edward Phosa	Edward Posa
Ephraim Morudu	Ephraim Murudu
Gideon Molea	Gideon Muliya
Isaac Khumalo	Izak Khumalo
Jacob Molebaleng	Jacob Molebalang, Jacob Malibaleng, Jacob Mulibaleng
Jeremiah Morudu	Jeremiah Murudu
Job Sikhala	Job Sekhala
Joshua Masoha	Joshua Masoga, Jozua Masoha, Joshua Masowa
Laban Phosa	Laban Posa
Lucas Mokoete	Lucas Muquili, Lukas Mokoete, Lucas Mokwile
Malachi Phosa	Malachi Posa
Makgatho	Makhatho, Makgato
Michael Mojabelo	Michael Mojabilo
Nathaniel Thema	Nathaniel Tema
Paul Mphisa	Paul Mpisa
Reuben Mphisa	Reuben Mpisa
Seroga Murudu	Seroka Murudu
Sesotho	Sesuto

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION: BASOTHO AND THE POLITICS OF BELONGING IN DEWURE PURCHASE AREAS, ZIMBABWE

### Introduction

When I began doing research on the Basotho community in Dewure Purchase Areas in 2005, I had a number of assumptions.<sup>1</sup> Some of these assumptions were that the community had largely been integrated into the local community, had lost their language and also that, apart from ownership of Bethel, their community farm, nothing really set them apart from the rest of the farmers in the Dewure Purchase Areas. My initial interviews seemed to confirm this image of an immigrant community which had almost seamlessly managed to integrate itself in the local community and also adopted the local language. At that stage, my hypothesis was that the Basotho community's sense of belonging was built on gradual integration into the local community which was helped by their ownership of freehold land. However, when I returned to do fieldwork for my PhD in 2009, I started to notice a number of things I had not been able to see in my initial fieldwork. One incident in August 2009, in particular, made me realise how complex Basotho social history was, and how they struggled with the problem of belonging. I had the opportunity to attend a memorial service of a deceased member of the Basotho community who had been one of my key informants in 2005. During this memorial service I noticed that members of the community sang some hymns in *Sesotho* which obviously had the effect of excluding other attendees who were not *Sesotho* speaking. I also observed that, apart from singing in *Sesotho*, when speaking to each other most Basotho spoke in *Sesotho* instead of *Chikaranga* (a local dialect of Chishona) which they would otherwise not use in their everyday interactions. Sotho etiquette was also used in interactions between kinsmen. It, therefore, became

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<sup>1</sup> I first did research on the Basotho community in Dewure Purchase Areas in 2005 as part of my M.A in African History research: J. Mujere. 'Vhunjere via Bhetere: A social history of the Basotho in the Dewure Purchase Areas in Gutu, c.1932-1960' M.A in African History Dissertation, History Department, University of Zimbabwe, 2006.

apparent to me that there were certain contexts where Basotho expressed their Basothoness more explicitly than others. Thus, although over the years Basotho have seemingly been assimilated into the Karanga community and speak their language, a more critical analysis of their everyday life reveals that, alongside their interaction with their Karanga neighbours, they have also maintained a sense of shared migration history, ethnicity, ethnic endogamy, language, and religion.<sup>2</sup> These aspects usually come alive and are performed during rituals of belonging such as funerals, memorial services, marriages and other gatherings. In spite of this, Basotho sought also active cooperation with non-Sotho farmers and engaged with them at forums such as the church, farmers associations, political, and social organisations among others. Against this background, it is important to explore Basotho's changing strategies of belonging over time and space.

This community is composed of descendants of Basotho who migrated to from South Africa to what is now Zimbabwe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since their migration, they have gone through many phases of constructing and negotiating their belonging as well as carving out an enclave in an area dominated by linguistically and culturally different autochthonous groups. In this vein, the thesis analyses how Basotho's migration history and their experiences with colonial displacements, resettlement in Purchase Areas, their relationship with Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) missionaries, internal conflicts and other factors shaped and continue to shape their construction of a sense of belonging.

The thesis asserts that as minority 'late comers', Basotho's sense of belonging revolved not only around ownership of individual freehold farms, but most significantly on Bethel, a community farm, on which they established a church, a school and a cemetery. This farm became the platform on which Basotho's belonging was framed by both Basotho themselves and other farmers in Dewure Purchase Areas and surrounding areas. In addition, the thesis analyses the impact of internal differences within the Basotho community and how they impacted on their construction of belonging.

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<sup>2</sup> Although the Karanga are viewed as autochthons in the local discourses of insiders and outsiders, this is by no means self evident. There are indeed interesting dynamics in Karanga communities' belonging which, however, will not be discussed here.

It is important to highlight that most of the members of this community were not Sotho in the sense of originating from Lesotho or the border between Lesotho and South Africa (southern Sotho), the majority of them being actually northern Sotho (BaPedi). In spite of this, they preferred using the greater Sotho category which encompassed both southern Sotho and BaPedi (northern Sotho) and helped forge a sense of unity. There were also a few individuals in the community who were originally Hlengwe (Shangani), Xhosa, and Zulu but identified themselves as Sotho. Those members of the community who are not originally Sotho, seem to have accepted the label of being Sotho, learned *Sesotho* and feel they belong to the community. Thus, the term Basotho is here used more loosely to refer to a community of immigrants who were predominantly of Sotho (northern Sotho/Pedi) origin and were and continue to be viewed by the surrounding communities as such. It is, however, important to note that in spite of this being a small community of people occupying farms which are not really geographically contiguous, they have been able to forge a sense of unity as a community. However, as people considered to be 'late comers', their belonging to the area has continued to be susceptible to questioning, especially by those who consider themselves to have stronger claims to the area. As such, they have had to continually devise ways and strategies through which they maintained their attachment to the area.

The study examines how as a small, mainly Christianized community, Basotho have been able to use the ownership of freehold land, graves, their school as well as religion, and language to sustain a particularistic identity whilst at the same engaging with their non-Sotho neighbours. The thesis argues that such tensions between Basotho's particularism and their attempts at integrating into the local community or between being 'strangers' and seeking to become 'autochthons' of sorts defines Basotho's strategies throughout the period under study. A key leitmotif in this study is that the Basotho, in their different struggles and strategies to belong, over the last century, have been fundamentally caught between being seen and treated as locals, and being seen (as well as seeing themselves) as different or 'outsiders'.

The thesis acknowledges that although the Basotho are tied to each other due to their intertwined kinship web, shared history, and their sense of unity built on ownership of Bethel Farm, there have always been some internal schisms which have had varying impacts on the



community's struggles for belonging. By analysing the nature and impacts of these internal schisms the study seeks to show how Basotho's 'unity in diversity' shaped the way they interacted with DRC missionaries and colonial officials as well as with their non-Sotho neighbours. This thesis uses the case of the Basotho community to illuminate the challenges faced by minority ethnic groups in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe and how they tried to strike a balance between particularism and integration.

The thesis uses belonging as an analytical tool to explore the history of the Basotho in Zimbabwe. Due to its conceptual limitations and the many connotations it has, this study has avoided using identity as an analytical category. Identity has been overburdened by many connotations making it, at best, ambiguous which affects its usefulness as a conceptual tool. Cooper and Brubaker argue that, as a category of analysis, identity 'tends to mean too much (when understood in a strong sense), too little (when understood in a weak sense), or nothing at all (because of its sheer ambiguity).'<sup>3</sup> As a result, they suggest that scholars move beyond identity and make use of 'terms less ambiguous and unencumbered by reifying connotations of identity.'<sup>4</sup> Although they do not provide a specific alternative, preferring instead to suggest a range of terms, such as *commonality*, *connectedness*, and *groupness*, Cooper and Brubaker's critique of identity exposes its conceptual limitations.<sup>5</sup> Other scholars have also observed the need to go beyond identity because of its ambiguities. For instance, Geschiere argues that identity 'has an unfortunate tendency to fix what is in constant flux (which is often exactly what its protagonists are striving for), and it often acquires teleological implications, suggesting that there is a basic need for a group or a person to produce a clearly outlined and unequivocal identity.'<sup>6</sup> Thus, although it is difficult to completely do away with identity as an analytical category, there is need to look for some alternatives which are less encumbered and less ambiguous. Drawing on Gerd Baumann's work,<sup>7</sup> Geschiere suggests that we use belonging as an analytical tool and

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<sup>3</sup> F. Cooper and R. Brubaker, 'Identity' in F. Cooper, *Colonialism in question: Theory, knowledge, history* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), p.59.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.76.

<sup>6</sup> P. Geschiere, *The perils of belonging: Autochthony, citizenship, and exclusion in Africa and Europe* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), p.31.

<sup>7</sup> G. Baumann, *The multiculturalism riddle: Rethinking national, ethnic, and religious Identities* (London: Routledge, 1999).

‘follow its different languages that so strongly assert themselves in quite different recent configurations. One of its advantages over identity is that it is at least in the *-ing* form.’<sup>8</sup> This study, therefore, employs belonging as an analytical tool and explores how Basotho have made use of, and deployed its ‘different languages’ since their migration.

Most studies have, however, tended to focus on the problem of belonging in the contemporary period without really looking at the long historical trajectory, thereby risking becoming ahistorical. For example, recent studies on the politics of belonging in Africa have largely focused on the upsurge of autochthony following the emergency of multiparty democracy<sup>9</sup>, or the recent xenophobic violence in southern Africa.<sup>10</sup> Belonging is, however, a continuous process involving negotiation and contestation over a period of time. Specific historical epochs engender specific ways through which people construct, negotiate, contest as well as assert their belonging. There is, therefore, need to revisit the older migrations of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which include internal and cross-border labour migrations as well as those induced by evangelisation, and explore their legacies. Some scholars are beginning to make attempts to make historical studies of migrations in Zimbabwe and draw connections between the older migrations of the colonial period and the contemporary ones.<sup>11</sup> The Basotho case study provides an opportunity to reconsider these older migrations and examine how they can illuminate contemporary migrations. It also allows for a more historically informed analysis of the migrations which can unravel the various challenges faced by immigrants in different historical contexts and the strategies they formulated and deployed in the face of such challenges. By analysing the *longue durée* of Basotho’s history in Zimbabwe, this thesis seeks to show how different historical contexts brought specific imperatives in Basotho’s construction and negotiation of belonging. It endeavours to show how Basotho used different but interrelated strategies in their struggles to belong. The study, therefore, takes a historical perspective, while

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<sup>8</sup> P. Geschiere, *The perils of belonging*, p.32.

<sup>9</sup> See P. Geschiere and S. Jackson, ‘Autochthony and the crisis of citizenship: Democratization, decentralization, and the politics of belonging’, *African Studies Review*, Vol.49, No. 2 (2006); P. Geschiere, ‘Funerals and belonging: different patterns in southern Cameroon’, *African Studies*, Vol.48, No.2 (2005); P. Geschiere and F. Nyamnjoh, ‘Capitalism and autochthony: The see-saw of mobility and belonging’, *Public Culture*, Vol.12, No.2 (2000).

<sup>10</sup> F. Nyamnjoh, *Insiders and outsiders in southern Africa: Citizenship and xenophobia in contemporary southern Africa* (Dakar: Codesria, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> See J. McGregor, ‘Rethinking the boundaries of the nation: Histories of cross border mobility and Zimbabwe’s new ‘diaspora’, *Critical African Studies*, (2012 forthcoming).

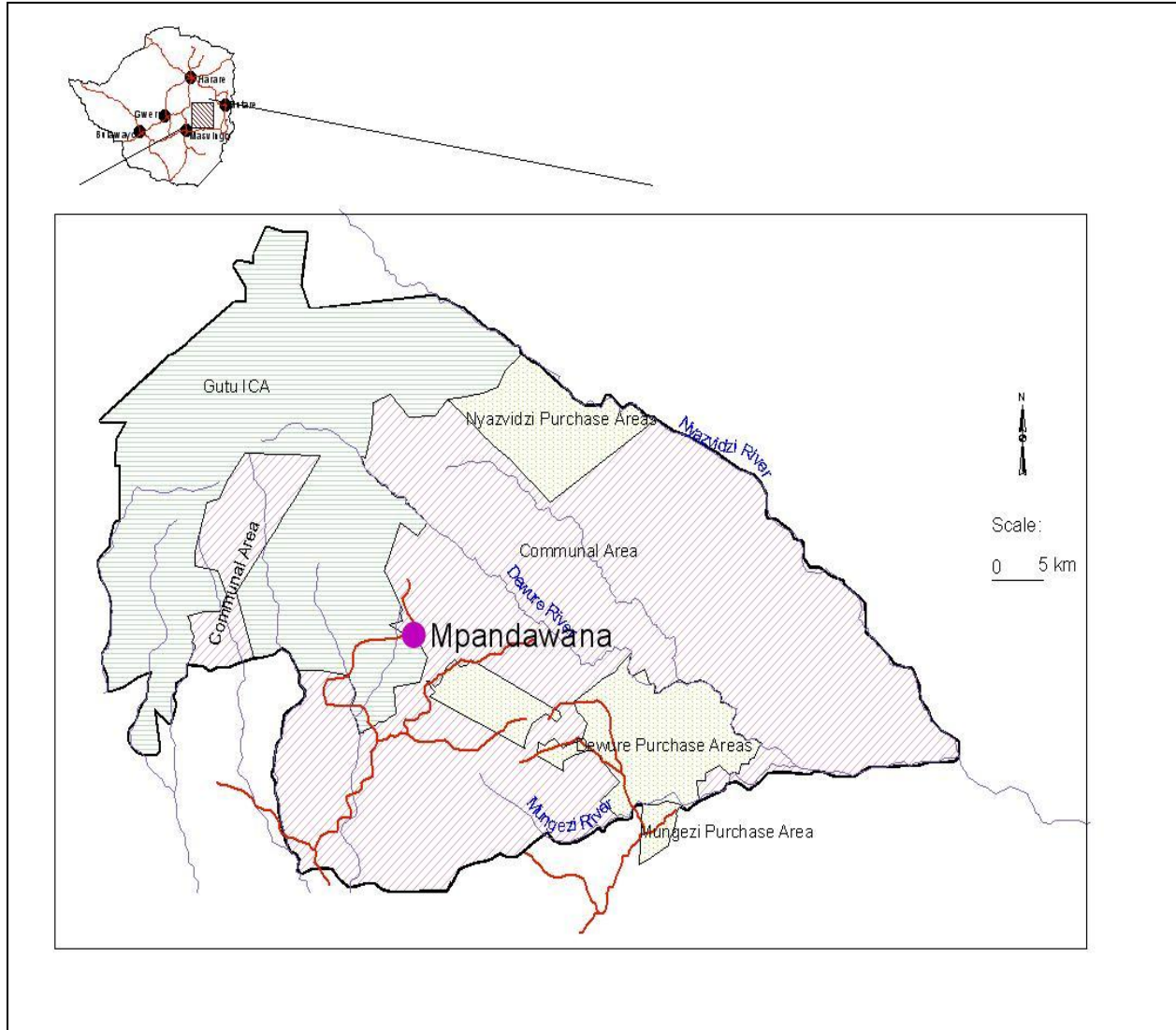
simultaneously mobilising and deploying anthropological insights to analyse the history of a community that emerged within the context of colonial encounters and the constructions of the colonial state that was characterised by evictions, displacements and relocations of communities.

It should, however, be highlighted that although the thesis draws on West African examples in its analysis of the centrality of autochthony in the politics of belonging, there are some differences between the West African and Zimbabwean context. It is therefore important to be cautious when applying West African examples in the Zimbabwean context. For instance, debates about the centrality of autochthony in the politics of belonging in West Africa started in the early 1990s when multi-party democracy began to emerge.<sup>12</sup> However, it was not until around 2000 that the national belonging of people of foreign descent began to be questioned by some political elites in Zimbabwe and notions of autochthony deployed in seeking to deny them full citizenship rights. Thus, although the thesis makes use of examples from West Africa and elsewhere in Africa it also acknowledges the differences in these contexts.

The choice of Dewure Purchase Area was mainly inspired by the fact that this was the area where most Basotho purchased farms after their eviction from Erichsthal and Niekerk's Rust farms in the 1930s. Furthermore, Basotho in this area have remained a closely knit group who managed to purchase a community farm on which they built a school and a church as well as establishing a community cemetery. Apart from the Dewure Purchase Areas, there are other Sotho communities in a number of districts in Matabeleland South Province. However, due to the different historical backgrounds between these communities and the one in the Dewure Purchase Areas, the study will only refer to these communities when similarities can be drawn. The reasoning behind starting the study in the 1930s is that Basotho settled in the Dewure Purchase Areas in 1932. In spite of this, a background covering their migration and settlement on Erichsthal and Niekerk's Rust farms from which they were evicted in the 1930s will be given. The study terminates in 2008 in order to provide a long historical trajectory of Basotho's migrations and struggles to belong in various historical contexts.

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<sup>12</sup> See P. Geschiere and F. Nyamnjoh, 'Witchcraft as an issue in the politics of belonging: Democratisation and urban migrants' involvement with the home village', *African Studies Review*, Vol.41, No.3 (1998), p.71.



*Figure 1 Map of Gutu district showing the location of Dewure Purchase Areas*

### **Migration, land, graves, and politics of belonging in Africa**

There is a growing body of historical and anthropological literature on the subject of migration and the politics of belonging in Africa. In recent years studies on migration and the politics of belonging have focused on the nature of relationships between the so called ‘first comers’ or

autochthons and ‘late comers’ or strangers.<sup>13</sup> These studies have revealed the divisive and exclusionary nature of politics of belonging. Notions of autochthony, in particular, have often been a powerful weapon in the hands of the political elites keen to remain in power by exploiting the division of people on autochthon-allochthon basis. Yet it is important to note that belonging is not entirely about autochthony, or rootedness but it is also about how people use symbols and metaphors to claim rights to authority and resources. This section discusses the usefulness of belonging as an analytical tool or theoretical framework that can be used in the study of social history of African communities.

Africa has had a long history of population movements dating back to the pre-colonial era. In fact, migration was one of the most important processes in the formation of new polities in pre-colonial Africa. According to Kopytoff, ‘Africa has been a “frontier continent” the stage for many population movements of many kinds and dimensions, ranging from such sub-continental proto-historical dispersions such as the Bantu or the Nilotes to the local movements preceding the colonial period.’<sup>14</sup> These migrations played an important role in state formation in pre-colonial Africa. Political segmentation was largely helped by the relative availability of land during this period. It is thus plausible to argue that Africa’s history is a history of migrations.<sup>15</sup> However, the nature and form of migrations have changed over time. With the introduction of the capitalist economy, ‘the urban and industrial expansion of the colonial and post-colonial eras gave rise to migrations to towns, mines, and plantations, and, in the process, to a continuing reorganisation of ethnic identities.’<sup>16</sup> This has meant that groups of people often find themselves in new areas where they are late comers and have to negotiate their belonging.

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<sup>13</sup> See P. Geschiere and S. Jackson, ‘Autochthony and the crisis of citizenship: Democratization, decentralization, and the politics of belonging’, *African Studies Review*, Vol. 49, No.2 (2006); P. Geschiere, ‘Funerals and belonging: different Patterns in Southern Cameroon’, *African Studies*, Vol.48, No.2 (2005).

<sup>14</sup> I. Kopytoff, ‘The internal African frontier: The making of African political culture’ in I. Kopytoff (ed.) *The African frontier: The reproduction of traditional African societies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p.7.

<sup>15</sup> A. Adepoju, ‘Migration in Africa: An overview’ in J. Baker and T. A. Aina (eds.) *The migration experience in Africa* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 1995), p.87.

<sup>16</sup> I. Kopytoff, ‘The internal African Frontier: The making of African political culture’, p.7.

Recently more attention has been paid to the link between migration, identity and belonging.<sup>17</sup> This shift has largely been influenced by the 1990s democratisation process in most African states which fuelled the desire amongst political elites to use autochthony as a tool to exclude political opponents. Geschiere and Nyamnjoh assert that, ‘democratisation seems to engender fierce and often violent struggles over who ‘really’ belongs and who is a stranger.’<sup>18</sup> This has led migration analysis to revolve around the impact of migration on identities, citizenship, and belonging and also the relationship between migrants and locals. This relationship has been marked by contested definitions of the ‘first comers’ and ‘late comers’, which have sometimes resulted in xenophobic violence.<sup>19</sup> In Cameroon, political liberalisation induced a general fear among autochthons of being outvoted by the numerically superior immigrants as voting became more important with the dawn of multiparty democracy. According to Konings, ‘with the introduction of multi-partyism, the ruling party and government often fear being outvoted during local and regional elections by ‘strangers’ who tend to support the opposition for the representation and defence of their interests.’<sup>20</sup>

The exclusion of those viewed as strangers has in some cases resulted in the crafting of citizenship laws designed to exclude and delegitimize those people labelled outsiders. In Ivory Coast and Cameroon sitting governments have sought to narrow definitions of citizenship in order to exclude their political opponents. For example, in Ivory Coast former President Laurent Gbagbo’s National Operation of Identification stipulated that, ‘every Ivorian had to go back to his or her “village of origin” in order to be “identified” there. Only after such an identification could a person be registered as a full citizen of the country and claim full citizen’s right-notably

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<sup>17</sup> See, for example, B. Ceuppens and P. Geschiere, ‘Autochthony local or global? New modes in the struggle over citizenship and belonging in Africa and Europe’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 34 (2005).

<sup>18</sup> P. Geschiere and F. Nyamnjoh, ‘Witchcraft as an issue in the politics of belonging: Democratisation and urban migrants’ involvement with the home village’, *African Studies Review*, Vol.41, No.3 (1998), p.71.

<sup>19</sup> See P. Geschiere and S. Jackson, ‘Autochthony and the crisis of citizenship: Democratization, decentralization, and the politics of belonging’, *African Studies Review*, Vol.49, No. 2 (2006).

<sup>20</sup> P. Konings, ‘Mobility and exclusion: Conflicts between autochthons and allochthons during political liberalization in Cameroon’ in Bruijn, de M, R. van Dijk and D. Foeken (eds.) *Mobile Africa: Changing patterns of movement in Africa and beyond* (Leiden, Brill, 2001), p.170.

rights to own land and to vote.<sup>21</sup> This was, as Geschiere and Jackson argue, ‘a tragic example of the violent extremes to which *autochthone* can be stretched.’<sup>22</sup> The ruling elites benefited from this situation since the strained relations between autochthons and migrants encouraged the perpetuation of the political status quo.

In Cameroon, President Paul Biya has had an obsession with autochthony and belonging. Geschiere and Nyamnjoh argue that Cameroon’s fixation with autochthony owes much to democratisation and the increased importance of votes which made President Biya seek to remain in power by using divisive policies which saw the divide between the so called autochthons and allochthons being overplayed.<sup>23</sup> The issue of autochthony and belonging in Cameroon has also affected immigrants’ access to land and even where people are buried when they die. In fact, funerals and burial places are viewed as pointers of where one actually belongs.<sup>24</sup> Hence death and funeral rituals have assumed a great role in discourses of belonging as burial places are often associated with where one ‘really belongs’. As Konings puts it, ‘the autochthony-allochthony discourse has not only become an important ploy for political entrepreneurs in their struggles for power. It appears also to have become part and parcel of the people’s daily lives in south west Province [of Cameroon].’<sup>25</sup> As a result of this, immigrants who are often more numerous than those who consider themselves first comers are viewed as a threat as they are perceived to have homes elsewhere where they actually belong.

In spite of its currency in Africa in the recent years, it is apparent that autochthony is largely a social construct that is being manipulated by political elites. Just like ethnicity, autochthony has created artificial boundaries and fanned notions of exclusion and caused the entrenchment of the ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ dichotomy. According to Geschiere and Nyamnjoh

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<sup>21</sup> P. Geschiere, *The perils of Belonging: Autochthony, citizenship, and exclusion in Africa and Europe*, p.98.

<sup>22</sup> P. Geschiere and S. Jackson, ‘Autochthony and the crisis of citizenship: Democratisation, decentralisation, and the politics of belonging’, *African Studies Review*, Vol.49, No.2 (2006), p.2.

<sup>23</sup> See P. Geschiere and F. Nyamnjoh, ‘Capitalism and autochthony: The see-saw of mobility and belonging’, p.443.

<sup>24</sup> P. Geschiere, ‘Funerals and belonging: Different patterns in southern Cameroon’, *African Studies*, Vol.48, No.2 (2005), p.47.

<sup>25</sup> P. Konings, ‘Mobility and exclusion: Conflicts between autochthons and allochthons during political liberalization in Cameroon’, p.188.

ethnicity and autochthony 'are equally capable of arousing strong emotions regarding the defence of home and ancestral lands, but since their substance is not named they are both more elusive and more easily subject to political manipulation.'<sup>26</sup> Leonhardt contends that, 'autochthony is not a coherent body of principles on which rights are based. It is a mystification of ancestry, a method used for the purposes of magically extracting wealth from the state.'<sup>27</sup> It is based on the often contestable claim of being the first comers and being the sons and daughters of the soil and opposed to strangers, aliens or late comers. Political elites thus use autochthony and narrow citizenship policies for political expedience.

It is all the more striking that in spite of it being seemingly embedded or primordial, autochthony is a very fluid form of identity. This makes the process of defining who is an autochthon and who is a stranger a very difficult task. Since identities are fluid, claims to autochthony are often met with counter claims. In the end autochthony is by no means cast in stone as 'strangers' can also claim autochthony thereby turning the former autochthons into strangers. It is in this light that Geschiere and Jackson argue that, 'belonging turns out to be always relative: there is always the danger of being unmasked as 'not really' belonging, or even of being a 'fake' autochthon.'<sup>28</sup> Hence autochthony and belonging are contested and negotiated notions which are open to various interpretations and reinterpretations.

The autochthon-allochthon dialectic is also played on conflicts over control of natural resources such as land. Lentz argues that land and land rights play an important role in the politics of belonging in Africa due to the fact that rights to land 'are intimately tied to membership in specific communities.'<sup>29</sup> Scarcity of land has also increased the need to identify those who 'really belong' to the area and those who are 'late-comers' and therefore have limited rights to the land. Control over land therefore becomes a sign of the extent to which one

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<sup>26</sup> P. Geschiere and F. Nyamnjoh, 'Capitalism and autochthony: The See-saw of mobility and belonging', p.425.

<sup>27</sup> A. Leonhardt, 'Baka and the magic of the state: Between autochthony and citizenship', *African Studies Review*, Vol.49, No.2 (2006), p.70.

<sup>28</sup> P. Geschiere and S. Jackson, 'Autochthony and the crisis of Citizenship: Democratization, decentralization, and the politics of belonging', p.1.

<sup>29</sup> C. Lentz, 'Land and the politics of belonging in Africa' in P. Chabal, U. Engel and L. de Haan (eds.) *African Alternatives* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p.37.



belongs.<sup>30</sup> In contrast, in the pre-colonial era though the first comer and late comer relationship also involved issues to do with control over land, the divide between autochthons and allochthons was not rigid. It is the scramble for resources and political manipulations which have led to the crystallisation of the divisions between autochthons and allochthons and the crippling of former processes through which immigrants could be integrated into the society and enjoy the same rights as the autochthons.

Using the case of the Anglophone region of Cameroon, Konings argues that, land was not the only reason for the development of antagonistic relations between autochthons and strangers.<sup>31</sup> The latecomers' success in agriculture, trade and other entrepreneurial activities also contributed to the strained relations as the autochthons became jealousy of the success of the immigrants. Politicians exploited these localised strained relations to further their own agendas of entrenching themselves. According to Lentz, 'in many cases, it is young men who invoke powerful discourses on autochthony, much more so than their fathers, who continue to insist that well-intentioned strangers should not be refused land if they need it for subsistence.'<sup>32</sup> This is often a result of petty jealousies over the success of the immigrants and also competition over resources.

Autochthony is also closely linked with the concept of rootedness. This entails an attachment to place, being an indigene or having roots in a certain place as opposed to being a stranger. Malkki, however, suggests that the idea of being rooted needs to be revised as it fails to appreciate people's ability to construct new notions of belonging when they get 'uprooted' or migrate.<sup>33</sup> She argues that, 'there has emerged a new awareness of the global social fact that, now more than perhaps ever before, people are chronically mobile and routinely displaced, and invent homes and homelands in the absence of territorial, national bases-not in situ, but through

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<sup>30</sup> C. Lentz, 'Land rights and the politics of belonging in Africa: An introduction' in R. Kuba and C. Lentz (eds.) *Land and the politics of belonging in West Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p.1.

<sup>31</sup> P. Konings, 'Mobility and exclusion: Conflicts between autochthons and allochthons during political liberalization in Cameroon', p.117.

<sup>32</sup> C. Lentz, 'Land and the politics of belonging in Africa', p.47.

<sup>33</sup> L. Malkki, 'National Geographic: The rooting of people and the territorialization of national identity among scholars and refugees', *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol.7, No.1(1992).

memories of, and claims on, places that they can or will no longer corporeally inhabit.<sup>34</sup> She therefore argues that, ‘to plot only “places of birth” and degrees of nativeness is to blind oneself to the multiplicity of attachments that people form to places through living in, remembering, and imagining them.’<sup>35</sup> Thus being rooted, autochthonous or indigenous are all notions which need to be re-examined and problematised in a bid to understand the politics of belonging. These notions have the effect to making place and being the first comer the most important, if not the only variable, in the construction of belonging. Belonging, thus, should not be reduced to ‘rootedness’ or autochthony. It is a multilayered and multidimensional phenomenon. Although the link between identity and territory cannot be ignored, indeed, there is a need to seriously consider how uprooted or de-territorialized people construct belonging.

It is apparent that as a category of belonging, autochthony is a highly contested phenomenon. This makes it very susceptible to different interpretations and reinterpretations such that no one can safely say that they are the ‘real autochthons.’ Given its malleability, autochthony leads to its violent manifestations since claims to autochthony are usually met with counter claims or result in the violent displacement of the perceived strangers. Practically, anyone can claim autochthony and by the same token anyone can be unmasked as a fake autochthon. This has strong resonance with ongoing debates about invention of tradition and identity and fluidity of ethnic identities.<sup>36</sup> As a form of belonging, ethnicity is also negotiated. People can also assume different identities depending on the situation. According to Li et al, ‘people may have multiple identities, with each identity dependent upon where they are at any particular moment and who they are with.’<sup>37</sup> Often migrants have to decide whether to stick with

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34; see also L. H. Malkki, *Purity and exile: Violence, memory, and national cosmology among Hutu refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p.4.

<sup>36</sup> T. O. Ranger, ‘The invention of tradition revisited: The case of colonial Africa’ in T. O. Ranger and M. Vaughan (eds.) *Legitimacy and the state in twentieth century Africa* (London: MacMillan, 1993); T. O. Ranger, *The invention of tribalism in Zimbabwe* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1985); T. Spear ‘Neo-Traditionalism and the limits of invention in British colonial Africa’, *Journal of African History*, Vol. 44, (2003).

<sup>37</sup> F. L. N Li, et al, ‘Discourses on migration and ethnic identity: Interviews with professionals in Hong Kong’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (New Series), Vol.20, No.3 (1995), p.342.

their old identities or adopt new ones. Hence plurality or fluidity of identities is unavoidable in the politics of belonging.

A landscape approach can be of great value in analysing migrations and politics of belonging as landscape is a vital component in people's construction of belonging.<sup>38</sup> The way in which people relate to the landscape and how they locate themselves within it is quite pertinent in their construction of belonging. As people migrate they often leave 'bits of themselves' engraved on the landscapes hence creating multiple claims to belonging. However, apart from landscape being an idea or a social construction it is also about people's doings not just their thoughts. In other words, it is about practice. Repetition or routine plays an important role in people's development of a sense of belonging. The essence of belonging lies in the repetition of certain activities which people ultimately identify as core routines. It is these routines, in certain places, that lead to the development of geographies of home.<sup>39</sup> According to Terkenli, 'these patterns (routines) become part of home because they represent recurrent, familiar points of reference in time, space and society. Repetition is an essential element in the transformation of place into home'.<sup>40</sup> Bender argues that 'by moving along familiar paths, winding memories and stories around places, people create a sense of self and belonging'.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, belonging involves not only being in a place that one is a local or insider but also includes one's relationship with the community and the landscape. In this light belonging is about the production of locality.<sup>42</sup>

The concept of materiality has recently gained currency in anthropology and other disciplines. According to Fontein, 'central to this trend is a renewed interest in the political

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<sup>38</sup> There are, of course, many different approaches to the study of landscape. See S. Daniel and D. Cosgrove (eds.) *The iconography of landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); E. Hirsch and O'Hanlon (eds.) *The anthropology of landscape: Perspectives on place and space* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); B. Bender (ed.) *Landscape: Politics and perspectives* (Oxford: Berg, 1993).

<sup>39</sup> T. S. Terkenli, 'Home as a region', p.325.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.326.

<sup>41</sup> B. Bender, 'Introduction' in B. Bender and M. Winer (eds.) *Contested landscapes: Movement, exile and place* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.4.

<sup>42</sup> A. Appadurai, *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalisation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p.179.

implications of the materiality of objects, landscape and nature.<sup>43</sup> This concept tries to bridge the gap between environmental determinism and postmodern deconstruction, and to span the nature-culture divide. It is premised on the argument that, ‘once deconstruction has reached its limits, we are inevitably still left with material substance whose presence is politically salient in complex ways.’<sup>44</sup> Tim Ingold calls for a mutual relationship between people and environment and argues against, ‘the sterile opposition between the naturalistic view of the landscape as a neutral, external backdrop of human activities, and the culturalistic view that every landscape is a particular cognitive or symbolic ordering of space.’<sup>45</sup> To him people’s physical relationship with the environment comes before social constructions. His discussion of affordances puts into perspective the ‘enabling’ qualities of materials. According to Ingold, ‘a place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there-to the sights, sounds and indeed smells that constitute its specific ambience.’<sup>46</sup> It can thus be argued that materials have affordances that either enable or impede people’s actions. In the case of belonging, it follows that the material qualities of the landscape can enable or constrain a community’s constructions of belonging. As has been highlighted above, belonging is constructed through repetition or practice which entails a relationship between humans and the materials.

In exploring issues relating to graves, land and belonging, which are strongly represented in the case of the Basotho, this thesis engages and draws insights from works by a number of scholars who have analysed similar issues elsewhere in Africa. In her recent article on what she calls ‘new meanings of home’ in post apartheid South Africa, Marchetti-Mercer provides a case of how, as a trajectory of belonging, ‘home’ can mean different things to different people in the same country.<sup>47</sup> She argues that the different notions of home among South Africans influence their experience of belonging in the post-apartheid South Africans. Some South Africans who felt at ‘home’ in the apartheid era found it quite difficult to really belong in the post apartheid

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<sup>43</sup> J. Fontein, ‘The power of water: Landscape, water and the state in southern and eastern Africa: An introduction’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol.34, No.4, (2008), p.751.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> T. Ingold, ‘The temporality of landscape’, *World Archaeology*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (1993). p. 152.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.155.

<sup>47</sup> M. Marchetti-Mercer, ‘New meanings of ‘home’ in South Africa’, *Acta Academica*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2006).

South Africa and ended up leaving the country. Yet those who were returning from exile also found it quite difficult to belong to a country which they had spent so many years away from. The place they once called home had changed and had become as strange to them as exile. This supports the argument that belonging is a dual process of claiming and being accepted in a group, place, and country among other categories.

Perhaps, more than anything else, funerals and graves put into perspective the politics of belonging in many African societies. There is a tendency among many African communities to want to bury their dead in their home villages. Most Africans desire to be buried 'at home' when they die even though they would have spent their lives in towns or elsewhere and yet others are forced by tradition to be buried at family cemeteries. As a result of this, being buried in a town or elsewhere where one's ancestor bones are not buried carries a lot of stigma. According to Geschiere and Nyamnjoh many Cameroonians consider burial locations as a very important criterion for belonging.<sup>48</sup> In essence, the basic test for one's belonging will be to ask them to show where their ancestors are buried. A failure to do so would be interpreted as meaning that the person belongs elsewhere, in this case where the bones of his/her ancestors are interred. In his recent publication, Chabal asserts that burials reinforce a collective sense of belonging and strengthens an individual's attachment to the community. As he argues, 'the link to the ancestors, wherever they are buried, is an integral part of the meaning of origin, and of the texture of identity, which cannot be disregarded.'<sup>49</sup> Belonging is here linked with attachment to a physical place which draws its meaning from people's attachments with the ancestral graves. Attachment to a physical place is however not the only variable in the belonging matrix. It is just but one of the many variables in complex assemblages of ethnicity, kinship, religion, and language among others.

Even in the case of rural-urban migrants, there is almost always an obligation to go back 'home' to attend funerals. Tradition also often dictates that even if one considers himself an urbanite, they are still supposed to have their remains buried at the ancestral burial grounds with all funeral rituals being performed. Smith observed that among the Igbo in Nigeria, rural-urban

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<sup>48</sup> P. Geschiere and F. Nyamnjoh, 'Capitalism and autochthony: The see-saw of mobility and belonging', p.435.

<sup>49</sup> P. Chabal, *Africa: The politics of suffering and smiling* (New York: Zed Books, 2009), p.29.

migrants ‘face powerful expectations to be buried at home in their ancestral villages and perform elaborate and expensive funeral ceremonies for their dead relatives.’<sup>50</sup> The value of this is basically the maintenance of migrants’ ties with their rural homes of which each funeral they attend is a reminder of where they belong. This also means those urban migrants in the end have dual or multiple notions of belonging.

Cohen and Atieno Odhiambo’s ethnographic study of the conflicts surrounding the burial of SM, a prominent Luo Kenyan lawyer, illustrate the extent to which some people can go to prove where one really belongs.<sup>51</sup> The conflict over who had the right to bury SM between his widow a Kikuyu, and his Luo kinsmen became a test of SM’s belonging. His widow desired to bury him on his farm close to Nairobi whilst his Luo kinsmen wanted him to be buried in his home village among the Luo in spite of him having spent the better part of his life in Nairobi. The case dragged on in the courts for six months until the high court declared that the deceased’s Luo community had the rights to bury him. It was indeed a contestation of where SM actually belonged or where his corporeal remains should belong and also whether one could truly belong to an urban area, away from his kinsmen. Graves can therefore be markers of where ‘some-body’ or ‘bodies’ belong(s).

On the theme of land, which is one of the pillars of this thesis, Parker Shipton’s ethnographic study of the Luo people in Kenya provides an interesting contribution to the debates on the interplay between land and the politics of belonging in Africa.<sup>52</sup> The main focus of this volume is land, credit, indebtedness, and belonging in Africa. The book provides an intriguing story of African peoples’ attachment to land and the threats of dispossession brought about by the introduction of freehold tenure and mortgaging. The author uses the case of the Luo in Kenya to show that ideologies about land and attachment have often clashed with governments’ policies aimed at titling land and making it possible to use as collateral in applying

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<sup>50</sup> D. J. Smith, ‘Burials and belonging in Nigeria: Rural-urban relations and social inequality in a contemporary African ritual’, *American Anthropologist*, Vol.106, No.3 (2004), p.569.

<sup>51</sup> D. W. Cohen and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Burying SM: The politics of knowledge and the sociology of power in Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1992).

<sup>52</sup> P. Shipton, *Mortgaging the ancestors: Ideologies of attachment in Africa* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

for agricultural loans. It is this Western-imposed model of land tenure and credit which Shipton sees as threatening the Luo people's attachment to their ancestral lands and the future of their belonging. Particularly important is the debate on the applicability of the concept of freehold tenure in Africa and whether land can be bought or pledged as collateral for a loan and consequently forfeited if the debtor defaults. As he puts it, the mortgage, 'threatens to separate people in rural areas from home, from kith and kin, and from ancestral graves, with all that these mean.'<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, in the case of the Basotho, the ability to purchase land has helped them to 'buy homes' and to establish an attachment to the land which, in the absence of freehold tenure, would have proved difficult given the fact that they are 'late comers' in the area. The case study shows how Basotho used freehold land and state planning regimes to construct enduring emotive attachments to land. Thus, apart from freehold tenure they also made use of the emotive presence of graves, farms, old homes to claim belonging. The case study therefore demonstrates that the distinction between freehold tenure and attachment to land established through kinship, graves, old homes and other factors is largely blurred.

Land, old homes and ancestral graves are often viewed as inalienable heritage that cannot be sold. As Shipton argues, 'graves are the symbolic focal points of human attachments to place: the living and dead, the social and the material, all connect here.'<sup>54</sup> Similarly, communities in the Southern Highlands of Madagascar land and tombs are central to their construction of a sense of belonging. According to Evers, in rural Madagascar 'the *tempon-tany* (masters of the land) controls access and management of land. They generally do not register their land claims. Tombs are deemed to constitute sufficient evidence of ownership, 'since the Malagasy believe tombs are geographical markers of family origin in a particular region.'<sup>55</sup> As a result of such notions about tombs and attachment to land, government attempts to reform land registration system was viewed as an attempt to 'bring the state into an area that is deemed to be the exclusive realm of

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.ix

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>55</sup> S. Evers, 'Trumping the ancestors: The challenges of implementing a land registration system in Madagascar' in S. Evers, M. Spierenburg and H. Wels (eds.) *Competing jurisdictions: Settling land claims in Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp.223-224.

the ancestors, who are widely believed to be the ultimate owners of land.<sup>56</sup> Graves, thus, help to connect people to the land and to their heritage. They are an integral part of people's attachment to land and to the community and indeed a reference point to their belonging.

Another theme explored in this thesis that has attracted rich literature is religion. Apart from or often related to autochthony in complex ways, religion is perceived as another important aspect of belonging. It has the effect of bringing people together and making them feel they belong to a community of believers and differentiating them from others with different religious beliefs. As Geschiere argues, religion is becoming as important as autochthony in the negotiation of belonging.<sup>57</sup> For example, Islam as a religion and a way of life engenders new notions of belonging for its converts. For many Muslims in North Cameroon commitment to the village is not always evident as the village is associated with non-believers or infidels. The newly converted Muslims join a community of Muslims and begin to view the non-Muslims in the villages as infidels and stops participating in the traditional ceremonies religion.<sup>58</sup> According to van Santen, in the case of the Mafa in North Cameroon 'as soon as converts have "started to pray" they change their name, dress in a different way, adopt another language, take on other praying habits, and practice other marriage rituals and bride price exchanges, follow other economic occupations and new inheritance system.'<sup>59</sup> In other words, the converts assume a new identity upon their conversion, with its own set of notions of belonging.

Similarly, religion has also been one of the key tools used in constructing and negotiating belonging in Zimbabwe. The 1920s and 1930s saw the emergence of African Initiated Churches (also known as African Independent Churches). These included a 'wide range of prophetic groups, varying from semi-Messianic to simple Zionist or Apostolic Churches.'<sup>60</sup> The differences

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p.224.

<sup>57</sup> P. Geschiere, *The perils of belonging*, p.2.

<sup>58</sup> J. C. M. Van Santen, 'Islam, gender and urbanisation among the Mafa of north Cameroon: The differing commitment to 'home' among Muslims and non-Muslims', *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 68, No.3 (1998), p.403.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p.407.

<sup>60</sup> M. L. Daneel, *Old and new in southern Shona Independent Churches Volume 1: Background and rise of the major movements* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), p.285.



in leadership and doctrines of these African Independent Churches created a new identity for the church members. Similarly, Pentecostal churches, the earliest in Zimbabwe being the Apostolic Faith Church introduced in Southern Rhodesia in 1918, also brought a new trajectory to religious belonging.<sup>61</sup> Pentecostalism brought a new form of belonging whose main basis is ‘being born again’ and being able to speak in tongues. As has already been highlighted, the trajectory of belonging offered by Pentecostalism places emphasis on accumulation and belonging to a community of believers whilst ‘Othering’ those who are not ‘born again.’ Maxwell’s historical study of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God (ZAOGA), arguably the biggest Pentecostal church in Zimbabwe and the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) provides an interesting analysis to the development of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe and the sense of belonging it gives the new converts.<sup>62</sup> According to Maxwell, the new converts, having been born again, ‘become smart in appearance, hard-working and literate, hence employable.’<sup>63</sup> This feeds into the gospel of prosperity which is at the centre of a large number of Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe. Apart from tracing the development of ZAOGA and its development into a transnational movement, he also analyses the position of the Ezekiel Guti, the church’s founder, and how he has managed to deal with internal schisms and managed to turn himself into a cultic figure in the church. It is quite apparent that the doctrines espoused by Pentecostal movements, bring in new strategies of religious belonging and set converts apart from other Christians.

### **The Basotho community: Migration, Christianity, and Purchase Areas**

There exists a large corpus of works on evangelisation in southern Africa and the migrations which they entailed. Some of the works highlight the role played by African evangelists and how some of them ended up settling in areas where they were working. This section analyses evangelisation in Zimbabwe in the light of the role played by African evangelists especially

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p.286.

<sup>62</sup> D. Maxwell, *African gifts of Spirit: Pentecostalism and the rise of a Zimbabwean transnational movement* (London: James Currey, 2006).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

Basotho. It also discusses how land, especially Purchase Areas farms, became central to the Basotho community after their settlement in Zimbabwe.

Eddy Maloka has produced arguably the most comprehensive study of the migrations of Basotho to mines in South Africa.<sup>64</sup> The book, which is based on his PhD thesis, analyses the social history of Basotho labour migrants in the mine compounds of South Africa. He provides insightful narratives on the journeys of Basotho to the mines, their social lives in the mines and their encounters with missionaries. Particularly, Maloka discusses at some length the history of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) which fashioned itself as the ‘church of Moshoeshoe’ or the church of the monarch in Lesotho and how it related to its Basotho converts. Maloka’s study is quite indispensable in as far as labour migrations in southern Africa are concerned and, most importantly, Basotho migrations to the mines. The study focuses on those migrations induced by economic factors in this case labour migrations. In contrast, the present study focuses on migrations that were not necessarily induced by the desire to get an income but which largely had to do with evangelisation activities. Be that as it may, Maloka’s study remains a very important contribution to the history of Basotho. The study provides some insights on the broad Basotho identity which can help us understand the Basotho community in the Dewure Purchase Areas which migrated from South Africa.

The issue of death and its social significance in the mines is one of the themes pursued by Maloka in one of his articles which covers aspects Basotho’s experiences with death and mourning in the mines.<sup>65</sup> The article examines how Basotho constructed the causes of death in the mines and compensation for these deaths. It analyses Basotho’s new conditions as migrant labourers impacted on their funerary practices. As he argues, because of the new conditions Basotho found out that they were now burying their dead, ‘the Johannesburg way’ not according to their cultural practices. The article is helpful in understanding the impact of migration on death and mourning as these phenomena have a strong effect on identity construction. My research will also dwell on death, graves and cemeteries and how these have played a role in

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<sup>64</sup> E. T. Maloka, *Basotho and the mines: A social history of labour migrancy in Lesotho and South Africa c.1890-1940* (Dakar: Codesria, 2004).

<sup>65</sup> T. Maloka, ‘Basotho and the experience of death and mourning in the South African mine compounds, 1890-1940’, *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines*, Vol. 38, Cahier 149 (1998).

Basotho's construction and negotiation of belonging in Zimbabwe. Thus, although Maloka's article focuses on the changing nature of burial practices in the mines, it is helpful in revealing the salience of funerals and burials in a migrant community.

Basotho migration to what is now Zimbabwe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was intricately linked to the evangelisation of the area. Basotho evangelists worked with a number of missionary bodies, especially the DRC and Berlin Missionary Society (BMS). Von Sicard is one of the scholars who have written about the early history of the DRC missionaries' work in Zimbabwe and the role played by African evangelists in the early evangelisations expeditions.<sup>66</sup> In his work, he also examined the role played by Basotho evangelists.<sup>67</sup> Although it is quite helpful in explaining the presence of Basotho people on the Zimbabwe plateau and the role in the DRC and BMS, von Sicard's book is, in essence, a hagiography of missionaries and their African evangelists with very little focus on the history of these African evangelists outside their role in the church.

Beach examines the spread and impact of Christianity among the Southern Shona people. In this article Beach examines the spread and impact of Christianity among the southern Shona.<sup>68</sup> He also examines the role played by Basotho and other African Evangelists in helping the Berlin Missionary Society and the DRC in establishing mission stations and spreading the gospel among the Shona people. More significantly, Beach had access to some rare DRC files in Cape Town which no other Zimbabwean historian had hitherto managed to access. His work will be quite helpful in the analysis of Basotho links with the DRC and their role in the spread of Christianity among the southern Shona.

Van der Merwe's works on the history of the DRC in Zimbabwe also discusses the pioneering work of Basotho evangelists who worked with DRC missionaries.<sup>69</sup> *The day star*

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<sup>66</sup> H. von Sicard, *Zvakaitika kare zvekereke yemaLuthere munyika yeRhodesia* (Bhuku rokutanga) (Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1972).

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> D. N. Beach, 'The initial impact of Christianity on the Shona: The protestants and the southern Shona' in A. J. Dachs (ed.) *Christianity south of the Zambezi* Vol.1 (Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1973).

<sup>69</sup> W. J. van der Merwe, *Kuvamba nokukura kwekereke yeReformed muZimbabwe (Reformed Church in Zimbabwe)*, (Masvingo: Morgenster Mission, 1987), W. J. van der Merwe, *The day star arises in Mashonaland* (Fort Victoria:

*arises in Mashonaland*, in particular, is one of the most important texts on the history of the DRC in Zimbabwe.<sup>70</sup> This book details the early history of the church; its struggles, failures and triumphs. Indirectly the book also explores the migration of Basotho and the role they played in the establishment of Morgenster Mission, the first DRC mission in the country. However, as a minister of religion in the church, Van der Merwe's writings are largely official histories which reveal very little in terms of internal schisms in the church and the infamous DRC missionaries' exploitation of Africans.<sup>71</sup> Given its focus on the church itself, the book does not examine the lives of this Basotho community outside the church.

Mashingaidze's analyses the relationship that existed between Basotho evangelists and DRC missionaries.<sup>72</sup> His focus is on the agency of the African evangelists in the evangelisation of their fellow Africans. As a result, he endeavours to show how most of the evangelization work was in fact carried out by Africans themselves. This is understandable given the historiographical trends of the 1970s whose focus was still on showing African agency. According to Mashingaidze, 'it was the Christian convictions, sacrifices, initiatives, moral courage and physical endurance of the Sotho, Venda and Eurafrican Christians that sustained the missionary fervour in Mashonaland for over two decades prior to the British colonisation of Zimbabwe in 1890.'<sup>73</sup> His discussion of the work of the Paris Evangelical Society (PES) and DRC missionaries particularly focuses on the contribution of Basotho converts and Basotho evangelists in the spread of the gospel among communities to the north of the Limpopo River. He highlights how ordinary Basotho converts in Lesotho contributed money towards the evangelical work and others volunteered to be evangelist. He refers to these and other African evangelists as the 'forgotten frontiersmen of Christianity's northern outreach'. His article generally celebrates

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Morgenster, 1953), W. J. van Merwe, *From mission field to autonomous Church in Zimbabwe* (Transvaal: N. G. Kerkboehandel, 1981).

<sup>70</sup> W. J. van der Merwe, *The day star arises in Mashonaland*.

<sup>71</sup> See for example: B. Davis and W. Dopcke, 'Survival and accumulation in Gutu: Class formation and the rise of the state in colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1939', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 14, No.1 (1987).

<sup>72</sup> E. K. Mashingaidze, 'Forgotten frontiersmen of Christianity's northward outreach; Black evangelists and the missions' northward hinterland', *Mohlomi: Journal of southern African Historical studies*, Vol. 2 (1978).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p.68.

African agency. This is understandable given that it was published in the 1970s when African historians were preoccupied with looking for African agency due to nationalist fervour. Although this is not one of the key themes discussed in this study, Mashingaidze's analysis of Basotho and other Africans' agency in the evangelisation of their fellow Africans helps in understanding the evangelisation induced migrations during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, whilst acknowledging the agency of African evangelists in the spread of Christianity, this study is mainly concerned with exploring the history of the communities that emerged as a result of these evangelisation migrations.

Basotho's purchase of farms in the Dewure Purchase Areas needs to be understood within the broader context of the creation of Purchase Areas in the 1930s and the emergence of a class of Africans owning freehold land. There exists a large corpus of works on Purchase Area Farms in Zimbabwe produced by agricultural economists, geographers, sociologists and historians.<sup>74</sup> Undoubtedly, the most enduring consequence of the Land Apportionment Act (1930) was the division of land in Southern Rhodesia on the basis of race. This was based on the recommendations of the Morris Carter Land Commission (1925). As a result of the Act, Africans lost their right to purchase land anywhere else in the country apart from the Purchase Areas. According to Ranger, the Purchase Areas were formed in response to the growing class of 'reserve entrepreneurs'.<sup>75</sup> These were largely successful male peasant farmers who had adopted the plough and were cultivating more land than others, thereby creating land shortages in the reserves. The disquiet within the Native Affairs Department was that these 'reserve entrepreneurs', as Ranger called them, were going to finish up the land in the reserves and disadvantage the less prosperous peasants.

Since the concept of Purchase Areas came with the loss of Africans' right to purchase land elsewhere in the country, the scheme was also interpreted as some kind of compensation for their loss of this right. According to Cheater, 'the black freehold areas were originally created as a political sop to advanced natives for the loss of their rights to by non-reserve land anywhere in

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<sup>74</sup> Purchase Areas (also known as Native Purchase Areas or African Purchase Areas) were freehold areas which were created for purchase by Africans following the enactment of the Land Apportionment Act in 1930.

<sup>75</sup> T. O. Ranger, *Peasant consciousness and guerrilla war in Zimbabwe: A comparative study* (London: James Currey, 1985), p.69.

the colony of Southern Rhodesia.<sup>76</sup> Shutt argues that, ‘Purchase Area farms were conceived as ‘single’ family farms; large enough for a family to live comfortably, but not so large as to compete with Europeans’.<sup>77</sup> She further states that Purchase Areas were part of the colonial administration’s dilemma of how to deal with the African elite. In the end, the scheme was a *quid pro quo* for Africans who had resources to purchase land but had lost their rights to purchase land elsewhere as a result of the Land Apportionment Act.<sup>78</sup>

Weinrich viewed Purchase Areas as a new phenomenon which saw a break from the old system of communal tenure.<sup>79</sup> As a result, Purchase Area farmers saw themselves as constituting what could be termed an African Middle Class with values, interests and grievances which were quite different from those of their counterparts in the reserves. Consequently, Purchase Area farmers tended to ‘Other’ their counterparts in the reserves and even excluded them from their farmers’ associations and unions.<sup>80</sup> This was the basis on which there developed some strained relationships between these farmers and the peasant farmers who remained in the reserves. Weinrich’s book is, however, frustrating to read for anyone concerned with names of people and places in the study. The nature of the subject she was discussing forced her to use pseudonyms instead of real names of the people she discusses.

In the same year that Weinrich’s book was published, Pollak published an article on African farmers in Rhodesia.<sup>81</sup> He makes an analysis of the Rhodesian reluctance to sell land to the Africans in spite of the fact that the law was explicit on the issue that the Africans were allowed to purchase land anywhere in the colony. This reluctance by white Rhodesians to sell land to Africans explains why by 1925 only fourteen farms totalling 45, 000 acres belonged to

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<sup>76</sup> A. P. Cheater, ‘Formal and informal rights to land in Zimbabwe’s Black freehold Areas: A case study from Msengezi’, *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 52, No.3 (1982), p.77.

<sup>77</sup> A. K. Shutt, ‘Pioneer farmers and family dynasties in Marirangwe Purchase Areas, colonial Zimbabwe, 1931-1947’, *African Studies Review*, Vol.43, No.3 (2000), p.62.

<sup>78</sup> A. K. Shutt, “‘We are the best poor farmers’”: Purchase Area farmers and economic differentiation in Southern Rhodesia c.1925-1980’ DPhil Thesis, University of California, 1995.

<sup>79</sup> A. K. H. Weinrich, *African farmers in southern Rhodesia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> O. B. Pollak, ‘Black farmers and White politics in Rhodesia’, *African Affairs*, Vol.74, no.296 (1975).

Africans.<sup>82</sup> Pollak argues that, 'in the interest of the settlers' peace of mind the commission declared that the ownership of land by Africans should only be permitted in designated areas and only 8 million acres were recommended.'<sup>83</sup> This was in line with the Rhodesian administration's desire to avoid a situation whereby the African farmers would get into direct competition with the white farmers. Of interest to this study is Pollak's analysis of the backgrounds of the people who purchased land in the pioneering phase of the Purchase Areas. He observes that though the Morris Carter Land Commission's aim in establishing Purchase Areas was to allow the 'reserve entrepreneurs to have the opportunity to purchase land, the early recruits to the purchase areas tended to be non-indigenous Africans and elite groups of Africans such as teachers, religious ministers, chiefs' and retired policemen among others.<sup>84</sup> Although Pollak's article does explore the migration history of the farm owners of foreign origin such as the Xhosa, Zulu and Basotho, the study helps to set the stage for a more in-depth study of the poly-ethnic nature of Purchase Areas and how this impacted on the politics of belonging in these areas.

Palmer's study of land and racial domination in Rhodesia makes an important contribution to the debate on land in the country. Palmer traces the segregation debate in the colony especially on its impact on land. He argues that though the law was explicit on the matter of Africans' rights to purchase land anywhere in the colony, the colonial administration managed to prevent this law becoming effective by refusing to sell land to Africans.<sup>85</sup> This explains why by 1925, only 14 farms belonged to Africans half of whom were non-indigenous. Palmer identifies the farms and also their owners. Among the people he identified as having been able to purchase farms before 1925, were Basotho who purchased two farms in the Victoria District.<sup>86</sup> Although the work does not specifically focus on Purchase Areas, it is quite indispensable to this study as it is vital in identifying farms purchased by Africans prior to the 1925 land commission. More importantly, Palmer identifies where the people evicted from these in the 1930s went

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<sup>82</sup> R. Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia* (London: Heinemann, 1977), p.263.

<sup>83</sup> O. B. Pollak, 'Black farmers and White politics in Rhodesia.'

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p.265.

<sup>85</sup> R. Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia*, p.135.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p.279 (Appendix ii).

including those farms purchased by Basotho in Dewure and Mungezi Purchase Areas in Gutu and Bikita districts respectively.

Cheater analyses the multi-ethnic nature of the Msengezi Purchase Areas.<sup>87</sup> This was a result of the fact that the people who first purchased from this Purchase Area came from all over the country with a sizeable number being non-indigenous Africans such as the Mfengu, Xhosa and Basotho among others. She argues that, the Mfengu/Xhosa descendents were regarded as being in the forefront of 'civilisation' in Msengezi because they had monogamous marriages as compared to the local Shona who were largely polygamous. However, Cheater does not pursue the complexities of such ethnic stereotyping and ethnic prejudices in the Purchase Areas as she argues that ethnic identity per se was not very important unless it interfaced with other factors such as educational and religious background and marital status.<sup>88</sup> The present study, instead, seeks to explore the interaction between Basotho, one of the immigrant groups, and other farmers in the Purchase Areas and also the politics of space and belonging in these areas.

The creation of Purchase Areas in the 1930s led to the rise in inheritance disputes involving freehold land. In her other study, Cheater explores generational disputes in farm ownership and struggles over inheritance, a theme that is also pursued in this study.<sup>89</sup> Her study also analyses the issue of inheritance, especially inheritance of farms, had a potential of causing inter and intra generational conflicts. Although Cheater focuses on Msengezi Purchase Areas, there are similarities with cases in other Purchase Areas. Since inheritance disputes, almost invariably, involved issues such as the legality of African wills, applicability of customary law, and community of property in Christian marriages these themes will also be discussed in relation to the Basotho community. The fact that the Basotho community was composed of people who had owned land prior to the establishment of Purchase Areas inheritance cases in this community

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<sup>87</sup> A. P. Cheater, 'Agricultural production in Msengezi African Purchase Land, Rhodesia: Sociological aspects' A Report on Research to the Faculty of Social Studies, University of Rhodesia, November 1974, p.22.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>89</sup> A. P. Cheater, 'Fighting over property: The articulation of dominant and subordinate legal systems governing the inheritance of immovable property among Blacks in Zimbabwe', *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 57 No.2 (1987) see also A. P. Cheater, 'Formal and informal rights to land in Zimbabwe's Black freehold Areas: A case study from Msengezi', *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* Vol. 52 (3), (1982).



set some legal precedents. It would therefore be interesting to analyse these inheritance cases and compare them with those from other Purchase Areas such as Msengezi.

Shutt has contributed much to the development of historiography of Purchase Areas in Zimbabwe. She argues that, the idea behind the Purchase Areas was, ‘to drive into limited and controlled areas those Africans who had or aspired to private rural property. These “purchase areas” as the tracts later came to be known, represented Africans’ real *quid pro quo* loss of their right to purchase land elsewhere’.<sup>90</sup> Her argument follows that of Cheater who argues that Purchase Areas were a sop or a concession to Africans. Shutt sees purchase areas as satisfying the African elite’s ideals of an emergent middle class which included, ‘privacy, a measure of respect from the colonial government and a symbolic and concrete separateness from African cultivators in the reserves and from lower paid workers.’<sup>91</sup> She also observes that, ‘there is considerable evidence that pioneer settlers in the purchase areas considered their freehold farms a means to augment, embody, and cement their middle class image.’<sup>92</sup> This was the reason why in the late 1930s the Native Land Board (NLB) introduced new regulations to curb absentee farmers in order to ensure that the farm owners would be resident at the farm. This impacted negatively on the urban elites who saw the farms as homes where they would retire to and also as status symbols.<sup>93</sup> She states that, ‘purchase area farms became ‘homes’ for these applicants who had no real home in rural areas, but many applicants were Zimbabweans who simply wanted more security of tenure.’<sup>94</sup> Shutt’s work however, largely focuses on the economic developments in the Purchase Areas and the potential of this scheme to produce an African Middle Class. It therefore dwells on the economic activities of the farmers and the challenges they faced in establishing thriving farms based on intensive farming. This study’s principal aim, however, is to analyse politics of belonging in the Purchase Areas and how Basotho farmers have used their ownership of farms to construct, negotiate and assert their belonging.

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<sup>90</sup>A. K. Shutt, ‘Purchase Area farmers and the Middle class of Southern Rhodesia, c.1931-1952’, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol.30, No. 3 (1997), p.558.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p.556.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p.565.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p.576..

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p.564.

In *Are we not also men*, Ranger uses the case the Samkange family to explore the development African nationalism and the influence of Christianity in Zimbabwe.<sup>95</sup> The book focuses on Thompson Samkange and his family, especially his sons, Stanlake and Sketchly. Among other things, he shows the impact that Thompson's work in the Methodist church had on his political career. The study also shows how Tambaram, the Samkange family farm in the Msengezi Purchase Area, was important in the development of a Samkange family 'dynasty' and their belonging to an emergent African Middle Class. According to Ranger, the farm was one of the first to be purchased in the Msengezi Purchase Areas in the 1930s and at that time, 'its acquisition had been a landmark in the establishment of an elite family.'<sup>96</sup> With time, like many other Purchase Area farms, Tambaram became more or a less a family burial ground and a place where all the family members would return to bury their relatives or for other family gatherings.

As a result, the Samkanges affectionately refer to the family burial ground on the farm as the 'Samkange Heroes Acre'.<sup>97</sup> Such attachment to family farms was replicated in many other Purchase Area farms in the country at different scales. In essence, Purchase Areas created a new sense of belonging for the farm owners. Apart from being status symbols, the farms became focal points for the different families leading to the creation of family dynasties on the farms. Basotho in the Dewure Purchase Areas, however, went a step further by purchasing a community farm which also became more or less a 'Basotho Heroes acre' and a focal point of their belonging. The cemetery on the Basotho communal farm developed to become a place loaded with meaning and a symbol for Basotho's attachment to the area. The book therefore provides an important entry point to an analysis of the centrality of cemeteries and graves in Purchase Area farmers' establishment of an attachment to their farms.

It is important to highlight that Missionaries had great influence in the lives of their African converts in both reserves and Purchase Areas. A number of missionaries were, however, infamous for their exploitation of their African converts. Davis and Dopcke's article provides an

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<sup>95</sup> T. O. Ranger, *Are we not also men: The Samkange family and African politics in Zimbabwe 1920-1964* (London: James Currey, 1995).

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.vii.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

analysis of the early forms of economic accumulation and the development of statecraft in Gutu district as well as missionaries' exploitation of surrounding African communities.<sup>98</sup> Their article documents the development of a capitalist economy in the district during the colonial period analysing issues such as agriculture, labour migration and taxation. They also analyse the role of the DRC in the development of a capitalist economy and in the district and most importantly missionaries' exploitation of their converts. DRC missionaries' paternalism and their tendency to exploit their converts were also crucial factors in the straining of relations between Basotho and DRC missionaries. The article, however, primarily covers the period between 1900 and 1939 and does not cover the Purchase Areas which is the main focus of this study. It is however helpful in providing a background to DRC missionaries' often acrimonious relationship with the local Native Commissioners (NCs) and a number of their converts, including the Basotho, because of their paternalistic and exploitative tendencies. It is against the background of DRC missionaries' exploitative tendencies that Basotho decided to reframe their relationships with these missionaries when they moved to the Dewure Purchase Areas.

Education was one of the key issues in the emergence of a 'progressive' or 'modernising' group of Africans. In her study of colonial education, Summers brings to the fore the various problems the colonial government and churches such as the DRC faced in establishing and running schools in colonial Zimbabwe.<sup>99</sup> She used two main case studies: the establishment and development of schools in Gutu district as well as the establishment and development of the London Missionary Society run Inyati mission to illustrate her arguments. In her Gutu case study, Summers showed how the DRC struggled to establish quality schools in the district and how they often came into conflict with the local people who were loathed missionaries' paternalism and also the poor quality of the schools. The Basotho community had similar problems with the DRC missionaries when they established their own school on their community farm in the late 1930s and resolved to avoid missionaries' control. Although Summers does not discuss the controversies surrounding the establishment and running of

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<sup>98</sup> B. Davis and W. Dopcke, 'Survival and accumulation in Gutu: Class formation and the rise of the state in colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1939'.

<sup>99</sup> C. Summers, 'Educational controversies: African activism and educational strategies in Southern Rhodesia, 1920-1934', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 20, No.1, (1994).

Basotho's Bethel School, her work helps to put into perspective the many and varied conflicts between DRC missionaries and Africans over the establishment and running of schools in the district.

This study could also be situated within the broader debate of ethnicity and the invention of tradition in Zimbabwe popularised by Ranger in the early 80s.<sup>100</sup> In his 1985 article on the invention of tribalism in Zimbabwe, Ranger argues that colonial administrators connived with chiefs and salaried Indunas to invent Shona and Ndebele identity.<sup>101</sup> The article was also an attempt at responding to the arguments that the conflicts between the Shona and Ndebele in the 1980s had roots in the pre-colonial period. Rather he argues that this was a result of colonialism and works of missionaries, which saw the invention of Shona and Ndebele identities. The main argument of this school is that in the pre-colonial period, Africans did not perceive themselves as belonging to any particular ethnic group(s), but ethnicity was a colonial invention. This school also argues that colonialism created ethnic stereotypes to such an extent that some people were perceived as good cooks, good mine workers, good supervisors among other such jobs, based primarily on their membership to a particular ethnic group.

The invention of tradition thesis has however been critiqued by a number of scholars in recent years. One of its shortfalls is that the fact that by emphasising the role of colonial officials and missionaries in 'inventing' tradition it takes African agency in the process and assumes that Africans do not have the power to reject the 'invented traditions'. Moreover, invention, 'implied a conscious construction of tradition, focused on colonial power and agency.' Msindo argues that contrary to Ranger's argument that ethnicities in Zimbabwe were colonial inventions, a closer look at the history of the Ndebele reveal its existence during the pre-colonial period.<sup>102</sup> Due to these critiques, Ranger began to revisit this theory by adopting the concept of social construction, which he largely borrowed from Benedict Anderson's concept of 'Imagined communities'.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> E. Hobsbawm and Ranger, T. (eds.) *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>101</sup> T. Ranger, *The invention of tribalism in Zimbabwe* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1985).

<sup>102</sup> E. Msindo, 'Remaking Ndebele and the Kalanga: Language and ethnicity in Matabeleland, 1860-1960s' Unpublished MPhil Thesis (African History), Wolfson College, University of Cambridge, 2002.

<sup>103</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

Ranger admits that the term ‘invention’ was problematic since it implied a one-sided happening and also implies a one off event, which does not allow for gradual processes of change.<sup>104</sup> He now argues that identities can also be imagined or socially negotiated rather than being invented.<sup>105</sup> This takes into account African agency in the transformation of identities and acknowledges that multiple and at times conflicting imaginations happened. However, due its conceptual limitations already highlighted, this study has avoided using identity as an analytical category.

Apart from the works discussed above, this study also builds on my M. A. in African history dissertation which looked at the history of Basotho people in the Dewure Purchase Areas in Gutu.<sup>106</sup> Although the dissertation tried to analyse the migration history of Basotho and their resettlement in the Dewure Purchase Areas, it largely focuses on ethnicity in Purchase Areas and it does not engage other pertinent issues such as the interface between land, graves, religion, autochthony and belonging. Furthermore, the study terminates in 1960 thereby leaving out other important developments that happen later.

### **Development of the research**

My interest in the Basotho community in the Dewure Purchase Areas in Gutu district began in around 2005 when I was doing research for my M. A. in African history dissertation. As someone who comes from the district, which is dominated by Karanga (a shona sub-group) communities, I had always been intrigued by the presence of a small but very tightly knit Basotho community. I then decided to carry out a historical study of the community. It was during this time that I began to appreciate the history of this community. After my masters dissertation I decided to carry-out a more in-depth study of the community at PhD level. My long history of contact with the community meant that I managed to establish a strong rapport with a

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<sup>104</sup> T. O. Ranger, ‘The invention of tradition revisited: The case of colonial Africa’ in T. O. Ranger and M. Vaughan (eds.) *Legitimacy and the state in twentieth Century Africa* (London: MacMillan, 1993).

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> J. Mujere, ‘*Vhunjere via Bhetere: A social history of the Basotho in the Dewure Purchase Areas in Gutu, c.1932-1960*’.

number of members of the community, observed their activities, and also interviewed some individuals several times. This went a long way in helping me earn the trust of the community and also to appreciate the community's internal social dynamics.

The research makes use of a wide range of oral sources which include oral traditions or collective memories of the community and oral histories. Collective memory was largely in the form of oral traditions of the community's migration into Zimbabwe, the role played by Basotho evangelists in the establishment of the DRC in the country, Basotho's purchase of farms and their eventual displacement to the Purchase Areas in the 1930s. Although these oral traditions were helpful in providing narratives of the community's early history, they were largely fragmented mainly because of the length of time that has passed since the community's migration from South Africa. Narratives of the community's journey from South Africa to colonial Zimbabwe and the first years of their settlement in the country were in most cases abstract and at best fragmented. Oral traditions of this period also do not reveal much about the role played by women in the community as they largely focus on the careers of the Basotho evangelists who worked with DRC and BMS missionaries. The National Archives of Zimbabwe, however, provided very rich archival material on this period which went a long way in filling the gaps in oral traditions.

Oral histories collected were mainly in the form of personal reminiscences or life histories. As a research method, a life history approach allows the unique experiences of individuals to inform the broader history of the community whilst allowing the nuances that would otherwise not be found in official documents to be revealed.<sup>107</sup> By allowing informants to narrate their life experiences this methodological tool helps the informant to remove assumptions he/she may have about the informant or the community. It, thus, gives agency to individuals in the history of the community. Although the challenge of a life history approach can be that it tends to centre on individual narrative at the expense of broader historical narratives, the interconnectedness of the narratives, however, help build a broader and nuanced history of the community. Interviews with a number of members of the Basotho community often revealed the complex web of kinship ties and other social networks. The interviews also revealed issues like

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<sup>107</sup> See J. B. Wallace, 'Life stories' in J. F. Gubrium and A. Sankar (eds.), *Qualitative methods in aging research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994).

migration history, marriages, the individual's religious and political views, the history of the purchase of their family farm and other details. Such minute details would have been difficult to obtain in group interviews. The life history approach is also more suitable for the study of minority groups whose histories are often not well represented in the meta-narratives.

Since those who were ethnically Sotho within the community largely engaged in endogamous marriages for a long time, this has meant a number of families in the community are related through complex kinship webs. Against this background, family histories were also collected alongside the more individual life histories. Family histories help reveal a broad based history of the community, more so given the fact that endogamous marriages meant that a large number of people in the community are related in one way or the other. From these family histories, I was able to reconstruct family trees which made complex kinship ties easier to comprehend and relate to the history of the community. Personal reminiscences or life histories were, therefore, richer than the community's collective memory. Their main weakness, however, was that at times they tended to be too narrow and excluded crucial material on other families not connected to the individual giving his/her reminiscences.

Between my initial fieldwork in 2005 and my 2009 fieldwork, I managed to create networks with a number of individuals which helped make understand better the social dynamics within the community and gain my informants' confidence. I also benefitted from observing a number of social events in the community and also from informal interactions with both Basotho and non-Sotho farmers in the area. Using the data I gathered from the interviews I was able map the social networks in the community and analyse their impact. These social networks were often articulated in the everyday happenings in the community.

Although most of the people I approached were very keen to share their life histories with me and respond to my numerous questions, some were reluctant to be interviewed for personal reasons. Others were reluctant to be drawn into responding to questions they considered to be 'political' or 'too personal'. In spite of this, I was satisfied with the wide range of narratives I managed to obtain.

Work in the National Archives of Zimbabwe involved an analysis of Delineation Reports, Purchase Areas Files, Land Files, General Administrative Correspondences as well as Native Commissioner's monthly and yearly reports and a huge collection of letters and memoranda produced by both the Basotho community and the local Native Commissioners. As a result I have been able to use these files in conjunctions with oral narratives and personal observations.

The archival material used in this study include Native commissioners' reports, delineation reports, native purchase areas files, education files, and a huge collection of letters and memoranda produced by the Basotho community and the local Native Commissioners. Native Commissioners in Gutu district were, for a long time, particularly interested in the Basotho community as they believed that they were progressive Africans whose presence in the district would make other Africans copy their 'advanced ideals'. As a result of this, Native Commissioners produced a large collection of reports, memoranda and letters on the the community. The challenge of using archival files has remained that the files were produced by colonial officials who had their biases and prejudices against their colonial subjects. This is the reason why colonial archives need to be read 'against the grain' and used in collaboration with other sources.

Archival files on the Basotho community are very rich from the early 1900s up to the 1960s but after the 1960s the local Native Commissioners and other colonial administrators seem to gradually lose interest in the community and begin to pay less attention on it. This may explain why archival files on the community for the 1960s and 1970s are not as rich as those of the earlier period. Apart from cursory references to members of the community who joined nationalist parties or became combatants during the liberation war, there was generally very little archival material on the community for this period. An alternative explanation may be that by the 1960s and 1970s the community had largely integrated and shed much of their particularism. For example, by the 1970s the Basotho community school had collapsed and most of the members of the community agreed that seeking to maintain a 'Basotho school' in the Dewure Purchase Areas was a futile exercise due to their small numbers.

The political context during which the research was carried out, however, made it difficult to obtain detailed oral accounts to fill the gap in the narrative which the scarcity of



archival material for the period created. A number of informants were uncomfortable discussing what they considered to be politically sensitive topics such as the role they played during the liberation struggle, politics after independence, land reform, the position of people of foreign ancestry in post-colonial Zimbabwe, and the post-2000 political violence among other topics. The politicisation of the liberation war history by the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), especially after 2000, also made the discussion of this topic with informants very difficult. Thus, instead of seeking to provide a comprehensive historical reconstruction of the period from the 1960s to 2008, chapter seven mainly highlights the political context during which oral histories and oral traditions used in this study were collected. The chapter is therefore necessary in providing the context of the research and to highlight significant points, but, due to the lack of archival material, does not provide an authoritative account of this period.

### **Organisation of the thesis**

The thesis is divided into seven, broadly thematic chapters. The first chapter introduces the thesis, reviews relevant literature and discusses the theoretical as well as the methodological approaches employed in the study. Chapter two explores Basotho migrations to what is now Zimbabwe, their relationships with DRC, PES, and Berlin Missionary Society (BMS). It also analyses the importance of Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal Farms to the Basotho until the 1930s when they moved to the Dewure Purchase Areas in Gutu district. It also examines how Basotho people's purchase of farms helped them develop an attachment to the land and have a sense of anchorage. The chapter argues that ownership of farms was a central feature in Basotho's construction of belonging, an issue which was also repeated when they moved to the Dewure Purchase Areas.

Chapter three examines the impact of the 1930s colonial displacements on the Basotho living on Erichsthal and Niekerk's Rust Farms. It commences by analysing the 1925 Morris Carter Land Commission and its recommendations, which formed the basis for the 1930 Land Apportionment Act. The Act legalised the segregation of land and the creation of (Native) Purchase Areas. The creation of the Purchase Areas as a *quid pro quo* for the Africans' loss of

their right to purchase land anywhere else in the colony was indeed one of the major recommendations of the Morris Carter Commission. The chapter examines the Basotho's experiences with the displacements and their settlement in the newly created Purchase Areas. It also explores Basotho's early attempts at negotiating belonging in the Dewure Purchase Areas which included purchase of family farms and most importantly the purchase of Bethel, their community farm. It was on this farm that Basotho built a school, church, and also established a cemetery.

In many African societies graves form a very important part of communities' attachment to place and in most cases become a rallying point in their construction of belonging. For autochthons, ancestral graves serve as evidence of a community's history and long attachment to a place. Thus, for new comers, ownership of land and graves of their relatives become key factors in their bid to establish their own attachment to this new place. Having set the stage by describing the motive and process through which the Basotho community went through purchasing Bethel Farm, chapter four discusses the centrality of the farm and the cemetery to Basotho's attachment to Dewure Purchase Areas. It explores how Bethel Farm, Basotho graves, and most importantly those at Bethel Cemetery, have become key symbols of not only Basotho presence in the Dewure Purchase Areas, itself dominated by the local autochthons, but also representations of their attachment to the land. Due to the fact that since its establishment in the 1930s Bethel Cemetery has remained the burial site of choice for most Basotho, the chapter focuses on this cemetery although it will also make references to some families who, for various reasons, decided to use their own family graveyards. The central argument in this chapter is that although, as 'latecomers', Basotho do not have ancestral graves in the area to back their claims to autochthony, their cemetery and family graveyards have been critical in the identification of the area as a Basotho enclave and also in cementing their attachment to it.

Focusing on the rise and fall of Bethel School, chapter five explores the link between education, identity, and belonging. The chapter examines the challenges that Basotho faced in establishing Bethel school as well as their attempt at making the school a 'Basotho school'. It also demonstrates how, in many ways, Bethel School represented the triumphs, failures and challenges faced by the Basotho in Gutu in their quest for belonging. It also asserts that the way

the Basotho community ran Bethel School exposes some subtle cleavages and fault-lines within the community as well as contradictions in colonial administration's perceptions of the community. The chapter is also an attempt at evaluating the success of a school primarily aimed at catering for the needs of a minority group in an area dominated by an autochthonous.

Chapter six examines the salience of religion in Basotho's construction of belonging. Basotho had a long relationship with the DRC missionaries which dated back to the period before the establishment of the first DRC Mission in the country in 1891. The chapter, thus, analyses the complexities that existed in the relationship between Basotho and the DRC missionaries. It argues that below the veil of an amicable relationship between the two was subtle mistrust. In most cases, these tensions were expressed in conflicts over the control of Bethel Farm and Bethel school, but most importantly on running of the church Basotho established on Bethel Farm. In the end, Basotho showed their desire to retain a measure of independence from the DRC missionaries by insisting on running their own affairs and refusing to fall under the direct control of the DRC missionaries at Morgenster, Gutu, Alheight and Pamushana missions. What ensued were a series of both overt and covert contestations which reached their nadir in the 1938 impasse over a bell donated to the Basotho community by DRC missionaries.

Chapter seven analyses Basotho strategies of belonging in the context of the changing historical and political contexts in contemporary Zimbabwe. As well as discussing Basotho's experiences with the state's deployment of a singular and hegemonic national identity which cloaks diversity, the chapter also explores the experiences of those Basotho who have since left the Dewure Purchase Areas and are living elsewhere in Zimbabwe and outside the country. It examines the connections, if any, that those Basotho who no longer own farms in the Dewure Purchase Areas still have to the area and also whether they still feel that they belong to that community.

The thesis concludes by returning to the major themes discussed in this study and making an attempt to assess the extent to which the Basotho community has been successful in dealing with the problem of belonging in various historical contexts since their migration to Zimbabwe. I also highlight the major conclusions drawn from the thesis and their significance to the broader debates about politics of belonging in Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular.

## CHAPTER 2

### BELONGING TO CHINHANGO AND HARAWE: EVANGELISATION, MIGRATION AND BELONGING c.1872-1932

#### Introduction

The Basotho community in Dewure Purchase Areas in Gutu district's migration history is intertwined with the history of evangelization of the region. Most of the members of this community are descendants of Basotho evangelists who migrated to present day Zimbabwe from South Africa in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with missionaries who were carrying out evangelical work among the southern Shona. Upon their settlement in colonial Zimbabwe, Basotho purchased two farms. The first was Niekerk's Rust (in Harawe area) in Ndanga district and the second one was Erichsthal Farm (in Chinhango area) in the Victoria area. Having lived on these two farms for almost three decades, they were evicted in the 1930s following the enactment of the Land Apportionment Act after which they moved to the newly created Dewure Purchase areas in Gutu. The history of these Basotho thus revolves around migration, evangelisation, ownership of freehold farms and struggles over belonging. The main objective of this chapter is to analyse the migration history of these Basotho, their relationships with missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), Paris Evangelical Mission (PEM) and Berlin Missionary Society (BMS), and to examine how they used their position as owners of freehold land to negotiate belonging. I argue that ownership of those farms, and to some extent the presence of graves, have long been central to Basotho's constructions of belonging and as a result they feature prominently in Basotho memorialisation of their migration, displacement and settlement in their present farms. Religion, education and farm ownership were also central issues in the construction of Basotho as progressive Africans.

#### Missionaries, evangelisation and Basotho evangelists

Basotho are recent migrants in Zimbabwe, most of them migrated to what is now Zimbabwe in the mid and late nineteenth century from 'Lesotho, south of present day Francistown in

Botswana and also from the Transvaal Province of South Africa.<sup>108</sup> The most significant Basotho communities in Zimbabwe are found in the Matabeleland region, the largest cluster being found in the Manama area in Gwanda South district. There is also another community of Basotho in Gwanda North who are under chief Nhlamba. Other communities in the region are found in Shashe, Machuchuta, Masera and Siyoka 2 in Beitbridge district.<sup>109</sup> There also small Basotho communities in Kezi District.<sup>110</sup> Hachipola asserts that the most prominent Sotho chief in Matabeleland is ‘chieftness (sic) Mare (or Mate) whose sub-chiefs or headmen are Thabani Rhanthonsi, Mahorosi, Khoatalala, Denga, Philip Nare, Pulpupeli Marape, Manyungu, Magaya and Mapala.’<sup>111</sup> There also exists another community of Basotho in Gutu district in Masvingo Province who are the subject of this study.<sup>112</sup> The Basotho community in the Dewure Purchase Areas is very small as compared to other Basotho communities in the country. This community is largely composed of farm owners in the Masema area of the Dewure Purchase Areas.<sup>113</sup> The majority of Basotho in this community originate from the Transvaal region of South Africa with most of them citing areas around Pietersburg their original homes.<sup>114</sup> Although they belong to the broader Sotho category, there are no direct links between the Basotho in the Dewure Purchase Areas and those in Matabeleland South province.

In spite of the fact that they had converted to Christianity Basotho continued with some of their cultural practices such as endogamous marriages which involved marriages between cousins (*motsola*). This was encouraged so that bride price cattle would remain in the same clan. This has meant that most of members of the community are related through complex kinship webs. According to one informant,

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<sup>108</sup> S. J. Hachipola, *A survey of the minority languages of Zimbabwe* (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1998), p.16.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> J. Mujere, ‘*Vhunjere via Bhetere: A social history of the Basotho in the Dewure Purchase Areas in Gutu c.1932-1960*’.

<sup>113</sup> S. J. Hachipola, *A Survey of the minority languages of Zimbabwe*, p.16.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Catherine Mphisa-Hakata, 3 September 2009.

most of the Basotho in Dewure Purchase Areas share the same progenitor, Seroga, of the Selika clan in Pietersburg in the Transvaal region in South Africa. Seroga, had five wives all being daughters of Mantulani. Some of the families that trace their genealogies to Seroga are the Mphisa, Sikhala, Morudu, Leboho, Mojapelo, Masoha, Maletse, and Mokwile. This explains why the name, Seroga, is very common among all these families. Apart from these shared dynastic or clan origins relations were also cemented through the practice of marriages between cousins (*motsola*).<sup>115</sup>

Consequently the Basotho kinship web has become so complex that at times it is very difficult to determine the relationship between two people. Marriage between cousins was quite common especially in the early years of Basotho's settlement in the country. The practice is however, dying due to a variety of reasons. Some of the reasons for this development include the difficulties in forcing the practice upon the younger generation which is reluctant to follow the tradition and also because control of cattle has lost its salience in the community.

The history of the Basotho community in the Dewure Areas in Gutu District is greatly linked to the history of evangelisation of the Shona people in southern Zimbabwe. Basotho in Lesotho and in the Transvaal region of South Africa were some of the earliest Christian converts in the region. As early as 1842 the Paris Evangelical Mission Society (PEM) mission at Morija had 28 converts and by 1848 they were 251.<sup>116</sup> The threats of the Zulu and the Ndebele raids greatly contributed to the conversion of Basotho to Christianity as they saw it as a way of ensuring their security. King Moshoeshoe (of Lesotho) also encouraged this development, 'not only because he genuinely had no real objections to the message, but also because it happened to suit his political purposes and reinforce his security.'<sup>117</sup> Moshoeshoe thus encouraged missionaries to set up mission stations in his kingdom to create buffer zones against his potential enemies. Though not very successful in converting Moshoeshoe and his court, 'the PEM managed to style itself as the "church of Moshoeshoe".<sup>118</sup> The PEM carried evangelisation work among Basotho in Lesotho and also in the mine compounds of South Africa. Over the years a number of Basotho converts became trusted evangelists for a number of protestant churches

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> T. Couzens, *Murder at Morija* (Johannesburg: Random House 2003), p.91.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p.90.

<sup>118</sup> E. T. Maloka, *Basotho and the mines: A social history of labour migrancy in Lesotho and South Africa c.1890-1940* (Dakar: Codesria, 2004), p.158.

among them the PEM, Berlin Missionary Society (BMS) and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). According to Coplan, ‘in the mid 19th century, the Basotho (sing.: Mosotho) were lauded by missionaries and resident British officials for their courtliness, ingenious adaptability, and eagerness for the “progress” they believed would come from the adoption of European ways.’<sup>119</sup> In the end, most missionaries who set off to carry out evangelical work among the southern Shona from South Africa and Lesotho took with them some Basotho converts who became quite indispensable as guides, porters and most importantly as evangelists. This is the reason why Basotho emphasise their links with missionaries when narrating their migration histories. Hence in tracing the history of Basotho who are in the Dewure Purchase Areas it is imperative to examine it in the light of the general history of the establishment and development of mission stations among the Shona in the southern parts of Zimbabwe.

The development of mission stations among the southern Shona can be divided into two broad phases. The first phase began in the 1870s and ended in 1883. This phase saw the DRC, the PEM and the Swiss Mission Vaudoise making some first steps towards establishing mission stations among the southern Shona, especially in Chivi and Zimuto areas.<sup>120</sup> Although the missionaries did not have much success in this period, they worked closely together and shared experiences and information about the area. The second phase, from 1883 to 1894, saw the BMS and the DRC sending through expeditions among the southern Shona people which culminated in the establishment of Morgenster and Chibi missions by the DRC and BMS respectively.<sup>121</sup> The second phase of missionary penetration saw a greater inflow of missionaries into the country and the establishment of more permanent mission stations across the Limpopo River. That period saw the missionaries commissioning no fewer than twenty one expeditions from South Africa into Mashonaland. Interestingly, although the expeditions were directed by the white

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<sup>119</sup> D. B. Coplan, ‘Fictions that save: Migrants’ performance and Basotho National culture’, *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1991), p.164.

<sup>120</sup> D. N. Beach, ‘The initial impact of Christianity on the Shona: The protestants and the southern Shona’ in A. J. Dachs (ed.) *Christianity south of the Zambezi* (Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1973), p.27.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

missionaries most of them were conducted by African evangelists, among them Venda, Pedi, and Basotho, thus underlining the importance of African evangelists in the missionary activities.<sup>122</sup>

The surge of interest in the evangelisation of Shona people in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is mostly attributed to the work of Reverend Stephanus Hofmeyr of the DRC who established a mission station at Goedgedacht in February 1865.<sup>123</sup> It did not take much time before Goedgedacht became a very important conduit for the passage of missionaries beyond the Limpopo into Shona areas. Goedgedacht became a springboard from which the evangelization of the southern Shona was launched. As Mazarire argues, the establishment of the DRC mission at Goedgedacht constituted the major first step towards the evangelization of the 'southern Shona'.<sup>124</sup> Soon after the establishment of the Goedgedacht mission, Hofmeyr began to make enquiries about the possibility of evangelising the Shona people to the north of the Limpopo River after hearing about them from the Buys brothers who had ventured there a couple of times.<sup>125</sup> The Buys brothers were coloured members of the DRC congregation at Goedgedacht who were descendents of Coenraad de Buys and his many African wives.<sup>126</sup> It was in fact Rev. Hofmeyr who realised the need for the missionaries to recruit African evangelists for the evangelisation of the Shona (also referred to as Banyai) to the north of the Limpopo River.<sup>127</sup>

The late 1860s and early 1870s thus saw a number of evangelists crossing the Limpopo and making contacts with some Shona chiefs, laying the ground for future and more serious evangelisation missions. In 1872 Gabriel Buys crossed the Limpopo and began preach Chief

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<sup>122</sup> E. K. Mashingaidze, 'Forgotten frontiersmen of Christianity's northward outreach: Black evangelists and the missions' northern hinterland ,1869-1914', p.68.

<sup>123</sup> W. J. van der Merwe, *From mission field to autonomous Church in Zimbabwe* (Transvaal: N. G. Kerkboehandel, 1981), p.37.

<sup>124</sup> G. C. Mazarire 'A right to self-determination! Religion, protest and war in south-central Zimbabwe: The case of Chivi district 1900-1980' M.A. in African History Thesis, History Department, University of Zimbabwe, June 1999, p.19.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>126</sup> D. N. Beach, 'The initial impact of Christianity on the Shona: The Protestants and the southern Shona', p.28.

<sup>127</sup> E. K. Mashingaidze, 'Forgotten frontiersmen of Christianity's northward outreach: Black evangelists and the missions' northern hinterland, 1869-1914', p.68.



Zimuto's area until 1876 when he went back to Goedgedacht.<sup>128</sup> Gabriel Buys was a coloured member of the DRC congregation who periodically went north of the Limpopo River on hunting expeditions during which he would take some time to preach to the Shona people.<sup>129</sup> Having sent out Gabriel Buys Rev. Hofmeyr was left without manpower to send to other expeditions until the return of Gabriel. Meanwhile he received enquiries from Mabile of the PEM in Lesotho and also from the Swiss Mission (SM) in Natal on the possibilities of sending expeditions to the Shona. Consequently, a joint expedition led by Asser Sehahabane a Mosotho of the PEM was arranged by the DRC, PEM and the Swiss Mission.<sup>130</sup> Gabriel Buys' expedition was followed by that of his brother Simon who was accompanied by Asser Sehahabane, a Sotho evangelist. Asser Sehahabane together with Jonathan a Pedi and Simon Buys left Goedgedacht in 1874 and crossed the Limpopo River to carry out evangelization among the Shona reaching as far north as chief Zimuto's area.<sup>131</sup> They returned with the good news that the Shona were very keen on receiving evangelists in their areas.

Having received encouraging news from Sehahabane about the Shona's reception of Christianity the PEM resolved to send missionaries and African evangelists on an evangelization mission among the Shona. Hofmeyr was having problems in mobilizing human and material resources to launch mission activities beyond the Limpopo.<sup>132</sup> However, Sehahabane and the other Basotho who had accompanied him to Mashonaland preached to the other Sotho about their expedition and the need to gather human, financial and material resources for the establishment of a mission station among the Shona.<sup>133</sup> They received much support from other Basotho who agreed that there was great need to support the evangelists who were carrying out evangelising expeditions among the Shona. According to Mashingaidze, 'not only did the

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<sup>128</sup> K. Sayce, *A town called Victoria or The rise and fall of the Thatched House Hotel* (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1978), p.59.

<sup>129</sup> W. J. der Merwe, *From mission field to autonomous Church in Zimbabwe*, p.37.

<sup>130</sup> E. Mashingaidze, 'Forgotten frontiersmen of Christianity's northward outreach: Black evangelists and the missions' northern hinterland, 1869-1914', p.69.

<sup>131</sup> D. N. Beach, 'The initial impact of Christianity on the Shona: The protestants and the southern shona', p.28.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>133</sup> E. K. Mashingaidze, 'Forgotten frontiersmen of Christianity's northward outreach: Black evangelists and the missions' northern hinterland, 1869-1914', p.69.

Basotho give whatever they could, but many volunteered to go and work among the people of Zimbabwe. Some who were too old to volunteer offered their young sons for missionary work.<sup>134</sup> The main reason why Basotho were so keen to contribute towards the spread of Christianity among the Shona was that as converts to Christianity they felt that they had to contribute towards the evangelization of other Africans. Ultimately, the PEM resolved in their 1875 conference in Lesotho to send a team led by Asser Sehabane to Mashonaland. Unfortunately they were denied passage by the Boer Transvaal government in Pretoria and were arrested.<sup>135</sup> In 1876 Rev. Dieterlen made another attempt to visit the Shona and received similar treatment from the Boers. In spite of these setbacks the missionaries continued to make concerted efforts to establish mission stations in Mashonaland. Upon their release from custody by the Boers the Basotho evangelists and their PEM missionaries organized another expedition to go into Chivi and Zimuto areas (under the authority of Chief Chivi and Chief Zimuto respectively). In 1877, Francois Coillard left for Mashonaland with some Basotho evangelists who included Asser Sehabane and Aaron who were to carry out evangelization work in Chivi and Azael and Andreas who were to work among the people in Chief Zimuto's territory.<sup>136</sup> Hofmeyr also gave them three of his best evangelists, Simon and Jesta Buys and also their cousin Michael. According to Mashingaidze, 'the Coillards and Hofmeyr's three men were to return to the south as soon as it was clear that the missions were established. In other words the Basotho were going to settle in Zimbabwe permanently-Sehabane and Aaron in Chivi's and Azael and Andreas at Zimuto's.'<sup>137</sup> This underlined the significance of the role of Basotho evangelists as frontiersmen in the spread of Christianity among the southern Shona. The explanation for the missionaries' preference for Basotho can be argued to have been the fact that Basotho were some of the earliest converts to Christianity and also that they showed great interest in evangelization work. According to W. J. van der Merwe, Basotho evangelists among them Lucas Mokoelé, Joshua Masoha and Micha Makgatho were some of the greatest African evangelists during the

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70; see also F. Coillard, *On the threshold of Central Africa: A record of twenty years' pioneering among the Barotsi of Upper Zambesi* (London: Hodder and Staughton, 1897, p.xxviii.

<sup>136</sup> D. N. Beach, 'The initial Impact of Christianity on the Shona: The protestants and the Southern Shona', p.29.

<sup>137</sup> E. K. Mashingaidze, 'Forgotten frontiersmen of Christianity's northward outreach: Black evangelists and the missions' northern hinterland, 1869-1914', p.70.

early period of evangelization in Transvaal and Mashonaland, rivalled only by Isaac Khumalo (a Zulu) and Gabriel Buys (a coloured) who worked with DRC missionaries.<sup>138</sup> It can also be argued that the fact that Basotho knew that they were to permanently settle in the country also made them desire to purchase land in the early years of the colonial period.

The BMS established two missions among the Venda in Transvaal which they used as launch pads for their own expeditions to the north. The mission at Chivasa was established in 1872 and the Tshakona Mission was established in 1874.<sup>139</sup> The first expedition which was not very successful was carried out by Buester in 1884 this was followed by another expedition, this time led by David Funzane a Venda evangelist. This expedition was more successful with the team going as far as Bikita among the Duma people.<sup>140</sup> They also got help from Shona migrants who were returning from mines in South Africa. In 1888 the BMS led by Superintendent Knothe and Schwellenus also launched their own evangelization mission among the Chivi people, which culminated in the establishment of Chibi Mission in 1894.<sup>141</sup>

It is apparent that both the DRC and BMS missionaries realised the advantages of employing African evangelists in their missionary expeditions. Wesleyans also had a number of African Evangelists who assisted them in their evangelical work among the Shona. When the Wesleyan pioneer missionaries Owen Watkins and Isaac Shimmin went to Zimbabwe in 1892 they employed a number of African evangelists and they soon had a large contingent of African evangelists. According to Mashingaidze, having arrived in 1892, within in year of their settlement, ‘the Wesleyan Society was by far the largest employer of black evangelists from the south [South Africa]. Ten more evangelists arrived. These were Josiah Ramushu, Mutsualo and John Molimeli Molele all Sotho; and seven Xhosa-Tutani, Belesi, Mutyuali, Mulawu, Fokasi, Shuku, and James Anta.’<sup>142</sup> Just as they did with the DRC, Basotho again formed a large part of

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<sup>138</sup> W. J. van der Merwe, *The day star arises in Mashonaland*, p.13.

<sup>139</sup> E. K. Mashingaidze, ‘Forgotten frontiersmen of Christianity’s northward outreach: Black evangelists and the missions’ northern hinterland, 1869-1914’, p.73.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> National Archives of Zimbabwe File Hist. Mss BE2/1/1 Diary of Knothe, Entry of 19 May 1888.

<sup>142</sup> E. K. Mashingaidze, ‘Forgotten frontiersmen of Christianity’s northward Outreach’, p. 80.

the African evangelists who worked with the Wesleyans missionaries. In fact, Josiah Ramushu who was the oldest among the ten African evangelist working with the Wesleyans, ‘was given the task of starting a school at Chiremba, (Epworth) and the rest were sent to such areas as Gambiza’s and Kwenda among the Njanja.’<sup>143</sup> However, in spite of the almost indispensable role of African Evangelists some missionaries such as the German Jesuits who founded Chishawasha Mission in 1892 did not employ African evangelists until about 1911 mainly because of Roman Catholic conservatism coupled with the fact that the team was composed of a large number of missionaries.<sup>144</sup> Be that as it may, African evangelists continued to play a key role in the evangelization of their fellow Africans. Apart from their desire to spread the gospel among their fellow Africans, evangelical work had other attractions for Africans such as providing them with opportunity to advance their education and also to accumulate wealth. As we will see later, a number of the Africans who worked as evangelists managed to advance their education, sent their children to school in South Africa and some of them bought pieces of land. They indeed formed a group of African elites.

It is clear that African Evangelists, among them Basotho, were indispensable in the spread of Christianity among the southern Shona. More often than not it was the African evangelists who were the first to preach to the Shona people and to convert them to Christianity before the missionaries came and established permanent stations.<sup>145</sup> According to Beach, though the missionaries usually assumed that a mission station and evangelisation began with the permanent settlement of European missionaries among the local people ‘for the Shona their experience of Christianity at first hand often began when an African evangelist arrived to preach and lay the foundation for a later mission.’<sup>146</sup> It can, thus, be argued that Basotho evangelists and other African evangelists were to a greater extent the ones who laid the ground for the establishment of mission stations among the Shona people and also ran some missions for a

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<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81.

<sup>145</sup> A number of these African evangelists had learnt the local languages during their early evangelisation missions across the Limpopo or when they went on hunting expeditions. Because of their knowledge of the local languages some of these evangelists also worked as interpreters for the missionaries. See W. J. Van der Merwe, *From mission field to autonomous church in Zimbabwe* (Fort Victoria: Morgenster, 1953).

<sup>146</sup> D. N. Beach, ‘The impact of Christianity on the Shona’, p.25.

considerable period of time. This was largely due to the fact that some Basotho men had gone into Mashonaland well before the missionaries had been to the area. In this regard, some Basotho men had a better understanding of the geography of Mashonaland and also the language spoken in this area. According to Beach, in 1887 five Basotho men who included Micha Makgatho, Joshua Masoha, Zacharia Ramushu, Simon Nyt and Michia Choene crossed the Limpopo River and reached Nyajena where they were well received by the chief who showed some interest in Christianity.<sup>147</sup> This party reported favourably about the possibility of the Shona people receiving the gospel. The expedition was followed by yet another in 1889 led by Makgatho, Masoha and Lucas Mokoеле who visited Murove, Madzivire and Nyajena areas and also paid a courtesy call to Chief Mugabe.<sup>148</sup> These three Basotho men were to visit Chief Mugabe again in 1890 when they guided Reverend S. P. Helm, who when he talked to Chief Mugabe realised that the chief was keen to have a mission station established in his area.<sup>149</sup> Rev. Helm's expedition thus set the stage for the establishment of the DRC mission station in Chief Mugabe's area. Meanwhile the BMS was negotiating with Chief Zimuto for the establishment of a mission station in his area which culminated in the establishment of Zimuto Mission in 1892. Chief Zimuto also granted the Jesuits permission to establish a Roman Catholic Mission at Gokomere in 1893. In 1894 the BMS established another mission in Chief Gutu's area. However, most of these missionaries were welcomed not because the chiefs wanted their subjects to convert to Christianity but for their potential usefulness as allies in local conflicts and also as trading partners.

When the 1890 expedition led by Rev. S. P. Helm returned to Goedgedacht they made a very impressive report to Rev. Hofmeyr who immediately began to make enquiries on who could be sent to establish a mission station among the Shona people. As a result of this A. A. Louw set out from Goedgedacht on 8 April 1891 to Chief Mugabe's area.<sup>150</sup> According to van der Merwe, A. A. Louw left Kranspoort (Goedgedacht) with some seven Basotho volunteers who included

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33.

<sup>150</sup> W. J. van der Merwe, *The day star arises in Mashonaland*, p.13.

Micha Maghatho, Joshua Masoha, Jeremiah Murudu, Petros Murudu and Lucas Mokoela.<sup>151</sup> These Basotho volunteers worked as evangelists, guides and interpreters since some of them had knowledge of the area as they had been to these areas before. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1891 A. A. Louw and his Basotho evangelists arrived in Chief Mugabe's area and established a mission station at Mugabe hill which became the first DRC mission in Zimbabwe and the centre of DRC missionary work among the southern Shona people.<sup>152</sup>

Upon their arrival, the Basotho evangelists were stationed in different communities where they had to carry-out their evangelical work. Jeremiah Murudu and his brother Petros Murudu were posted at Matibi and Neshuro respectively, Isaac Khumalo went to Vurumela amongst the Hlengwe, Lucas Mokoela went to Madzivire, Joshua Masoha to Ruvanga and Micha Makgatho to Nyajena. David Molea was the only one who stayed at Morgenster with A. A. Louw because he had to act as his interpreter since he could speak *chiKaranga* the language spoken by the locals further cementing the reputation of Basotho as people who were quite conversant with the local languages.<sup>153</sup> David Molea had been to this area in several evangelization and hunting expeditions and learnt the languages spoken in the area during these expeditions. Most of these Basotho evangelists and their families decided to settle permanently in the country and continued to play a crucial role in the evangelisation of the communities around Morgenster Mission and a number of other centres.

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<sup>151</sup> W. J. van der Merwe, *Kuvamba nokukura kwekereke yeReformed muZimbabwe (Reformed Church in Zimbabwe)* (Masvingo: Morgenster Mission, 1987), p.22.

<sup>152</sup> A. R. Mutumburanzou et al., *Ten years of development in reformed Church in Zimbabwe 1977-1987* (Masvingo: Morgenster Mission, 1989), p.4.

<sup>153</sup> W. J. van der Merwe, *From mission field to autonomous Church in Zimbabwe*, p.52.



Figure 2: A plaque on the wall of the Murray Theological College at Morgenster commemorating the work of the seven Basotho Evangelists

### Basotho in Chinhango (Erichsthal Farm) and Harawe (Niekerk's Rust Farm)

Gradually Basotho began to coalesce in Fort Victoria district. Friends and relatives of the original Basotho evangelists continued to settle around Morgenster Mission. Thus Basotho evangelists and their families were joined by other Sotho families such Mphisa, Mmakola, Mojapelo, Molebaleng, and Komo (Nkomo) among others. In 1907 Jacob Molebaleng and three others purchased Erichsthal Farm in the Victoria District from the Posselt Family for £1000.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>154</sup> AT1/2/1/10 Land owned by Natives in 1925.

The farm measured 14202 acres and was located between the Shagashe and Mutirikwi Rivers.<sup>155</sup> It was owned in four equal but undivided shares which meant that they lived on the farm as a community rather than as individual private owners. The four owners of the farm were Jacob Molebaleng, Ernest Komo, Matthew Komo and Jona Mukula.<sup>156</sup> The other group of Basotho bought Niekerk's Rust Farm which was located close to Harawe Hill in Ndanga District just a few kilometres from Erichsthal Farm. The farm originally belonged to Mr. H. C. van Niekerk but was later sold to W. B. Richards.<sup>157</sup> Richards in turn sold the farm to Basotho immigrants who stayed on this farm until the early 1930s.<sup>158</sup> The farm was purchased in 1909 by Ephraim Morudu together with nine other Basotho. The purchase price of the farm was £900 and it measured 3.249 acres.<sup>159</sup> Like Erichsthal, Niekerk's Rust was owned in undivided shares so it was run more or less like a small village though the part owners had title deeds to the farm.

By 1924 there were about fifty adult Basotho men living on Erichsthal and Niekerk's Rust farms with their families. As the community grew colonial officials began to discuss ways through which these 'alien natives' could be administered. Unlike indigenous Africans, Basotho did not have any traditional authority, a factor which placed them in a very ambiguous position in the colonial set up. Some members of the community recognised that they needed to have their own traditional authority in order to fit into the schema of the colonial state. The Superintendent of Natives for Fort Victoria noted that Basotho 'desired to have a recognized mouth piece, through whom they may approach the government, and through whom notification of new legislation or government orders can be conveyed to them.'<sup>160</sup> After some deliberations

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<sup>155</sup> R. Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia*, p.280 (appendix II), A. K. Shutt, "We are best poor farmers": Purchase area farmers and economic differentiation in Southern Rhodesia c. 1925-1980', p.28. The farm measured 14202 acres and together with Niekerk's Rust was one of only 14 farms owned by Africans before 1925.

<sup>156</sup> S1042 Superintendent of Natives (Fort Victoria) to C. N. C, 20 December 1927, S1857 Distribution of Estate: Joseph and Johanna Komo (No Date).

<sup>157</sup> S1542/F2/1 Superintended of Natives (Fort Victoria) to C. Bullock Assistant Chief Native Commissioner Salisbury, 2 August 1933.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> R. Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia*, p.280. Although the farm owners were generally viewed as Basotho there were some members like Jona Mukula who was a Hlengwe and Isaac Khumalo who was a Zulu or Ndebele.

<sup>160</sup> S1561/10/7 The superintendent of natives Victoria to CNC 4 September 1924.



and with the support of the Superintendent of Natives, Cornelius Magoba was appointed headman (or chief) of the Basotho community on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1924.<sup>161</sup> Unfortunately, Magoba died just ten days after his appointment and he was replaced by Jacob Molebaleng on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1925.<sup>162</sup> Jacob Molebaleng was given the title of chief or headman of the community and was addressed as such in many government correspondences.<sup>163</sup> As the leader of the community, Jacob Molebaleng coordinated most of the activities of the community and made representations to colonial officials. The creation of a ‘customary authority’ for Basotho was part of the colonial administration’s way of dealing with the ambiguous position of Basotho as colonial subjects. Generally all ‘natives’ were supposed to be under some form of customary authority such as a chief so that they could be easily administered and monitored. However, as ‘alien natives’ Basotho did not fall under any traditional authority in Victoria District hence the need to create one for them. As will be shown later, in this and subsequent chapters, the appointment of a traditional authority did not go down well with some members of the community who argued that, as owners of freehold land, they did not need to be under a traditional authority. This development later caused a lot of discord within the community.

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<sup>161</sup> S1561/10/7 The superintendent of natives Victoria to CNC 1 October 1924. Magoba was also spelled as Maqula, Makola although the most appropriate spelling was Mmakola.

<sup>162</sup> S1561/10/7 The superintendent of Natives Victoria to CNC 21 March 1925.

<sup>163</sup> S924/G33/App.2 Superintendent of Natives (Fort Victoria) to CNC, 14 October 1927.

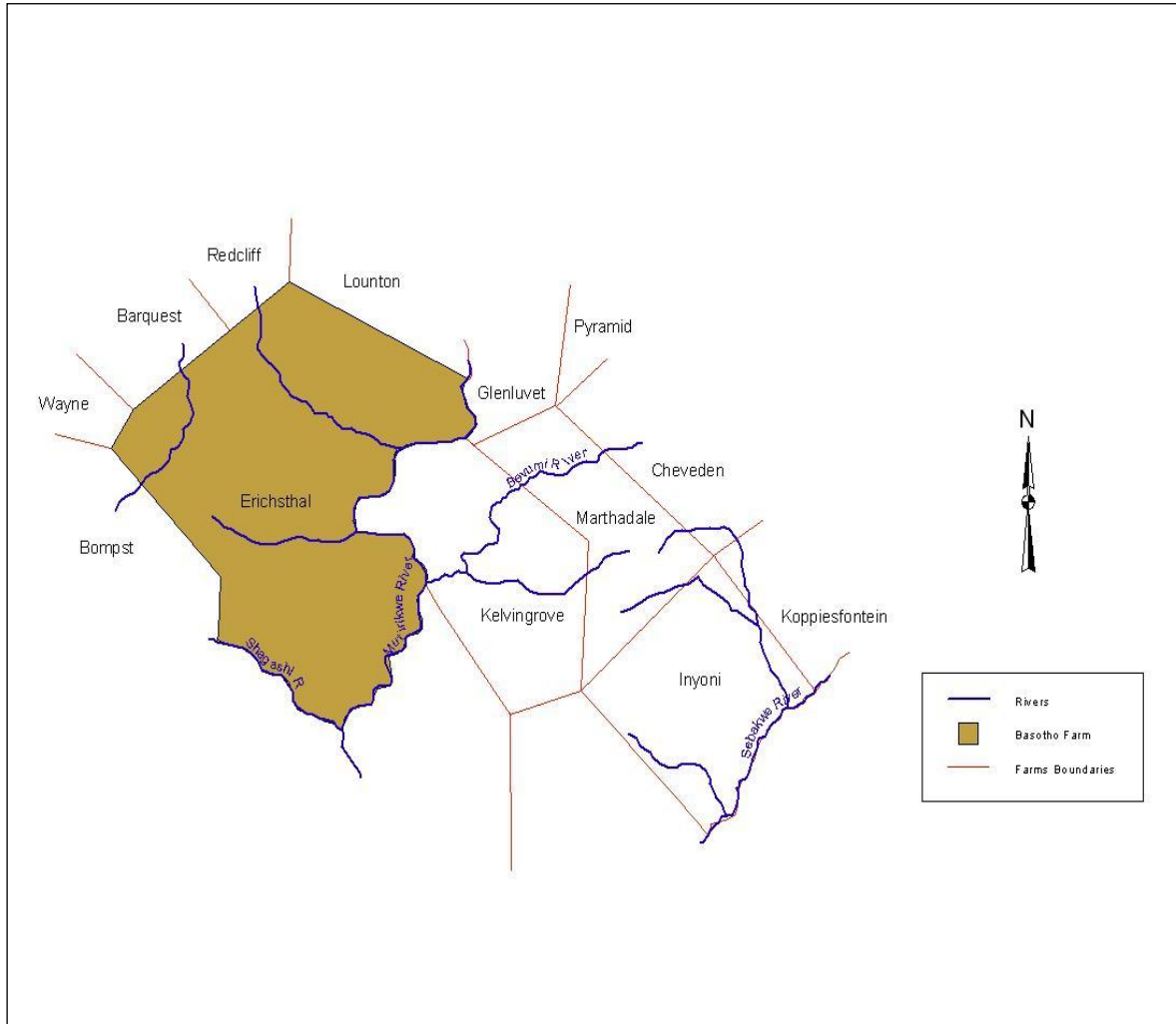


Figure 3: Erichsthal Farm before the construction of Lake Mutirikwi

When asked about where they first settled when they came to Zimbabwe, most Basotho would give the terse response *'kuChinhango'* in reference to Erichsthal Farm or *'kuHarawe'* in reference to Nierkerk's Rust Farm.<sup>164</sup> These two areas have remained central to Basotho sense of belonging in Zimbabwe. When reminiscing about their days on Erichsthal Farm (in Chinhango) it is common to hear Basotho in Dewure Purchase Areas say *ndafunga kuChinhango* (I miss

<sup>164</sup> Interview with Fredrick Komo at Farm No. 392 Dewure, Gutu, 28 December 2005, Interview with Mrs. Mazvinetsa Pirikisi at Farm No. 159 Dewure East, 28 December 2005.

Chinhango).<sup>165</sup> Erichsthal Farm (in Chinhango) and Niekerk's Rust Farm (in Harawe) which are in fact just a few kilometres apart have become so conspicuous in Basotho narratives that they have become more or less staging points of Basotho memorialisation of their migration and displacement as well as their construction of belonging in Zimbabwe. Basotho's memories of migrations and displacements are arguably engraved in the landscape, graves and ruined old homes in Chinhango and Harawe. The material of graves, old homes and other relics in Chinhango and Harawe has helped preserve the memory of Basotho stay in the area. For example, although Basotho were displaced from Chinhango in the 1930s the place continued to be associated with Basotho even many years after they had been displaced from the area because of the presence of Basotho graves.

It is also important to note that after Basotho's displacement in the 1930s Erichsthal Farm suffered another kind of alienation in the 1960s. It was partially flooded by Lake Mutirikwi (formerly Lake Kyle) which was constructed at the confluence of Shagashi and Mutirikwi rivers. The lake was constructed to provide irrigation water for the low veld sugar estates. The lake flooded a large part of Erichsthal Farm such that part of the farm was buried underneath the lake whilst the other part became part of the Mutirikwi Recreational Park which was established to the north of the lake. Yet in spite of this, the memories of the Basotho who stayed in this area have lived on. Fontein has observed that even the game rangers in the Mutirikwi Recreational Park acknowledge the presence of 'Basotho graves' and the story they tell about previous occupation of the area by Basotho.<sup>166</sup> Similarly, though Basotho were not part of the people who were using ancestral graves to reclaim land around Lake Mutirikwi during the Fast Track Land Reform Programme in 2000, their attachments to the landscape have continued to be recognised by the locals (under chiefs Chikwanda, Murinye, Mugabe, and Nemanwa), most importantly, because of the graves of their forefathers which are still an important part of the landscape.<sup>167</sup> In

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<sup>165</sup> Interview with Catherine Mphisa-Hakata, 17 September 2010.

<sup>166</sup> For a more nuanced analysis of politics of land and graves in the Lake Mutirikwi area see J. Fontein, "We want to belong to our roots and we want to be modern people": New farmers, old claims around Lake Mutirikwi, southern Zimbabwe', *African Studies Quarterly*, Vol.10. No.4 (2009).

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

an interview with Joost Fontein, Ambuya VaZarira, a local *svikiro* (spirit medium) had this to say, concerning the presence of Basotho graves in *Chinhango*:

**Joost Fontein:** Ambuya, I have another question about Basotho graves in the game park, which I have heard about...can you tell me about this?

**Ambuya VaZarira:** Yes, I know about this, there are a lot of Basotho graves there. The chief of those Basotho was called Molebaleng. He came from South Africa, with white settlers, and they were given a place, there were the game park is now. That is the Chinhango area. When Molebaleng came to Chinhango he found VaZarira there. Then he died and he left his son Jacob Molebaleng. It was that Jacob who took my father and put him into Morgenster school. That is how my father attended school and later became a teacher and he came back and taught here with the Basutu at their school. I was once shown that area.

So it is true there are a lot of graves of the Basotho people there. Jacob had a son in South Africa called Tuli. He once came here to look for me, when he wanted to sweep his ancestor's graves....That is when I saw the graves there and that is when I saw my own forefather's grave, my *Sekuru*. But that grave is to one side. He did not want to be buried there with the Basotho. He did not want that so his grave is a little bit away to one side.<sup>168</sup>

The above narrative from Ambuya VaZarira shows how Basotho had managed to establish an attachment to the area, not only through purchasing farms but also through their interactions with their non-Sotho neighbours. Basotho's links with the DRC missionaries at Morgenster Mission meant that they had access to education which helped in the construction of their image as progressive Africans. The active presence of Basotho graves in the area has also helped ensure the preservation of their history in the area as well as its melding with that of the local Karanga communities.

Owing to the presence of Basotho graves and old homes in the area and the living memory of Basotho's occupation of the area, one of the bays on the northern shores of the lake was named 'Basotho Bay'.<sup>169</sup> With this naming and memorialisation Basotho's attachment to the landscape around the lake has survived both the 1930s land alienations and partial flooding by the lake. According to Newell Mawushe, the Basotho Bay was so named because it falls in an

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<sup>168</sup> Joost Fontein Interview with Ambuya VaZarira, 12 December 2005. I am very grateful to Joost Fontein for allowing me to use his fieldnotes.

<sup>169</sup> The name even appears on the official maps of the area.

area which was formerly a Basotho farm.<sup>170</sup> Such place naming has helped to ensure the continued survival of memories of Basotho. In a way, Basotho still belong to Chinhango and Harawe even though they were displaced from these areas in the 1930s. The material traces they left such as graves and old homes have been quite vital in showing Basotho attachment to the two farms in spite of the fact that they were new comers to the area. It could be argued that the fact that Basotho purchased their farms was the first step through which they asserted their belonging in an area which they were otherwise late comers. Ownership of farms and burials were thus related ways through which Basotho established attachment and belonging to the land. As latecomers with no claim to any other area in the country it was important for Basotho to use the farms and graves to establish one. The longevity of Basotho belonging in Chinhango and Harawe thus owes much to the material significance of their farms as well as graves and old homes.

### **The construction of Basotho as progressive Africans**

Hardly a year passed, during Basotho's stay on Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal, without the Native Commissioner of Victoria District reporting specifically about their activities on the two farms. The reports revealed a great deal of information about how the colonial officials' perceived the Basotho community in comparison with the local Karanga communities. They also show how Basotho perceived their own position as colonial subjects in relation to other Africans in the colony. Colonial officials' perceptions of Basotho as 'progressive' or 'better natives' as compared to the indigenous Karanga communities owed much to Basotho's links with DRC missionaries, their conversion to Christianity and attainment of a certain level of western education. They also could afford to send their children to study in South Africa which few indigenous Africans could afford.

Education was one of the central pieces in the work of missionaries as it helped in their conversion of locals. Consequently, from the early years of the establishment of the DRC Missions in Mashonaland much emphasis was placed on the establishment of schools. As early

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<sup>170</sup> Interview with Newell, Boat Captain, Mutirikwi Lake Shore Lodges, Lake Mutirikwi, 4 February 2006.

as 1892 the DRC had established a school to cater for children of their Basotho evangelists.<sup>171</sup> In his report for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 1909 the NC for Victoria District noted that,

at Morgenster mission, under the DRC, natives are learning rough carpentry. The Basuto children are being taught by a Basuto who was sent to Basutoland for education. This school was formerly under the supervision of the DRC but is now, I understand, independent. It is situated on a farm owned by the Basutos.<sup>172</sup>

The Basotho communities in Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal farms thus managed to establish schools on their farms with the help of the DRC missionaries at Morgenster Mission. In 1911 the NC for Victoria District reported that, 'the natives (local Karanga communities) are somewhat apathetic on the question of education. The older people are usually opposed to it. At the Basuto farm Erichsthal the Basuto children are taught by a Basuto girl. Some of the Basuto boys have been sent to the Southern Colonies for education. Practically all the Basuto (sic) are members of the DRC.'<sup>173</sup> Such disparities in appreciation of western education between Basotho and the Karanga in the surrounding areas under Chiefs Mugabe, Chikwanda, Murinye and other chiefs clearly shows why the NC viewed Basotho as more progressive 'natives'. Basotho were generally viewed as progressive Africans who valued education. It is apparent that Basotho manipulated their ambiguous position as non-indigenous Africans as well as their links with DRC missionaries to have access to land and education for their children.

The colonial administration's perceptions of Basotho as 'better and progressive natives' was also enhanced by the fact that Basotho were quite enterprising on their farms producing grain, butter, cream and other types of farm produce. The NC of Victoria District estimated that more than half of the butter that was sold in the Victoria market was produced by Basotho farmers. He further reported that some Basotho were also involved in 'transport riding' which at the time was largely a preserve of white Rhodesians.<sup>174</sup> Sayce notes that the transport riders of

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<sup>171</sup> W. J. Van der Merwe, *The day star arises in Mashonaland*, p.19.

<sup>172</sup> N9/1/12 Victoria District, Report for the Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1909, 8 January 1910.

<sup>173</sup> N9/1/14 Victoria District: Report for the Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1911.

<sup>174</sup> N9/1/14 Victoria District: Report for the Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1911, N9/1/15 Victoria District, Report for the Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1912. Transport riding was a system where a group of entrepreneurs moved around the country with wagons trading in grain and other commodities. For detailed analysis of transport riding in Rhodesia see Stanley P. Hyatt, *The old transport road* (Salisbury: Books of Rhodesia, 1963).

Fort Victoria ‘trundled around the district in their rickety carts and wagons buying grain and meal and selling it in Victoria.’<sup>175</sup> Among Africans in Victoria, Basotho farmers were only rivalled by Karanga farmers of Rugby Farm who were also producing milk, butter, and cream which they sold in Fort Victoria and Gwelo. Rugby Farm was owned by twenty one indigenous Karanga people who had purchased the farm which measured 3, 246 acres at the price of a hundred head of cattle.<sup>176</sup> Most of the farm owners were teachers from DRC mission at Morgenster.<sup>177</sup> One of the part-owners of Rugby Farm managed to purchase a cream separator and soon became a regular supplier of cream to the Gwelo Creamery.<sup>178</sup> Together with the Karanga of Rugby Farm, Basotho were often referred to as ‘progressive’ and ‘intelligent’ natives by colonial administrators in Victoria district because of their level of education, ownership of property and their entrepreneurial skills.<sup>179</sup> These farmers were producing a lot of farm produce when the ordinary reserve farmers were struggling to make ends meet. It was clear that for colonial officials in Victoria District, Basotho owners of Niekerk’s Rust and Erichsthal farms and Karanga owners of Rugby Farm were the epitome of hard work and determination which the rest of the people in the district had to emulate. In 1924 the NC of Victoria District reported that,

cotton seed supplied by the government has been distributed to the Native Teachers in charge of kraal schools and is being grown under the supervision of the visiting missionaries. Seed was also supplied to a selected number of *intelligent natives* including the *Makaranga* (sic) owners of the Farm ‘Rugby’ and the Basutu (sic) owners of the Farms ‘Erichsthal’ and ‘Niekerk’s Rust.’<sup>180</sup>

In the minds of the colonial administrators Basotho and the other local elites who included teachers and the owners of Rugby Farm were, as the NC put it, ‘intelligent natives’ who deserved support from the government. In this regard being progressive was linked to both having a level of western education and most importantly property ownership.

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<sup>175</sup> K. Sayce, *A town called Victoria*, p.61.

<sup>176</sup> N9/1/14 Victoria district: Report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1911.

<sup>177</sup> R. Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia*, p.279.

<sup>178</sup> N9/1/17 Victoria District: Report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1924.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

Although, Basotho and a few Karanga farmers were still able to sell the surplus produce to surrounding towns, the early period of colonial rule (from 1898 to 1902) was the golden period of peasant production. Peasant producers in Victoria district were able to supply surrounding mines and towns with their agricultural produce which fuelled their initial prosperity during the early years of colonial rule. According to Mazarire, ‘this “prosperity”, successive Native Commissioners always argued, was another reason why the African men of Victoria district did not go out to work.’<sup>181</sup> However, as Bundy has shown in the case of South Africa, this period of general prosperity for African peasants did not last for long.<sup>182</sup> As the capitalist economy developed and the demand for labour in mines and towns increased, peasant production began to disintegrate. Moreover, settlers were demanding more and more land for capitalist agricultural production and displacing Africans from their land. The basic thesis of Bundy’s *The Rise and fall of the Southern African peasantry* was that ‘there was an initial period of prosperity after Colonial domination had been established over the indigenous people of the Eastern Cape; that this prosperity was based on a positive response towards the “market” and that the decline of this “prosperity” was inseparably associated with the rise of industrial capitalism in the shape of the gold mines.’<sup>183</sup> In the case of Rhodesia, Phimister argues that, the opening of the Gwelo-Salisbury railway line in 1902 and the Gwelo-Salukwe railway line in 1903 marked the beginning of the end of this prosperity as the railway lines saw a dramatic increase in the supply of cheaper produce from other areas.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> G. C. Mazarire, ‘A social and political history of Chishanga: South-Central Zimbabwe c.1750-2000’ Unpublished DPhil Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 2009.

<sup>182</sup> C. Bundy, *The rise and fall of the South African peasantry* (London: Heinemann, 1979).

<sup>183</sup> J. Lewis ‘The rise and fall of the South African peasantry: A critique and reassessment’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1984), p.1. In this article, Lewis provides a critique of Bundy’s thesis. Among other things, he challenges the homogeneity in the South African peasantry Bundy assumes in his book.

<sup>184</sup> I. Phimister, ‘Peasant production and underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914, with particular reference to the Victoria district’, in R. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds.) *The roots of rural poverty in central and southern Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 262-263.



## **Johannes Mokwile and the Southern Rhodesia Native Association**

The question of the future of the colony when the Company rule came to an end in 1923 triggered a variety of responses from both White settlers and Africans.<sup>185</sup> Debates revolved around whether the colony should go under direct British control, get into a union with South Africa or become a self governing country under Responsible Government. One of the ways through which Africans responded to this crisis was by forming associations which represented them and articulated their aspirations and grievances. These associations were, however, almost always dominated by African elites who were also mostly ‘alien natives’. For example, the Southern Rhodesia Bantu Voters Association (SRBVA) which was formed in 1923 was a brainchild of Abraham Twala who was a Zulu. Twala was a convert to the teachings of the South African, John Tengo Jabavu, who advocated for Africans’ right to vote among other civil rights.<sup>186</sup> Although it claimed to be a national organisation, the SRBVA was dominated by African elites from Bulawayo in particular and Matabeleland in general. Ranger notes that in spite of the fact the SRBVA claimed to be an apolitical organisation, it was by all intents and purposes a political organisation because its major aim was to represent African voters.<sup>187</sup> Moreover, in spite of being stronger in urban areas, it also recruited members in reserves, criticised Native Commissioners and encouraged Africans to submit their grievances the organisation. As a result of this colonial officials viewed the SRBVA as a radical organisation.

In almost direct opposition to the SRBVA was the Southern Rhodesia Native Association (SRNA) which had been formed in 1919 by African elites in Mashonaland.<sup>188</sup> It was an offshoot of the Union Bantu Vigilance Association. The SRNA was the brainchild of Johannes S. Mokwile. Just like Abraham Twala, Mokwile was an ‘alien native’. His father was Lukas Mokwile, a Sotho DRC evangelist, who had come with Rev. A. A. Louw and helped in the establishment of the DRC mission at Morgenster. He later, together with other Basotho,

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<sup>185</sup> See T. O. Ranger, *The African voice in southern Rhodesia 1898-1930* (London: Heinemann, 1970). It details the various ways in which both settlers and Africans responded to this crisis.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p.90.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> N9/1/17 Victoria district: Report of the Native Commissioner for the year ending 31 December 1926.

purchased Niekerk's Rust Farm in Fort Victoria. Johannes Mokwile received his industrial training at the London Missionary Society run Tiger Kloof Institution in South Africa. Upon completion of his studies he returned to Rhodesia and began to work for the government as a masonry instructor.<sup>189</sup> As a result of his Christian background, Johannes Mokwile's ideology was strongly influenced by Christian values. His ideological position, which became the guiding philosophy of the SRNA, was explained in an article he published in the Native Affairs Department Annual (NADA) in 1924. In this article he argued that Basotho needed to imitate Indians' work ethic and entrepreneurial skills.<sup>190</sup> The article was based on the conversation he had with a certain member of the Indian community in Rhodesia in a train from Gwelo to Fort Victoria. The Indian had challenged Basotho to be more productive on their farms. 'Why did your father buy a farm, yet you do not know how to make money out of the farm?' the Indian asked Mokwile.<sup>191</sup> Mokwile felt challenged by the Indian and wrote what he considered to be the ideals of hard work and progress that Basotho and other Africans had to follow if they wanted to be as prosperous as the Indians in the country were. He stated that:

It is so far clear that the way these Indians have worked or used the soil, even if it is only rented, has overloaded them with profits. These profits derived from the soil came from the character of the Indians themselves, and not from any special privileges given them which natives do not enjoy....Now then, unless we who live side by side with these White men resolve to depart from primitive conditions, progress is impossible. Natives then must move with times, use their opportunity, talk less, work more. Today I cannot go in where an Indian goes, just because he is a worker and I am a talker.<sup>192</sup>

The ideals of hard work and discipline were thus perceived to be at the centre of what Mokwile considered to be the Indian work ethic which he and other Africans had to emulate. This had strong resonances with the Protestant work ethic which was at the centre of protestant theology. It espoused the value of hard work, self-discipline and entrepreneurial skills. As a member of a protestant church (the DRC), Mokwile identified with the Protestant work ethic and also sought

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<sup>189</sup> J. Mokwile, 'Native ideals' *Native Affairs Department Annual*, Vol.2 (1924), p.95. I am grateful to Gerald Chikozho Mazarire for drawing my attention to this article.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p.95.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95-96.

to adopt similar traits from the Indian community in the country. He compared Basotho's position with that of other colonial subjects such as Indians who were comparatively more prosperous. He therefore, desired to help his people escape from the colonial image of Africans as generally indolent people by preaching the gospel of hard work and good entrepreneurial skills.

Mokwile's also took the opportunity to criticise the 'radical politics' of John Tengo Jabavu which had found a following among members of the SRBVA. In particular, he criticised Jabavu's claim that Africans had reached a stage where they had grown 'so strong that they now see the injustices done to them to which formerly they were unable to see' which Jabavu had expressed in a paper titled 'Native Opinion.'<sup>193</sup> In a scathing attack on Jabavu's career and his philosophy Mokwile argued thus;

I am afraid that if I do live long I may become an old man before I am able to witness any improvement in native administration being sought about by extravagant talk of men who make leadership their own only profession. It will not be those who seek high education that natives will always listen to. Their real leaders will be *men of the soil*; men who have learned how to use the soil, and who are not ashamed to be seen with their coats off...<sup>194</sup>

This was strong repudiation of Jabavu's philosophy which was also a veiled attack on Jabavu himself. Mokwile was a moderate who also believed in the moral force of Christianity. Apart from his firm belief in the importance of a good work ethic, he also believed that the presence of Whites would help Africans to achieve their aspiration. His ideology became the driving force behind the SRNA. According to Ranger, the SRNA, 'was a movement of the "men of the soil", the progressive farmers of Mashonaland'.<sup>195</sup> These progressive farmers included Basotho owners of Erichsthal and Niekerk's Rust, Karanga owners of Rugby Farm in Fort Victoria and other farmers in other districts of Mashonaland.<sup>196</sup> In Fort Victoria the association was stronger in Gutu, Chivi and Bikita districts.

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<sup>193</sup> T. O. Ranger, *The African voice in Southern Rhodesia 1898-1930*, p.105.

<sup>194</sup> J. Mokwile, 'Native ideals', p.97.

<sup>195</sup> T. O. Ranger, *The African voice in Southern Rhodesia 1898-1930*, p.106.

<sup>196</sup> N9/1/17 Victoria District: Report of the Native Commissioner for the year ending 31 December 1926.

Initially, the colonial officials were reluctant to allow the SRNA gather African grievances and pursue them with colonial officials. In 1927 the CNC stated that the SRNA, ‘has no right to claim representation of the Natives of the Colony, nor is it desirable that it should be fostered with that end.’<sup>197</sup> In spite of this, the SRNA continued to raise African grievances with colonial officials. In the same year a delegation of the association went to see the CNC in Salisbury and registered their disquiet at the employment of male attendants in female hospital wards. They viewed this as ‘an outrage on the modesty of female Native patients that Native male attendants should enter the wards occupied by women. They argued that women should be employed either as nurses or even for the performance of necessary, unskilled duties in such wards.’<sup>198</sup> Thus apart from presenting African grievances the association was also suggesting solutions to the problems. They complained about poor wages, Indians establishing businesses in reserves, conditions of prisons, requested that Africans be provided with free education and that they be given enough land to purchase among other issues. It is clear that African voices during this period were increasingly becoming louder and clearer as African associations became more articulate in their demands.

Although they had similar broad objectives, the SRNA and SRBVA often came into conflict because of their different philosophies and regional biases. Colonial officials fanned these differences to encourage animosities so as to avert a possible union of these associations. The SRNA’s less radical slant earned it acceptance from the colonial administration ‘which tended to play off “moderate” Rhodesian Native Association against the incipiently radical RBVA.’<sup>199</sup> At one point the President of SRNA tried to forge a special relationship between his organisation and the government so as to put the other organisation such as SRBVA in its shadow.<sup>200</sup> Such links with the colonial officials put the SRNA in collision course with other associations. The South African Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) which had opened branches in Rhodesia in 1927 accused the SRNA of being the ‘Good Boy’ Association

<sup>197</sup> S1561/25, Native Councils Bill, 1926-37 (Minutes and Memoranda): CNC to PM’s Secretary, 10 March 1927.

<sup>198</sup> S1561/25, Native Councils Bill, 1926-37 (Minutes and Memoranda): Notes on Meeting between CNC and SRNA, 1 June 1927; CNC to Secretary, Department of the Colonial Secretary, 20 June 1927.

<sup>199</sup> T. O. Ranger, *The African voice in Southern Rhodesia 1898-1930*, p.105.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, p.107.

because of its close ties with colonial officials. This obviously annoyed the leadership of SRNA which retaliated by writing to Prime Minister Moffat asking him to help in keeping Africans away from the ICU which they accused of agitation.<sup>201</sup> In spite of the seemingly less radical ideology of Mokwile and his organisation, it remained a voice for most ‘progressive farmers’ in Mashonaland. It was by no means a tool to be used by colonial officials. It had its fair share of confrontations with colonial officials and complained at their reluctance to take their grievances seriously. For example, due to lack of action on their various requests to the government, in 1929 the SRNA Fort Victoria Branch wrote to the CNC, ‘we natives have had some requests to the government through your hands; yet we have not got anything which we can say government has done some good to us.’<sup>202</sup> They had requested compulsory education, a court interpreter with better knowledge of their language, review on native wages and a superintendent who knew their customs among other issues. They concluded by saying, ‘all people are disheartened saying that the government of this country belongs to whites only, if it were ours; it should do some good to us we natives.’<sup>203</sup> Although the national office of the SRNA distanced itself from this letter it certainly shows that in spite of its image as a ‘Good Boy’ Association it engaged the CNC and other colonial officials on various African grievances.

Writing in the 1930s, a columnist using the penname ‘Kingfisher’ contributed a number of articles in *The Bantu Mirror*. ‘Kingfisher’ covered various activities of Africans in Fort Victoria and surrounding districts in his column ‘Fort Victoria News’.<sup>204</sup> From the content of most of his articles, especially his celebration of Basotho community’s progress in the area of education and farming, as well as his admission that he belonged to the DRC, it is probable that the person behind the column could possibly have been Johannes Mokwile. Interestingly, most issues covered by ‘Kingfisher’ strongly resonated with the ideas that had been raised by

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<sup>201</sup> S1561/25, Native Councils Bill, 1926-37 (Minutes and Memoranda): Walter D. Chipwaya to Moffat 28 June 1929.

<sup>202</sup> S1561/25, Native Councils Bill, 1926-37 (Minutes and Memoranda). (Letter was sent to CNC via National Secretary by the Fort Vic branches: in Zimuto Reserve, Gutu, Zaka, Bikita, Fort Victoria Township, and Chibi on 1 Nov 1929).

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> Kingfisher’s real identity remained a mystery. However, from his intimate knowledge of the everyday life in the Basotho community, it seems he was probably a member of the Basotho community.

Johannes Mokwile in his 1924 article. In spite of this however, it is by no means clear whether Johannes Mokwile was indeed the man behind the ‘Kingfisher’ column in *The Bantu Mirror*. ‘Kingfisher’ was once asked by the editor to reveal his actual name but it was never published in the paper.

‘Kingfisher’ seemed to have been someone who was keen to show that Africans were making strides in developing themselves either through farming, education or evangelical work. In the end ‘Fort Victoria News’ became a column that celebrated achievements of African elites around Fort Victoria. It is quite clear that he was someone with intimate knowledge of the Basotho community and did not miss an opportunity to celebrate their achievements. In 1936 he wrote:

Mr. Cephas Mmakola and his wife have returned from a long leave in the Transvaal. They have a Sedan car which they bought there. *Pambili ma-Africa...* (Forward Africans). We hear that Rev. A. Mukwili [Mokwile/Mokoele] is coming out to southern Rhodesia next month. He comes to stay and work among the Basutos (sic) in the Fort Victoria District. Mr. Mukwili belongs to the Dutch Reformed Church. Readers of the ‘*Bantu Mirror*’ will note that there are no African Ministers of the DRC Mission in this colony. So we who belong to this church are ready to give Rev. Mr. Mukwili a hearty welcome when he comes.<sup>205</sup>

His report shows that he was someone with close ties with the community. The tone of the article was actually celebratory. He took every opportunity to show value of hard work, progress and the moral force of Christianity.

Furthermore, in an apparent bid to show that Basotho and a few other Africans were the vanguard of progress among Africans in Rhodesia, ‘Kingfisher’ wrote in one of his many contributions to *The Bantu Mirror*:

perhaps readers of *The Bantu Mirror* who are interested in the progress of the Bantu people will be pleased to find that in this eastern part of Mashonaland, we have now two great Bantu Chiefs whose aims are for the good and advancement of their people, and setting an example for other chiefs to start the same. Chief Jacob Molebaleng [of the Basotho community] same as chief Gwebu of Charter are both Christian Chiefs and monogamists (Married to one wife and one wife only).<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Kingfisher, ‘Fort Victoria news’ *The Bantu Mirror*, 6 June 1936.

<sup>206</sup> ‘Gutu News’ *The Bantu Mirror*, 16 January 1937.

Conversion to Christianity and the adoption of the principle of monogamy was seen as one of the markers of progress among Africans in Rhodesia who were generally viewed by Whites as backward. Jacob Molebaleng of the Basotho community and Chief Gwebu, who was the chief a community of Ndebele people in Buhera district who had been displaced from Fort Rixon in Matabeleland<sup>207</sup> were thus viewed by Kingfisher as shining examples of African Chiefs who had shunned African practices of polygamy and adopted the Christian principle of monogamy. It is quite evident that intertwined with, and because of colonial constructions, the Basotho also constructed themselves as progressive Africans who had adopted Christian principles of marriage.

Although it would appear that, because of their shared migration history and the fact that they were a minority and migrant group, Basotho were a united community, behind this veil of unity were internal schisms which were often fanned by cliques that emerged in the community. The conflict between the Komo brothers, Matthew and Ernest, and Jacob Molebaleng illustrates the problems caused by these cliques in the Basotho community. Whilst most of the members accepted Jacob Molebaleng as the leader of the community (on both Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal Farms) the Komo brothers did not respect Molebaleng's authority especially given the fact that he was gradually establishing himself as the chief of the community. As we will see in other chapters this problem persisted even after Basotho had moved to Dewure and Mungezi Purchase Areas.

Emboldened by Mr. Winterton, a lawyer working in Fort Victoria, the Komo brothers took a defiant stance against Jacob Molebaleng and disregarded his authority. They argued that they did not recognise Jacob Molebaleng's authority because 'they did not wish to live under tribal control.'<sup>208</sup> The Komo brothers were basing their argument on the fact that they were owners of freehold land and, thus, could not live under a traditional authority like other Africans living in reserves. It is, however, apparent that Winterton was advising the Komos to disregard the authority of Jacob Molebaleng because he benefitted financially from representing them in

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<sup>207</sup> see F. Musoni 'Educating the Ndebele in Buhera district, Zimbabwe; A case for a multi-cultural approach?' Paper presented to the Curriculum and Arts Education Departmental Seminar, University of Zimbabwe, 31 March 2006.

<sup>208</sup> S924/G33/App.2 Superintendent of Natives to CNC, 14 October 1927.

the courts in Fort Victoria. Writing to the CNC in 1927, the Superintendent of Natives for Fort Victoria noted that:

I explained to them [the Komos] that in this country every native who is domiciled must live under tribal control and that the only alternative was to take out the blue registration certificate and be treated as a non-indigenous native. They did not take advantage of this, but have taken every opportunity to make the headman's position difficult and flout his authority and in order to more effectively do this they employ the local solicitor Mr. Winterton, who is, in my opinion exploiting the unfortunate position and fomenting more trouble out of which he of course reaps certain pecuniary advantages.<sup>209</sup>

It is apparent from the Superintendent of Natives's letter that colonial officials in Fort Victoria believed that Winterton was taking advantage of the conflicts among the Basotho to enrich himself. Moreover, the fact that the Komos refused to 'take the blue registration certificate' which would have meant that they would be treated as 'alien natives' shows that they felt that they belonged to the country although they did not wish to belong to a 'tribal authority' like other Africans. In the end this became a conflict about what types of colonial subjects they were and how this related to their security of tenure and sense of belonging. The 'blue registration certificates' would have greatly impacted on their access to land and by extension their construction of belonging.

Apart from their disregard of Jacob Molebaleng's authority as the headman/chief of the Basotho community, the Komos also failed to consider the rights of other part-owners of the farm before proceeding with any deal or transaction involving the farm. They defiantly entered into a partnership Mr. Van Blerk to build a General Dealer Business on the farm.<sup>210</sup> This did not go down well with Jacob Molebaleng because the Komo brothers did not inform him and, most importantly, because van Blerk was neither a member of the Basotho community nor a part-owner of Erichsthal Farm. Mr. Winterton was at the centre of this business arrangement as he was the one who assisted the Komo brothers and their partner van Blerk in obtaining a business license for the shop. This prompted Jacob Molebaleng to seek legal advice as he argued that either the Komos had to pay rentals since their partner van Blerk did not own any share in the

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<sup>209</sup> S924/G33/App.2 Superintendent of Natives to CNC, 14 October 1927.

<sup>210</sup> Van Blerk was a coloured who was also an in-law of the Komos as he was married to Johanna Komo the daughter of Joseph Komo.



farm or they could contribute money towards the costs of the sub-division of the farm to avoid such problems arising again.<sup>211</sup> Jacob Molebaleng was saved from going through the costly process of surveying and subdividing the farm by the Superintendent of Natives (Fort Victoria) who advised him that this was rather unnecessary because the 1925 Land Commission had placed this farm in the European area meaning that the Basotho were soon going to be asked to vacate the area and move to the newly created purchase areas. The Superintendent of Natives complained that Mr. Winterton had earned so much money from Basotho through taking to court matters which could have easily been solved without going to court and causing a lot of schisms within the community.<sup>212</sup>

## Conclusion

The chapter has explored the migration history of the Basotho community. It also analysed the links between Basotho migration and the evangelisation of the area to the north of the Limpopo River. The migration history of Basotho illustrates the vital role played by African evangelists in the evangelisation of the Southern Shona. Basotho evangelists were indeed as important as white missionaries in the evangelisation missions. Their migrations and history is thus greatly related to the development of mission stations such as Morgenster Mission. Basotho later settled in Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal farms which they made their home until they were displaced in the 1930s. The chapter has also argued that Basotho people's attachment to their new homes in Harawe and Chinhango was strengthened by their ownership of farms. Farm ownership became the platform on which belonging was constructed, contested and negotiated. As late comers, without any spiritual attachment to land, ownership of freehold provided Basotho with the means through which they could assert themselves. In a number of ways, the farms and ruined homes in both Harawe and Chinhango helped ensure the survival of Basotho memories even after their displacement in the 1930s. Basotho arguably crafted their belonging around ownership of freehold land. Basotho image as progressive farmers was also a key issue. Their links with DRC missionaries, ownership of property and their Christian faith made them to be perceived as

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<sup>211</sup> S924/G33/App.2 Superintendent of Natives to CNC 14 October 1927.

<sup>212</sup> S1042 1924-1937 Superintendent of Natives (Fort Victoria) to CNC, 20 December 1927.

'progressive Africans'. Basotho manipulated these networks and their image as progressive Africans to access resources and put themselves on a better footing within the broader category of colonial subjects.

## CHAPTER 3

### COLONIAL DISPLACEMENTS AND BASOTHO QUEST(S) FOR BELONGING IN DEWURE PURCHASE AREAS

#### Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the migration history of the Basotho community, their links with Dutch Reformed Church missionaries, and also how they were generally viewed by colonial administrators as ‘progressive Africans’ as compared to the indigenous communities. The major focus of the chapter was on Basotho activities on Erichsthal and Niekerk’s Rust, their two farms in the Victoria and Ndanga district respectively. The 1930s, however, witnessed fundamental changes in Southern Rhodesia’s land policy. The Land Apportionment Act (1930) effectively legalised the division of land to segregate the races, with productive land being reserved for white settlers, while Africans were crowded into reserves and newly created Purchase Areas. The Africans who occupied areas which were declared European Areas were ordered to vacate the land and move to reserves; however most stayed on as ‘squatters’ on crown land or white owned farms. The creation of Purchase Areas became a concession Africans received for their loss of rights to purchase land anywhere else in the country. This change also affected those Africans like Basotho who had owned land prior to 1925. The two farms were declared to be in an area reserved for Europeans and they were told to vacate their farms in 1932 and 1933 respectively. This chapter discusses Basotho’s experiences of the 1930s displacements and how they, through purchase of farms in the Dewure and Mungezi Purchase Areas, established an enclave for themselves and reformed their strategies of entitlement. The chapter also discusses the challenges that Basotho faced in purchasing their farms and dealing with inheritance disputes involving land.

## Land alienation and Basotho settlement in Dewure Purchase Areas

The 1925 Morris Carter Land Commission, the first major commission by the settler government since gaining self-government status in 1923, made recommendations which had a far-reaching impact in the country. The government appointed the Morris Carter Commission to investigate the land question and suggest how it could be solved.<sup>213</sup> The commission recommended the division of land between races and suggested that ‘an estimated 6, 851, 876 acres of the unalienated land be assigned to Africans as Native Purchase Areas, that 17, 423, 815 acres be reserved for future purchase by Europeans.’<sup>214</sup> Most of the commission’s recommendations were incorporated into the 1930 Land Apportionment Act (LAA) whose main provision was that, ‘there should be separate areas in which Europeans and Natives should have the right to acquire and hold land.’<sup>215</sup> The Act effectively expunged the 1898 Order-in-Council which had hitherto allowed Africans to purchase land anywhere in the country. It created the Native Land Board (NLB) which dealt with the alienation of land and the settlement of Africans in Purchase Areas. The act therefore legalised racial segregation on land in the colony making purchase areas ‘a real *quid pro quo*’ for the Africans’ loss of rights to purchase land elsewhere in the country.<sup>216</sup> In the same vein, Cheater argues that, ‘the black freehold areas were originally created as a political sop to advanced natives for the loss of their rights to buy non-reserve land anywhere in the colony of Southern Rhodesia.’<sup>217</sup> This emergent African Middle class desired to have a measure

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<sup>213</sup> The Commission was headed by Morris Carter who had previously been Chief Justice in Uganda and Tanganyika (Tanzania). He had also previously headed the Kenya Land Commission which led to the alienation of huge tracts of land in the Kenyan Highlands. See R. Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia* (London: Heinemann, 1977), p.41.

<sup>214</sup> R. Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia*, p.160.

<sup>215</sup> A. C. Jennings and G. M. Huggins, ‘Land Apportionment in Southern Rhodesia’, *Journal of the Royal Society*, vol.34, No.136 (1935), p.298.

<sup>216</sup> A. K. Shutt, ‘Purchase Area farmers and the middle class of Southern Rhodesia, c.1931-1952’, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol.30, No.3 (1997), p.558.

<sup>217</sup> A. P. Cheater, ‘Formal and informal rights to land in Zimbabwe’s Black freehold areas: A case study from Msengezi’, *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 52, No.3, (1982), p.77.

of privacy and separateness from other Africans in the reserves.<sup>218</sup> No such concession was, however, made in South Africa after the 1913 Land Act.

It is noteworthy that before the appointment of the Morris Carter Commission (1925) only fourteen farms totalling 46, 966 acres in the whole country were owned by Africans. This was a result of a systematic segregation of Africans by the Rhodesian Government with regards to purchase of land.<sup>219</sup> This was in spite of the existence of a law that allowed Africans to purchase and sell land on the same terms as Europeans. According to Woodhouse and Chimhowu ‘the very colonial legislation, the 1898 Order-in-Council, contained a ‘Cape Clause’ that stipulated that ‘natives’ in the colony were allowed to own or dispose of land on condition that transactions were undertaken before a judicial officer responsible for ensuring that the native party understood the nature of the contract.’<sup>220</sup> This order-in-council persisted until 1923 when the British South Africa Company (BSAC) administration was replaced by the Responsible Government.<sup>221</sup> Yet until 1923 the BSAC administration prevented Africans from fully benefiting from this clause by simply refusing to sell land to non-whites and encouraging the White farmers to do the same.<sup>222</sup> This made it quite difficult for Africans who desired to purchase land to do so. In the end very few Africans were able to purchase land and usually at very inflated prices.<sup>223</sup> Hence, although theoretically Africans were free to purchase land anywhere in the country, very few were able to do so due to the settlers’ reluctance to sell land to Africans and also due to the prohibitive prices of the land. The majority of the Africans who had

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<sup>218</sup> A. K. Shutt, ‘Purchase Area farmers and the middle class of Southern Rhodesia, c.1931-1952’, p.556.

<sup>219</sup> R. Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia*, p.135.

<sup>220</sup> P. Woodhouse and A. Chimhowu, ‘Communal Tenure and rural poverty: Reflections of land transactions in Svosve Communal Area’ BWPI Working Paper No. 35, 2008., p.20.

<http://www.bwpi.manchester.ac.uk/resources/Working-papers/bwpi-wp-3508.pdf>

<sup>221</sup> A. C. Jennings and G. M. Huggins, ‘Land Apportionment in Southern Rhodesia’ *Journal of the Royal Society*, vol.34, No.136 (1935), p.297.

<sup>222</sup> R. Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia*, p.135.

<sup>223</sup> A. K. Shutt, ‘Purchase Area farmers and the middle class of Southern Rhodesia, c.1931-1952’, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol.30, No.3 (1997), p.558.

been able to own land on a freehold tenure basis were of South African origin such as Basotho, Xhosa and Zulu who usually used their connections with missionaries to purchase land.<sup>224</sup>

Although just a few Africans had managed to purchase land the settlers were increasingly becoming uneasy with the idea of allowing Africans to buy land anywhere in the country. Shutt notes that ‘although the actual numbers of acres alienated were insignificant, there was the perception in government circles that there was an emerging trend towards the purchase or lease of land by Africans.’<sup>225</sup> Thus, in spite of the relatively small number of Africans who had managed to purchase land, White farmers were keen to stop this trend. According to Steele, white farmers saw it ‘as the start of a massive influx of advanced Africans into the ‘European’ area, where like as not they would either ‘kaffir farm’ on extensive basis or bring in their relatives from the Union.’<sup>226</sup> The dominance of non-indigenous Africans such as Basotho who were coming from the Union (South Africa) in the purchase of land was thus already causing a lot of consternation among White Rhodesians.

As a result of the promulgation of the LAA and the subsequent creation of Purchase Areas, Africans in areas designated for Europeans were ordered to vacate their land and either purchase land in Purchase Areas or move to Native Reserves. Basotho’s Erichsthal and Niekerk’s Rust farms were also designated to be in a European area which meant that the owners had to move elsewhere. In anticipation of their displacement, Basotho started to enquire with the NLB on the possibility of acquiring land in the newly created Purchase Areas. Since they were not permitted to buy land in the Purchased Areas because they already owned freehold land the NLB suggested that they exchange their shares in Erichsthal and Niekerk’s farms for purchase area farms in Mungezi and Dewure Purchase Areas in Bikita and Gutu districts respectively.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> A. K. Shutt, ‘We are the best poor farmers’, p.28.

<sup>225</sup> A. K. Shutt, ‘We are the best poor farmers’, p.30.

<sup>226</sup> M. C. Steele, ‘The foundations of a Native Policy: Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1933’, p.427.

<sup>227</sup> S924/G33 Native Affairs Department, Native Area Administration, Correspondence, General, 1927–50: (Farms Erichsthal and Niekerk’s Rust), Application 1, Assistant Director of Native Lands, Salisbury to Superintendent of Natives Fort Victoria, 19 March and 13 April 1932.

Soon arrangements were made for them to take up farms in Mungezi and Dewure Purchase Areas.

Settlement in the purchase areas was a gradual process owing to the government's deliberate policy of not hastening the settlement process and due to the shortage of manpower to survey the farms. Niekerk's Rust Farm was officially alienated in 1932 and the Basotho owners of the farm who included Samuel Malete, Reuben Mphisa, Petrus Morudu, Joshua Masuwa [Masoha], David Muliya (Molea) and Peter Rasitoo were offered 5, 228 acres in the Dewure Purchase Areas in Gutu District in exchange for the farm.<sup>228</sup> They were also paid £374 in compensation for the improvements they had done on the farm.<sup>229</sup> Erichsthal Farm was alienated the following year with Basotho of the farm, Jacob Molebaleng, Ernest Komo, Matthew Komo and Jona Makula being given until the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 1934 to vacate the farm.<sup>230</sup> Basotho owners of Erichsthal Farm were initially offered 11, 656 acres in Mungezi Purchase Areas in Bikita District in exchange for their farm and were paid £2,118.00 as compensation.<sup>231</sup> Mungezi and Dewure contiguous Purchase Areas were divided only by the Mungezi River, which is also the boundary between Gutu and Bikita Districts. In spite of the offer however, most of the Basotho including those who had stayed on Erichsthal Farm chose to take up farms in Dewure rather than Mungezi Purchase Areas. The reason for this was that by the time the Basotho from Erichsthal farm were offered land in Mungezi Purchase areas those from Niekerk's Rust had already started settling in Dewure which made it attractive for those coming from Erichsthal Farm.

The land offered to Basotho in exchange for their shares in Erichsthal and Niekerk's Rust farms was however not equivalent to the size and quality of their previous farms. For example, the land offered in exchange for Erichsthal was 710 morgen less than Erichsthal Farm and the soils were of a poorer quality.<sup>232</sup> Yet in spite of the government's insincerity and unwillingness

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<sup>228</sup> S1542/F2/1 Assistant Director of Native Lands to Chief Native Commissioner, 9 December 1932.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.* See also R. Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia*, p.280.

<sup>230</sup> S1044/10 The Superintendent of Natives, Fort Victoria to the Assistant Director of Native Lands, 23 June 1934.

<sup>231</sup> R. Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia*, p.280.

<sup>232</sup> S138/21 Vol.5 Superintendent of Natives Fort Victoria to CNC, 25 October 1932. A morgen was a South African measure of land which is equivalent to about 2.2 acres.

to pay Africans reasonable compensation for their farms, it was spending a lot of money buying European farms which now fell in areas designated for purchase by Africans.<sup>233</sup>

The Basotho experiences with colonial displacements, as we will see later, had a great impact on how Basotho constructed their belonging in the Dewure Purchase Areas. Ownership of freehold land in the Purchase Areas became one of the major ways through which Basotho established a sense of belonging and claimed an attachment to the land which was otherwise dominated by the Karanga under Chief Nemashakwe and Chin'ombe of the *Gumbo Madyirapazhe* clan and those under Chief Chiwara of the *Moyo Duma* clan. The basis of their attachment to the Dewure Purchase Areas was that they had purchased land and therefore legally owned it.

After finding out their homes had been turned into purchase areas, some families who had the means decided to purchase the land instead of letting it fall to strangers. In the case of Mshagashe Purchase Areas in Zimuto a number of families whose lands had been designated for purchase areas decided to quickly apportion land among themselves such that they could buy their ancestral lands rather than let them fall to immigrants.<sup>234</sup> Similarly, in Chishanga in the Victoria District, Mr Craig who was the government land surveyor allowed local people who wanted Purchase Area farms to 'point their homes' where he would peg out the farm so as to allow the locals to buy their ancestral lands so that they would not lose their lands to immigrants.<sup>235</sup> Consequently, a number of people in this area continued to live in the same areas they had always lived in.

Although some people were able to buy their ancestral lands, the government was generally against syndicate purchases of farms and the idea of making purchase areas 'homes' as this had the potential of making the farms uneconomic retirement areas. Be that as it may, there was an exception to this rule. Basotho were offered land in both Mungezi and Dewure Purchase Areas in which they were allowed settle as a community. Most of them chose to settle in the

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<sup>233</sup> R. Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia*, p.217.

<sup>234</sup> G. C. Mazarire, 'A social and political history of Chishanga: South-central Zimbabwe c.1750-2000'.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*



Dewure Purchase Areas and began to coalesce in the Masema section of the Purchase Area. Mr. Craig, the government land surveyor working in Fort Victoria, actually advised all Basotho who came to him wanting to purchase land to go to Dewure Purchase Areas which had been 'reserved for them.'<sup>236</sup> Land surveyors were therefore complicit in the creation of a Basotho enclave in the Dewure Purchase Areas and to a lesser extent in Mungezi Purchase Areas. Farm holdings 16 to 38 in the Dewure Purchase Areas were provisionally surveyed and set aside for the Niekerk's Rust Basotho.<sup>237</sup> Those coming from Erichsthal Farm also chose to settle in the same area in the Dewure Purchase Areas. Dewure, and to a lesser extent Mungezi Purchase Areas thus became Basotho's new home. According to Shutt, in the early years of the purchase areas many applicants 'were from towns others were alienated from reserve life-those cut off from traditional avenues of wealth accumulation and prestige, such as black South African immigrants (such as Basotho), mission based farmers and ordinary clergy.'<sup>238</sup> The advantage that these Africans had over others was that they had been exposed to the money economy for a longer period and had already been introduced to the idea of individual tenure.<sup>239</sup> The Purchase Areas thus provided these non-indigenous Africans with an opportunity to own land especially given the fact that most of them had been displaced from the farms they had purchased prior to the creation of Purchase Areas. The NLB was thus faced with the challenge of dealing with non-indigenous Africans, especially those from the Union (South Africa). The high number of non-indigenous Africans or 'alien Natives', as they were sometimes called, prompted the NLB to make a decision that they were not going to accept any application for land from non-indigenous Africans who had entered the country after the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1931.<sup>240</sup>

The fact that a number of Africans who were of foreign ancestry desired to buy land in the Purchase Areas became a source of disquiet among some indigenous people who felt that

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<sup>236</sup> S138/81 Superintendent of Native Fort Victoria to CNC Salisbury, 10 October 1932.

<sup>237</sup> S1044/9 A. C. Jennings Assistant Director of Native of Native Lands to the Superintendent of Natives, Fort Victoria, 14 February 1933.

<sup>238</sup> A. K. Shutt, 'Purchase Area farmers and the Middle Class of Southern Rhodesia, c.1931-1952', p.562.

<sup>239</sup> M. C. Steele, 'The foundations of a Native Policy: Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1933', p.450.

<sup>240</sup> A. C. Jennings and G. M. Huggins, 'Land apportionment in Southern Rhodesia', *Journal of the Royal Society*, Vol.34, No.136 (1935), p.306.

these groups were not supposed to benefit from the scheme. Even the NLB's stipulation that they would only grant land to those Africans who had entered the country before the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1931 failed to silence the dissenting voices among the indigenous Africans. In July 1933, the NLB decided to place a five year moratorium on land applications from non-indigenous Africans so as to allow the indigenous Africans to benefit from the scheme.<sup>241</sup> This suggests that there was already a complex politics of inclusion and exclusion coalescing around notions of autochthony and indigeneity in which the colonial state was deeply implicated. The state, through the NLB, sought to determine who could purchase land in the Purchase Areas on the basis of indigeneity. Yet those non-indigenous Africans, such as Basotho, who were already benefiting from the Purchase Area scheme still continued to enjoy a favourable treatment from the administrators. The fact that the government did not afford to fully compensate Basotho for their loss of Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal farms meant that it had to offer them farms in the Purchase Areas. According to Steele, 'to lower the cost of expropriating the Sotho owners of 'Erichstahl' (sic), a farm placed in the European Area, the Board offered the senior partners 1,500 morgen (about 3000 acres) each in adjacent purchase area.'<sup>242</sup> This gave Basotho an advantage over other farmers as they had bigger farms which became a key issue later when farmers began to subdivide their farms.

The majority of Basotho pioneer farmers in the Dewure Purchase Areas were descendants and members of the extended families of the original owners of Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal Farms. This meant that a number of them had to share estates of their deceased relatives who were the original owners of Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal farms. As a result a large number of Basotho families purchased farms in the Purchase Areas. Among the Basotho families who purchased farms in the pioneering period include the Mphisa, Masoha, Leboho, Sikhala, Maghatho, Ramushu, Komo, Molebaleng, Morudu, Moeketsi, Mojapelo and Mokwile among others.<sup>243</sup> The Basotho community that was established in the Masema area of the Dewure Purchase areas was largely composed of families who had come from Niekerk's Rust and

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<sup>241</sup> M. C. Steele, 'The foundations of a Native Policy: Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1933', p451.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.448-449.

<sup>243</sup> S1859 1933-1949 Schools Gutu, Basuto community's Plot: Bethel: Holding 24, Dewure Division, Gutu, 25 October 1941.

Erichsthal farms although some Basotho continued to come from other areas throughout the 1930s.

A number of Basotho farmers purchased land in the Dewure Purchase Areas in the early 1930s with a few others such as Joshua Masoha Jnr doing so during the second phase of farm allocations starting in 1954.<sup>244</sup> The Morudu brothers, Jeremiah, Ephraim and Seroka purchased three farms adjacent to each other. Jeremiah Morudu purchased farm number 16, his brother Ephraim farm number 17 and Seroka bought farm number 18.<sup>245</sup> Ephraim Morudu's farm which measured 317 morgen cost £127 but he was asked to pay an initial deposit of £15 with the rest being paid in fourteen equal instalments of £8 starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1934.<sup>246</sup> The Morudu brothers thus effectively carved out a bloc of farms for themselves in the same way as the Rusike brothers Aaron Jacha, Matthew Rusike and Zachia Rusike did in the Marirangwe Purchase Areas.<sup>247</sup> The reason for doing this was to maintain the close family networks which were important in the lives of minority groups such as Basotho. A number of other Basotho also purchased their own farms in the same area as they desired to be close to their kith and kin. Thus gradually the Masema area of the Dewure Purchase Area was becoming a Basotho enclave. Although initially earmarked for the Basotho from Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal, it should be noted that the majority of the farmers in Dewure Purchase Areas were Karanga from surrounding areas such as Munyikwa, Chiwara, Serima, and Chin'ombe among other areas in the district. There was also a good number of farmers originating from other districts. Consequently, the Basotho had to coexist with their Karanga neighbours, both those in the surrounding reserves (Tribal Trust Lands) and those in the Purchase Areas. In 1935 the NC reported that settlement of

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<sup>244</sup> R. F. Loxton et al, 'Report on the survey of natural resources and socio-economic circumstances of Gutu District in relation to Economic Development and Land use Policy' Ministry of Internal Affairs, Rhodesia, May 1971, p.121.

<sup>245</sup> Interview with George Murudu, 22 August 2009 at Farm Number 28 (At the memorial service of Aletta Mphisa). See also appendix 3.

<sup>246</sup> S1044/9 A. C. Jennings Assistant Director of Native lands to The Superintendent of Natives-Victoria (No date).

<sup>247</sup> A. K. Shutt, 'Pioneer farmers and family dynasties in Marirangwe Purchase Area, Colonial Zimbabwe, 1931-1947' *African Studies Review*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (2000), p.60., see also AOH/14: Oral History of Aaron Jacha.

both the Basotho and the local people was continuing in the Dewure Purchase Area with very few challenges.<sup>248</sup>

Across the Mungezi River in the Mungezi Purchase Areas (in Bikita District) other Basotho such as Matthew Komo and Ernest Komo were also taking up land which they had been offered by the NLB in lieu of their shares in Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal farms. In 1933 Matthew Komo who owned one quarter of Erichsthal Farm was offered a 1,500 morgen farm in Mungezi Purchase as well as £632.10 in compensation.<sup>249</sup> Although at the time the offer was made the farm had not yet been surveyed, it was roughly identified as adjoining to the East of Pastures Farm.<sup>250</sup> Ernest Komo was given an option of taking up 500 morgen of land located either in the Dewure Purchase Areas or in the Mungezi Purchase Areas.<sup>251</sup> Although a few Basotho purchased land in the Mungezi Purchase Areas; they still considered themselves to be part of the larger Basotho community resettled in the Dewure Purchase Areas and participated in all Basotho gatherings held in the Dewure Purchase Areas. They also contributed towards the purchase of Bethel, the Basotho community farm.

Apart from those coming from the Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal farms, some Basotho coming from other areas saw the opportunity of joining their kith and kin in the Dewure Purchase Areas and also began to purchase their own farms in the area. In 1938 Kingfisher, a columnist for *The Bantu Mirror*, reported that,

new arrivals in this Mazema District [Gutu District] of Fort Victoria are Mr. and Mrs. Moeketsi and family, and Mr. and Mrs Wm. Mangonyane and family. These two families have come to settle here for good. Mr. J. R. Moeketsi owns Farm No. 52 Devuli (sic) [Dewure] Division, and Mr. Wm. Mangonyane is not fixed up with his own yet. The Basoto (sic) in this district are growing in numbers. *May God bless them to prosperity* [emphasis my own].<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> S1563 N. C. Annual Reports, Gutu, 10 January 1935.

<sup>249</sup> S1044/9 A. C. Jennings to Superintendent of Natives Fort Victoria, 22 Jan 1933.

<sup>250</sup> S1044/9 A. C. Jennings to Superintendent of Natives Fort Victoria, 8 Jan 1934.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> Kingfisher, 'Fort Victoria news: Basotho settlement' *The Bantu Mirror*, Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March 1938, Fort Victoria News, p.7. What was being referred to as Mazema District was actually the Masema section of the Dewure Purchase Areas where most Basotho purchased farms thereby making it a Basotho enclave.

These Basotho families were buying land in the Dewure Purchase Areas when the Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal Basotho had already settled in the area. It seems the NLB was content to have all Basotho who wanted to purchase farms go to Dewure Purchase Areas as they believed that it would make it easier to monitor their activities. The colonial administrators also believed that the presence of Basotho in Gutu, whom they viewed as more advanced Africans would have a beneficial effect on the autochthons. As the NC of Gutu enthusiastically reported, 'I find these Basutos (sic) decent law abiding members of the district and consider their presence among the Karanga will induce a general urge amongst local natives to copy the Basutu's (sic) more advanced ideas and ideals.'<sup>253</sup> Although the NC's office was to later change its opinion about Basotho, it is clear that their arrival in the district in the early 1930s had initially been considered as beneficial for the district.

Although the NLB worked with the assumption that Purchase Areas were a *tabula rasa* waiting to be occupied, it was obvious that some communities had to be displaced to pave way for the carving out of the farms. As pointed out earlier, in Mshagashe, a number of local people, with the complicity of the land surveyors managed to purchase their ancestral lands. However, in Dewure Purchase Areas, where most Basotho immigrants were settling, a number of chiefs among them, Chiwara, Chin'ombe, and Nemashakwe had lost their land to the purchase areas. Chiwara who controlled the area the south-west of the Dewure Purchase Areas lost some of his land to the farms and the boundaries had to be moved.<sup>254</sup> In the Eastern and Central sections of the Dewure Purchase it was Chief Nemashakwe who suffered most as his people were displaced. The displaced people moved to Chief Chin'ombe's area or to Vhunjere and Zinhata; what remained of chief Nemashakwe's area. Although there was little resistance from the people displaced from the area to pave way for the creation of the Purchase Area, it is clear that most people loathed these forced movements and also the fact that they were leaving behind their ancestral lands.

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<sup>253</sup> S 1859 Schools 1933-1949 Basuto settlement, Gutu, N. C. Gutu to C. N. C., 6 November 1935.

<sup>254</sup> S2929/8/3 Delineation Report-Gutu: Report on Chiwara chieftaincy, Chikwanda Reserve, Gutu, 19 February 1964.

Having seen that the Basotho had not received any significant resistance from the local communities when they started to settle in Dewure, the colonial administrators began to consider the purchase area as a safe place for settlement by non-locals. When Albert Lobengula of the Ndebele Monarchy also sought to purchase a farm in Mshawasha Purchase Areas the Superintendent of Natives refused, arguing that the farm 'may well become a centre for disaffection and a shelter for the ill disposed, and the feelings of the local natives should be considered.'<sup>255</sup> He instead suggested that Albert Lobengula go to Dewure Purchase Area where he would be amongst 'people who speak his language' (the Basotho) or to Jenya Purchase area in Chibi District, which was considered dry and remote from modes of communication such as the railway line and where only two people had taken up farms.<sup>256</sup> The Superintendent of Natives argued that in Dewure Purchase Areas, Albert Lobengula would be far 'from channels of communication with Matabeleland and its evil influence and the alienation of a further huge tract of country to a foreigner would not be noticeable.'<sup>257</sup> Although Albert Lobengula later decided not to purchase a farm, it seems that the colonial administrators were happy to see an enclave of immigrants being established in the Dewure Purchase Areas. This was one of the methods the Rhodesian State employed in dealing with the problem of non-indigenous Africans. In Matabeleland, the Mfengu (Fingo) who migrated to the country at the behest of Cecil Rhodes were allowed to establish a Fingo location in Bembesi. Each adult male member of the Fingo party had been allocated land in the Fingo Location they later began to make demands for land elsewhere.<sup>258</sup>

The situation that emerged in the Dewure Purchase Areas resembled that which obtained in the Msengezi Purchase Areas where a number of non-indigenous Africans such as Xhosa and Zulu purchased a number of farms in the pioneering period.<sup>259</sup> Often because of the fact that

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<sup>255</sup> S1044/9 Superintendent of Natives Victoria to CNC Salisbury, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1934., See also S1044/10 NC Victoria to CNC Salisbury 26<sup>th</sup> July 1934.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> M. C. Steele, 'The foundations of a Native Policy: Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1933', p.451.

<sup>259</sup> A. P. Cheater, 'Agricultural production in Msengezi African Purchase land, Rhodesia: Sociological aspects' A Report on Research to the Faculty of Social Studies, University of Rhodesia, (1974), p. 22.

most of them were Christians who practised monogamy and had a level of education, they were seen as having as more progressive than indigenous farmers. This, however, required a careful negotiation between immigrants and the locals who had purchased farms or were living in the surrounding areas under Chiefs Nemashakwe and Chin'ombe of the Gumbo Madyirapazhe and Chiwara of the Moyo Duma Clan.

Although the NLB and the Superintendent of Natives generally believed that the locals were not against the occupation of their land by immigrants, some local Shona people were opposed to the acquisition of farms in the purchase areas by 'non-indigenous natives'. In October 1935 the NC of Victoria District reported that representatives of the Southern Rhodesia Native Association (SRNA) had met him with the request that 'the government be asked to prohibit the acquisition of land in purchase areas by alien natives, that the settlement of foreign natives was distasteful and undesirable.'<sup>260</sup> They based their demand on the order by Col. Carbutt the Chief Native Commissioner (CNC) that 'the purchase areas were available for acquisition by indigenous natives only.'<sup>261</sup> Among the 'foreign natives' which were being talked about were the Basotho who were settling in Dewure Purchase Areas in significant numbers. Since Basotho had lived in the colony for about three decades and had actually owned land prior to the creation of the purchase areas, the NLB saw no reason why they could bar them from buying land in the purchase areas. The position taken by the NLB with regards to these non-indigenous Africans however reveals the anxiety within the board on the increasing purchase of land by this group of Africans. It is clear that both the CNC and the NLB were already deeply involved in the discourses of indigeneity and were under pressure to carefully regulate the purchase of farms by those considered to 'foreign natives.' Therefore, Basotho had to reforge their entitlement to land and also negotiate their belonging within this context.

The actions of the SRNA, however, dispelled the myth of locals who did not see anything wrong with the occupation of their lands by people they viewed as strangers. It is probable that since Basotho had owned land on freehold tenure during the period when most indigenous

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<sup>260</sup> S1044/10 N. C Victoria to C. N. C. 10 October 1935.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*

Africans did not have the chance to buy land the members of the Victoria Branch of the SRNA felt that it would be unfair for them to benefit from the newly created purchase areas.

### **What is in a name? The politics of farm names**

The early years of settlement in the purchase areas saw the farm owners giving quite interesting names to the farms they were buying. These farmers were keen to make a statement about their status through the names they gave to their farms. The majority of the names given to the farms related to the idea of progress and African development. Other names referred to the farmers' places of origin, a phenomenon which appealed mostly to farmers of foreign descent. This naming practice was also quite common among Basotho farmers in the Dewure Purchase Areas. For example, Farm Number 28 which belonged to Paul Mphisa was named 'Progress Farm' in keeping with the ideals of progress which were being preached by the African elites during the pioneering years of the purchase areas. Similarly, Jacob Molebaleng's farm was named 'Sekukuniland Pioneer Farm' which was a reference to the BaPedi homeland in South Africa where the Molebaleng family originated from.<sup>262</sup> The name also highlighted the fact that Basotho viewed themselves as pioneer farmers in the Dewure Purchase Areas as well as highlighting Molebaleng's Pedi roots in *Sekukuniland*. As highlighted earlier, although most of the members of the community were not Basotho in the sense of originating from Lesotho or the border between Lesotho and South Africa, most of them being actually BaPedi (northern Sotho from the Transvaal region), they appealed to the greater Sotho category (which encompass both southern Sotho and northern South/BaPedi), as a strategy for forging unity and articulating their belonging. Farm names were thus carefully chosen to make a statement about religion, status or the historical roots of the farm owners.

This naming practice became so pervasive in the pioneering years of the purchase areas that Africans began to debate the meanings of these novel farm names in various forums. In 1936 the editor of *The Bantu Mirror* noticed this trend in the Marirangwe Purchase Areas and decided to initiate debate in the newspaper. He wrote; 'what do you think of these names of some of the

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<sup>262</sup> Kingfisher, 'Fort Victoria news', *The Bantu Mirror*, 2 October 1937.



farms (in Marirangwe Purchase Areas) Hope Farm, Catch Farm, New Zululand, *Zangwa*, *Nzondelelo* Farm, *Nkululeko*, *Pekamani*, *Zuvarabuda* and Canaan. From these names you will notice and study the meaning of each, for yourself. Let us hear some of the names from the other Native Purchase Areas.<sup>263</sup> These were carefully chosen names which were loaded with meaning and history. Names like ‘New Zululand’, ‘*Sekukuniland* Pioneer Farm’ were a clear reference to the owners’ history as well as their desires to be progressive farmers in the purchase areas. Other names like Hope Farm, *Nkululeko* (freedom), *Zuvarabuda* (dawn) and Progress Farm were a constant reminder that the farmers had to strive for prosperity in their new farms as well as asserting class differentiation between purchase area farmers and peasants in the reserves. Basotho farmers belonged to this emerging African middle class which valued progress as encapsulated in some of the names they gave their farms.

As will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, apart from purchasing their individual farms, Basotho also made contributions and purchased a farm which they communally owned. They established a school, clinic, church, dip tank, and also made the farm the site for the community cemetery.<sup>264</sup> They named this farm Bethel. Although, it is not clear why they chose that particular name, it is clear that as Christians they named the farm after the Biblical Bethel. Over time Bethel Farm became synonymous with the Basotho community in the Dewure Purchase Areas. The farm became a symbol of not only Basotho presence in the Dewure Purchase Areas but also their belonging as community. *KuBhetere* (Bethel Farm), as the local Shona people call it, became accepted as a place for the Basotho. Therefore, a combination of ownership of freehold land and naming of those farms was a key factor in both the emplacement of Basotho in the Dewure Purchase Areas and the establishment of a strong sense of attachment to the place.

This naming of farms was a vital method through which Basotho expressed their sense of belonging in the Dewure Purchase Areas. For example, names such as ‘*Sekukuniland* Pioneer Farm’ reflected the roots of the community whilst names like ‘Progress Farm’ pointed to the

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<sup>263</sup> ‘The AME Church conference and the Superintendent’s visits’, *The Bantu Mirror*, 15 February 1936, p.6.

<sup>264</sup> The significance of Bethel Farm in Basotho belonging will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.

aspiration of the community. Such farm names were thus carefully chosen and were full of meaning for both the farm owner and by extension the community at large. Christian or Biblical names such as 'Bethel Farm' reflected Basotho's Christian faith and their strong desire to project themselves as such.<sup>265</sup> In other the name helped them project their religious belonging as it differentiated them from non-Christians. Hence, just like other pioneer Purchase Area farmers like those in Marirangwe described by the editor of *The Bantu Mirror*, Basotho made use of this naming practice to articulate their belonging by celebrating difference. Although their use of the greater Sotho category was a useful strategy in their struggles for belonging, the members of the community also remained conscious of their specific historical roots.

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<sup>265</sup> It though that the name Bethel Farm was suggested one of the DRC missionaries, most likely Rev. Murray.

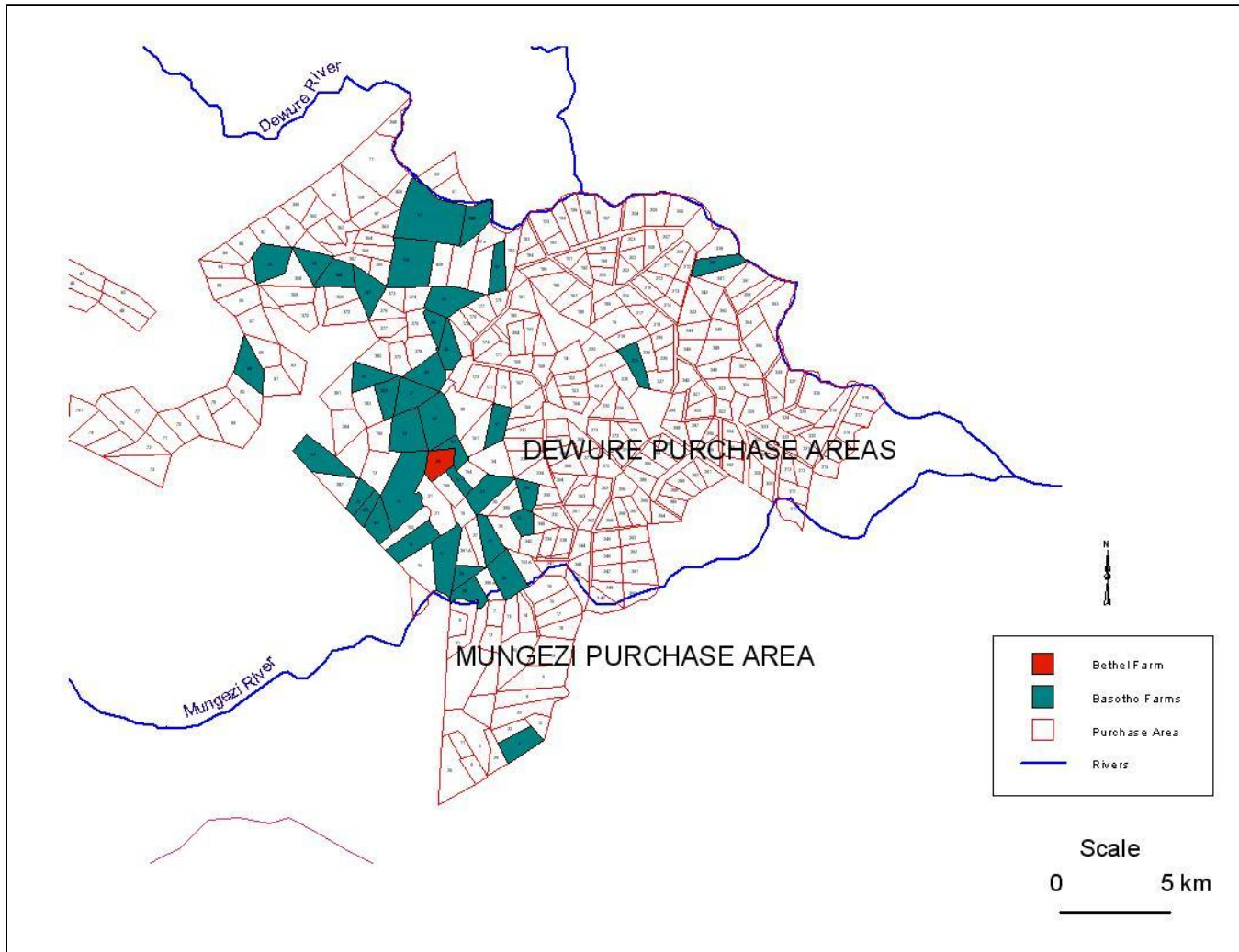


Figure 4: Basotho farms in Dewure Purchase areas (some of the farms where later sub-divided or sold)

## Land and inheritance disputes

The settlement of Basotho in Mungezi and Dewure Purchase Areas did not go smoothly. There were disputes between some members of the community over unpaid debts and complex inheritance cases. By the early 1930s when Basotho began to move from Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal farms to Dewure and Mungezi Purchase Areas most of the original part-owners of the two farms had died. In the case of Niekerk's Rust, of the nine original owners of the farm only three -Jeremiah Morudu, Lucas Mokwile and Isaac Kumalo - were still alive when the farm was expropriated.<sup>266</sup> This led to a number of inheritance disputes as the deceased owners often left multiple heirs. Hence inheritance of immovable property became one of the most problematic issues in the early 1930s as families fought over inheritance of the different individual shares in these two farms and also what laws to use in such cases. These disputes opened up debate on the legality of African wills, gender dynamics in inheritance cases, Christian marriages and community of property in marriages as well as the applicability of customary law in inheritance cases.

It was often not clear whether it was appropriate to use 'customary law' or the ordinances enacted by the colonial government to distribute the estates of Africans who either died testate or intestate. There was also interference from colonial officials on determining what was custom and what was not. According to Shutt, 'the end result was of an uneasy mix of European conceptions of inheritance of private property and African ideas about traditional succession to the head of the family. These ill-fitting pieces formed the basis of the colony's administration of estates in the purchase areas.'<sup>267</sup> This resulted in constant disputes over inheritance especially where immovable property such as land was concerned.<sup>268</sup> The Purchase Area scheme

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<sup>266</sup> S1542/F2/1 Assitant Director of Native Lands to CNC 9 December 1932.

<sup>267</sup> A. K. Shutt, "'We are the best poor farmers': Purchase area farmers and economic differentiation in Southern Rhodesia, c.1925-1980' DPhil Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1995, p.15.

<sup>268</sup> For a discussion of the complexity of customary law in colonial Africa see M. Chanock, *Law, custom, and social order: The colonial experience in Malawi and Zambia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); K. Mann and R. Roberts (eds.) *Law in colonial Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1991).

tremendously increased the number Africans who owned land which in turn led to increase in inheritance disputes involving immovable property.<sup>269</sup>

This emergent socio-economic environment brought a number of challenges for Africans whose inheritance laws with regards to immovable property had remained ambivalent. The imbrications between customary law and the common law used in the colony threw Africans into legal quagmires. Inheritance cases also opened up issues such women's legal minority status, Africans' rights to transfer immovable property by wills as well as the importance of Christian marriages in inheritance. A number of Africans turned to colonial courts to settle the many inheritance cases which emerged because of Africans' ownership of freehold land. Since it was unclear whether Africans had to use 'customary law' or common law in their inheritance cases, especially those involving immovable property such as land, there were numerous inheritance disputes in Purchase Areas.

There were debates about what constituted customary law and situations in which it could be applied. However, far from being static and out there, customary law emerged out of colonial encounters. As Roberts and Mann aptly put it, 'customary law, regarded by some Europeans as immutable tradition evolved out of the interplay between African societies and European colonialism.'<sup>270</sup> Hence, with many Africans now able to legally own freehold land, the applicability of customary law in inheritance cases involving land became a major issue of legal debate. With regards to inheritance, customary law tended to put men at an advantage since heirs were almost always chosen from the male members of the family. Traditional marriages also tended to weaken women's ability to inherit from their deceased spouses. In most communities in colonial Zimbabwe heirs were usually selected using the primogeniture system (eldest son becoming the heir) or the collateral system in which 'the eldest son succeeded the father after which all brothers succeeded in a row until the first son of the eldest brother succeeded and the

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<sup>269</sup> For examples from other Purchase Areas see for example A. P. Cheater, 'Fighting over property: The articulation of dominant and subordinate legal systems governing the inheritance of immovable property among blacks in Zimbabwe', *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 57, No.2 (1987).

<sup>270</sup> R. Roberts and K. Mann 'Law in colonial Africa' in K. Mann and R. Roberts (eds.) *Law in colonial Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1991), p.4.

system was repeated over generations.<sup>271</sup> These customs were, however, never universally applicable as they changed from one community to another and from one generation to another. For example, the introduction of the capitalist economy meant that property which, in the past, was regarded as belonging to the extended family became individual property. Introduction of freehold tenure also further complicated inheritance cases, especially where land was involved. Colonial officials further complicated matters by working with traditional authorities in codifying and enforcing this ‘customary’ law. According to Gwarinda, although customary law operated together with common law, ‘the problem arose where provisions of customary law would be seemingly discriminatory and customary [law] was still held to apply.’<sup>272</sup> Many inheritance disputes ended up being decided in colonial courts as the interpretation of ‘customary’ continued to be a source of confusion.

As the number of Africans seeking legal recourse in various disputes increased during the colonial period, Africans began to be viewed as litigious. Colonial courts were important platforms on which Africans engaged with European settlers and with their fellow Africans. Litigation was one of the ways through which Africans engaged with each other and with the European settlers during the colonial period. According to Roberts and Mann, ‘Africans met one another on the legal battlefield far more often than they did Europeans.’<sup>273</sup> Inheritance cases and other legal disputes can therefore provide a lens through which Africans’ colonial experiences can be viewed and analysed.

During the colonial period inheritance cases were largely dealt with by district administrators working with the Master of the High Court and land boards.<sup>274</sup> In spite of this, however, some Africans were able to take further legal recourse by appealing to Magistrates or the High Court. With some Africans beginning to write wills some inheritance disputes revolved around the legality of such wills. According to Cheater, the ‘general guideline indicating either testate or intestate disposal has been complicated by a number of intervening factors: interaction

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<sup>271</sup> G. C. Mazarire, ‘A social and political history of Chishanga: South-Central Zimbabwe c.1750-2000’, p.45.

<sup>272</sup> T. A. Gwarinda, ‘A Critical analysis of the impact of the common law on African indigenous law of inheritance: A case study of post-colonial legislation in Zimbabwe.’ Master of Laws Thesis, University of Fort Hare, 2009, p.53.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>274</sup> A. P. Cheater, ‘Fighting over property’, p.174.

between these two alternatives; further interaction between the rules governing inheritance among blacks and those pertaining to whites; marriage law; and ignorance of customary law on the part of white administrators.<sup>275</sup> As will be shown below, being among the first Africans to own freehold land, and also being Christian converts, a number of Basotho got embroiled in inheritance disputes with issues like community of property in Christian marriages, wills, and customary law being some of the legal points of debate.

The case involving the estate left by Joseph Komo is one of the cases that epitomises the challenges faced by Africans in dealing with inheritance issues during this period. Joseph Komo was a Mosotho who was one of the four part-owners of Erichsthal farm. He also owned a large head of cattle which he kept on the farm. He died in 1914 and was survived by his wife Johanna, two daughters, Pauline Leboho (Komo) and Johanna Jr and his only son Ernest Komo.<sup>276</sup> Johanna Komo Jr married van Blerk (a coloured) with whom she had two children Joseph Jr and Stephen.<sup>277</sup> Joseph Komo's estate became a bone of contention between the Komos and the van Blerks because Joseph van Blerk had left his estate, part of which was his late wife (Johanna Komo)'s inheritance from her father Joseph Komo, to his two sons.

The Komo family was arguing that it was improper for the children of Joseph van Blerk, their brother-in-law, to benefit from Joseph Komo's estate through their father. They were also challenging the legality of van Blerk's Will together with the notarial deed he had signed with them dividing the estate of Joseph Komo. In a sworn statement, Fredrick Komo, the late Joseph Komo's brother, had argued that Ernest Komo who was Joseph Komo's only son was the heir to the estate.<sup>278</sup> This argument was based on custom, according to which the eldest son of the deceased was supposed to be the heir to the estate. However, due to the fact that there was a will and a notary deed dividing the estate, it was difficult for the case to be decided on the basis of customary law only. Due to the complex nature of his inheritance the case ended up being

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<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, p176.

<sup>276</sup> S1857 Distribution of estate: Joseph and Johanna Komo.

<sup>277</sup> A Coloured in this context refers to a person of mixed blood.

<sup>278</sup> S1857 Distribution of Estate, Fredrick Komo sworn statement before NC Gutu, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1940.

decided in the High Court of Rhodesia in the Komo and Leboho v. Holmes N.O High Court case which started in 1933 and was concluded in 1935.<sup>279</sup> The facts before the court were that:

Joseph K.[Komo] was at the time of his death in 1914 the owner of a quarter undivided and undefined share in a farm. He was survived by his widow Johanna K. [Komo] whom he had married by Christian rites, and by six children, only three of whom participated in his estate, which was administered under the common law. His daughter Johanna married one van Blerk by Christian rites, and died in 1929 without issue. Before her death she stated that she wished her share in her father's estate to go to her husband, van Blerk. Her estate was administered under the common law. In 1929 the widow Johanna K.[Komo] together with her children Ernest K.[Komo] and Paulina L. [Leboho] and van Blerk entered into a notarial deed which divided the estate of the late Joseph K.[Komo] equally between Ernest K [Komo] and Paulina L [Leboho] and van Blerk. In 1933 van Blerk died and bequeathed all his property by will to his own children and appointed defendant as executor. Ernest K [Komo] and Paulina L. [Leboho] thereafter lodged objection to the confirmation of the accounts in van Blerk's estate on the grounds that van Blerk was not at that time entitled to make a will, and alternatively, if he was so entitled, he had bequeathed property to which he was not entitled. They also objected to the notarial deed on the ground that the estates of Joseph K. [Komo] and Johanna van Blerk should have devolved by native custom and that van Blerk could not have acquired any property through his wife.<sup>280</sup>

This, therefore, became a test case to determine whether Africans had the capacity to dispose immovable property by will and also whether marriages by Christian rites had an effect on community of property.<sup>281</sup> Apart from challenging the fact that their father's estate had devolved to van Blerk through marriage, the Komos were also arguing that as a 'native' van Blerk was not entitled to make a will. Although the position of coloureds during this period was quite ambivalent, the Komo family chose to categorise Van Blerk as a native to bolster their argument that he was not entitled to make a will.

The court, however, found that 'the administration of the Estates Ordinance, 1907 applied to all inhabitants of Southern Rhodesia whether native or European and clearly recognized the rights of all persons, including natives, to make wills, that by reason of section 50 of the Southern Rhodesia Order in Council 1898, the ordinance must prevail over any native law which

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<sup>279</sup> Komo and Leboho v. Holmes N.O (May 31 and August 1 1935), Southern Rhodesia Law Reports, 1933-35.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*



might prohibit the making of a will and that van Blerk's will was therefore valid.<sup>282</sup> The court thus found that van Blerk was entitled by common law to dispose by will his rights in Erichsthal Farm.<sup>283</sup> The court also ruled that, 'native law could not be used [as] guide to these cases because; although 'native law' did recognise to some extent individual rights of ownership of property it did not recognise land as private property as such or as community of property.'<sup>284</sup> It further stated that 'the estates of the beneficiary who died since application of the Native Marriages Act Chapter 79 should be dealt with in terms of that Act that is to say in terms of section 13 which provides that distribution of the estate should be in accordance with native law and customs unless the deceased left a will.'<sup>285</sup> On the issue of community of property the court held that, 'although Komo and his wife were natives, community of property did apply to their marriage, as it was a marriage by Christian rites, and therefore the widow became entitled to one-half of his estate on Komo's death, and so it was rightly awarded to the three children in equal shares.'<sup>286</sup> This became a defining case on the government's interpretation of what 'custom' was and how it could be applied in relation to inheritance and also on inheritance cases involving immovable property such as land.<sup>287</sup> The case also helped determine the validity of 'native wills'.

The Komo and Leboho v. Holmes High Court case ruling therefore became the reference point for the administration of Joseph Komo's estate and cleared the way for van Blerk's children to inherit part of the estate. Van Blerk had two sons, Joseph Jr and Stephen and one daughter, Johanna Jr. Joseph Jr lived in Nelspruit in South Africa and his brother Stephen lived in Fort Victoria. The court ruled that they be granted £57 each as part of their share of their

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<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>283</sup> 'Validity of native will: Judgment in high court: Interpretation of Order-in-council' *The Rhodesia Herald*, Saturday 3 August 1935.

<sup>284</sup> A. K. Shutt, "'We are the best poor farmers": Purchase area farmers and economic differentiation in Southern Rhodesia, c.1925-1980', p.48.

<sup>285</sup> S1857 Distribution of Estate, Acting Master of the High Court to NC Gutu 13 August 1940.

<sup>286</sup> 'Validity of native will: Judgment in high court: Interpretation of Order-in-council' *The Rhodesia Herald*, Saturday 3 August 1935.

<sup>287</sup> A. K. Shutt, "'We are the best poor farmers": Purchase area farmers and economic differentiation in Southern Rhodesia, c.1925-1980', p.47.

father's estate.<sup>288</sup> Their grandfathers Francis Lekula and Fredrick Komo the head of the Komo family were however against the idea of allowing the two to be given the money due to them in their father's estate, arguing that the money should go towards the purchase of a farm for their families. They feared that the two could squander the money leaving their families without any place of their own. Fredrick Komo stated thus; 'had Erichsthal not been expropriated under the Native Land Apportionment Act the descendants of Joseph Komo *would have had a home* but if the money is now paid to the sons, Stephen and Joseph, they might squander the money and it will be lost to the family.'<sup>289</sup> Moreover, one of the two sons, Joseph, had once been described, in a letter by the NC for Nelspruit District in South Africa to the NC for Gutu District as 'a shiftless fellow' who was not very keen to work making him likely to misuse his inheritance.<sup>290</sup> From the statement by Fredrick Komo, it is quite evident that the idea of securing land for their families was a very important issue among Basotho especially during the years when they had been displaced from Erichsthal and Niekerk's Rust farms. Ownership of freehold land was thus at the centre of Basotho's strategies of community reproduction and sustenance.

It is clear from Fredrick Komo's statement that for Basotho, being conscious of their status as immigrants, 'home' meant being at a place where one had secure land tenure. Being a community of immigrants, Basotho felt strongly about ownership of land as it was a major rallying point in their construction of belonging. Without ownership of land, they felt that they would be very insecure since they did not have any claim to the communal lands in the reserves. Hence Francis Lekula and Fredrick Komo's stance on how Stephen and Joseph had to manage their inheritance was informed by a need to continue the tradition of ownership of land, and also to ensure the security of future generations of their community. Land was viewed as a more permanent thing which allowed people a greater attachment to a place and a sense of belonging which money could not provide.

This case set a precedent in African inheritances. The High Court ruling clarified the legality of Africans disposing land through wills, community of property in Christian marriages

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<sup>288</sup> S1857 Distribution of Estate: Master of High Court to NC Gutu, 11 May 1942.

<sup>289</sup> S1857 Distribution of Estate: Joseph and Johanna Komo, Statement by Fredrick Komo.

<sup>290</sup> S1857 Distribution of Estate: Joseph and Johanna Komo, NC Nelspruit to NC Gutu 7 October 1941.

and the applicability of customary law in inheritance cases. By the time the High Court made a determination on the government had enacted the Native Wills Act (No.13 of 1933). According to Cheater, 'the Act made it legally possible for blacks to dispose of their property by will, but reconfigured the automatic customary inheritance in cases of intestacy.'<sup>291</sup> The Act stipulated that where the deceased died intestate his/her estate was to be disposed following customary law.<sup>292</sup> In spite of that, however, it was never quite clear which cases could solely governed by customary law since some farmers were married using Christian rites, intermarried across ethnic groups or having been modernised some simply did not adhere to traditional customs.

Another inheritance case (not quite as convoluted as the Komo case) was the one involving the estate of Reuben Mphisa one of the twelve Basotho part-owners of Niekerk's Rust Farm. When Basotho were being given compensation for the loss of their farms the government accepted Paul Mphisa as heir in the deceased Estate of his father Reuben Mphisa. Consequently, they granted him 300 morgen of land in Dewure Purchase Areas in exchange for his father's share in Niekerk's Rust Farm. He took up farm number 28 in a section where other Basotho were also taking up land.<sup>293</sup> This arrangement was however complicated by the fact that at the time of the purchase of Niekerk's Rust Reuben Mphisa did not have sufficient money to pay for his share so he borrowed £40 from his sister Martha.<sup>294</sup> He however failed to repay the money before his death.<sup>295</sup> Since Paul Mphisa did not have the money to repay his aunt Martha Mphisa, the superintendent of natives suggested that one third of the 300 morgen farm that Paul Mphisa was taking up in Dewure Purchase Areas be ceded to Martha Mphisa to settle the old debt. Although Martha was willing to have the debt settled by taking up the 100 morgen of land (one third of Paul's 300 morgen farm) she preferred to take up land which was close to her nephew Cephas Mphisa who was also taking up land in Dewure Purchase Areas.<sup>296</sup> The superintendent of

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<sup>291</sup> See A. P. Cheater, 'Fighting over property', p.177.

<sup>292</sup> A. P. Cheater, 'Fighting over property', p.177; see also Native Wills Act, No. 13 of 1933.

<sup>293</sup> S1044/9 AC Jennings Assistant Director of Native Lands to SON, Fort Victoria 22 January 1934.

<sup>294</sup> S1044 /9 Native Purchase Areas 1934-1942, SON Fort Victoria to NC Gutu, 8 January 1934.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*

natives then suggested that Paul Mphisa 'should be granted 200 morgen of land free; that Martha should be given the balance of 100 morgen free; that Paul be allowed to purchase 100 morgen on the usual terms.'<sup>297</sup> This deal was however jeopardised by the fact that Paul was reluctant to let Martha take up 100 morgen of his land preferring instead to pay her the £40 she was owed. Since Paul Mphisa did not have the money to immediately pay Martha, the superintendent of natives suggested that he used his farm as security to borrow money to pay for the land that Martha wanted to purchase.<sup>298</sup> Consequently, Paul Mphisa agreed to pay the instalments for the farm that Martha had purchased making her one of the first women to purchase own farm in the Dewure Purchase Areas.<sup>299</sup> This case shows the uncertainties in inheritance matters during this period and the challenges Basotho faced in dealing with inheritance issues. As the Komo and the Mphisa cases have shown, the issues of gender and inheritance were indeed central to debates around Africans' ownership of immovable property such as land. The two cases also show the pragmatism that could be employed in solving land disputes especially involving members of the same family.

Apart from Martha Mphisa, Esther Mojapelo was also one of the few women in the Basotho community who became pioneer farm owners. The case of Esther Mojapelo was however different from that of Martha Mphisa in that whilst Martha bought her farm, Esther took over the farm which formerly belonged to her brother Barend Rasitoo. Barend Rasitoo was employed as a driver in the Nuanetsi Ranches in Nuanetsi district (now Mwenezi). His work commitments made it difficult for him to manage his farm which made him decide to transfer ownership of the farm to his sister Esther Mojapelo.<sup>300</sup> This was exacerbated by the fact that NLB was generally against absentee farm owners preferring to have farmers staying on their farms. The transfer was registered with the Deeds Registry on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1935 making Esther Mojapelo one of the first women to own land in the purchase area scheme.<sup>301</sup> Esther

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<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>298</sup> S1044/9 Native Purchase Areas 1934-1942, SON Fort Vic to NC Gutu, 5 January 1934.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>300</sup> S1044/10 NC Victoria to Asst. NC Nuanetsi, 18 March 1935.

<sup>301</sup> S1010/10 NC Victoria to NC Gutu, 27 April 1935.

Mojapelo became one of the influential members of the Basotho community at one time becoming a teacher at Bethel, the school established by Basotho farmers. Hence although the Basotho farm owners in the pioneering period were predominantly men, some women got the opportunity to own farms in their own right.

It should be stressed that even well after their resettlement in Dewure and Mungezi Purchase Areas inheritance disputes and gendered access to land continued to be critical issues among Basotho. Although the *Komo and Leboho v. Holmes* High Court (1935) case and the African Wills Act (1933) had helped clarify a number of issues including whether Africans could dispose land through wills as well as community of property in Christian marriages, the position of women as legal minors continued to affect a number of women in the community. The *Elizabeth Makola vs Gondongwe* (1953) case is illustrative of this challenge and show how some Basotho women took the legal route to fight for their rights. This case involved Elizabeth Makola, the widow of Cornelius Makola who was the owner of Farm Number 5 in Mungezi Purchase Areas.<sup>302</sup> The two had been married in 1929. Cornelius however died in May 1950 after having written a will in terms of the Native Wills Act (1933) in which he made his wife one of the heirs to his estate.<sup>303</sup> The will further stated that the farm had to be sold after his death and the proceeds divided among the beneficiaries.<sup>304</sup> Since he had made a will it meant that in terms of the Native Wills Act (1933) Cornelius Makola's estate had to be disposed following common law instead of customary law.

A number of issues arose after the death of Cornelius Mmakola. Firstly, Elizabeth did not fall back into guardianship of her brother, Stephen Kumalo, who owned a farm in the Dewure Purchase Areas but continued to work on the farm and later got employed as a nurse at Bikita Clinic.<sup>305</sup> Secondly, after the farm had been sold to Mr Gondongwe, Elizabeth entered into an agreement with Gondongwe in which the latter allowed her to occupy the farm and plant her

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<sup>302</sup> Makola was usually spelt Mmakola. However, here I use the spelling used in the legal documents.

<sup>303</sup> S643 NC Bikita to The Registrar Appeal Court, 2 June 1953 (Reference JUD 3/4/53), I am grateful to George Karekwaivenani for pointing me to this and other files on this case.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

crops until July 1951.<sup>306</sup> Gondongwe later demanded £20 from the proceeds of a Cotton crop Elizabeth had planted on the basis that the farm now belonged to him. He based his claims on the strength of the agreement he had signed with Elizabeth. Elizabeth however, disowned the contract and appealed against Gondongwe arguing that,

her consent was obtained from her by duress in that when she signed it [the contract] she did so upon the advice of the Assistant Native Commissioner and at the request of the respondent as she was afraid that she would have been moved off the land forthwith if she did not do so and thus lose her crops, and this borne out by the fact that as soon as the Assistant Native Commissioner and respondent left the farm, appellant went to protest against their actions to the Provincial Native Commissioner, Fort Victoria.<sup>307</sup>

The appeal shows Elizabeth Makola's willingness to fight for her rights and her desire to seek further recourse. She had already obtained a level of education and apart from working on the farm she was employed as a nurse at Bikita clinic. Taking into consideration what she had been able to do to fend for herself since the death of her husband; the court ruled that Elizabeth could no longer be regarded as a legal minor. It also declared the contract she had entered into with Gondongwe null and void on the grounds of duress.<sup>308</sup> The court further found that although the respondent (Gondongwe) had paid the purchase price of the farm in January 1951 the transfer of the land was not completed until in 1952, which meant that legally the farm still belonged to the original owner (through his widow Elizabeth).<sup>309</sup> Although this could have been an isolated case given the fact that women generally found it difficult to seek further legal recourse by lodging an appeal, it shows the resilience of some Basotho women in fighting for their rights. It is also worth noting that Elizabeth Makola's brother, Stephen Kumalo, also supported her by writing an affidavit in which he argued that although Elizabeth was supposed to return to his guardianship

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<sup>306</sup> S643N E Nelson Clerk of the Court, Office of the NC Bikita to The Registrar Court of Appeal, 27 October 1952 (Gondongwe 15421 Bikita versus Elizabeth Makola).

<sup>307</sup> Elizabeth Makola vs Gondongwe (Native Appeal Court) Appeal Case No. 64/52, 7 December 1954.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

after the death of her husband, she was earning her own living and did not need his guardianship.<sup>310</sup>

These Basotho inheritance cases helped determine the position of Africans in the colonial set up. The cases set legal precedents which were later used in the colonial courts. Thus apart from shaping the history of the Basotho community, the inheritance cases had an impact on the national level. They helped clarify the legality of African wills, community of property in Christian marriages, inheritance of immovable property, and the legal status of women.

### **Basotho and the Dewure Native Council**

In spite of evident strong Basotho in-group ties built around shared migration history and kinship ties strengthened by endogamous marriages, Basotho were not entirely inward looking; they interacted with other farm owners in Dewure Purchase Areas in their everyday lives and in various organisations and institutions established in the area. They joined a number of associations and other bodies in which they interacted with other farm owners. There were mainly three bodies serving farmers in the Dewure Purchase Areas; the Dewure Native Council, The Farmers Association and the Intensive Conservation Areas (ICA) committees (in the Dewure East, Central and West sections).<sup>311</sup> ICAs, as the name implies, were responsible for conservation of the areas and dealt with the implementation of good farming methods among farmers. The Natural Resources Act had made provisions for the creation of ICAs where farmers of a specific area agreed to voluntarily undertake conservation work in return for enhanced subsidies from government.<sup>312</sup> Apart from the Natural Resources Board (NRB), ICAs also worked with the Department of Agriculture. The Farmers Association was an organisation run by the farmers themselves and they used it to channel their grievances, apply to grants and lobby the government. The Native Council and Farmers Association were the two most important bodies in

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<sup>310</sup> S643 NC Bikita to The Registrar Appeal Court, 2 June 1953 (Reference JUD 3/4/53), Gondongwe vs Makola NC's court records, Stephen Kumalo 9591 Gutu, 20 January 1954.

<sup>311</sup> S2929/8/3 Delineation Report-Gutu: Report on Dewure NPA, By C. J. K. Latham, 19 February 1964.

<sup>312</sup> J. McGregor, 'Conservation, control and ecological change: The politics and ecology of colonial conservation in Shurugwi', *Environment and History*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1995), p.267.

the Purchase Areas as they provided a platform for farmers to work for their improvement of their lot.

The idea of establishing Native Councils was introduced by Prime Minister Moffat in 1929. Comparisons were being drawn with countries like Kenya where Native Councils had been introduced in 1925 and were being used as conduits to levy rates and for medical and educational works.<sup>313</sup> According to Steele, ‘in the initial stage, they [Native Councils] represented an attempt to graft European institutions onto a rapidly changing tribal society with a view to the installation of a democratic system of local government at some future stage.’<sup>314</sup> This was meant to provide a government controlled body where rural and later Purchase Area farmers could pursue their aspirations without resorting to political agitation. Native Councils were also designed to preclude the influence of African pacifist movements such as the Southern Rhodesia Native Association (SRNA), Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) and the Southern Rhodesia Bantu Voters Association (SRBVA) which were increasingly becoming politically agitated. They were also designed to become new conduits used by the government to introduce ‘Native development’ programmes.

The precursors to the statutory Native Councils were the Native Boards established in 1930. They were chaired by NCs and were composed of chiefs and other elected members. The depression, however, made it quite difficult to find sufficient funding to run these nascent Native Boards. Moreover, African Associations such as ICU resisted the Native Councils as they saw them as a ploy by the government to increase its control over Africans.<sup>315</sup> In particular, they loathed the Native Councils Bill’s provision that the councils should be chaired by NCs whom they felt would dominate the council and impose their ideas on Africans.

After the experimental phase, the statutory Native Councils were established in 1937 with a similar structure to that of their antecedents, the Native Boards. Each council was composed of six members; two government appointees, two elected tax paying members (or farm owners in

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<sup>313</sup> S1561/25, Native Councils Bill, 1926-37 (Minutes and Memoranda): G. V. Maxwell, CNC, Kenya, 18 August 1927.

<sup>314</sup> M. C. Steele, ‘The foundations of a Native Policy: Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1933’, p.74.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, p.179.



the case of Purchase Areas). In the councils in reserves the NC would also appoint two chiefs.<sup>316</sup> NCs presided over all the Native Councils in their districts and decisions were taken by vote. They could make decisions on matters such as construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, dams, ridges, dip tanks, hospitals among other issues.<sup>317</sup> Native Councils became semi-autonomous units that taxed and administered the distribution of resources in their own areas. This is why they gained notoriety for exploitation. Native Councils were easily established in the reserves as compared to Purchase Areas. In the former, they worked with what were called Tribal Land Authorities headed by chiefs. In the latter, there were no equivalent tribal institutions so they were composed of farmers and headed by the NC. A number of Purchase Areas resisted the establishment of these Native Councils arguing that they were exploitative and enhanced the powers of the NCs. Mazarire notes that the farmers in Mshawasha Purchase Areas completely rejected the establishment of Native Councils in their area which drew the ire of the Ministry of Internal Affairs officials who threatened to punish them.<sup>318</sup> However, in spite of the widespread resistance, especially by African elites in pacifist associations such as ICU, Native Councils were established in a number of Purchase Areas of which Dewure was one.<sup>319</sup>

In 1938 Basotho requested for a council in which they could be the dominant group. This was, however, complicated by the fact that Basotho farms were not geographically contiguous. The impracticality of such an arrangement was also highlighted by the CNC. The NC, however, noted that Basotho were making such a request on the assumption that all the remaining plots in the area would be sold to Basotho only.<sup>320</sup> Following Basotho requests for a Native Council the NC convened a meeting of all members of the Basotho community in both Mungezi and Dewure Purchase Areas on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1938 on which they discussed the establishment of the Native

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<sup>316</sup> S1561/25, Native Councils Bill, 1926-37 (Minutes and Memoranda): Acting AG to CNC, 24 December 1928

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> G. C. Mazarire, 'A social and political history of Chishanga: South-central Zimbabwe c.1750-2000', p.290.

<sup>319</sup> Examples include Jenya Purchase Areas in Chibi, Nyazvidzi in Gutu, and Mungezi Purchase Areas in Bikita among others.

<sup>320</sup> National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) Records Centre, Loc.30.3.3r.Box 71832 Assistant Director of Lands, Native Land Board to NC Gutu, 21 February 1939.

Council.<sup>321</sup> It was unanimously agreed that Basotho form a Native Council composed of all Basotho in both Mungezi and Dewure Purchase Areas. It was also agreed that the council would be composed of seven office bearers and members from both Purchase Areas were elected into the first committee.<sup>322</sup> Elected from Mungezi Purchase Areas were Jona Mmakola and Matthew Komo with Ephraim Morudu, Paul Mphisa, Andries Masoha, Seroka Morudu and Malachi Phosa coming from Dewure Purchase Areas.<sup>323</sup>

The creation of a 'Basotho Native Council' was, however, complicated by the fact that although the community was bound by its shared history and attachment to Bethel Farm, the fact that Dewure and Mungezi Purchase areas were in different districts rendered the arrangement impractical. As already highlighted, Basotho farms in Dewure Purchase Areas were not geographically contiguous making the drawing of geographical boundaries for the Native Council difficult if not impossible.<sup>324</sup> In the end it was resolved that Basotho in Dewure Purchase Areas join other farmers in Dewure Purchase Areas to form the Dewure Native Council. This council excluded those Basotho in Mungezi because they fell in another district (Bikita). The Native Council had three sub-committees namely, Public works, Education and Finance. The Public Works major concern was with the construction as well as maintenance of roads, bridges, dams and dip tanks. This committee also had members co-opted from the ICAs. The Education committee dealt with the running of Tirizi Council School and also the application for new council schools.<sup>325</sup> The council also handled work on the establishment of other social amenities such as postal services, telephone services, recreational facilities, clinics, grinding mills and general dealers among others.<sup>326</sup> The trading services which the council handled between 1948 and 1957 include Mr. Nyanyiwa's application for a General Dealer in reservation C; Herbet Fanny and Manjonjo application for Butcher's Shop; Vandirayi and Takavinga's application for

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<sup>321</sup> NAZ Records Centre, Loc.30.3.3r.Box 71832 NC Gutu to CNC, 7 July 1938.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>324</sup> NAZ Records Centre, Loc.30.3.3r.Box 71832 CNC to NC Gutu 22 July 1938, NC Gutu to CNC, 30 July 1938.

<sup>325</sup> Education in the Dewure Purchase Areas will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

<sup>326</sup> S3285/43/38/3 D.J.Y Woods to The Secretary: Working Party of Community Development and Local Government Coordinating Committee (1971).

a General Dealer's site on Reservation C. All the applicants were from the district and their applications were approved.<sup>327</sup>

Although Basotho seemingly worked well with other farmers, discourses of inclusion and exclusion often emerged in the associations, bodies and committees. It was clear that there was a see-saw of mutuality and difference between farmers in these bodies. Notions of difference and exclusion often emerged during deliberations in the Dewure Native Council. More often than not debates on policies and proposals ended up dividing the council between members of the Basotho community and the non-Sotho members. As early as 1948 the NC of Gutu district was already complaining about the discord in the Dewure Native Council as he observed that Basotho, who were viewed as more 'progressive' and 'modernising', were more willing to pay high taxes whilst the Karanga farmers were either reluctant to do so or could not afford. The NC explained:

*we have in this division a minority of progressive Basutos and a majority of Karanga. The two sections number at present about 150 farmers and for the success of any council it was stressed that high taxation would be necessary. While the Basothos (sic) agreed and used all forceful arguments in favour of taxation being from £2 to £5 a male, the Karanga were bemoaning poverty and benefits of taxations from 2/6 to 10/-. One decision being called the majority the Karanga voted for 5/- taxation and it was only when the disappointed Basuto (sic) cast their votes for 10/- tax, that the higher taxation governed the majority to carry it through.*<sup>328</sup>

Of the ten members of Dewure Native Council in 1948 five, J. Molebaleng, J. Moeketsi, M. Phosa, E. Morudu, and P. Mphisa, were Sotho which made it possible for them to sway the council to accept the higher taxes they proposed.<sup>329</sup> This general dissension in the council was largely influenced by the fact Basotho were comparatively well to do and could afford to pay the high taxes they were advocating. As people who were generally regarded as more 'progressive natives' by the colonial officials, it is also possible that Basotho proposed these high taxes so as to fit into this constructed image and to be in good books with the colonial officials. As a result

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<sup>327</sup> S2797/4663 Dewure Division Native Council, Gutu 1947-1957.

<sup>328</sup> S2797/4663 NC Gutu to Provincial NC, Fort Victoria, 12 August 1948, Dewure Division Council.

<sup>329</sup> S2797/4663 NC Gutu to Prov. NC Fort Victoria, 19 March 1948, Minutes of Dewure Division Native council Meeting held at the Office of the NC, Gutu, 18 March 1948.

of these differences between Basotho farmers and their Karanga counterparts, especially with regards to the taxes and other council rates their community had to pay, the NC toyed with the idea of creating a separate Native Council in which Basotho would be the dominant group. He argued that Basotho were being ‘held back by the more cautious Karanga’ who were reluctant to pay high taxes which, in his opinion, would help in the development of the area.<sup>330</sup> This idea was quickly dropped because it was then felt that it would accentuate the ethnic division between Basotho and Karanga farmers.<sup>331</sup> Thus, although all these bodies provided a platform on which all farmers in Dewure Purchase Areas interacted and shared ideas, discourses of difference continued to bedevil the community. Disputes in the council thus illustrate how, in spite of being seemingly inclusive non-partisan, bodies such as the Native Council became a platform where notions of exclusion took centre stage.

Apart from the Native Council and the ICAs, Basotho were also members of the Farmers Association. After the Native Council, the Farmers Association was the important organisation in Dewure Purchase Areas. In 1964 the Delineation Officer for the District noted that:

the Farmer’s Association, we were given to understand, is primarily concerned with the agricultural economics of the Division. Besides this, however, it is the organ of the farmers for all grievances, requests and general plans for the area.....general meetings are held regularly at which all farmers may voice their opinions and their views, they consider the association theirs, it is something with which they can readily identify themselves. As one person put it, ‘the Association is our mother body, the council is more like a father from these two bodies all our bodies have sprung.’<sup>332</sup>

Overall, the Farmers Association was concerned with general progress of farmers and dealt with issues like application for funds and grants. Unlike the Native Council which was under the control of the NC, farmers expressed their views and aspirations better in this association. However, although Basotho were very vocal in the Native Council and often came into conflict

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<sup>330</sup> S2797/4663 Acting Provincial NC Fort Victoria to CNC, 16 August 1948.

<sup>331</sup> S2797/4663 NC Gutu to Provincial NC, Fort Victoria, 12 August 1948, Dewure Division Council.

<sup>332</sup> S2929/8/3 Delineation Report-Gutu: Report on Dewure NPA, By C. J. K. Latham, 19 February 1964.

with non-Basotho members the Farmers Association was largely dominated by Karanga farmers.<sup>333</sup>

### **Sub-divisions, Basotho family and personal networks**

From the 1950s sales and sub-divisions of farms became a common phenomenon among pioneer farmers in most purchase areas. In Marirangwe Purchase Areas the 1950s began ‘with a flurry of subdivisions and sales.’<sup>334</sup> According to Shutt, this was a contradiction to the Rural Land Board (RLB)’s argument that purchase area farmers were loathe to sell their farms.<sup>335</sup> The farmers gave a number of reasons for sub-dividing their farms. In Marirangwe Purchase Areas, Matthew Rusike argued that the reason why he sold 235 of his 715 acre farm was that market gardening had better returns than traditional plough agriculture.<sup>336</sup> Others sold portions of their farms in order to pay off debts or to service their mortgages. This explains why a large number of these sales happened after the NLB had demanded that the farmers pay up the arrears.<sup>337</sup> In spite of the stated reasons, there were other peculiar family reasons that necessitate such sales such as family squabbles after the death of the original owners of the farm. However, for the Basotho in Dewure Purchase Areas the outright disposals of farms was not common since being ‘alien natives’ Basotho were more reluctant to sell their farms as compared to their local counterparts, preferring instead to sub-divide their farms. In 1964 the Delineation Officer for Gutu, C. J. Latham reported that, ‘some of the farms taken up by these people [Basotho] were very large.

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<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>334</sup> A. K. Shutt, ‘We are the best poor farmers’, p.392.

<sup>335</sup> A. K. Shutt, ‘We are the best poor farmers’, p.392. The NLB was replaced by the RLB in 1963 this change came after electoral victory of the Rhodesian Front in 1962 which ended the Responsible Government’s experiment with racial partnership which ushered in an era of hostility against purchase areas. See also A. K. Shutt, Squatters, ‘Land sales and intensification in Marirangwe Purchase Area, colonial Zimbabwe, 1931-65’, *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (2002), p.496.

<sup>336</sup> A.K. Shutt, Squatters, ‘Land sales and intensification in Marirangwe Purchase Area, Colonial Zimbabwe, 1931-65’, p. 53.

<sup>337</sup> A. K. Shutt, ‘We are the best poor farmers’, p.402.

The majority has now been sub-divided and only the remnants of this rather colourful group remain today.<sup>338</sup>

The attachment that most Basotho had to their farms together with the fact that they had established an enclave in the Dewure Purchase Areas made it unlikely for them to sell their farms. Moreover, over the years these farms became family farms, making it difficult for the descendants of the original owners to sell them. In the end they usually resolved to live together on the farm with each core family having its own homestead and fields where they grew crops with other resources such as water sources, pastures and forests being exploited by all the families on the farm. So, like in other purchase areas, the sub-division of farms was a common phenomenon among Basotho. For example, the Mphisa family decided to sell part of their farm to Ben Chabhanga who was a family friend and had worked as teacher at Bethel School in the 1950s.<sup>339</sup> Similarly, the farm (number 53) belonging to Jacob Molebaleng was also sub-divided with one portion being sold to Pirikisi.<sup>340</sup> Nathaniel Thema's farm (farm number 20) was also sub-divided with one of the subdivisions (farm number 407) being sold to Dzingiso. Such subdivisions became common among most of the Basotho families in the Dewure Purchase Areas as a number of people fell into arrears in their mortgages. Sub-divisions were also an easy option for Basotho since most of them had fairly large farms which could easily be subdivided as compared with later settlers who tended to have smaller farms.

The Sikhala family is one of the most well known of the Basotho families. According to Sam Sikhala, Andrew Sikhala was one of the Basotho who migrated to Zimbabwe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. He first settled in the Niekerk's Rust Farm in Harawe together with other Basotho who included Andreas Malete, Ephraim Murudu and Seroka Mphisa. He was married to Margret Malete, the daughter of Andreas Melete who also migrated with him. Andrew had three daughters Deborah, Wilmina, and Hendrina and two sons Job and Harry.<sup>341</sup> Andrew Sikhala died

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<sup>338</sup> S2929/8/3 Delineation Report-Gutu: Report on Dewure NPA, By C. J. K. Latham, 19 February 1964.

<sup>339</sup> Interview with Carly Mphisa, in fact the Mphisa farm was composed of two farms, farm number 28 and 29. Farm number 29 was thus the one sold to Ben Chabhanga although it could not be established when the transfers were registered with the Registrar of Deeds' Office.

<sup>340</sup> Interview with Mrs Mazvinetsa Pirikisi, Farm Number 159, 28 December 2005.

<sup>341</sup> Interview with Samuel Sikhala, Farm No. 35, 16 July 2009.

when Basotho were still living on Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal Farms and he was buried on a cemetery close to the railway station in Fort Victoria (Masvingo) town.<sup>342</sup> Job Sikhala's children were Andrew (Jnr) also known as Munyinaha, Andreas, Samuel, Margret (Jr), and Deborah (Jr). Job Sikhala bought farm number 35 in Dewure Purchase areas when together with other Basotho he was moved from Niekerk's Rust Farm in 1932. At present there are three homesteads on the Sikhala farm belonging to Andrew Munyinaha, Andreas and the other to Samuel who has remained at his father's original homestead where the original farm house still stands.<sup>343</sup> Like many of the first farms in the Dewure Purchase Areas the Sikhala farm was also sub-divided with a portion being sold to Mr Mazorodze who was a friend of the Sikhalas.<sup>344</sup>

It is also important to highlight what became of Job Sikhala's sisters Deborah and Hendrinah. Deborah married Timothy Mgijima a Mfengu who lived in Silobela District.<sup>345</sup> Thus for a long time Deborah lived in Silobela away from the Basotho community in Gutu. She had also broken with tradition by marrying someone who was neither her *motsola* (cousin) nor a member of the Basotho community. By contrast her sibling Hendrinah married Mokwile, a Mosotho, and they bought farm number 31 in Dewure Purchase Areas. Hendrina however died in 1961 without any children of her own and she left the farm to the children of her sister Deborah.<sup>346</sup> Currently the farm is registered under the name of Andrew Mgijima, the son of Deborah and Timothy Mgijima.<sup>347</sup> However, although they are not ethnically Sotho because their father was a Xhosa, over the years the children and grandchildren of Deborah have largely been viewed as members of the Basotho community. This was made easier by the fact that they inherited Hendrinah's farm and quickly got integrated into the community.

As a result of sub-divisions and the increasing number of family members staying on the same farm the types of farms envisaged by colonial administrators were never realised. Inter and

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<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>347</sup> Dewure Purchase Areas, Registrar of Deeds Records, Harare.

intra-generational conflicts also often emerged over inheritance and usufruct rights to the farm. Whilst among Karanga farmers who still had links with relatives in reserves it was possible for some descendants of the original farm owners to move to reserves, this option was difficult for Basotho who did not have any such links. A 1971 report of the Ministry of Internal Affairs noted that ‘on many farms, heads of household operate as ‘mini chiefs’ wielding authority over small but growing groups of people in a quasi tribal context.’<sup>348</sup> Thus, as highlighted above, though there was often one person appointed as the heir when the former owner of the farm died, other family members continued to stay on the farm and established their own homesteads and had their own fields where they did their farming thus making the farm a mini village.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed Basotho experiences of the colonial displacements following the enactment of the 1930 LAA which legalised segregation of land in the country. After their displacement from their two farms, Niekerk’s Rust and Erichsthal, Basotho moved to the newly created purchase areas. The NLB set aside Dewure Purchase Areas in Gutu District and Mungezi Purchase Areas in Bikita District for purchase by Basotho moving from Niekerk’s Rust and Erichsthal. Although the NLB was against syndicate purchases of farms in the Purchase Areas as it was keen to avoid the development of miniature chiefdoms, it gave tacit approval for the creation of a Basotho enclave in the Dewure Purchase Areas.

Having previously built their sense of belonging in the country on the seemingly strong footing of owning freehold land (having purchased Niekerk’s Rust and Erichsthal Farms prior to the establishment of Purchase Areas), Basotho saw the creation of the Purchase Areas as providing them with an opportunity to coalesce again and rebuild their entitlement to land as well as negotiating their belonging. However, their resettlement in Dewure Purchase Areas also brought some challenges. A number of internal disputes, fuelled by different factions within the community, threatened to tear the community apart. The community also had to deal with the

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<sup>348</sup> R. F. Loxton et al, ‘Report on the survey of natural resources and socio-economic circumstances of Gutu District in relation to economic development and land use policy’ Ministry of Internal Affairs, Rhodesia, May 1971, p.139.



complex inheritance disputes, especially where immovable property such as land was involved. Some members of the Basotho community were already writing wills and were marrying using Christian rites which further complicated issues with regards to which laws were to be followed in inheritance cases. The Komo case showed how difficult it was for Africans to dispose immovable property through a will and how the contentious interpretation of what was customary and what was not allowed people to make claims and counter claims. Apart from the role played by ownership of freehold land it should also be highlighted that the names which Basotho gave their farms also reflected their sense of belonging as these names reflected their religious beliefs, their historical roots as well as their aspirations. These farm names, in a number of ways, encapsulated Basotho struggles to belong.

## CHAPTER 4

### **‘KUBHETERE’: BETHEL FARM AND BASOTHO BELONGING IN DEWURE PURCHASE AREAS**

#### **Introduction**

The foregoing chapter analysed Basotho’s experiences of the 1930s displacements and their purchase of farms in the Dewure Purchase Areas. It also highlighted how the farms became important in Basotho’s construction of a sense of belonging and their interactions with other farmers in the area. This chapter examines the centrality of Bethel Farm, Basotho’s communally owned farm, and the features on it, in the everyday life of these Basotho. The cemetery, in particular, became a key feature on the farm and a marker of Basotho’s attachment to the land. The chapter also explores the various factors that influenced most members of the Basotho community’s decision to bury their dead at Bethel cemetery and the social significance attached to this exclusive Basotho burial place. It argues that being recent immigrants, ownership of land and attachment to it often established through links to graves and other landscape features, became factors in how Basotho formulated and continue to formulate their sense of belonging to the land. This is arguably the reason why *kuBhetere*, as Bethel Farm is called by the surrounding communities, has become synonymous with Basotho belonging in Dewure Purchase Areas.

#### **Bethel Farm and Basotho belonging**

As highlighted in the previous chapter, as ‘alien natives’, Basotho’s belonging in the Purchase Areas largely hinged on ownership of freehold farms and establishing an attachment to these farms. It is, however, important to note that apart from purchasing their individual farms, Basotho also purchased a community farm which began a feature in Basotho’s everyday life. As the leader of the community, Jacob Molebaleng sent numerous letters to the NLB on behalf of the community requesting for a farm which would be used a site for building a ‘non-denominational’ church, school, and clinic. They also planned to make the farm a site for a community cemetery and a dip tank. Whilst the establishment of a school, dip tank and clinic

represented Basotho desire to foster development through provision of education and health services the cemetery largely showed their keenness to establish an attachment to the land through graves. In essence their desire was to make the farm the centre of all their activities and a marker of their unity as a community.

The idea of having a ‘community farm’ in Purchase Areas was quite a novel one. Consequently, it began to be suggested by some colonial officials that as ‘alien natives’ without any rights in the reserves, maybe Basotho wished to establish a ‘reserve’ of their own. This prompted the Superintendent of Natives for Fort Victoria to write to the Chief Native Commissioner (CNC) stating how he thought Basotho wished to make use of the farm. The superintendent pointed out that Basotho did not wish to have a ‘reserve’ of their own as was being suggested in other circles but wished to purchase their own farm which would be controlled by their chief (Jacob Molebaleng) and a committee of four.<sup>349</sup> He also stated that ‘...the Basutos (sic) have been scattered throughout this area and now wish to grasp the opportunity of building up the tribe into one harmonious whole and restoring their old customs and manners which have to a large extent been lost through detribalization.’<sup>350</sup> The Superintendent of Natives therefore saw the purchase of a community farm and the establishment of an enclave in Dewure Purchase Areas as a noble enterprise which would help in the process of Basotho’s ‘re-tribalisation’, a process which entailed being under the control of a traditional authority. His justification for Basotho’s desire to have a community farm is vital in explaining how the farm became crucial in Basotho construction of a sense of belonging. It is also apparent that in spite of the NLB’s policy against syndicate purchases of farms, some government officials were prepared to let Basotho establish an enclave for themselves in Dewure Purchase Areas. It is interesting to see how Basotho and the Native Affairs Department (NAD)’s agendas seemed to overlap. The NAD and Basotho were clearly linking land or territory to identity and belonging and therefore saw the establishment of a Basotho enclave in the Dewure Purchase Areas critical in their quest for belonging. However, as will be shown later, not all Basotho viewed Jacob Molebaleng as their traditional authority and some of them openly

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<sup>349</sup> S1044/10 Superintendent of Natives Fort Victoria to CNC, 26 January 1934.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*

challenged his ambiguous position as ‘chief’ of the community. The community was also quite fractured with members of different cliques often fighting for the control of the community.

Basotho thus saw the Purchase Area scheme as providing them an opportunity to have a place where they could reconstitute themselves as community. The NC of Gutu District was however hesitant to allow Basotho to create what he termed a ‘miniature nation’ in the purchase areas. He sharply differed with the Superintendent of Natives of Fort Victoria’s sentiments. Whilst the Superintendent saw the coalescence of Basotho in Dewure Purchase Areas and their purchase of a community farm as providing them with an opportunity to build a community which would be under a traditional authority and therefore aiding in the ‘re-tribalisation’ process, the NC saw this as setting a bad precedent that could be followed by other Africans. After holding a meeting with the representatives of the community he sent a report to the Chief Native Commissioner (CNC) stating that,

it appeared they (Basotho) wished to start as a separate nation in Rhodesia, distinct from Karanga and Ndebele that they wished teachers of the Basutu (sic) tribe who teach through the medium of Sesutu (sic) and English [at Bethel School], making no provision for education in the *Chikaranga* tongue. That were government to aid in this isolation other settlers might feel that they, too, should be aided in self isolation, and that eventually the government might be faced with the requirements and demands of a number of nations in miniature, all seeking to avoid coalescences one with the other rather than unite and thus simplify a general programme of general control and advancements as a whole.<sup>351</sup>

In spite of these early misgivings , the NC was ready to allow Basotho to establish themselves as a community the purchase areas as he saw it as ultimately beneficial to the locals who could copy ‘the Basutu’s (sic) more advanced ideas and ideals’.<sup>352</sup>

The NLB approved Molebaleng’s application and granted the Basotho community Farm Number 24, which they named Bethel Farm. The conditions for the grant were that the farm would be ‘for the use and benefit of the Basotho community for religious, educational and recreational purposes and also as sites for a dipping tank, burial ground, and clinic.’<sup>353</sup> The deed

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<sup>351</sup> S1859 NC Gutu to CNC Salisbury, 6 November 1935.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>353</sup> S1044/9 Superintendent of Natives-Fort Victoria to Chief Jacob Molebaleng, Erichsthal, 23 February 1934.see also S1859 Rev. Dr. W. J. van der Merwe Makumbe Mission Buhera to Director of Native Lands (no date).

of grant stated that the farm was granted to Jacob Molebaleng in his capacity ‘for the time being as chief of the Basutu (sic) community and his succession in office in trust for Basutu (sic) community in southern Rhodesia.’<sup>354</sup> The farm was, like other farms, not to be leased or subdivided without the consent of the NLB.<sup>355</sup> The purchase price for the farm, which measured 151,70 morgen, was £75 inclusive of the cost of surveying and pegging.<sup>356</sup> A number of Basotho contributed towards the purchase of the farm as they saw it as an opportunity for the community to have a communally owned farm on which this could rally around. This was a great privilege for the community as no other group in Purchase Areas had been given the opportunity to purchase farm for such purposes.

Since the ownership of the farm was ultimately vested in the whole Basotho community, members had to make contributions for the purchase of the farm. Jacob Molebaleng asked all members of the Basotho community in Dewure Purchase Areas (and the few families in Mungezi Purchase Areas in Bikita District) to make their contributions. Initially, all the Basotho farm owners were asked to contribute £2 each towards the purchase of the farm.<sup>357</sup> Some of the members who contributed towards the purchase of the community farm included Matthew Komo, Paul Mphisa, Jacob Molebaleng, Silas Molebaleng, Lucas Mokwile, Shadreck Leboho, and Fredrick Komo among others.<sup>358</sup> However, for various reasons some members failed to make their contributions. The figure was however, raised to £4.10.0 when Jacob Molebaleng realised that not many people were making their contributions. Only nine members had managed to pay their £2 contributions and as a result a further £2.10.0 had to be paid by those members who were willing to contribute. This led to tension in the community as other members became disgruntled by the reluctance of their colleagues to make their contributions. Leading the way, Jacob Molebaleng contributed £13 towards the purchase of the farm.<sup>359</sup> In total, forty members

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<sup>354</sup> S1859 NC Gutu to W. J. van der Merwe (no date).

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> S1044/9 Superintendent of Natives-Fort Victoria to Chief Jacob Molebaleng, Erichsthal, 23 February 1934.

<sup>357</sup> S1859 Summary of Minutes of a Meeting held at Bethel School on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1938.

<sup>358</sup> S1044/9 Superintendent of Natives-Fort Victoria to Chief Jacob Molebaleng, Erichsthal, 23 February 1934., S1859 Rev. Dr. W. J. van der Merwe Makumbe Mission Buhera to Director of Native Lands (no date).

<sup>359</sup> S1859 Summary of Minutes of a Meeting held at Bethel School, 8 October 1938.

later managed to make contributions of various amounts.<sup>360</sup> Tension between members who had contributed and those who, for various reasons, had failed to make their contributions however continued.

It should be stressed that although the Basotho community was a seemingly harmonious community, behind this veil of unity were some deep-rooted differences which resulted in conflicts and divisions. It is therefore crucial that we disaggregate the community and analyse these fault lines and cleavages. One issue that exposed these fault lines was the problem the community was facing in raising money for the purchase of the community farm. Interestingly, in spite of the challenges a large section of the community was unwilling to accept ‘donations’ from people or organisations outside the community such as DRC missionaries and other farmers in the Purchase Areas. As the problem of raising the money continued, the community split into two with, on one side, Jacob Molebaleng and the larger section insisting on accepting only contributions by Basotho and the other section, which was reluctant or unable to pay up, willing to accept donations from outsiders, especially DRC missionaries.<sup>361</sup> The latter section solicited for a donation from DRC missionaries at Morgenster Mission and were offered them £40.<sup>362</sup> Jacob Molebaleng and other members of the community however refused to accept the donation. They argued that such a donation would give DRC missionaries powers to interfere with their activities on the farm and possibly give them an excuse to take over the farm at a later stage.

Apart from the challenges they faced in purchasing the farm, Basotho had also to grapple with the problems of managing it. Bethel Farm was run by an elected committee of Basotho farm owners. Basotho indicated in their bye laws that,

The committee shall consist of a Chairman, who shall be the Native Commissioner of the district for the time being, a vice-chairman, who shall be the Headman of the Basuto community for the time being, and seven members elected as hereinafter provided. In the absence of the chairman, the Assistant Native Commissioner of the District for the time

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<sup>360</sup> See appendix 4.

<sup>361</sup> S1044/9 Superintendent of Natives-Fort Victoria to Chief Jacob Molebaleng, Erichsthal, 23 February 1934.see also S1859 Rev. Dr. W. J. van der Merwe Makumbe Mission Buhera to Director of Native Lands (no date).

<sup>362</sup> S1859 Interview: J. Molebaleng, M. Phosa, S. Molebaleng (no date).

being shall preside at meeting of the meeting of the committee be styled the Deputy Chairman.<sup>363</sup>

This committee was empowered to run Bethel farm and also make decisions on other issues affecting Basotho. It met once every three months at Bethel School, kept minutes of deliberations, and held general meetings every calendar year which were attended by all members of the Basotho community who would then vote for a new committee. Elections to the committee were held by secret ballot in the event of there being more than seven nominees to the committee.<sup>364</sup> With the NC chairing all the meetings of the Basotho Committee, Basotho were almost always under the patronage of the colonial officials who wanted them to be a model of progress for the rest of the farmers in the Purchase Areas. It is clear that they had thrown their lot with the colonial officials which framed them as more progressive natives as compared to their non-Sotho counterparts. By cooperating with the NC and distancing themselves from the patronage of DRC missionaries the Basotho seemed to be willingly making themselves legible to the state. However, due to their internal squabbles, they did not always live up to the expectations of the colonial officials.

However, just as had what happened during their stay on Niekerk Rust and Erichsthal Farms, some members of the community continued to dispute the authority of Jacob Molebaleng. A clique composed of Ephraim Morudu, Paul Mphisa, Andries Maletse, Seroga Morudu and Job Sikhala among others was quite antagonistic towards Jacob Molebaleng. They opposed what they considered to be the growing powers of Jacob Molebaleng in the community which he derived from his position of a 'chief'. They contested this, arguing that he was not a chief in the traditional sense and therefore did not have the power to run the community farm as he pleased.<sup>365</sup> During a meeting held at Bethel Farm on 8 October 1938, Ephraim Morudu told the NC that,

we are worried because we see Molebaleng visit you every month. He comes back bringing troubles. I went with Molebaleng to visit Mr. Phyre. Mr. Phyre said the real

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<sup>363</sup> S1859 1933-1949 Minutes of an Advisory Committee Meeting for the Bethel Community Plot-Dewure No. 24- held at Bethel School in Tuesday, 29 July 1941.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>365</sup> S1859 Minutes of Meeting Held at Bethel on 8 October 1938.

chief of the Basutos (sic) was in Transvaal and that Molebaleng was only an overseer. I want the NC to understand that Molebaleng was never appointed Chief. We never said he could do as he liked. The NC appears to back Molebaleng. He should say Molebaleng is only an overseer.<sup>366</sup>

Morudu and his clique thus felt that as people living on freehold land they could not be subject themselves to a traditional authority, a phenomenon associated with reserves where communal tenure was used. They were thus refusing to fall in the same category as other colonial subjects who were administered through their traditional authorities but wanted to be somewhere between citizens (primarily whites) and subjects (primarily Africans living in native reserves and ruled through traditional authorities). Although they were not comfortable dealing with traditional authorities or decentralised despots they could not escape their position as colonial subjects.<sup>367</sup> This arguably explains why Basotho chose to have an elected committee run the affairs the community instead of allowing Jacob Molebaleng to have absolute authority. The position of Jacob Molebaleng as ‘chief’ of the Basotho community was thus quite ambiguous and became source of discord. The issue continued to fester with no clear solution in sight.

Jacob Molebaleng, who clearly had the support of the bigger section of the community, countered Ephraim Morudu’s claims by arguing that Morudu and his clique were troublemakers who wanted to derail the progress of the community and tarnish the otherwise good image of the community in the district. In 1946 he wrote to the NC complaining about the conduct of Morudu and his clique saying,

the community recommends and confirms that nobody should come to your office reporting any matter about the community without the consent of the public. I find that the community under my leadership has been brought into a most muddled of conditions. I think you will agree with me that any matter concerning the community be reported to you by the means of the minutes. There are very few people who have caused and will still cause such trouble, reporting to your office about selfish disputes which have caused and will still cause the government official representatives to distrust this community. The minutes of the last meeting and the minutes of this meeting will show that only four people, namely Paul Mphisa, Andries Maletle, Seroka Morudu and Job Sekhala (sic) are the sources of all the trouble of the figure shown by the minutes. Paul Mphisa was

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<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>367</sup> See M. Mamdani, *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of colonialism* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).



ordered by the meeting to bring to me the Dipping tank books of Bethel and he agreed to do so. To my surprise Paul Mphisa and Andries Mokoela write the attached notes refusing to send the books. Andries Mokoela has nothing to do with the work at Bethel Dipping Tank. May I appeal to your support what I can do with these people? *It seems that if they are left to do what they like the community will always suffer the blame and distrust of the officials* (my emphasis).<sup>368</sup>

When Paul Mphisa was asked by the Basotho Community Committee why he was refusing to hand over the Dip Tank books he stated that he had been away from home and would hand them over.<sup>369</sup> It is possible that he was taking his time to hand over the books just to annoy Jacob Molebaleng and to make a point that he did not respect his authority. Each time a new committee was elected one of the cliques would get into the committee almost en masse with the other leaving office. For example, in 1941 the committee was composed of Jacob Molebaleng (the vice-chairman), and Messrs Matthew Komo, Ephraim Morudu, Seroga Morudu, Paul Mphisa, Job Sikhala, Andries Maletle and Sailos Molebaleng. All of the members of the committee, except Sailos Molebaleng, belonged to the Ephraim Morudu clique that felt Jacob Molebaleng's position as chief did not have any basis in tradition and as such they took every opportunity to challenge his authority.<sup>370</sup> Thus, as long as the issue of Jacob Molebaleng's position was not dealt with to the satisfaction of Ephraim Morudu and his clique such clashes were bound to continue. As illustrated in the dispute between the Komo family and Jacob Molebaleng discussed in chapter two, the problem of different cliques engaging in some kind of war of attrition was one of the greatest challenges the Basotho community faced even before their settlement in Dewure Purchase Areas. It is apparent that personal and family networks played a crucial role in these cliques. Conflicts emanating from such clashes permeated almost all aspects of Basotho's everyday life.

The NC of Gutu, however, seemed to take sides with Morudu and his cohort in their conflicts with Jacob Molebaleng. His view was that Molebaleng was taking advantage of his ambiguous position as chief and the equally ambiguous statement in the grant for the farm which

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<sup>368</sup> S1859 J. Molebaleng to the NC Gutu, 6 October 1946.

<sup>369</sup> S1859 J. Mojapelo (School Secretary) to NC Gutu, 3 October 1946.

<sup>370</sup> S1859 1933-1949 Minutes of an Advisory Committee Meeting for the Bethel Community Plot-Dewure No. 24- held at Bethel school in Tuesday, 29 July 1941.

stated that it was being offered to him, ‘in his capacity for the time being as chief of the Basuto (sic) community, and his successors in office in trust for the Basuto community in Southern Rhodesia.’<sup>371</sup> According to the NC, this was the reason why Jacob Molebaleng viewed himself as ‘the Big Noise among the Basuto (sic), that he was so approached and he so accepted the offer of the community holding.’<sup>372</sup> Yet, some Basotho landholders in Mungezi (Bikita District) and Nyazvidzi Purchase Areas (Gutu District) had also contributed to the purchase price of the farm on the understanding that Molebaleng would hold the farm in trust of the community at large.<sup>373</sup> He could not really make decisions that affected the community without the approval of the Basotho committee.

The community also established a school on Bethel Farm, which was to cater for Basotho children. The school was established in 1937 under the supervision of Rev. W. F. van der Merwe of the DRC who was based at Alheight Mission.<sup>374</sup> Since this school was largely meant for Basotho children the only languages taught at the school were English and *Sesotho*. This was in spite of the fact that some Shona children also enrolled at the school.<sup>375</sup> The school was run by a school committee, which was composed of Basotho farm owners.<sup>376</sup> Basotho saw the teaching of *Sesotho*, their language, at Bethel School as one of the ways through which they could perpetuate the sustenance of their Sotho cultural identity. *Chishona*, the language of the local people, was not taught at this school in spite of the fact that it enrolled both Sotho and non-Sotho children. As we will be discussed in chapter six, even the running of Bethel School was greatly affected by conflicts between the different cliques in the community.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> S1859 NC Gutu to Director of Native Lands, 26 June 1943.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>374</sup> S 1859 Rev. W. F. van der Merwe (Alheight Mission) to the N. C. Gutu, 22 September 1942. The establishment Bethel school will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

<sup>375</sup> S1859 Rev. W. van der Merwe (Alheight Mission) to the C. N. C. Gutu, 6 November 1935.

<sup>376</sup> Interview with Rachel Mphisa, Bethel Farm (Farm No.24), 17 July 2009.

<sup>377</sup> In some cases the Superintendent of the school complained that often one if one section was in the school committee the other would do all it could to cast it in bad light. This, of course, greatly affected the way the school was run which also contributed to its ultimate failure.

The Basotho community also established a clinic at Bethel Farm with the help of Rev. van der Merwe. He had lengthy discussions with Jacob Molebaleng and other members of the Basotho committee who included Matthew Komo, Paul Mphisa, Seroka Murudu and Ephraim Murudu on the logistics of building the clinic as well as the possible site for it on Bethel Farm. He also provided the plan for the clinic, a four roomed building, and Basotho agreed to contract Seroka Morudu to build it.<sup>378</sup> In one of his many letters to the NC of Gutu on the subject of the establishment of a clinic on Bethel Farm, Rev. Van der Merwe wrote, 'I propose that the proposed erection of a clinic at Bethel has been somewhat retarded. You will realise that I am naturally anxious for the erection of such a building so as to secure more efficient medical services for the Basutu (sic) community.'<sup>379</sup> It is important to note that during this period most communities in rural districts in the country were spearheading the construction of clinics in their communities with very little help coming from the colonial administration.<sup>380</sup> By 1947, Gutu District had only four state run clinics, one in Chikwanda Reserve (Chitando clinic) and three in Gutu Reserve (Gutu, Chin'ombe and Chitsa). In fact the one in Chief Chitsa's area was established 'somewhat to the embarrassment of the Medical Department who were not ready to equip it. The local chief and his people were insistent that they provided some of the outbuildings with their own unpaid labour, so the department was obliged to complete the work.'<sup>381</sup> Hence, with the colonial administration very slow in providing health services, Basotho sought to use their own resources to construct their own clinic thereby forcing authorities to provide services.

Although the NC did not object to the construction of the clinic at Bethel, he, however, expressed his disquiet at what he considered to be Basotho's failure to justify privileges they were getting from the government.<sup>382</sup> Basotho were getting this 'privilege' of having clinics on their community farm yet the other farmers were relying on the government or mission clinics

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<sup>378</sup> S1859 Rev. van der Merwe (Alheight Mission) to NC Gutu, 10 August 1942.

<sup>379</sup> S1859 Rev. Van der Merwe (Alheight Mission) to NC Gutu, 11 June 1942.

<sup>380</sup> M. C. Steele, 'The foundations of a Native Policy: Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1933'.

<sup>381</sup> S1563 Native Commissioners Annual Reports, 1947, Report of the Native Commissioner, Gutu, 1947; see also S1563 Native Commissioners Annual Reports, 1946, Report of the Native Commissioner, Gutu, 1946.

<sup>382</sup> S1859 NC Gutu to Rev van der Merwe, 22 August 1942.

which were few and far between. The NC was also against the idea of the construction of the house for a 'Home Demonstrator' as he felt that the government was not in a position to provide Basotho with such a person.<sup>383</sup> In his letter to the NC in September 1942, Rev. W. F. van der Merwe noted that he had advised Basotho not to proceed with the building of the clinic because the services of the Home Demonstrator, Aletta Kamungoma, would not be available for them.<sup>384</sup> Aletta Kamungoma was a Mosotho from the Mphisa family who was married to Hopwood Kamungoma a Bemba who also owned a farm in the Dewure Purchase Areas.

The clinic was later constructed and operated for some time with Aletta Mphisa Kamungoma working at the clinic. However, because of lack of support from the government, the clinic was not a great success. In one of the Dewure Division Native Council meeting held on 29 January 1954 one of the Basotho councillors stressed the need for the government to provide clinics in the area. He argued that the people from the Dewure Purchase Areas were very far away from government clinics that they needed the government to provide them with a clinic in the farms.<sup>385</sup> The Chairman of the Council Mr. L. C. Mino who was also the Assistant Native Commissioner of the District however stressed that the position of the government was that there were some areas which did not have any medical facilities close by and until such areas were provided with these facilities the Purchase Areas would not be a priority.<sup>386</sup> As a result of the lack of government funding the clinic established by the Basotho community later closed. As one of the members of the community observed, 'to say it was a clinic would be an overstatement, but it was just a dispensary where people went to receive treatment on common ailments otherwise people largely travelled to Gutu Mission for treatment.'<sup>387</sup>

The debate over the construction of the clinic captures the contradictions that were growing in the NC's office over the position of Basotho in the purchase areas in comparison to

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<sup>383</sup> A Home Demonstrator was a woman trained as a Jeanes Teacher whose duty was to instruct other African women on issues to do with hygiene and domesticity.

<sup>384</sup> S1859 Rev. W. F. van der Merwe Alheight Mission to the N. C. Gutu, 22 September 1942.

<sup>385</sup> S2797/4663 Minutes of Dewure Division Native Council, Gutu, 29 June 1954.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>387</sup> Interview with Mrs Aletta Mphisa-Mazanhi, Old Location, Mpandawana Growth Point, 31 January 2006. She was a cousin of Aletta Mphisa-Kamungoma.

that of other farm owners. In the early years of the Basotho's settlement in the district, colonial administrators perceived them as 'more advanced natives' whose presence in the farms would help the local Karanga emulate their supposedly 'advanced ideals'. However, in the 1940s the same office was already showing great signs of disillusionment with Basotho whom they saw as failing to justify the privileges they received. Similarly, in Marirangwe Purchase Areas the Xhosa and Fingos (Mfengu) who were also of South African origin, were also perceived to be 'advanced natives' yet their attitude to conservation and other farming methods were viewed by the colonial administration as not justifying that position.<sup>388</sup> It is also apparent that although the Superintendent of Natives was very keen on seeing Basotho establish themselves in the Purchase Areas the NCs were cautious about allowing them to create what they called a 'miniature nation.'<sup>389</sup> This probably explains why the NC was quick to express his disillusionment and condemn Basotho when they failed to tow the line. By choosing to align themselves with colonial officials and pledging to be 'progressive natives' Basotho had taken a risk which became more apparent when they failed to live up to the constructed image.

### **Bethel cemetery**

Basotho were very keen to make Bethel Farm the centre of their activities as a community that as soon as they had finished paying for the farm they embarked on many activities chief among them being the construction of the church, clinic and the school. At the same time they also identified and fenced off a site for a community cemetery. The idea of a community cemetery was however a new phenomenon in the purchase area.<sup>390</sup> Most farmers buried their relatives on their private burial grounds on their farms. Bethel cemetery however, became a burial site of choice for the majority of Basotho an issue which was made even stronger by the fact that it was exclusively meant for the burial of Basotho.<sup>391</sup> The fact that both the farm and the cemetery were

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<sup>388</sup> A. K. Shutt, 'Pioneer farmers and family dynasties in Marirangwe Purchase Areas, colonial Zimbabwe, 1931-1947', *African Studies Review*, Vol. No.3 (2000), p.73.

<sup>389</sup> S1044/10 Superintendent of Natives Fort Victoria to CNC, 26 January 1934.

<sup>390</sup> S1859 Schools, 1933-1949 NC Gutu to W. J. van der Merwe (no date).

<sup>391</sup> Interview with Jeremiah Masoha, Farm 223, 16 July 2009.

exclusively meant for Basotho soon lead to the general association of Bethel Farm with the Basotho community. *KuBhetere* soon became a generic term for the area occupied by Basotho farmers.

After a while it soon became the custom that most Basotho living in or originating from Dewure (and Mungezi) Purchase Areas be buried on the cemetery on Bethel Farm. It is at this cemetery that most of Basotho buried and continue to bury their deceased relatives.<sup>392</sup> Some of the notable Basotho buried at this cemetery include the long time leader of the community Jacob Molebaleng and his brother Silas Phogole Molebaleng. Other people buried at the cemetery are from families such as Phosa, Nyathi, Mulota, Mmakola and Mojapelo among others.<sup>393</sup> Sangu Musindo, the care-taker of Bethel Farm stated that Basotho who live in Gutu or originate from the farms in the Dewure and Mungezi Purchase Area view this cemetery as a key feature in Basotho's lives that even when a member of the community dies in a faraway place efforts are always made to bring them back to be interred together with other members of the community at Bethel Cemetery.<sup>394</sup> Within the district some farmers travel a distance of more than twenty kilometres to Bethel whilst within the country some Basotho live in towns like Harare and Bulawayo which are 300 or 400 kilometres from the district.

Over the years the cemetery became a marker of Basotho belonging and, in the words of Sangu Musindo, the caretaker of the farm, 'Basotho's own heroes' acre and a key point in their attachment to the area.<sup>395</sup> As a result of such strong connections to this farm together with their individual farms, which is strengthened by the burials, Basotho are reluctant to sell their farms as selling a farm is equated to selling one's history and attachment to the area as well as risking separation from the community. Thus, although in the past they could not sell their farms because of the fact that they did not have any claims to land in the reserves, later it became largely because of the graves, old homes and farms which materialised their emotive ties to the

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<sup>392</sup> Interview with Mr. Sangu Musindo (Care Taker of Bethel Farm) Bethel Farm, Number 24, Dewure, Gutu, 01 February 2006.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.* Most of the graves in this cemetery have tombstones marking the names of the deceased.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>395</sup> Interview with Sangu Musindo, Bethel Farm (Farm Number 24), 17 July 2009.

land. Moreover, since the farm was bought using contributions from the members of the community, it would also be difficult for all the members to make a unanimous decision to sell the farm. Thus, keeping the farm has also ensured the sustenance of a sense of unity among members of the community as it has become something of a focal point.

By the early 1940s Basotho were already travelling from their various farms in the Dewure Purchase Areas as well as the Mungezi and Nyazvidzi purchase area to bury their kith and kin at Bethel cemetery. Basotho in Mungezi Purchase Areas travelled something between 15 and 20 kilometres to Bethel Farm on foot because there were no buses servicing that area. The layout of the cemetery was designed in such a way that each family has its own row in which they would dig graves for their deceased. There are very neat rows of graves in the cemetery and to show the level of affluence of Basotho farmers most of the graves have expensive engraved granite tombstones. Currently the person who is in charge of both the farm and the cemetery is Sangu Musindo. Musindo is however not a Mosotho but a Karanga from Bikita who is married to Rachel Mphisa a member of the Basotho community. Due to his marriage in the Mphisa family and the fact that he is currently the care taker of Bethel Farm, Musindo feels that he is a full member of the community. Interestingly, he believes that although he is not a Mosotho he is likely to be buried on the cemetery when he dies because of his links to the Basotho community established through marriage.<sup>396</sup>

To underline the significance of Bethel cemetery to Basotho, Sangu Musindo pointed out that in some instances people travel long distances to bury their dead relatives at this cemetery. In fact during public holidays Bethel farm becomes a hive of activity as many Basotho go there either to unveil tombstones, put flowers on graves of their loved ones or to conduct memorial services. The desire to be interred together with one's relatives is still very strong among Basotho and indeed among many African communities. According to Geschiere, it is usually assumed that 'a person who still has family will at death be brought back to the village to be buried there' even if they would have spent their lives in towns.<sup>397</sup> In some instances even those Basotho who have since sold their farms and have moved to towns still return to bury their

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<sup>396</sup> Interview with Sangu Musindo, Bethel Farm (Farm Number 24), 17 July 2009.

<sup>397</sup> P. Geschiere, *Perils of belonging*, p.55.

deceased relatives at Bethel cemetery.<sup>398</sup> This act seems to complete the town dwellers' sense of belonging to this farming community. As Chabal has observed,

burial is important not just because it is a key element in the circle of life but because it makes manifest and keeps alive the concrete link between the individual, the community and the land with which it is identified. It is, thus, the core of individual and collective identity, which defines a relationship between the person and the group, or network.<sup>399</sup>

In the same vein, Christopher argues that 'the place of burial is an emotionally highly-charged site, not only for the families concerned, but also at times for the ethnic or cultural group concerned. Monuments to the dead, whether individuals or groups, may be of significance long after the immediate family connection has gone.'<sup>400</sup> Burials at Bethel cemetery thus carry a lot of significance for members of the Basotho community as they help them cement their networks. The material significance of land and graves help to cement Basotho's attachment to Dewure Purchase Areas in spite of their position as 'late comers' or 'outsiders' in the district. This is a result of the notion that there are always sentimental ties to graves whether recent or ancestral graves and there is a tendency to want to identify with the area where the remains of one's relatives are interred.

Other farmers as well as communities in the surrounding areas also recognise the significance of Bethel Farm to Basotho. When talking about Bethel Farm, Basotho's Karanga neighbours refer to it as "*kuBhetere kuBasotho*" which means 'Bethel the place of Basotho people'.<sup>401</sup> *KuBhetere* was and has continued to be 'home' to Basotho including those who spent most of their time working in different locations in the country. During fieldwork, each time that I travelled to one of the farms belonging to Basotho I was often asked if I was going to Bethel (*KuBhetere*). This became a constant reminder of the meanings that Bethel Farm has assumed among both Basotho and the surrounding communities. Thus, the name Bethel transcends

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<sup>398</sup> Interview with Sangu Musindo, Bethel Farm (Farm Number 24), 17 July 2009.

<sup>399</sup> P. Chabal, *Africa: The politics of suffering and smiling*, p.49.

<sup>400</sup> A. J. Christopher, 'Segregation and cemeteries in Port Elizabeth, South Africa', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol.161, No. 1 (1995), p.43.

<sup>401</sup> During my fieldwork I was told this each time I asked for directions to Bethel Farm or when I told people that I was going to Bethel Farm.



references to Bethel Farm and encapsulates Basotho sense of belonging and other farmers and surrounding communities' acknowledgement of the area as a Basotho enclave. The cemetery thus help to cultivate a Basotho sense of belonging in an area surrounded by the Karanga of the *Gumbo Madyirazhe* and *Moyo Duma* clan under Chief Chiwara and other clans.

The idea of making farms places for burials was quite a common feature among farmers in the purchase areas. Due to their relative privacy purchase area farms were often viewed by elite Africans as status symbols, homes as well places to establish their family graveyards. One example of such case was the Samkange family whose Tambaram Farm became the centre of the establishment of the Samkange family dynasty. The farm was one of the first to be purchased in the Msengezi Purchase Areas in the 1930s and at that time, 'its acquisition had been a landmark in the establishment of an elite family.'<sup>402</sup> With time, like many other Purchase Area Farms, Tambaram became more or a less a family burial ground and a place where all the Samkange family members would return to bury their relatives or for memorial services. As a result the Samkanges affectionately refer to the family graveyard on the farm as the 'Samkange Heroes Acre'.<sup>403</sup> Interestingly, Ranger points out that the idea of writing a book based on the Samkange family came whilst he was attending a memorial service at Tambaram.<sup>404</sup> This practice of having family burial grounds was repeated in many other purchase areas as African elites saw the farms not only economic units but also as symbols of status and as retirement homes. The case of the Basotho community is, however, unique in that it is a communal cemetery set on an exclusively Basotho owned farm.

Although being buried at Bethel Cemetery has great significance among Basotho it should be noted that some Basotho families chose to have their own family burial grounds on their private farms. Among the families that decided to use private graveyards include the Mphisa, Komo, Sikhala and Murudu. Varying reasons are often proffered to explain why these families decided to use private graveyards. Samuel Sikhala argues that his family and other Basotho families decided not to use Bethel cemetery because they feared that in the event that

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<sup>402</sup> T. O. Ranger, *Are we not also men*, p.vii.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*

the farm was sold and the community ‘lost it’ to the new owner, they would be alienated from the graves of their relatives, a risk they were not prepared to take.<sup>405</sup> Others such as Fredrick Komo cite the forbidding distances between their farms and Bethel Farm as the reason why they would rather use their private burial grounds on their farms. Be that as it may, they still continued to attend burials at Bethel cemetery and have an attachment to the place.<sup>406</sup> They still see the cemetery as ‘their cemetery’.



*Figure 5: Bethel cemetery*

<sup>405</sup> Interview with Samuel Sikhala, Farm No. 35, 16 July 2009.

<sup>406</sup> Interview with F. Komo, 28 December 2005.

The differences between Karanga burial practises and those of Basotho, who mainly follow Christian rites, is one of the factors which makes funerals and graves significant issues in the belonging matrix in Dewure Purchase Areas. In the end funerals have become rituals of belonging, determining not only where the deceased person belongs or belonged, but most importantly where the relatives of the deceased belong. Unlike most of the Karanga in Gutu who practised indigenous Karanga burial rituals, Basotho observe Christian burial rites which are normally conducted by a pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church. Traditional Karanga burial rituals involve the consultation of *n'anga* (diviner or traditional healer) to determine the cause of death. Even when the cause of death is an obvious one, such as an accident, it is mandatory for the bereaved family to visit a *n'anga* and enquire about the cause of the death of their relative. It is believed that a person does not just die, but some evil power is always behind each death or angry ancestors would have exposed the family to such dangers. So, after visiting a *n'anga* they return to tell the rest of the family *chakadya mwana* (what ate the child). If the deceased was married, the family carries out the *kugadzira* ritual a year after burial during which the spirit of the dead person is called back so that it can protect the family.<sup>407</sup> Basotho also had similar traditional burial rituals, which also involved consultations of diviners especially in cases where the death was sudden.<sup>408</sup> Just like in the Karanga communities embryos or babies were traditionally buried in clay pots by old women.<sup>409</sup> Moreover, and again, just like in Karanga beliefs if a person was not buried on the same day the grave was dug, the grave should be 'watched by men throughout the night to prevent the "*baloi*" (evil doers) from approaching.'<sup>410</sup> However, as Christians, Basotho deviated from most of these burial rituals and they stopped consulting diviners and among other burial rituals considered incompatible with Christian

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<sup>407</sup> For a more detailed descriptions of Karanga beliefs see, Herbert Aschwanden (in collaboration with the African nursing sisters of the Musiso Hospital, Zimbabwe), *Symbols of death: An analysis of the consciousness of the Karanga* (Mambo Press, Gweru, 1987), M. Gelfand, *The spiritual beliefs of the Shona : A study based on field work among the East-Central Shona* (Mambo Press, Gwelo, 1977).

<sup>408</sup> <http://www.malealea.co.ls/basotho-culture/basotho-beliefs.html> visited on 20 May 2011.

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.* see also Herbert Aschwanden (in collaboration with the African nursing sisters of the Musiso Hospital, Zimbabwe), *Symbols of death: An analysis of the consciousness of the Karanga*.

<sup>410</sup> <http://www.malealea.co.ls/basotho-culture/basotho-beliefs.html> visited on 20 May 2011.

values.<sup>411</sup> Yet it is possible that some of them may still be secretly performing some of these traditional rituals although they insist that they have abandoned them.

Thus, although as neighbours Karanga farmers and their Basotho neighbours assist each other at funerals, in the end funerals and burial rites provide a platform where group, religious and ethnic boundaries are negotiated and sometimes accentuated. As Durham and Klaitis argue, 'in the context of death, people shape forms of community and difference-along lines of ethnicity, class, religion, gender and kinship-through the mutuality of their emotions.'<sup>412</sup> Similarly, Basotho Christian funeral rites and their exclusive cemetery set them apart from their non-Sotho neighbours in Dewure Purchase Areas and surrounding areas like Zinhata, Vhunjere, Chiwara and Chin'ombe who largely observe traditional Karanga funerary rites.

A few months after burial, the Basotho conduct a memorial service. Since the majority of the members of this community belong to the Dutch Reformed Church, the service is normally conducted by a DRC pastor following the church guidelines. It is also common practice for granite tombstones to be erected after about a year depending on whether the family can afford it. A ceremony in which the tombstone is unveiled is then organised and again a pastor is invited to preside over the occasion and to bless the tombstone. This series of elaborate Christian rites are clear indicators of the importance of Christian faith in the everyday life in the Basotho community and also helps to highlight their religious belonging.

Bethel cemetery and other Basotho graves located on individual farms have continued to play a significant role in Basotho's strategies to belong up to the present day. There have been clear continuities between the past and the present in Basotho's attachment to the area established through the emotive significance of graves of their relatives. However, it is not merely the presence of Basotho graves that matter here, but most importantly it is about how Basotho make use of their materialities to negotiate and assert belonging. So strong are the sentimental attachments to the cemetery that even those Basotho who do not have any close

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<sup>411</sup> Interview with Sangu Musindo, Bethel Farm (Farm Number 24), 17 July 2009.

<sup>412</sup> D. Durham and F. Klaitis, 'Funerals and the public sphere of sentiment in Botswana', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (2002), p. 277.

relatives buried at Bethel cemetery still refer to ‘graves of our relatives’ at Bethel cemetery.<sup>413</sup> Thus not only do graves help in physically marking and identifying the area as a Basotho area, but they also tell a story of their migration and settlement in area dominated by Karanga communities who claimed autochthony. They also evoke a sense of belonging among Basotho as well as pointing to the difference between Basotho and those who viewed themselves as autochthons in the purchase areas. As Fontein argues, graves actually have an active and ‘affective’ presence in the landscape.<sup>414</sup> This resonates with Bunn’s assertion that, tombs and graves are not mute but have a great influence on the living.<sup>415</sup> Therefore, there is need to consider more closely the salience of graves not only in negotiation of autochthony but also other forms of belonging which are not necessarily based on being a first comer or a ‘son of the soil’. The Basotho case demonstrates that it is not only among the autochthons that graves matter but they are also vital in the belonging of even those people who are conscious of being ‘late comers’.

Language has also been one of the major tools used by Basotho in maintaining a sense of unity as well as constructing and articulating a sense of belonging in Dewure Purchase Areas. When I began doing fieldwork among Basotho in Dewure Purchase Areas in 2005, I had assumed that most of them had lost much of their language. Interestingly, my first interviews seemed to confirm this assumption, as my informants were very comfortable speaking in *Chikaranga* during my interviews with them and did not seem to see any need for them to display their knowledge of *Sesotho* to me. However, during my subsequent fieldwork in 2009, I began to notice that although they spoke *chikaranga* in their everyday interactions, there was a tendency for them to revert to *Sesotho* during occasions such as funerals, memorial services and other family gatherings. The use of *Sesotho* during such occasions is quite intriguing given the fact that the language is seldom used in Basotho’s daily interactions. During such occasions, *Sesotho* become the language of choice. In addition to language, they also observe Sotho

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<sup>413</sup> Interview with Fredrick Komo at Farm No. 392 Dewure, Gutu, 28 December 2005.

<sup>414</sup> J. Fontein, ‘Graves, ruins, and belonging: Towards an anthropology of proximity’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 17 (2011), p.713.

<sup>415</sup> D. Bunn, ‘The sleep of the brave: Graves as sites and signs in colonial Eastern Cape’ in P.S. Landau and D. D. Kaspin (eds.) *Images and empires: Visuality in colonial and post-colonial Africa* (Los Angeles: University of California Berkeley Press, 2002), p.57.

etiquette. For example, an aunt becomes *raghali*, uncle becomes *maloame*, and cousin becomes *motsoala* and so on, as they shy away from using the Shona terms they would otherwise use in their everyday interactions. The occasions clearly provide a platform for Basotho to display their knowledge of *Sesotho* and also to rekindle some aspects of *Sesotho* culture and etiquette. Such performances serve to authenticate the occasion and cultivate a sense of togetherness among members of this community. *Sesotho* cements their relations and help to unpack the otherwise complex kinship webs. Certainly, keeping their language, albeit reserving it for important gatherings, is increasingly becoming a way through which the nostalgic elders of the community reminisce about their history and also inculcate their knowledge to the young generations. The language also helps them to cultivate a sense of togetherness as it excludes the non-Sotho who cannot speak the language. Such rituals and ceremonies unite Basotho and cement their sense of belonging. Some Basotho even make an effort to teach their children *Sesotho* although they do not get to use the language in their day to day communication.<sup>416</sup> In spite of them being ‘late comers’ or ‘strangers’ in the area, Basotho use funerals in much the same way as those who claim autochthony to negotiate belonging and to ritualise their attachment to the soil. As Geschiere observed, ‘in many parts of Africa the funeral “at home”-in the place where the deceased was born and not where (s)he lived-is acquiring an ever explicitly political significance.’<sup>417</sup> The return of the urban dwellers to the farms for occasions such as funerals and all the attendant ceremonies therefore shows that even those Basotho who now live in urban areas, far away from their farms, still believe that although they spend much of time in towns, their ultimate belonging is among their people in the purchase areas. As a result convoys of vehicles are often seen going to the farms as Basotho ‘return home’ to bury their loved ones, attend some ceremonies or just to be with others during public holidays.

The salience of *Sesotho* language is also shown by the importance given to the Basotho Choir on occasions such as funerals, memorial services, church services and other gatherings. This choir is exclusively composed of Basotho members of the DRC who sing hymns in *Sesotho*. During one memorial service I attended during my fieldwork in 2009, the choir and other

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<sup>416</sup> Interview with Mrs Aletta Mphisa-Mazanhi, Old Location, Mpandawana Growth Point, 31 January 2006.

<sup>417</sup> P. Geschiere, *The perils of belonging*, p.55.

members of the community held a night vigil on the eve of the memorial service, singing hymns in *Sesotho*.<sup>418</sup> As noted by Rachel Mphisa, the wife of the caretaker of Bethel Farm and a key members of the choir, the choir is a very important group in the community that no gathering of Basotho ends without the choir singing some hymns in *Sesotho*.<sup>419</sup> Thus, funerals and other social gatherings in the Basotho community provide members with an opportunity to gather and strengthen their kinship as well as reaffirming their positions in the kinship webs. They also help reaffirm one's belonging to the purchase areas, a link which is established through attachment's one's family farm and also to Bethel Farm.

### **Of ghosts and belonging**

The discussion has, thus far, focussed on the importance of funerals and graves in Basotho negotiation and construction of belonging in Dewure Purchase Areas. However, it is almost impossible to talk about graves, cemeteries or even *matongo* (ruined old homestead) in most African communities without inevitably having to discuss the phenomenon of ghosts or roaming spirits of the dead. Fontein recently broached the question of ghosts and belonging in Zimbabwe by analysing the link between George Sheppard, a former white farmer and owner of Lodge at Ancient City, which is close to Great Zimbabwe, and his grandson Simon Bright's claim to belonging in the area around Lake Mutirikwi.<sup>420</sup> Simon Bright's argument is that since the ghost of his grandfather continued to be seen at the Lodge at the Ancient City this cemented his own claim to belonging in the area where he spent his childhood.<sup>421</sup> The question that is pertinent here is whether people can claim belonging basing on the argument that the spirits/ghosts of their forefathers roam the area. According to Fontein, 'Simon Bright himself fondly remembers and has a deep personal attachment to or 'obsession with' what he described as 'the landscape of my

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<sup>418</sup> I attended the memorial service of Mrs. Aletta Mphisa-Mazanhi held on Farm 28 Dewure PA on 21-22 August 2009. I interviewed the deceased in my first fieldwork in 2005.

<sup>419</sup> Interview with Rachel Mphisa, Bethel Farm (Farm No.24), 17 July 2009.

<sup>420</sup> J. Fontein, 'Graves, ruins and belonging: Towards an anthropology of proximity', p.710.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, p.711.

childhood' near the Boroma hills.<sup>422</sup> In a way, 'stories about the presence of his grandfather's ghost, and of his ritual offerings of whisky to his spirit, substantiate his personal sense of belonging by materializing his own family's history in the landscape.'<sup>423</sup> This points to the possibility of the use of stories of appearance of ghosts to negotiate one's belonging in an area.

A similar scenario also surrounds one on the farms in the district (in Nyazvidzi Purchase Areas) which was previously owned by a member of the Basotho community. This farm is reported to be infamous for the alleged presence of a troublesome ghost of its original owner, who was a member of the Basotho community. He was one of the Basotho people who contributed towards the purchase of Bethel Farm although he ended up buying his farm in the Nyazvidzi Purchase Area (in the northern part of Gutu District).<sup>424</sup> According to the story I was told by one of the surviving relatives;

He was the original owner of Farm No. X in Nyazvidzi Purchase area in Gutu. He, however, lost his farm in unclear circumstances. One of the reasons may have been that he was working in Gwelo (now Gweru) and may have been absent from his farm for protracted periods. Consequently, the farm was later repossessed and sold to another person.<sup>425</sup>

It is not quite clear whether this Sotho farm owner had managed to pay the full amount for the farm when the farm was repossessed or whether it is even true that the farm was repossessed because he was an absentee farm owner. However, because of the circumstances in which he lost his farm, it is believed that he died a bitter man and as a result of this his ghost has 'continued to roam on the farm.'<sup>426</sup> Since his death, his alleged ghost has continued to haunt the farm and each person that has bought the farm has left complaining of the presence of ghosts on the farm. Some members of his family feel that the farm still belongs to them because the ghost of their relative continues to roam around the farm and refuses to leave until the farm has been returned to its

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<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>424</sup> S1859 1933-1949 Schools Gutu, Basuto Community's Plot: Bethel: Holding 24, Dewure Division, Gutu, 25 October 1941.

<sup>425</sup> Interview with David Leboho, 22 August 2009.

<sup>426</sup> Interview with J. Gaba (pseudonym) 21 August 2009.



‘rightful owners’. The surviving family has, therefore, continued to have some connection to this farm because of the ‘presence of the ghost’ of their relative on the farm.<sup>427</sup> There is, in fact, a sense of triumph in some members of the family that no one has been able to stay on this farm for a long time due the ‘activities of the ghost’. Although ghost stories are impossible to ascertain as they are usually based on rumour, the significance of such stories is still strong among those who believe them. Whether the ghost is actually seen or not is not what is important, what is crucial is that there are people who believe in them and use such stories to negotiate belonging and justify their claims.

Apart from the case presented above, there are not many cases of ghost appearances that are widely known among the Basotho. However, one of the commonly known in the Dewure Purchase Areas is the rumour of ghosts on the Kamungoma Farm. The basis of this rumour is the fact that a large number of people were killed while attending a *pungwe* (all night political rally) in 1978.<sup>428</sup> It is thus suspected that since a lot of blood was spilt on this site, the spirits of the people who died at this place still roam around the farm and at times appear in different forms. The people who stay on the farm however deny the presence of these ghosts insisting that if they actually exist, they are yet to see them.<sup>429</sup> What is undeniable, however, is the fact for those who believe in their existence, ghosts are real and they are also territorial. Consequently, it is plausible to argue that the living who identify with the graves of their dead relatives can, as in the cases described above, also identify with their ghosts of the deceased relatives as well as the territories they roam. This has an effect of bridging the gap between the ‘material-graves’ and the ‘spiritual-ghosts’ in the belonging matrix. This resonates with Bunn’s argument that, ‘when we speak of graveyards being haunted by restless spirits, or grief stricken mourners who prostrate [themselves] upon tombs, we are also speaking about the grave as a point of access to the other worlds. The grave is associated with the literal proximity of human remains and the lingering

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<sup>427</sup> It however proved quite difficult to solicit more information concerning the farm from David Leboho because he considers this to be a very sensitive family issue which cannot be discussed with outsiders but he claimed that as of 2009 the farm was vacant as the recent owner had abandoned it after constant encounters with the ghost.

<sup>428</sup> The massacre at Kamungoma farm will be discussed in greater detail in chapter seven.

<sup>429</sup> Ndakaripa Musiwaro interview with Mapfumo Kubandira, Farm number 342 Dewure Purchase Areas, 21 December 2009.

spiritual presence of the dead.’<sup>430</sup> It is arguably this lingering spiritual presence of the dead which connects the living to the land where their dead relatives lie buried.

Stories about ‘ghosts’ at Bethel and other farms encapsulate the ambiguous nature of Basotho’s attempts to become autochthons whilst at the same time remaining outsiders. It can be argued that the very fact that there is a reference to Basotho ‘ghosts’ and not their ancestors is a sign of their partial or incomplete belonging to the area since autochthons arguably have ancestors not roaming ghosts. Their Christian beliefs have also affected the possibility of them making stronger claims based on ancestral spirits like local communities who claim autochthony.

For the people in Gutu District, *kuBhetere* has become a generic term for the Basotho community and everything that is associated with them. Buses which ply the route between Mpanawana Growth Point (Gutu Service Centre) and Vhunjere, a communal area to the east of the Dewure Purchase Areas, often have an unmistakable destination board which is boldly written: ‘Vhunjere via Bhetere’.<sup>431</sup> For the locals the destination board evokes a lot of images which with great significance in the broader politics of belonging in the purchase areas. It is evident that Bethel, is not just another farm or Bus stop, but it is an important node in the political geography of the district. It tells a story of Basotho belonging in an area where they are clearly ‘late comers’ whose only claim to attachment to the area is through ownership of freehold land. Their struggles to belong have revolved around ownership of freehold land, religious linkages, attachment to graves as well as the preservation of family networks strengthened by a practice of ethnic endogamy which involved marriages between cousins (*motsoala*) although the later started to marry out. ‘*KuBhetere*’ is, therefore, not simply a reference to a farm but it is also a silent reminder of the spatial politics of the Dewure Purchase Areas.

The names of some Bus stops along the road are also significant in Basotho’s attachment to the area. These include the Mphisa and the Sikhala Bus stops. These bus stops are so named because they are located at the farms belonging to the Mphisa and Sikhala families. They have become ‘active’ in shaping Basotho belonging as people who use them engage with the idea of

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<sup>430</sup> D. Bunn, ‘The sleep of the brave: Graves as sites and signs in colonial Eastern Cape’, p.57.

<sup>431</sup> During my fieldwork I used Munashe Bus Service which at the time was the only remaining regular bus plying this route after Madondo Bus Service stopped servicing the route.

the presence of Basotho in the area. These seemingly mute features tell stories of Basotho settlement in the Dewure Purchase areas and most importantly they also tell a story of a minority and migrant group carving out an enclave. Thus, interactions with such features together with performance of rituals of belonging such as funerals help in strengthening a people's attachment to a place. As Tilley argues, 'identifying with place does not just happen. It requires work, repeated acts which establish relations between peoples and places.'<sup>432</sup>



*Figure 6: Bethel Farm Bus Stop*

The attachment of the Basotho to their farms makes it very difficult for them to sell them for any reason. They often say that, unlike their Karanga neighbours who can sell their farms and return

<sup>432</sup> C. Tilley 'Introduction: Identity, place, landscape and heritage', p. 14

to the rural areas (formerly Reserves/Tribal Trust Lands), they do not have other places that they can go to if they sell their farms. Explaining the importance of Bethel farm and Basotho's family farms, one of my informants had this to say;

As Basotho in Dewure and Mungezi Purchase Areas, these farms are very important to us. It is very rare to see a member of this community selling their farm because they are aware that they will be selling more than a farm, but a very important asset and the future of their children and their children's children. Where would one go with their family if they sell the farm? The few who sold their farms either bought plots in peri-urban areas, or bought houses in towns. But it is rare for that to happen. As for Bethel Farm, it can never be sold. In fact, we will never accept any offer for it. Recently, a certain politician in this district tried to buy the farm claiming that it was idle. Our position was however very firm. We stated that it was impossible to buy Bethel Farm because it was purchased by our forefathers and most of them are buried there. It will therefore remain a Basotho farm for generations and generations; maybe forever.<sup>433</sup>

It is, therefore, possible to argue that farms and graves are at the core of Basotho belonging in Dewure Purchase Areas. This belonging is often performed through rituals such as funerals and memorial services where *Sesotho* comes alive and with it Basotho etiquette and other rules of engagement among kinsmen, which help Basotho reaffirm their belonging to both place and group.

## Conclusion

Studies of autochthony and belonging have tended to emphasise the importance of funerals in autochthony based claims to belonging. However, as has been shown in this chapter, even groups such as the Basotho community in Dewure Purchase Areas, who are conscious of being 'late comers' in the area, also use funerals and graves to negotiate and articulate their belonging. In fact by carrying out rituals of belonging such as burials and funerals which help them establish an attachment to the land 'late comers' would actually be slowly transforming themselves into autochthons by establishing an attachment to the soil. This chapter has shown the centrality of farms as well as the place of funerals and graves in Basotho's construction and negotiation of

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<sup>433</sup> Interview with Jeremiah Masoha, Farm 223, 16 July 2009.

politics of belonging in Dewure Purchase Areas. It is apparent that without the aid of freehold land, it is possible that Basotho would negotiate their belonging to land in a different way. The ‘affordances’ of family farms and of Bethel Farm, such as privacy and autonomy, have allowed Basotho to frame and negotiate their belonging in the manner they have done and are doing. It is thus possible to talk about the importance of place, in this case farms, in how belonging is constructed. Bethel Farm became a focal point for Basotho in Dewure and Mungezi Purchase Areas and Basotho graves helped cement their sense of belonging. Being the fulcrum of the community’s activities, Bethel Farm in many ways encapsulates Basotho belonging and projects the point that although they are newcomers in the area Basotho have managed to assert their belonging by establishing an attachment to the area. Moreover, funerals and other family gatherings also go a long way in defining who the Basotho are, as it is during such occasions that the kinship web is unravelled and *Sesotho* language becomes the language of choice. It is therefore possible to make a case for Basotho belonging in the Dewure Purchase Areas basing on the emotive presence of Bethel Farm, the cemetery on the farm as well as other Basotho graves located on various family graveyards. Farms, graves, roads and Bus stops among other features are material traces of Basotho presence in the Dewure Purchase Areas which are active in shaping Basotho sense of belonging. As Fontein has observed elsewhere, such evidence of recent occupiers can easily be juxtaposed with and ‘conjure up images of particular pasts just as readily as caves, sacred springs, and ancestral graves can’.<sup>434</sup> Within this broad Basotho sense of unity are, however, subtle schisms and fault lines which have been expressed through a number of cliques which emerged in the community. Drawing on the work by Joost Fontein, the chapter demonstrated how both graves and ghosts (or rumours of the presence of ghosts) of Basotho have been important in the identification and construction of Bethel and other farms as Basotho areas. In spite of the uncertainties surrounding sightings of ghosts, some individuals have sought to use claims of ghosts’ appearances as evidence of the strong attachment they, as relatives of the deceased, have to the area.

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<sup>434</sup>J. Fontein, ‘Graves, ruins, and belonging: Towards an anthropology of proximity’, p.716.

## CHAPTER 5

### ‘THIS IS OUR SCHOOL...’: THE RISE AND FALL OF BETHEL SCHOOL c.1937-1970s

#### Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the significance of Bethel farm in Basotho construction and negotiation of belonging in the Dewure Purchase Areas. It also noted how a number of features on the farm such as the community cemetery, the church and the school helped Basotho establish a strong sense of affinity and an attachment to the land. Focussing on the challenges Basotho faced in establishing and running Bethel School, this chapter explores the link between provision of education and immigrants’ negotiation of belonging. The chapter examines the challenges that Basotho faced in establishing Bethel school and their attempt to project it as a ‘Basotho school’ through retaining the school and also by insisting that *Sesotho* become part of the school curriculum. The chapter also, in many ways, demonstrates how Bethel school illustrated the triumphs, failures and challenges faced by the Basotho in Gutu in their quest for belonging. It also asserts that the way the Basotho ran the school exposed otherwise subtle cleavages and schisms within the community. The chapter is also endeavours to evaluate the success of an attempt at an education system primarily aimed at catering for the needs of an immigrant minority group. It, thus, asserts that the rise and fall of Bethel school, a number of ways, encapsulates Basotho struggles for belonging.

#### Bethel School: Education among Basotho

The 1920s saw most British colonies adopting an education policy that was specifically modelled to cater for Africans. This policy gained currency in the aftermath of the publication of the findings of the Phelps-Stokes African Education Commission in 1920. The commission was led by Thomas Jesse Jones who had earlier on made a similar survey in the United States of America

(Southern States) and recommended that 'schools for Negroes should place more emphasis on the industrial and agricultural aspects of education.'<sup>435</sup> Apart from industrial work, the Phelps-Stoke Fund advocated an education system that would inculcate Christian values which explains why missionaries were greatly involved in the programme.<sup>436</sup> According to Berman, the Phelps-Stokes Fund education commissions 'were catalysts in the creation of the Colonial Office's common educational policy for Africa, first enunciated in 1924.'<sup>437</sup> The Colonial Office saw similarities between Afro-Americans and Africans in its colonies and concluded that what was good for Afro-Americans would also be good for Africans. This education model, which leaned heavily towards industrial work, was implemented in a number of British colonies which include Southern and Northern Rhodesia, Gold Coast, Uganda, Nyasaland and Kenya among others.

Southern Rhodesia's 'Native Education' policy had not changed much from the time of occupation up until the end of Company rule in 1923. 'Native' education was generally the concern of missionaries, who were given very limited financial assistance by the government. The education policy was broadly geared towards the production of educated African elites and emphasised academic subjects. However, after the change in colonial administration as Company rule ended, there were some changes in the policy. These changes were implemented by the newly established Native Development Department (NDD) which had been established in 1920 under H. S. Keigwin. One of Keigwin's objectives was to 'promote the growth of Native industries and to rectify the alleged deficiency in industrial education taught in missions.'<sup>438</sup> By so doing he sought to transform Native education, making it oriented towards the training of artisans rather than just production of educated African elites who would work in towns. As Steele aptly puts it, 'Keigwin stressed the need to raise the masses, rather than an academically-qualified elite: the schools would assist this process by turning out skilled artisans "who shall be able, both by their conduct and knowledge to set a higher standard of life to those around

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<sup>435</sup> E. H. Berman, 'American influence on African education: The role of the Phelps-Stokes Fund's Education Commissions', *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (Colonialism and Education) (1971), p.133.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*, p.143.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, p.132.

<sup>438</sup> M. C. Steele, 'The foundations of a Native Policy: Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1933', p.306.

them.”<sup>439</sup> Berman describes Keigwin as ‘one of Jones’ staunchest advocates, arguing that all Africans should be trained to a due appreciation of their industrial and agricultural possibilities.’<sup>440</sup> Keigwin believed that industrial training would help curb self-assertiveness which was ‘so often the mark of the “book-learned” African.’<sup>441</sup> This, therefore, meant that Southern Africa was right at the fore-front of the crusade to turn away Africans from academic subjects and making them appreciate the value of industrial work.

To promote industrial training, schools relied on ‘capitation grants’ (grants-in-aid) which were provided for by the government on the basis of the number of hours a school dedicated to the teaching of industrial work as well as discipline and hygiene.<sup>442</sup> However, such grants were seldom adequate. It was within this model of Native education and development that, with help of funding from the American Carnegie Corporation, the colonial administration established the Jeanes Teacher training programme in 1929.

Since Basotho generally valued their close ties with the colonial officials, they also sought to graft themselves onto these new ideals. They were largely complicit with colonial education policy in creating disciplined but docile colonial subjects through education. They did this by establishing their own schools and also sending their children to mission schools. The emphasis on industrial training also had some resonances with the Protestant work ethic which, as members of the DRC, Basotho had already been introduced to. Thus, the desire to be viewed as progressive and disciplined colonial subjects meant that Basotho enthusiastically supported this new education policy. Since among them were some qualified teachers, the establishment of the schools was not a difficult goal to achieve. At Morgenster Mission the children of Basotho evangelists were taught by a Sotho teacher who had been educated in Lesotho.<sup>443</sup> As highlighted in chapter two, they established two schools, one on Niekerk’s Rust and another on Erichsthal

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<sup>439</sup> M. C. Steele, ‘The foundations of a Native Policy: Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1933’, p.307.

<sup>440</sup> E. H. Berman, ‘American influence on African Education’, p.142.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*, p.142

<sup>442</sup> See C. Summers, ‘Giving orders in Southern Rhodesia: Controversies over Africans’ authority in development programs, 1928-1934’, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (1998).

<sup>443</sup> N9/1/12 Victoria District, Report for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1909.



Farm before their displacement to Purchase Areas in the early 1930s.<sup>444</sup> In some instances some Basotho parents even sent their children to schools and colleges in South Africa. Hence, Basotho already had the experience with running schools before their settlement in the Dewure Purchase Areas and they also had the qualified personnel to run them.

As a result, as soon as they resettled in Dewure Purchase Areas in the early 1930s, Basotho did not wait for the government to establish a school for them. Instead, they took the initiative to establish their own school. In a letter to the NC of Gutu requesting for the establishment of a school among Basotho in Dewure Purchase Areas, Rev. I. Botha pointed out that the Basotho community had two schools under the DRC on Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal Farms before their displacement.<sup>445</sup> Rev. Botha also stated that Basotho wished to appoint Basotho teachers, Jona Mmkola and his wife Selina Mmkola. Jona held a Teacher's Provisional Certificate from Transvaal, South Africa whilst Selina was a standard three teacher.<sup>446</sup> Jona had been sent to a South African school by the DRC who paid part of his school fees with the remainder being paid by his parents.<sup>447</sup>

Apart from Jona and his wife, there were a number of other Basotho with various levels of qualifications who could be employed as teachers. For example, in 1936 Deborah Molebaleng, the daughter of Chief Jacob Molebaleng, who had just passed her Standard VI at Morgenster left for Hope Fountain in Matabeleland where she was to do a Jeanes Teachers Course.<sup>448</sup> The Jeanes Teachers Programme had been imported from United States of America and introduced in Rhodesia in 1929 as part of Harold Jowitt's concept of Native development. Using funding from

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<sup>444</sup> N9/1/14 Victoria District: Report for the Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1911, S1859 Rev. I. Botha (Pamushana Mission) to N. C. Gutu, 27 December 1934.

<sup>445</sup> S1859 Rev. Botha (Pamushana Mission) to NC Gutu, 27 December 1934.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>447</sup> S1859 N. C. Gutu to C. N. C., 23 September 1936.

<sup>448</sup> Cornelius Molebaleng (Dewure Purchase Areas) 'Chief's Daughter Takes Jeanes Course' in *The Bantu Mirror*, Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1936., Kingfisher, 'Fort Victoria News' in *The Bantu Mirror*, Saturday 27 June 1936., Susana Kumalo, another member of the Basotho community completed a Jeanes Teachers course in 1938. See Kingfisher, 'Fort Victoria News: Basuto Settlement' *The Bantu Mirror*, Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March 1938, Fort Victoria News. For a more detailed explanation of the Jeans Teacher programme in Southern Rhodesia see also C. Summers, 'Giving orders in Southern Rhodesia: Controversies over Africans' authority in development programs, 1928-1934'.

the Carnegie Corporation, the Jeanes Teacher Scheme trained male teachers at Domboshawa and female teachers at Hope Fountain mission. Jeanes teachers were often sponsored by their missions and upon completion of the course they returned to work under the supervision of these missions. According to Summers,

Jeanes programs sought to give African men and women advanced training in the basic skills of community development: hygiene, school improvement, industrial skills, medical aid, and domesticity. After a course at Domboshawa School and a community-based internship, the men would go back to the missions that sponsored them. Working under a missionary supervisor, each man would have responsibility for a circle of rural schools. He was required to visit the schools, help teachers improve their techniques, sponsor school garden plots, and direct the students in manual and industrial work. But he was to do more, reaching out from school to community: helping with cleanups, overseeing latrine digs, and providing suggestions for cooperative organizations ranging from the schools' parent committees through communal work parties. The male Jeanes teacher would be working with denominational schools, and reporting to a mission supervisor. But he would be paid by the Native Development Department at a substantially higher level than a regular mission-employed teacher.<sup>449</sup>

However, women teachers on the Jeanes Teachers programme like Deborah Molebaleng had a slightly different curriculum. This did not involve supervision of teachers but emphasised hygiene, cookery, sewing and health services which were at the core of the Victorian ideals of domesticity.<sup>450</sup> According to Leach 'education was to play a major role in promoting this "domestic felicity" through a gender differentiated curriculum in which girls were taught specific "feminine" skills by female teachers, and preferably in separate schools.'<sup>451</sup> Other Africans were to learn through the demonstrations being done by these educated African women such as Jeanes Teachers and had to embrace the ideals they promoted.

Since they were already integrated into the colonial education policy and some of them already had teaching qualifications, Basotho found the establishment of their own school desirable. The Superintendent of Natives (Fort Victoria) also reiterated this point by pointing out

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<sup>449</sup> C. Summers, 'Giving orders in Southern Rhodesia: Controversies over Africans' authority in development programs, 1928-1934', p. 280.

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid.*, p.281.

<sup>451</sup> F. Leach 'African girls, nineteenth-century mission education and the patriarchal imperative', *Gender and Education*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (2008), p.337.

that there were a number of Basotho who could take up posts as teachers at the school. He noted that ‘amongst their (Basotho) community are qualified teachers and tradesmen of all kinds.’<sup>452</sup> It should also be noted that the demand for schools was quite high in the Purchase Areas as farmers. This was because of the fact that, as people seen as progressive Africans, Purchase Areas farmers were keen to establish schools in their areas to cater for their children. Since the colonial administration was reluctant to fund schools for Africans, farmers took their own initiatives to establish their own schools, making a number of requests to the local NCs to be allowed to build schools in their areas. What arguably set Basotho apart from other farmers was that they were an organised group of immigrants who had made an effort to establish a school to primarily cater for their children. They also sought to make Sesotho one of the key subjects taught at the school. Moreover, the school was to be built on a Basotho owned farm instead of the plots which had been reserved for schools. This, in a way, was an expression of Basotho’s desire to be independent from both DRC missionaries and other farmers in the Purchase Areas.

The Basotho community’s initial application to establish a school was turned down by the NC of Gutu on the grounds that they had not yet acquired any rights to the land on which they wished to establish the school.<sup>453</sup> NCs had been given the authority to approve such applications and also to visit schools in their districts without any prior notice.<sup>454</sup> Under the regulations put in place in 1923 ‘no school could be opened without the CNC’s consent, his approval regarding character had to be obtained for every new Native teacher designated for work in the reserves’ although the Director of Education still had the powers to veto teacher appointments.<sup>455</sup> After the application was blocked by the NC, Basotho temporarily shelved it as they sorted out the purchase of their community farm. In 1936, however, with the help of Rev. van der Merwe, they were eventually granted the permission to establish a school on Bethel,

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<sup>452</sup> S924/G33/ App. 3 Superintendent of Natives (Fort Victoria) to C. N. C., 2 February 1933.

<sup>453</sup> S1859 N. C. Gutu to Rev. I. Botha (Pamushana Mission), 10 January 1935.

<sup>454</sup> M. C. Steele, ‘The foundations of a Native Policy: Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1933’, p.333.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*

their community farm and the school was opened in January 1937.<sup>456</sup> Malachi Phosa was employed as the first teacher at the school and also acted as its head teacher.<sup>457</sup> Malachi Phosa had been trained at Waddilove Institute where he obtained a teaching course. As a native speaker of *Sesotho* he could also teach the language.<sup>458</sup> He was the son of Laban Phosa, a Sotho farm owner in the Dewure Purchase Areas.<sup>459</sup> Other Basotho teachers to be employed at the school included Laura Moeketsi, Reuben Mphisa, and Michael Mojapelo among others.<sup>460</sup>

Basotho saw *Sesotho* as playing a crucial role in their group identity that they sought to preserve it for the future generations. Language can be argued to be one of the crucial markers of identity: hence the need for any minority and immigrant group to preserve it if they have a desire to maintain their group identity. According to Nyati-Ramahobo 'language is one of the most salient features marking ethnic boundaries among groups, and it is also the strongest, due to the importance of communication.'<sup>461</sup> One way through which Basotho sought to ensure the survival of their language was through the teaching of the language at Bethel school. They made a conscious decision to make *Sesotho* and English the only languages of instruction at the school although some students at the school were non-Sesotho speakers. This was a bold decision given the minority status of Basotho in the Dewure Purchase Areas. In 1938 'Kingfisher' triumphantly reported that, 'this [Bethel school] is the only school in Southern Rhodesia where Suto (sic) speaking children are allowed to enjoy their mother language in full.'<sup>462</sup> This shows the importance Basotho placed on the teaching of *Sesotho* at Bethel school and how the community viewed it as a major achievement. The teaching of *Sesotho* shows that Basotho initially sought to

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<sup>456</sup> S1859 Rev. W. F. van der Merwe (Alheight Mission) to N. C. Gutu, 20 June 1942., Kingfisher, 'Basuto Settlement: Fort Victoria News', *The Bantu Mirror*, Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March 1938.

<sup>457</sup> 'Gutu Notes', *The Bantu Mirror*, 16 January 1937.

<sup>458</sup> S1859 Malachi Phosa (Morgenster Mission) to N. C. Gutu, 11 October 1936

<sup>459</sup> S1859 C. E. Davis Circuit Inspector Gwelo, Report on Bethel School, Date of Visit, 16 October 1937.

<sup>460</sup> Interview with Mrs Aletta Mphisa-Mazanhi, Old Location, Mpandawana Growth Point, 31 January 2006.

<sup>461</sup> L. Nyati-Ramahobo, 'Ethnicity and language: Lessons from Botswana', Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, 2008, p.52 [http://www.osisa.org/resources/docs/PDFs/OpenSpace-Nov2008/2\\_3\\_language\\_p049-54\\_lydia\\_nyati\\_ramahobo.pdf](http://www.osisa.org/resources/docs/PDFs/OpenSpace-Nov2008/2_3_language_p049-54_lydia_nyati_ramahobo.pdf) visited on 12/04/2011.

<sup>462</sup> Kingfisher, 'Basuto settlement, Fort Victoria News' *The Bantu Mirror*, 5 March 1938, p.7.

construct their belonging by maintaining their distinct group identity from the rest of the farming community. Although its success was debatable, the teaching and use of *Sesotho* at Bethel was projected to help in the sustenance of Sotho culture and values.

Language plays a crucial role in articulation of ethnicity and also in other forms of cultural belonging. Although language has ‘rarely been equated with the totality of ethnicity’ it is nonetheless such a vital component of ethnicity that its saliency needs to be appreciated.<sup>463</sup> Every language carries with it a distinct ethnic baggage making the link between ethnicity and language difficult to ignore. By emphasising the teaching of *Sesotho* at Bethel school, Basotho were thus consciously trying to preserve their language even though they were already making use of *Chikaranga* (a dialect of *Chishona*) in their everyday interactions with other farmers who are predominantly Karanga.

It should be pointed out that the teaching of *Sesotho* at Bethel was solely an initiative of the Basotho community using the expertise of those among them who had teaching qualifications and therefore could teach the language. DRC missionaries were supportive of the idea of Basotho using *Sesotho* alongside English at Bethel as they thought that this would help the community forge unity. As indicated in chapter two, DRC missionaries had a school established for children of Basotho evangelists at Morgenster Mission in the 1890s. The school employed Basotho teachers, which ensured that *Sesotho* could be used at the school, although there was no official position on the use of the language. The colonial administration did not provide any assistance in the teaching of *Sesotho* at the school apart from providing teachers and giving out capitation grants. Given the fact that the Basotho community was too small to warrant any specific government language policy, the community took their own initiative to have *Sesotho* taught at their school even though *Chikaranga* remained the local lingua franca. As highlighted in chapter four, *Sesotho* played a very significant role in Basotho sense of belonging even though it was not always used in everyday interactions. Its significance was often seen in Basotho gatherings such as funerals, memorial services, and weddings among others. Thus, with the teaching of *Sesotho* as one of its core objectives, Bethel school engendered a strong sense of affinity among Basotho.

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<sup>463</sup> J. Fishman (ed.) *Language and ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Although the main objective of establishing Bethel school was the provision of education to children of Basotho farmers, the school also served other purposes. The establishment of Bethel school also showed that Basotho were modernising Africans who were keen to foster development in their community through education. The fact that they intended it to be an almost exclusively Basotho school was also a sign of Basotho particularism. 'This is our school' was a common mantra showing Basotho's strong attachment to the school. Education can, therefore, be argued to have been one of the motifs used by Basotho to weave their notion of belonging, especially in the 1930s and 1940s when they were very keen to project an image of being progressive Africans which endeared them to colonial officials.

Although the two DRC missionaries, Rev. Botha of Pamushana Mission and Rev. van der Merwe of Alheight Mission, had played a key role in the establishment of Bethel School, Basotho were reluctant to allow DRC missionaries to have control over their school. This was a significant move given the fact that the two schools that the Basotho had established on Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal farms had been run by DRC missionaries.<sup>464</sup> It also showed a major shift in the relationship between the Basotho and the DRC missionaries which had hitherto been quite cordial. Basotho were clearly remodeling their belonging by aligning themselves with colonial officials and moving away from their formerly very strong ties with DRC missionaries. They feared that the domination of DRC missionaries would not only create discord in the community, but would give the missionaries an opportunity to take over their school and community farm. Consequently, they decided not to place their school under the direct control of the DRC missionaries choosing, instead, to place it under direct government control. In 1935, the NC of Gutu noted that, 'the Basutos (sic) wish their school to be under direct government supervision, and quite distinct from mission control something similar to a farm school.'<sup>465</sup> They also declared that their school was 'un-denominational' meaning that DRC missionaries could

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<sup>464</sup> S1859 Rev. I. Botha (Pamushana Mission) to N. C. Gutu, 27 December 1934.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*

not claim it to be one of its schools.<sup>466</sup> This signified a significant shift in Basotho's relationship with DRC missionaries.

Even though they never clearly stated the reason for their reluctance to place their school under direct control of DRC missionaries, it is important to note that DRC missionaries were already notorious for their exploitation of Africans in Gutu district. DRC missionaries were loathed in the district for a number of reasons. They levied fines for 'moral offences', rearranged marriages, charged very high school fees and enriched themselves at the expense of their converts.<sup>467</sup> The CNC, Col. Carbutt, observed that DRC missionaries arrived in the Victoria Circle from the Union (South Africa) poor but before long they accumulated wealth through exploiting Africans and ended up investing in real estate in Fort Victoria town and even in South Africa.<sup>468</sup> It was against such a background of exploitation of Africans by the missionaries that in 1925 the Victoria Branch of the Southern Rhodesia Native Association (SRNA) lobbied for the replacement of missionary control of the education system with Government schools under the administration of Africans.<sup>469</sup> Since most of them were members of the SRNA, it is possible that Basotho based their decision on the numerous complaints that they and other Africans had against DRC missionaries, especially with regards to the manner in which they ran their schools and also their overbearing attitude towards Africans.

Rev. Orlandini of Alheight Mission in Gutu District, in particular, was infamous for imposing fines on DRC adherents for moral crimes such as illicit sex and pregnancies among unmarried women.<sup>470</sup> DRC schools in Gutu and other districts were also generally of a poor quality as the missionaries used them as a tool to enrich themselves through the money they were paid by the government to supervise them. In 1932 the Superintendent of Natives observed; 'the

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<sup>466</sup> S1859 NC Gutu to The Circuit Inspector, Native Schools Gwelo, 7 May 1936.

<sup>467</sup> S1542/M8, CNC to Secretary to the Premier (Native Affairs), 8 May 1933.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>469</sup> B. Davis and W. Döpcke, 'Survival and accumulation in Gutu: Class formation and the rise of the state in colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1939', p.78.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*

unpopularity of the Dutch Reformed Church in Gutu is extraordinary...were any other missionary body to open schools in the district, the Dutch Reformed Church could close its doors.<sup>471</sup> The notoriety which DRC missionaries had gained in the district for their exploitation of Africans and also for the poor quality of their schools arguably explains Basotho's insistence on retaining control of their school and to maintain its status as a 'non-denominational' school.

Although Bethel School was run like other kraal or farm schools in the district, it, however, had a school committee headed by the district NC with a missionary, Rev. van der Merwe, being the superintendent of the school.<sup>472</sup> NCs and DRC missionaries worked together on matters to do with Basotho's running of Bethel school, especially on the issue of finances and general management of the school. Both the NC and the superintendent of the school, who was always a DRC missionary, attended the school meetings and had a strong influence on developments at the school. The school therefore still continued to be within reach of the state and missionary paternalism. Thus, Basotho were forced to accept paternalistic structures of control in the form of the NC and the superintendent. It needs to be emphasised that although Rev. van der Merwe supervised the school, the school remained 'non-denominational' and the Basotho community had some control over school finances and other issues. Thus, although Rev. van der Merwe was a DRC minister, Basotho did not object to him being the superintendent of the school as long they retained control of their school.

The first structure erected at the school was a classroom block, which was built using burnt bricks and had a thatched roof.<sup>473</sup> In November 1935 the NC reported that he expected the first intake of pupils at Bethel school to be fifty Basotho children and five Karanga children.<sup>474</sup> Although there was no deliberate policy to exclude children of other farmers from the school, it is clear that Basotho wanted to maintain the image of the school as a 'Basotho school' by making an effort to retain control of the school and also to maintain their majority status. The school was

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<sup>471</sup> S1542/m8 Superintendent of Natives Victoria to CNC, 22 August 1932.

<sup>472</sup> S1859 Rev. W. F. van der Merwe (Alheight mission) to N. C. Gutu, 20 June 1942

<sup>473</sup> S1859 N. C. Gutu to C. N. C., 6 November 1935.

<sup>474</sup> S1563 N. C. Annual reports, Gutu 1935.



thus supposed to aid Basotho exceptionalism and help to forge unity in the community. The school, however, failed to open in 1935, and could only do so two years later. Although the school enrolled both children of Basotho farmers and those of Karanga farm owners the only languages taught at this school were English and *Sesotho*.<sup>475</sup> Thus the few Karanga pupils at this school had to do with learning in English and in *Sesotho*, as *Chishona* their first language was not part of the curriculum. Close comparisons can be drawn with Gwebu School in Buhera district which was established in 1934 for the Ndebele people resettled in this area from Fort Rixon in Matabeleland. Since the school was specifically established for the Ndebele people *Sindebele* and not *Chishona* was taught alongside English until 1965 when *Chishona* replaced *Sindebele*.<sup>476</sup> Similarly, Bethel continued to have English and *Sesotho* as languages of instruction in spite of the presence of non-Sotho students until the 1970s when it was closed.

The school was run by an elected school committee under the superintendence of Rev. van der Merwe and the chairmanship of the NC.<sup>477</sup> The school committee handled the school finances, paid teachers, and also purchased school equipment among other necessities. The constitution of the school stated that any member of the Basotho community who was a part-owner of Bethel farm could be elected to the school committee at a general meeting.<sup>478</sup> This effectively meant that although other farm owners had children attending school at Bethel, they could not be elected into the school committee for the simple reason that they were not members of the Basotho community or part-owners of Bethel Farm. Furthermore, the constitution also stipulated that the school committee was vested with the powers to investigate complaints made by parents, teachers or pupils about anything at the school and to report their findings to the school inspector in the event of anything adversely affecting the school being exposed. The school committee also had the powers to dismiss any member of the school staff if he/she was

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<sup>475</sup> Interview with Fredrick Komo, Farm No. 392 Dewure, Gutu, 28 December 2005.

<sup>476</sup> F. Musoni, 'Educating the Ndebele in Buhera district, Zimbabwe; A case for a multi-cultural approach?' Paper presented to the Curriculum and Arts Education Departmental Seminar, University of Zimbabwe, 31 March, 2006, p.9.

<sup>477</sup> S1859 Bethel School Committee to N. C. Gutu, 19 June 1950.

<sup>478</sup> S1859 Constitution of Bethel School, 19 June 1950.

found guilty of any misconduct.<sup>479</sup> Hence, though the school committee worked in conjunction with the superintendent, the NC and the Education Circuit Inspector, the constitution empowered it to deal with any disciplinary issues at the school.

Just like at any other school in the district, student attendance was taken seriously at Bethel School as it was tied to funding. Davis and Dopcke note that at the DRC Alheight Mission School, on the fringes of the Dewure Purchase Areas, attendance was insisted upon such that truancy was punished through payment of fines, labour or grain.<sup>480</sup> Attendance was important in that it was used in application for government ‘capitation grants’. DRC schools were particularly infamous for enforcing attendance because of its implications for government grants. According to Summers, ‘DRC missions employed attendance officers who went out around the schools to enforce school attendance, which was recorded carefully in the school registers submitted for the government's capitation grants in aid.’<sup>481</sup> Government funding was therefore one of the reasons why attendance was also insisted upon on pupils at Bethel school. Below is a table showing the total enrolment of pupils at Bethel School in its first year and the number of pupils present on 16 October 1937 when the Circuit Inspector visited the school.

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<sup>479</sup> S1859 Bethel School Committee to N. C. Gutu, 19 June 1950.

<sup>480</sup> B. Davis and W. Dopcke, ‘Survival and accumulation in Gutu: Class formation and the rise of the state in colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1939’, p.79.

<sup>481</sup> C. Summers, ‘Giving orders in Southern Rhodesia: Controversies over Africans’ authority in development programs, 1928-1934’, p. 291.

ON ROLL			PRESENT			
	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
1 <sup>ST</sup> YEAR	17	9	26	12	6	18
SUB A	5	4	9	5	4	9
SUB B	6	1	7	6	1	7
STD 1	5	----	5	5	----	5
STD 2	2	2	4	2	2	4
STD 3	1	2	3	1	2	3
STD 4	2	----	2	2	----	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>48</b>

*Table 1: Bethel school attendances register for 16 October 1937. (source: S1859 C. E. Davis Circuit Inspector Gwelo, Report on Bethel School, 16 October 1937.)*

All in all, only eight pupils out of fifty six on the school register were absent on this particular day showing a very high percentage of attendance at the school. In fact, absentees were in the first grade only with all students in the formal grades attending. Be that as it may, the attendance for a single day could be deceiving given the fact that school authorities always tried to ensure very high attendances on such occasions as visits by Circuit Inspectors. The number of pupils in Standard four shows the problems that were rife in running such higher standards at small schools like Bethel. Generally very few pupils reached Standard four, let alone Standard five and six. The Kerr Commission noted that very few pupils in the 1950s reached Standard six, with

Standard three being the ‘distinct terminus’ for African children.<sup>482</sup> This was a result of the general problems schools like Bethel faced in running classes beyond standard three, especially the limited number of pupils as well as limited government support. This explains the very small number of pupils in Standard Four at Bethel in 1937. Moreover, some students preferred to move to mission schools for the higher standards, leaving Bethel with a very few students in these classes. Consequently in 1942 the Circuit Inspector reported that although Basotho wanted to continue having Standard four at their school, the number of pupils did not allow for it.<sup>483</sup> The limited numbers of pupils at Bethel became one of the problems that contributed to the closure of the school in the 1970s.

The subjects taught at Bethel School were quite similar to those taught at other schools in the district. These included Arithmetic, Religious Education, English, Music and Industrial work among other subjects.<sup>484</sup> As was the case in all other schools, industrial work was emphasised because the colonial government perceived it as having a ‘civilizing role’ on Africans whom they viewed as indolent. In 1940, the Circuit Inspector of Schools Mr. A. R. Mather reported that although he had been impressed by the quality of academic work of pupils at Bethel School, he had not been particularly impressed by the boys’ industrial work and he recommended that this subject be prioritised.<sup>485</sup> To this end, he recommended that Agriculture and vegetable gardening be taken more seriously at this school.<sup>486</sup> The school had a piece of land on the farm reserved for its agricultural activities and another one which became a gum tree plantation.<sup>487</sup> This was in line with the general trend in colonial education which put much emphasis on practical subjects to prepare Africans for work in the colonial set up. Since they were keen to maintain their image as

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<sup>482</sup> A. V. Judges et al., ‘Report of the Southern Rhodesia Education Commission 1960’ Presented to the Legislative Assembly 1963, Rhodesia, 27 June 1963, p.69

<sup>483</sup> S1859 A. R. Mather Circuit Inspector Gwelo to Rev. A. A. Louw Pamushana Mission, 7 October 1942.

<sup>484</sup> A. Mphisa Interview with Mrs Aletta Mphisa-Mazanhi, Old Location, Mpandawana Growth Point, 31 January 2006.

<sup>485</sup> S1859 A. R. Mather Circuit Inspector Gwelo to the N. C. Gutu, 5 August 1940.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>487</sup> S1859 NC Gutu to Rev. Van Der Merwe (no date).

progressive Africans and also given the fact that industrial work was tied to the 'capitation grants' Basotho made efforts to get to the standards of industrial work, especially agriculture and gardening, which was being recommended by the Education Circuit Inspector.

It is in the light of the above that one of the conditions imposed on schools for them to obtain Government capitation grants by the Education Ordinance was to have four hours per day devoted to the teaching of industrial work.<sup>488</sup> The Southern Rhodesia Education Commission of 1962 noted that some African witnesses claimed that 'the industrial subjects are useful in the preparation of the school-leaver who wishes to earn his living as a jobbing builder or carpenter in his rural areas.'<sup>489</sup> Industrial work was thus recommended because it was viewed as providing the pupils with skills that could be useful to them in wider society. Whilst boys did carpentry, agriculture and building, girls were taught home craft, which involved sewing, cookery, and other skills that were considered important for future housewives.<sup>490</sup> Industrial work would teach them not only to work for themselves but also to work for Europeans. As West argues, industrial work was meant to make Africans tractable labourers and docile subjects.<sup>491</sup> In essence industrial work was meant to train Africans for lower level jobs which involved manual work and were seen as commensurate with their position as colonial subjects. Even if Basotho acquiesced to these policies, perhaps the reason was to curry favour and find acceptability as advanced natives. One way in which they showed their support for this education philosophy was through sending their children to Domboshava and Hope Fountain for the Jeanes Teacher programmes. However, alongside their support for this education philosophy they also sent their children to mission schools and colleges in South Africa where they obtained professional qualifications.<sup>492</sup> They

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<sup>488</sup> M. O. West, *The rise of an African middle class: Colonial Zimbabwe, 1898-1965* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), p.41.

<sup>489</sup> A. V. Judges et al 'Report of the Southern Rhodesia Education Commission 1963' Presented to the Legislative Assembly 1963, Rhodesia, 27 June 1963., p.50

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>491</sup> M. O. West, *The Rise of an African middle class*, p.40.

<sup>492</sup> For example Jona Mmakola had obtained his teaching certificate in Transvaal and Johannes Mokwile studied a Tiger Kloof Institute in South Africa.

also enrolled their children at various mission schools in the country which included Morgenster, Pamushana, Gutu, Chibi and Dadaya among others.<sup>493</sup>

In the early years of the establishment of the school, pupils wrote on slates using slate pencils and use text books mostly imported from South Africa.<sup>494</sup> In spite of the many problems the school faced, in the early years of its existence, Bethel School pupils seemed to have had sufficient books and slates. In March 1938 the NC of Gutu reported that he visited Bethel School and found all pupils present on that day provided with a full complement of slates, slate pencils and books.<sup>495</sup> Hence, at least in the early years of Bethel School's existence, pupils seem to have been well provided for. This is in contrast to most DRC schools which, according to Davis and Dopcke, faced a number of problems, which include large numbers of pupils in one class, shortage of black boards, slates and pencils.<sup>496</sup> This was probably one of the reasons why Basotho chose to avoid mission control.

Schools in Purchase Areas were generally few and far between and pupils often had to travel long distances to attend. The school committee sought to solve this problem by establishing some 'boarding facilities' to cater for those pupils who had to travel very long distances.<sup>497</sup> In 1938 almost half of the school was using 'boarding facilities.'<sup>498</sup> In 1940 the Circuit Inspector, Mr. A. R. Mather, recommended that all pupils in standard two and above become 'boarders' since the work they were doing demanded that they be at school longer than the other pupils.<sup>499</sup> What however needs to be stressed is that the so-called 'boarding facilities'

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<sup>493</sup> Interview with Mrs Aletta Mphisa-Mazanhi, Old Location, Mpandawana Growth Point, 31 January 2006.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>495</sup> S1859 N. C. Gutu to C. N. C., 7 March 1938.

<sup>496</sup> B. Davis and W. Dopcke 'Survival and accumulation in Gutu: Class formation and the rise of the sate in colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1939', p.79.

<sup>497</sup> Kingfisher, 'Basuto Settlement, Fort Victoria News' *The Bantu Mirror*, Saturday 5 March 1938, p.7; S1859 NC Gutu to CNC, 6 November 1935.

<sup>498</sup> Interview with Mrs Aletta Mphisa-Mazanhi, Old Location, Mpandawana Growth Point, 31 January 2006.

<sup>499</sup> S1859 A. R. Mather Circuit Inspector, Gwelo, to N. C. Gutu, 5 august 1940.

did not resemble a boarding school in any way but name. From the narratives of the former students, the so called boarding facilities were just a couple of ramshackle buildings at the school where students slept from Monday to Friday. They made their own food and were not really monitored by their teachers. On Friday they would go to their respective homes to get more food provisions to last them for another week.<sup>500</sup> As we will see later in this chapter, the ‘boarding facility’ became a source of problems for the school as reports of abuse of female students emerged.

### **Basotho cliques and the challenges of running Bethel school**

Due to the limited funding from the government Basotho largely relied on school fees in the running of the school. This problem was compounded by the fact that part of the teacher’s salaries had to come from the school fees.<sup>501</sup> As a result school fees charged at Bethel school were generally high compared to most schools in the district. In fact schools in Gutu district were quite infamous for charging the highest school fees in the country, which ranged from 5/- (5 shillings) for lower grades to 10/- (10 shillings) for standard four.<sup>502</sup> Bethel school was charging even higher fees. In 1937, the fees at Bethel school were pegged at 12/- (12 shillings) which were higher than the district average yet the Circuit Inspector even recommended that the figure be maintained because it helped stabilise the finances of the school.<sup>503</sup> Basotho continued to pay these high fees not only because it was the Circuit Inspector’s recommendation but also because they wanted to maintain their status as modernising African farmers who understood the need to pay high school fees in order to develop their school.

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<sup>500</sup> Interview with Mrs Aletta Mphisa-Mazanhi, Old Location, Mpandawana Growth Point, 31 January 2006.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>502</sup> B. Davis and W. Dopcke ‘Survival and accumulation in Gutu: Class formation and the rise of the State in colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1939’, p.78.

<sup>503</sup> S1859 C. E. Davis Circuit Inspector Gwelo, Report on Bethel Kraal School Gutu District, 16 October 1937.

In spite of their desire to maintain their status as ‘progressive natives’ a number of Basotho failed to pay the school fees in time. This caused so much discord in the community because the day to day running of the school largely depended on the amount of school fees the school committee was able to collect. The fees issue therefore became a major drawback in the development of Bethel School. Rev. A. A. Louw Jr, who replaced Rev. van der Merwe as the superintendent of the school in 1942, also complained about the time Basotho were taking in paying fees and threatened to turn away those pupils who had not paid their school fees. In September 1946 he wrote to the NC of Gutu saying that,

I understand also that a large number of the parents have up to date not yet paid the school fees fixed by the School Council, and it seems as if the council is unable to get the fees from them. I know what I would do in such a case. I would just refuse to admit the children to attend school until all the fees have been paid up.<sup>504</sup>

Coming from the superintendent of the school, such an evaluation of the state of affairs at Bethel revealed a very gloomy picture. It is noteworthy that although the NC had previously viewed Basotho as progressive people whose ideals had to be copied by ‘Karanga farmers’, their failure to pay school fees for their children and to run their school properly was a sure sign of their failure to fit into this idealised image. As a result, the superintendent of the school and the NC were more often than not left with no option but to recommend drastic measures such as turning away those students who would not have paid their school fees to ensure the smooth running of the school.

One of the major impacts of the school fees payment problem was the high staff turnover at the school as teachers resigned from their posts at an alarming rate. This was largely because teachers went for long periods of time without receiving their monthly salaries, often because the parents would have not paid school fees for their children. The rate of resignation of teachers at Bethel was so acute that 1943 was the fourth consecutive year when the school began the year with a complete change in its teaching staff.<sup>505</sup> Dickson Zinondo and Kathleen Thema had resigned from their posts at the end of 1942 citing among other things, the late payment of their

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<sup>504</sup> S1859 Rev. A. A. Louw Jr Pamushana Mission, to N. C. Gutu, 9 September 1946.

<sup>505</sup> S1859 A. R. Mather Circuit Inspector Gwelo to Rev. A. A. Louw (Pamushana Mission), 7 October 1942.



monthly salaries.<sup>506</sup> Dickson Zinondo's salary from 1 April to 31 December 1942 had not been paid and Kathleen Thema was also owed her salary from the 1<sup>st</sup> of June to the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1942.<sup>507</sup> This situation forced the two teachers to resign from their posts at the end of 1942. The superintendent of the school threatened not to appoint any new staff at the school until he was satisfied that the school committee had paid what it owed the teachers who had served in 1942.<sup>508</sup> He also suggested that the school be reduced to a one-teacher school or even close if the problems persisted, thus putting the future of the school in danger of closing just a few years after its establishment.<sup>509</sup>

The Basotho community was reprimanded by the NC together with the Superintendent of the School and the Circuit Inspector for their sluggish payment of school fees and also for their mismanagement of school finances. There was such gross mismanagement of funds at the school that in 1946 police had to be called to carry out investigations into missing funds.<sup>510</sup> It seems members of the school committee were in the habit of diverting school funds to their own use which affected the smooth running of the school. The NC was so incensed by this that he wrote the superintendent of the school noting that, 'these Basutos (sic) are the most non-cooperative crowd of Africans I have yet struck and to my mind nothing short of closing the school will bring them to their senses.'<sup>511</sup> Basotho were thus failing to live up to their idealised image of being 'more advanced natives' whose presence in the Dewure Purchase Areas would be a positive

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<sup>506</sup> S1859 Rev. A. A. Louw Jr (Pamushana Mission) to N. C. Gutu, 14 December 1942.

<sup>507</sup> S1859 N. C. Gutu to Rev. A. A. Louw Jr (Pamushana Mission), 22 December 1942.

<sup>508</sup> S1859 Rev. A. A. Louw Pamushana Mission to N. C. Gutu, 14 December 1942.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>510</sup> S1859 NC Gutu to Rev. A. A. Louw Jr (Pamushana Mission), 13 September 1946.

<sup>511</sup> S1859 NC Gutu to Rev. A. A. Louw Jr (Pamushana Mission), 13<sup>th</sup> September 1946., p.269. In 1946 the J.E.S Turton the Provincial NC also complained about the behaviour of the Xhosa and Fingo (Mfengu) farmers in the Marirangwe Purchase Areas who were not paying up instalments for their farms in time. He saw them as failing to live up to their constructed image of being more advanced Africans. See S2588/1991/1 PNC JES Turton to NC, Salisbury, 28 January 1947, S924/G6 NLB Minutes 12/13 May 1947.

influence to the local Karanga.<sup>512</sup> Though the NC did not have the school closed what is interesting is the way the various Gutu NCs' perceptions of Basotho as 'decent and law-abiding members of the district', which had been expressed by the then NC in 1935, had completely changed by 1946. It is important to note that although the NC of Gutu in the 1940s had initially shown faith in the Basotho community, he generally had misgivings about how Africans in the district ran their affairs. For instance, he was quite unimpressed by the way Africans in Gutu were running their dispensaries. In his annual report of 1941 he noted: 'I suppose I am not as enthusiastic as I could be over a system that leaves most of the activity in the hands of the Native Orderly, no matter how competent he may be.'<sup>513</sup> This arguably explains why he was also quick to condemn Basotho when their constant bickering negatively affected the running of their school.

As the payment of school fees continued to be a challenge for most Basotho, Jacob Molebaleng and some members of the Basotho community suggested that the fees which were being collected from the Dip Tank be used to pay the teachers.<sup>514</sup> This led to the division of the community into broadly two antagonistic groups. These cliques failed to agree on the right course of action to take with regards to solving the teachers' salaries problem. On one hand were Jacob Molebaleng, his brother Silas Molebaleng, Nathaniel Thema, Michael Phosa and their followers who were proposing that the community use dip tank fees to pay teachers and on the other Ephraim Morudu and his followers who included Seroga Morudu, Paul Mphisa, Andries Malete, Job Sikhala, Matthew Komo, were against the idea.<sup>515</sup> The two factions failed to cooperate with each other thereby throwing the running of the school into chaos. Ephraim Murudu and his group argued that Dip Tank fees were supposed to be used only for the purposes

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<sup>512</sup> See A. K. Shutt, "We are the best poor farmers": Purchase areas farmers and economic differentiation in Southern Rhodesia .c.1925-1980' ,p.269, The farmers of foreign origin in the purchase areas, mostly the Basotho, Xhosa and Mfengu, were viewed as 'advanced natives' but later they were accused of not living up to this constructed image.

<sup>513</sup> S1563 Native Commissioners Annual Reports, Annual Report of the NC, Gutu, for the Year Ended 31 Dec 1941.

<sup>514</sup> S1859 Schools, Bethel Community School: Dewure Division (No date); S1859 J. Molebaleng to The NC Gutu, 6<sup>th</sup> October 1946.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*

of buying of dipping chemicals and other veterinary necessities and not for paying teachers.<sup>516</sup> They therefore viewed the proposal as bordering on an abuse of authority by Jacob Molebaleng. They accused Jacob Molebaleng of behaving like a chief when he was just an ‘overseer who could not act as he wished.’<sup>517</sup> Battle lines were thus drawn between Jacob Molebaleng and his supporters, who were the majority, and Ephraim Morudu and his supporters, who were fighting what they considered to be Molebaleng’s overbearing behaviour. This obviously impacted on the smooth running of the school.

When the proposal was presented during a community meeting, sixteen members largely belonging to the Molebaleng clique, voted in favour of the proposal whilst four members voted against it. Not surprisingly, the four members who voted against the proposal were Andries Mokoale, Paul Mphisa, Seroga Morudu and Job Sikhala who were already known for their animosity towards Jacob Molebaleng.<sup>518</sup> It is, however, not clear whether Ephraim Morudu voted or abstained. It is possible that he may have abstained, having realised that his clique’s votes were not enough to carry the day. Although the majority decision prevailed, this was not before Morudu and his clique had put up a fight and showed that they would not just accept Molebaleng’s proposals without their opinions being heard.

The tension between the two cliques was not helpful in that it eroded the confidence of colonial officials which they initially set out to achieve. The timing of these factional disagreements at the school was also quiet inauspicious given the irritable nature of the presiding NC, whose opinions about local African affairs carried a lot of weight in government circles. The NC’s opinion was that the cliques that had emerged in the community were adversely affecting development of the school. He wrote to the superintendent of the school complaining that the

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<sup>516</sup> Interview with Fredrick Komo, Farm No. 392 Dewure, Gutu, 28 December 2005.

<sup>517</sup> S1859 Schools, Bethel Community School: Dewure Division (No date), S1859 J. Molebaleng to The NC Gutu, 6<sup>th</sup> October 1946.

<sup>518</sup> S1859 Bethel School Meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1946, Jacob Mojapelo School Secretary to NC Gutu, 3 October 1946.

Bethel school committee was hamstrung by factionalism which affected decision making. In a tone showing lack of hope in the future of the school the NC wrote:

It may be said that I have withdrawn my interest and that with truth. In the early days of my service in this district I queried with your predecessor the necessity of a school committee for these folk; furthermore, I declined to have anything to do with the election of one. That is still my view. *It is a case of Jakob [Jacob Molebaleng] and his followers versus Komo-Murudu-Mphisa element, what the one side supports the other opposes* (my own emphasis). At the moment the Komo-Murudu-Mphisa gang are in the school committee, last year it was Jakob and his crew, the one does its best to annoy the other. It would be far better for you, as the superintendent, to run the whole show, even if you decide to remit any monies collected to me for disbursement later and salaries or whatever it may be. Carrying on under the present arrangement is simply asking for more of unseemly squabbles which have sickened me.<sup>519</sup>

It is clear from the NC's letter that the tension between Jacob Molebaleng and the Komo-Murudu-Mphisa clique was so deep that it threatened to tear the community apart. Murudu and his followers viewed Jacob Molebaleng as overbearing. They even challenged his position as chief which, according to them, was not based on tradition although this was an official position recognised by the colonial administration. The school committee, thus, provided Morudu and his colleagues with a platform to contest Jacob Molebaleng's authority without necessarily breaking away from the group. Seeing that Basotho were using the school committee as a stage where different cliques contested power, the NC suggested that the school committee be dissolved so that the superintendent could directly run the school. The school was obviously caught up in the cross-fire of a larger and older contest for power and influence between the two camps, which as explained in chapter two, had emerged even before their settlement in the Dewure Purchase Areas. Although the NC did not carry out the threat to dissolve the committee, the threat showed his frustration with the Basotho who only a few years back were viewed as 'more advanced natives'. Thus although Basotho sought to assert their right to belong as progressive Africans close to colonial officials, their failure to run their schools as well as their constant squabbles worked against them.

By trying to avoid DRC missionary patronage and choosing to align themselves with colonial administrators, especially the NC, the Basotho were making a calculated risk in which

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<sup>519</sup> S1859 NC Gutu to Rev. van der Merwe, 25 November 1942.

they modelled themselves as progressive farmers who would adhere to the demands of colonial officials and become an example to other farmers. Their constant bickering and failure to properly run their school, however, eroded the initial gains they had made when they had successfully established their school. This strategy also set them on a collision course with other farmers who were not keen to follow all orders coming from the NC and other colonial officials. For example, the Dewure Division Native Council was almost always split into two camps during meetings, with one side led by Basotho councillors advocating high fees and levies and the other, composed of mostly Karanga farmers, resisting them as considered unaffordable. In the end, Basotho had to adjust their stance because of their small numbers as compared to Karanga farmers.

Internal squabbles in the Basotho community seem to have been a result of both internal rivalries and their external relations with both the DRC missionaries and colonial officials. DRC patronage caused a number of internal problems especially on the running of Bethel school and the unsolicited donations which the missionaries were trying to make. Meanwhile, colonial officials' imposition of Jacob Molebaleng as a chief for the community created its own problems since some members of the community were willing to live according to the desired traditional structures expected of Africans to make them legible to the state whilst others were arguing that Molebaleng's position was only symbolic. All these factors related to the various strategies Basotho deployed to secure tenure, entitlement, attachment to the land and ultimately belonging.

### **School superintendence and Basotho autonomy**

The Basotho's determination to preserve their independence from DRC missionaries saw them get into a conflict with the missionaries over the superintendence of Bethel school. Rev. Van der Merwe who had been the superintendent of the school since its establishment resigned from his post in 1942 as he had been transferred from Alheight Mission in Gutu to Makumbe Mission in Buhera district. As he felt that he could not continue to supervise the school from Buhera district he recommended that Rev. Louw Jr of Pamushana Mission become the new superintendent of the school. This move however, did not go down well with the Basotho community who saw it

as another move by the missionaries to undermine their autonomy.<sup>520</sup> In defiance of this recommendation, the Bethel School Committee appointed Rev. Botha, who had replaced Rev. Van der Merwe at Alheight Mission, as the new superintendent of the school.<sup>521</sup> This decision showed the Basotho's desire to run their school without any interference from DRC missionaries. At a meeting of the Basotho community held on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 1942, Michael Phosa 'explained that the school was not under any denomination and that the Basuto (sic) therefore had the right to choose any superintendent they liked.'<sup>522</sup> Although after some negotiations Basotho eventually accepted to have Rev. Louw as the superintendent of their school, the impasse which had happened went a long way to revealing Basotho's determination to maintain their autonomy from the DRC missionaries. Their choice of Rev. Botha over Rev. Louw Jr was largely influenced by a desire to show that they did not want DRC missionaries to have influence on them.

The Basotho case was quite similar to what obtained in Marirangwe Purchase Areas where farmers were against the appointment of missionaries as superintendents of their schools. Farmers in Marirangwe established their school in 1950 and, like Basotho, declared it a 'non-denominational' school. In addition, they refused to accept a missionary as a superintendent of the school arguing that this would create financial problems at the school as missionaries could end up using school funds for church projects.<sup>523</sup> They also argued that a non-denominational school would mean that every child would be welcome regardless of religious affiliation.<sup>524</sup> According to Shutt, 'one of the Marirangwe farmers, Walter Nyambezi stated that he was tired of missionaries as school superintendents. "Why cannot we have a person not connected to a church?" he asked.'<sup>525</sup> It is quite clear that these farmers were keen to escape the patronage of the

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<sup>520</sup> S1859 W. F. J. van der Merwe (Alheight Mission) to N. C. Gutu, 11 June 1942.

<sup>521</sup> S1859 W. F. J. van der Merwe (Alheight Mission) to N. C. Gutu, 10 August 1942. The transformations in the relationship between Basotho and DRC missionaries will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six.

<sup>522</sup> S1859 W. F. J. van der Merwe (Alheight Mission) to N. C. Gutu, 31 August 1942.

<sup>523</sup> A. Shutt, "'We are the best poor farmers": Purchase areas farmers and economic differentiation in Southern Rhodesia .c.1925-1980', p.283.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, p.282.

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*, p.283. See also S2797/2451 Marirangwe Council Minutes, 12 October 1949.

missionaries, preferring, instead, to run their own schools as they pleased. Similarly, when some Mshawasha Purchase Area farmers were applying for a Boarding school in the Chishanga section of the Purchase Area they indicated that they wanted the school to be run by the government and not by missionaries.<sup>526</sup> It, therefore, seems that most Purchase Area farmers were keen to escape missionary patronage and manage their own affairs. However, as close allies of DRC missionaries, Basotho accepted missionary superintendents but on condition that they worked with their school committee and did not dictate anything to them. They also wished to have the powers to decide whom they wanted to be the superintendent of their school. Their desire was to maintain a delicate balance between benefiting from missionary patronage and maintaining their autonomy.

### **Abuses of female students at Bethel school**

One of the major problems faced by the Basotho community in running Bethel School was the abuse of female school students by teachers. It was quite common during the colonial period for children to start their schooling when they were already in their teens. This increased the incidences of sexual abuse of female students by their male teachers. This problem was also rife at Bethel school. For example, in 1942 Reuben Robert Mphisa, who was one of the teachers at Bethel school, was accused of raping one of his students, Rhoda Tawu.<sup>527</sup> The principal witness on this case was Priscilla Molebaleng who was a female teacher at the school.<sup>528</sup> After an investigation, overwhelming evidence implicating Reuben Mphisa was found and he was dismissed in September of the same year.<sup>529</sup> Although no criminal charges were levelled against Reuben Mphisa as the Attorney General refused to prosecute, the NC reported that ‘what is recorded reveals a dreadful state of affairs sufficient to justify the name of the school being

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<sup>526</sup> G. C. Mazarire, ‘A social and political history of Chishanga: South-Central Zimbabwe c.1750-2000’, p.224.

<sup>527</sup> S 1859 NC Gutu to the Circuit Inspector Gwelo, 22 April 1943.

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.* Interview with P. Molebaleng ( She was the one who reported the case of the sexual abuse of Rhoda Tawu.

<sup>529</sup> S1859 NC Gutu to Circuit Inspector Gwelo, 22 April 1943. Reuben Robert Mphisa was however not arrested because, for unclear reasons, the Attorney General declined to prosecute him and the case was dropped.

altered from Bethel to 'Brothel' school.<sup>530</sup> One of the members of the Basotho community argued that the only reason why the perpetrators were never convicted was that the Basotho community felt it would tarnish the image of the school and the community at large.<sup>531</sup> Against this background, sexual abuse of pupils at Bethel School could have possibly been higher than the case of the abuse of Rhoda Tawu revealed especially given the fact that a large number of pupils stayed in these 'self-catering' 'boarding facilities' which were not well supervised by the school authorities. The case could have been a tip of the iceberg in a widespread abuse of school children by male teachers at the school. It was, therefore, not surprising that it took Priscilla Molebaleng, a female teacher at the school, to expose the sexual abuse.

The sexual abuse of pupils at Bethel School can therefore be said to have been one reason why the Circuit Inspector, A. R. Mather, ordered the 'Boarding School' at Bethel to be closed in 1946.<sup>532</sup> Aletta Mphisa, who was one of the pupils at this school at the time, remembers that Mather was disturbed by the living conditions of pupils in the 'Boarding' facilities and ordered it to be closed.<sup>533</sup> Instead of being saddened by the closure of the 'Boarding' facilities, pupils at Bethel School were happy to leave. This was because of the many challenges they faced in these boarding facilities, which included shortage of food and other necessities, as well as the squalid conditions in which they lived.<sup>534</sup> Explaining the challenge of food provision for the pupils at the school, Rev. Van Der Merwe noted that 'parents pay school fees but are required to provide the food for any of their children who do not go home at night and supply them with bedding.'<sup>535</sup> The problem of food supplies was so acute that the community began to toy with the idea of having a planting a maize crop on the farm to help alleviate this problem.

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<sup>530</sup> S1859 N. C. Gutu to Circuit Inspector Gwelo, 22 April 1943.

<sup>531</sup> Interview with James Mathe (pseudonym), 15 November 2009.

<sup>532</sup> Interview with Mrs Aletta Mphisa-Mazanhi, Old Location, Mpandawana Growth Point, 31 January 2006.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.* She highlighted that on the day Mr. Mather came at the school and announced that the boarding facilities had been closed all the students were very happy and relieved that they no longer had to face the daily routine of having to cook for themselves before going to school and after classes.

<sup>535</sup> S1859 NC Gutu to Rev Van Der Merwe (no date) circa 1943.



In addition to the closure of the 'Boarding' facilities, the Education authorities also began to consider removing Standard four from the school because of the many problems the school was facing running it. The Superintendent of the school saw the higher standards, especially Standard four, as the ones that caused so many problems for Bethel School because of the problems associated with administering them such as the limited numbers of students and the rate at which teachers were resigning from work.<sup>536</sup> Mr. A. R. Mather concluded that it had been a mistake to have Standard four allowed at Bethel School.<sup>537</sup> Taking his cue from Mr. A. R. Mather, Rev. Van der Merwe ordered Standard four to be discontinued for the year beginning January 1943 and all the affected students to be transferred to Pamushana Mission.<sup>538</sup> The Basotho community thus lost Standard four largely because of their failure to properly run the school, their mismanagement of school funds, and their failure to pay teachers on time.

### **Contestations over the status of Bethel as a 'Basotho school'**

The problems which were increasingly threatening to cripple the running of Bethel School also caught the attention of the Dewure Division Native Council in the 1940s. The councillors began to debate whether against the backdrop of the emerging problems it was good for the school to remain under the control of the Basotho community. Some councillors began to suggest that the management of the school be placed in the hands of the Dewure Division Native Council. It should be highlighted that although Basotho had some measure of influence in the council, the majority of the councillors were non-Basotho farmers.

In one of its meetings in 1948 the council debated a proposal to have the council take over control of the school from the Basotho community. J. Moeketsi, a Sotho councillor in the Native Council, recommended that the school remain under the Basotho arguing that 'this was

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<sup>536</sup> S 1859 Rev. A. A. Louw Jr (Pamushana Mission) to N. C. Gutu, 14 December 1942.

<sup>537</sup> S1859 A. R. Mather Circuit Inspector Gwelo to Rev. A. A. Louw Jr Pamushana Mission, 7 October 1942.

<sup>538</sup> S1859 Rev. W. F. van der Merwe (Alheight Mission) to N. C. Gutu, 22 September 1942.

primarily a Basuto (sic) School put there to teach in Sesutu (*Sesotho*) and English languages and for the purpose of teaching the Basuto (sic) children their own customs.<sup>539</sup> Moeketsi therefore saw the school as playing a key role in the Basotho community, especially by showing Basotho exceptionalism as it was viewed as helping to inculcate Basotho values and culture in the pupils. Apart from helping in forging Basotho unity by the teaching of *Sesotho*, ownership of a modern institution such as a school was also a matter of pride for the community as it helped advance their image as progressive Africans. It was against this background that Councillor Moeketsi viewed the school as having a significant role in the community-hence the need for the community to retain control of the school.

The majority of the members of the Basotho community supported Moeketsi's argument for the community to maintain its ownership and control of the school. It is important to note that even Ephraim Morudu, who was well known for his refusal to go along with majority decisions, supported the idea of Basotho retaining the control of the school. He argued that it was not possible for the school to be transferred to the council because not only was it built by the Basotho community but it was also built on a farm owned by the community, thus making it a 'Basotho school' and therefore un-transferable.<sup>540</sup> It is therefore apparent that, for some Basotho, the school continued to play a critical role in the sustenance of the community's identity as they saw its major role as being that of teaching *Sesotho* and Sotho cultural values. This meant that as long as the school remained in the hands of Basotho and *Sesotho* continued to be taught at the school, the community's identity would be preserved. Moreover, the school provided a platform where Basotho articulated their unity and their attachment to the area, although such unity was sometimes destabilised by tensions between cliques. Thus, for J. Moeketsi and Ephraim Morudu, the Basotho community took pride in the knowledge that this was a 'Basotho school'.

Interestingly, not every member of the Basotho community shared these views about the value and importance of Bethel school to the community. J. Mojapelo, who was another Sotho councillor in the Dewure Native Council, disagreed with Moeketsi's views with regards to the

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<sup>539</sup> S2797/4663 Minutes of Dewure Division Native Council Meeting, 18 March 1948.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*

future of the school and also its significance in the sustenance of *Sesotho* as well as Basotho customs. He argued that he had been a teacher at Bethel School for a number of years and was convinced that no Sotho customs were being taught at the school.<sup>541</sup> Thus, Mojapelo saw the school as playing nothing more than a symbolic role in the sustenance of Basotho cultural values. He added that the majority of the children at the school were actually children of the local Karanga farmers and not Basotho children.<sup>542</sup> Thus, he reasoned that transferring the school from the control of the Basotho community to the Dewure Division Native Council was, as far as he was concerned, not going to have any significant impact on the Basotho community. Mojapelo's argument summed up the fluid nature of the Basotho community at that time and also the extent to which they had failed to make Bethel a 'Basotho school.'

Furthermore, Mojapelo exposed the thinness of the rhetoric of Bethel School's importance in teaching Basotho children Sotho language and culture. Although at the time the school was established in 1937, the majority of its pupils were Basotho, by 1948 the children of Karanga farmers had become the majority, due to the fact that a number of the Basotho had enrolled at other schools in the district and beyond, and also because Karanga farmers were the majority in the area. In the end it had become difficult to identify Bethel School as a 'Basotho School', whose mandate was to teach Sotho children their culture, as the majority of the pupils had become children of the local Karanga farmers. In spite of these arguments however, the Basotho community managed to fight off the attempts to transfer Bethel school to the council as they strongly argued that the school had great significance to them and was built on their community farm. It is clear that the significance of the school for Basotho changed over time. Although in the 1930s the school was also very significant to Basotho as the majority of the pupils were Sotho and the teaching of *Sesotho* was the pride of the community, by the late 1940s, with the number of Basotho pupils drastically reduced, the school carried less significance. Basotho had lost the demographic battle and with it their isolationist approach.

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<sup>541</sup> S2797/4663 Minutes of Dewure Division Native Council Meeting, 18 March 1948.

<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*

Such conflicts among the Basotho over the importance of Bethel School shows the challenges they faced in their attempts to model themselves as progressive Africans. The conflicts also reveal the challenges Basotho faced in maintaining social cohesion in their struggles for belonging. In spite of their keenness to project an image of unity, the many instances of disagreements or conflict betrayed cleavages within the community. Bethel school provided a platform where different cliques fought turf wars and sought to gain positions of influence in the community. In some instances Basotho did not even agree on the significance of the school, with members like Mojapelo suggesting that the school be taken over by the Dewure Division Native Council. As Jannecke aptly puts it, 'representations of identity typically ignore and repress internal differences within community' whilst emphasising a strong sense of belonging and membership to a community.<sup>543</sup> It is clear that, in the case of the Basotho community, there were both instances when strong in-group ties were revealed and a sense of belonging well articulated, as well as moments when unity was threatened and cliques emerged.

Moreover, the developments at the school contributed to and also revealed the gradual hybridisation of the Basotho community. Whilst in the early 1930s the community emphasised and celebrated their strong in-group ties, which were cemented by endogamous marriages and also their pride of the teaching of Sesotho at Bethel school, the same cannot be said of later decades. As the discussion above has shown, Bethel school gradually began to be dominated by non-Sotho students and began to lose its image as a 'Basotho school'. Moreover, Basotho's increased interaction with other farmers in the Farmers' Associations, Dewure Division Native Council, the DRC and other platforms meant that Basotho could not remain isolated, especially that their farms were not actually geographically contiguous.<sup>544</sup> Thus, Basotho's interaction with other farmers on matters to do with Bethel school together with their interactions in other spheres described in the preceding chapters greatly impacted on their sense of group identity.

As noted by Mojapelo, by 1948 children of local Karanga farmers, who were the majority in these Purchase Areas, had become the majority at Bethel School, and quite a number of the

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<sup>543</sup> C. Jannecke 'Strategies of representation in Tsitsikamma Fingo/Mfengu land restitution claims', *South African Historical Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 3, (2008), p.142.

<sup>544</sup> See map of the distribution of Basotho owned farms in chapter three.

Basotho were enrolling their children at other schools in the district and beyond. In the end it became difficult to identify Bethel School as a ‘Basotho School’ whose mandate was to ‘teach Sotho children their customs and language’, as had been envisaged by these Basotho when they had established it. This resonates with Homi Bhabha’s argument that viewing identities as pure or as having fixed properties could be problematic since there is a possibility of hybrid identities emerging from the interaction of two or more identities leading to the emergence of what he calls a third space.<sup>545</sup> He further argues that there is need to ‘think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences.’<sup>546</sup> Bethel school was indeed one of the platforms on which Basotho sought to articulate cultural difference with varying degrees of success. Over the years the Basotho community became more and more fluid due to its interaction with the local Karanga farmers at various levels. Furthermore, some Basotho farmers were dropping their cultural practices such as endogamy by marrying into the local communities. Moreover, as highlighted in chapter four, Basotho were also increasingly using *Chikaranga* (a Shona dialect) in their everyday interactions, reserving Sesotho to their more private gatherings such as funerals. Since language is one of the most important markers defining an ethnic group, the adoption of *Chikaranga* provides interesting trajectory in the hybridisation of the Basotho community.

By the mid 1974 Bethel School had been closed and it was never reopened again.<sup>547</sup> One of the reasons for the closure of the school was the fact that the Roman Catholic Church had opened up Masema School close to Bethel School. This school charged very low school fees as compared to Bethel and offered Standard Four, which was no longer being offered at Bethel.<sup>548</sup> Therefore, it made more sense even for Basotho, to send their children to Masema School. Tirizi School was opened close to the Dewure Purchase Areas and Dewende School was also opened in the Purchase Areas in the 1950s. These developments went a long way in solving the problem of

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<sup>545</sup> H. Bhabha, *The location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>547</sup> Interview with Mrs Aletta Mphisa-Mazanhi, Old Location, Mpandawana Growth Point, 31 January 2006.

<sup>548</sup> Interview with Mrs Mazvinetsa Pirikisi, Farm No. 159 Dewure East, 18 September 2009.

long distances students in the Dewure Purchase Areas who had to travel to attend school which resulted in Bethel losing many students because the new schools were closer and more affordable than Bethel.<sup>549</sup> The problems at Bethel School pushed more and more pupils to transfer to other schools. Furthermore, the Basotho community also began to move away from their isolationist tendencies. Fredrick Komo recalls that whilst in the early years of their settlement in Gutu the Basotho people insisted on having their children learn only English and *Sesotho*, from the 1950s they began to see the need for their children to also learn local languages to help them integrate better in the wider society. As a result, they began to send their children to other schools where they could learn other languages such as *Chishona* and *Sindebele*.<sup>550</sup> Those Basotho who were working in towns and mines also took their children and enrolled them in schools there; further depriving Bethel school of Basotho students. For example, Junerose Phosa transferred from Bethel School in the 1960s and enrolled at Senga School in Gwelo (now Gweru) where her brother Antipas was teaching.<sup>551</sup> Such a situation meant that Bethel school was left with too few pupils for its own sustenance, leading to its closure. This engendered a closer cooperation between the Basotho and other farmers in the area of education, which can be argued to have contributed to the emergence of a hybrid community. Currently children of Basotho farmers enrol at schools in Dewure Purchase Areas such as Masema, Dewende, Shumba, and Tirizi primary schools and to Dewende and Tirizi Secondary Schools.<sup>552</sup> Others however go to various mission schools and urban schools.

It can be argued that the articulation of any form of belonging is context specific. Although in the 1930s they appealed to some form of particularism, from the late 1940s they began to realise the problems with this strategy. Basotho pupils were gradually becoming the minority at Bethel school thus eroding its image as a 'Basotho school'. Furthermore, the rhetoric

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<sup>549</sup> S2929/8/3 Delineating Reports Gutu, Report of Dewure N. P. A., By C. J. K. Latham, 19 February 1964.

<sup>550</sup> Interview with Fredrick Komo, Farm No. 392 Dewure, Gutu, 28 December 2005.

<sup>551</sup> Interview with Junerose Phosa, Kuwadzana Phase 3, Harare, 13 March 2006.

<sup>552</sup> Personal Communication with Mr. S. Mapwanyire, Headmaster Tirizi Secondary School, Gutu District 28 December 2005, He confirmed that quite a large number of Basotho children learn at the school and added that though most of them can speak *ChiShona* fluently the teachers have problems in spelling their Sesotho names and surnames.

of the importance of the school as an institution dedicated to the teaching of Sesotho and Sotho cultural values also began to be challenged by some of the members of the Basotho community. It therefore became imperative for Basotho to transform the way they constructed and negotiated their belonging. No longer could they base their belonging on exceptionalism.

## Conclusion

Debates about migration and belonging have often led to the overplaying of the stories of those who view themselves as the autochthons or first comers.<sup>553</sup> This has led to a general neglect of the stories of those viewed as ‘strangers’ or ‘late comers’ and their agency in the politics of belonging. However, as has been shown in this chapter ‘late comers’ actually have an agency and they use a plethora of methods to construct, negotiate, contest and articulate their belonging. Basotho used Bethel school articulate their belonging basing on their image as modernising Africans and sought to maintain its status as a ‘Basotho school’. Although the gradual processes of assimilation and integration in the local community led to the hybridisation of the Basotho community, the significance of the school in the articulation of difference cannot be overlooked. The teaching of *Sesotho* at the school had a great significance in the construction of the image of Bethel as a ‘Basotho school’. Bethel school therefore had a great function in the Basotho community in the Purchase Areas as it was associated with Basotho’s community farm and by extension their attachment to the land. The chapter has also shown how like land, graves, funerals and religion among other factors, schools and by extension education can also play a significant role in the belonging matrix. As people who framed themselves as modernising or progressive Africans, Basotho viewed the establishment a school as a major achievement. The school thus became a platform where cultural difference as well as integration was played out. Thus, although the school was a symbol of progress it was also about language and Sotho customs.

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<sup>553</sup> See for example P. Geschiere, *Perils of belonging*.

The many challenges that Basotho faced in running their school exposed the fissures within the community which often came to life during debates on the running of the school. Often the community was split between the Molebaleng and the Morudu cliques. Although these cliques did not ultimately lead to the complete breakdown of unity, they show the complexities and contradictions within the seemingly cohesive Basotho community. Internal conflicts also revealed the contradictions within Basotho's attempts to project Bethel school as a critical institution in forging Basotho unity and also in asserting their attachment to Bethel, their community farm. The image of Bethel as a 'Basotho school' was challenged by other farmers and most significantly by some members of the Basotho community. The conflicts over the school thus exposed both those moments when Basotho showed their strong in-group ties as well those occasions when the fault lines within the community were exposed. Basotho conflicts with DRC missionaries as well as their numerous factional disputes were more about struggles over who controlled those institutions, such as Bethel School, which mediated Basotho identity and sense of belonging. In the end the school was both about playing to colonial policies and also about Basotho particularism. Bethel School can therefore be a window through which one can view and appreciate the various strategies Basotho used in dealing with the ever-changing contours of belonging.



## CHAPTER 6

### BELIEVING AND BELONGING: RELIGION, ETHNICITY, AND THE POLITICS OF BELONGING IN DEWURE PURCHASE AREAS

#### Introduction

The recent upsurge in Pentecostal Christianity has placed religion at the centre of politics of belonging in Africa as it creates new trajectories of belonging based on the doctrine of being 'born again'. Its ambiguities notwithstanding, Christianity can provide adherents with something on which to build networks and solidarities. It creates a new form of identity for the converts and fuels new notions of inclusion and exclusion. This has been the case with the Basotho whose adoption of protestant Christian values has, over the years, been an important factor in their everyday interactions with other farmers. It should, however, be noted that religion is often intertwined with autochthony, ethnicity, identity and politics among other factors in the belonging matrix. Hence, it should be viewed as just one piece in the complex milieu of strategies of belonging.

In spite of having spent almost three decades enjoying the patronage of Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) missionaries, when Basotho moved from Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal farms to Dewure Purchase Areas in the early 1930s, they made a conscious decision to run their affairs with little interference from the missionaries. This was a significant shift from the close relationship that Basotho had established with the missionaries. This chapter explores the various ways through which Basotho used religion, in this case Christianity, to construct and negotiate their belonging in the Dewure Purchase Areas. It also analyses the interface between religion, ethnicity, ownership of land and notions of inclusion and exclusion and how this impacted on the relationship between Basotho and their non-Sotho neighbours. It argues that below the veil of an amicable relationship between the DRC missionaries and their Basotho converts were subtle mistrusts, schisms and religious fault lines that found expression in the numerous disputes between the two. In the end, Basotho expressed their desire to retain a measure of independence

from the missionaries by refusing to fall under their direct control. The first section focuses on the colonial period and the unique challenges Basotho faced in their dealings with DRC missionaries whilst the second section is an analysis of the tensions within the Bethel congregation over the position of the Basotho within the local church.

### **Basotho and the DRC in the Dewure Purchase Areas**

Religion can help forge unity among adherents and separate them from other people with different beliefs. Appealing to religion can be an important strategy for establishing belonging because it tends to transcend kinship, ethnic, political and other differences. Once a person converts to a new religion, they adopt a new way of life which their new religion demands of them and change their sense of belonging. Apart from being relational, belonging is also situational making it possible if not desirable for individuals to use different strategies in negotiating belonging in different contexts. Thus, whilst appealing to religion can work in some contexts it may not work in others, necessitating the use of other strategies. Hence, appealing to religion is just but one of the many strategies available to communities in their strategies of belonging. For Basotho, Christianity in general and membership of the DRC in particular were key factors in their construction and negotiation of belonging.

As highlighted in the previous chapters, Basotho have long historical links with missionaries who carried out evangelical work among the southern Shona, especially the DRC missionaries. Their relationship with DRC missionaries also gave them access to educational facilities which were being established by the church. Hence, the fact that they were Christians who had also acquired a level of education helped in the construction of the Basotho as progressive and modernising colonial subjects. However, as contexts changed Basotho found it necessary to remodel their relationship with the missionaries. This was influenced by their desire to avoid missionary patronage, *moreso*, given that DRC missionaries were particularly known for their exploitation of converts and paternalistic tendencies.<sup>554</sup>

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<sup>554</sup> See B. Davis and W. Dopcke, 'Survival and accumulation in Gutu: Class formation and the rise of the state in colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1939'.

It should be highlighted that religious denominations enable adherents to create solidarities and networks based on belonging to the same church. There are often different associations within most denominations which are based on age, gender and other factors. In the DRC, for example, leagues (*sungano*) were and continue to be important associations which enable members to interact both within and outside the church.<sup>555</sup> There are four major leagues in the church: women's league (*sungano yamadzimai*), men's league (*sungano yavarume*), girls' league (*sungano yavasikana*) and boys' league (*sungano yavakomana*). Members of these leagues meet regularly at the local church or organise meetings in the congregation (*Chiunga*) where they interact with each other. As Burchardt aptly puts it, 'apart from high levels of church attendance, religion has proven significant in offering spaces for belonging through networks of faith-based volunteerism and solidarity.'<sup>556</sup> This helps create solidarities among church members which even work outside the church environment. Since belonging is relational, these leagues become important social safety nets which can be critical when a member faces some social or economic challenges. Such networks may, however, intersect with or transcend other networks such those based on political affiliation, kinship, and ethnicity among others.

It should be noted that although the Basotho community was largely composed of DRC adherents there were some members who belonged to other religious denominations. Notable among those individuals who did not belong to the DRC were T. Makgatho and L. Phosa and their families who belonged to the First Ethiopian Church (FEC).<sup>557</sup> Fredrick Komo, David Leboho, Jacob Molebaleng, Silas Molebaleng and Shadreck Leboho were Lutherans.<sup>558</sup> J. Moeketsi and M. Phosa were Wesleyans.<sup>559</sup> Although the non-DRC members of the Basotho community remained a minority, the dominance of DRC missionaries in the community was

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<sup>555</sup> See A. R. Mutumburanzou et al. *Ten years of development in Reformed Church in Zimbabwe*.

<sup>556</sup> M. Burchardt, 'Belonging and Success: Religious Vitality in an African Metropolis' [http://www.irmgard-coninx-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/pdf/urbanplanet/collective\\_identities/Burchardt\\_Essay.pdf](http://www.irmgard-coninx-stiftung.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/urbanplanet/collective_identities/Burchardt_Essay.pdf) p.8.

<sup>557</sup> Interview with Junerose Phosa, Kuwadzana Phase 3, Harare, 13 March 2006.

<sup>558</sup> S1859 Schools 1933-1949 Basutu Community: Gutu, Minutes of Interview: J. Molebaleng, M. Phosa, S. Molebaleng (No date)

<sup>559</sup> Interview with Mrs Aletta Mphisa-Mazanhi, Old Location, Mpandawana Growth Point, 31 January 2006.

bound to lead to some tensions. Basotho were therefore keen to avoid having one religious denomination dominating in the community. The fact that Jacob Molebaleng, the leader of community, was not a member of the DRC put an interesting dynamic and explains why he was keen to see that all religious denominations had equal recognition in the community.

Moreover, as pointed out in chapter four, even those individuals who did not belong to DRC contributed to the purchase of the community farm making the dominance of DRC missionaries a possible source of conflict. Thus, the decision to maintain a measure of autonomy from DRC missionaries was also made with this denominational diversity in mind. In addition, Basotho feared that the missionaries would use their influence to take over control of the church they were establishing on their community farm and ultimately the farm itself. Such fears should be understood in the context of Basotho having lost their two farms following the Land Apportionment Act (1930). Against this background, they still felt that their tenure was not quite secure, hence their desire to keep the missionaries at arm's length.

It was against the background of the above that, upon leaving Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal Farms in the early 1930s, Basotho agreed that no single religious denomination was supposed to have a dominant position in the community. As the NC of Gutu reported, to avoid the domination of DRC missionaries, 'when moved from Victoria, all Basutos (sic) agreed that no mission of any denomination should have anything whatever to do with their school or church. This was in order that no one class or religion dominate or have more claim than another.'<sup>560</sup> This was, indeed, an unequivocal statement articulating Basotho's desire to keep DRC missionaries at bay in as far as the running of their communal farm, school and church was concerned. They were also making efforts to avoid making those members of the community who were not DRC adherents feel excluded from the rest of the community. By making such a decision, Basotho were effectively forging a form of belonging built on religious diversity and accommodation as opposed to the one based on denominational homogeneity.

It is also possible that their displacement from Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal farms, where they had lived for close to three decades, left them disillusioned with DRC missionaries

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<sup>560</sup> S1859 Schools 1933-1949 Basuto community: Gutu, Minutes of Interview: J. Molebaleng, M. Phosa, S. Molebaleng (No date).

and their ability to protect their interests hence their decision to throw their lot with the NCs and other colonial officials. After their resettlement in Dewure Purchase Areas, colonial officials especially the NC assumed more significant roles, chairing meetings of the community and the Bethel School committee and settling disputes. He was effectively micro-managing the affairs of the community whilst the DRC missionaries were being kept at bay.

The Basotho's decision not to allow DRC missionaries to have any say in how they ran their affairs also need to be understood in the context of the growing unpopularity of the DRC. The DRC's problems with their African converts started as early as late 19<sup>th</sup> century when they resolved to institutionalise a policy of separation of races in the church.<sup>561</sup> Moreover, as Mazarire argues, 'the DRC preached the need for a radical break from the customs and religious beliefs of the past by the convert and although the church could be "indigenized" it alienated the Africans and subjected them to rather too much European tutelage.'<sup>562</sup> It was this tutelage which Basotho were beginning to resist. DRC missionaries had also gained notoriety for exploiting the African converts in Victoria, which may have influenced the Basotho's decision to rethink their ties with them. According to Mazarire, 'the DRC personnel in particular were notorious even in their involvement in underhand dealings involving expropriating cattle and grain from Africans, taking advantage of restrictive marketing regulations in the search for rapid capital accumulation to end up investing in real estate in the town of Fort Victoria.'<sup>563</sup> DRC missionaries in other colonies were also loathed by both Africans and some colonial officials due to their mistreatment of Africans. According to Lamba, although most missionaries generally viewed Africans as second class citizens 'the Dutch [in Malawi] seem to have stuck to it more tenaciously and consistently, with a record of more brutality.'<sup>564</sup> As result, DRC missionaries began to be disliked by many Africans, even some of their converts.

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<sup>561</sup> M. L. Daneel, *Old and new in southern Shona Independent Churches Volume 1: Background and rise of the major movements* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), p.196.

<sup>562</sup> G. C. Mazarire, 'The rise and fall of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in the Victoria Circle 1888-1950: A dissenting view of the Church's alleged invention of Chikaranga with particular reference to the Chibi Circuit', *New Dimensions in History Seminar Paper No. 5*, Department of History, University of Zimbabwe 28 May 2004, p.9.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>564</sup> I. C. Lamba, 'The Cape Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Malawi: A preliminary historical examination of its educational philosophy and application, 1899-1931', *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No.3 (1984), p.377.

In Gutu district, DRC missionaries became so notorious for exploiting Africans that the issue drew the attention of colonial officials. The DRC entered Gutu in 1907 when they took over Gutu Mission from the Berlin Missionary Society. In 1909 Rev. Orlandini established Alheight Mission which became the second DRC Mission in the district. Apart from its religious influence through its network of churches and schools, the DRC also became influential in the economic sphere in the district as it employed teachers, preachers, agriculturalists and other workers as well as trying cases, imposing fines and collecting taxes. The church therefore became a source of employment as well as a source of exploitation of Africans due to the excesses of the missionaries which led to its unpopularity.

In 1933 the Superintendent of Natives of Victoria wrote to the Chief Native Commissioner (CNC) noting that ‘the unpopularity of the Dutch Reformed Church in Gutu is extraordinary. It is quite clear to my mind that the success of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was due to this very dislike.’<sup>565</sup> Rev. Orlandini, who was stationed at the DRC Alheight Mission in Gutu for twenty two years until his expulsion from the district in 1934, was notorious for evolving a paternalistic and overbearing hold over Africans around the mission that they began to see him as their NC. According to Davis and Dopcke, Rev. Orlandini ‘established a virtual dictatorship over the surrounding African population. As chief of the mission, he and his staff of African evangelists, teachers and messengers judged cases, collected fines and “taxes”, recruited labour...’<sup>566</sup> Orlandini enriched himself by exploiting Africans, establishing a virtual fiefdom for himself and his personnel. As Davis and Dopcke argue, in 1933 Orlandini ‘had at least 900 cattle grazing in the Gutu Reserve. He had herds at the villages of all his teachers and at others. He dealt extensively with European cattle buyers, selling 200 to 300 head at a time.’<sup>567</sup> The mounting complains about the conduct of Orlandini and his personnel from Africans and the NC resulted in his expulsion from Gutu Reserve in 1934.

Realising that the promises of progress made by the missionaries had not been fulfilled and also having been victims of missionaries’ exploitation, a number of Africans began to seek

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<sup>565</sup> S1542/M8, Superintendent of Natives Victoria to CNC 22 August 1932.

<sup>566</sup> B. Davis and W. Dopeke, ‘Survival and accumulation in Gutu: Class formation and the rise of the State in colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1939’, p. 64.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*, p.79.

alternatives outside the DRC. The DRC's many schools were ill-equipped and charging extortionate fees and DRC Gutu mission hospital was charging higher patient fees than government hospitals.<sup>568</sup> According to Lamba, DRC missionaries' goal of creating 'a Bible loving, industrious and prosperous peasantry proved a fiasco, since the prosperity was never realised; the Dutch adhered to an educational policy which from the beginning aimed for literacy for a people classified as children.'<sup>569</sup> These and other grievances gave a number of Africans enough impetus to seek alternatives outside the DRC. In the case of Gutu district, some left the mission and returned to heathenism, whilst others invited the Catholics to establish a school in the district and end the DRC's monopoly.<sup>570</sup> However, the most significant impact of growing DRC unpopularity was the increase in people joining African Initiated Churches, especially Rev. Samuel Mutendi's Zion Christian Church (ZCC) which was taking hold in the district and had already established a school in 1927.<sup>571</sup>

In 1932 Luka Jarawani of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) appeared in the district, preaching that "American Negroes" would end white rule and abolish taxes.<sup>572</sup> His promise to provide education for all in a few months had a particularly drastic effect on DRC schools which dramatically lost a large number of students, a situation which was only reversed when the Superintendent of Natives revoked the preaching licenses of the AMEC preachers in the district.<sup>573</sup> Luka was prohibited from entering the reserve and later imprisoned for forgery.<sup>574</sup> After this incident Howman, the Superintendent of Natives (Victoria), was approached by some men who requested that they be allowed to form their own church rather than revert to being members of the DRC.<sup>575</sup> It became clear to the Superintendent of Natives that, due to Orlandini

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<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.*, p.80.

<sup>569</sup> I. C. Lamba, 'The Cape Dutch Reformed Church mission in Malawi', p.388.

<sup>570</sup> B. Davis and W. Dopcke, 'Survival and accumulation in Gutu', p.81.

<sup>571</sup> For the rise and spread of African Initiated Churches in Gutu see M. L. Daneel, *Old and new in southern Shona Independent Churches*, Volume1.

<sup>572</sup> B. Davis and W. Dopcke, 'Survival and accumulation in Gutu', p.84.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*, p.84.

<sup>574</sup> M. C. Steele, 'The foundations of a Native policy: Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1933', p.210.

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*, p.84.

and other DRC missionaries' exploitation of Africans in the district, the DRC had become very unpopular with Africans which had made African Initiated Churches like ZCC gain a foothold.

However, for a number of reasons, Basotho chose to stick with the DRC amidst this dramatic waning of the church's fortunes in the district. In spite of this, they were also seeking to have a measure of autonomy from the missionaries. In 1935, C. S. Davis, the Schools Inspector for the Gwelo Circuit, noted that 'they [Basotho] have steadily grown away from that mission (DRC) and from conversations with some of them lately I gather they have grown to dislike it.'<sup>576</sup> Coming against the background of the long history of cordial relationships between Basotho and DRC missionaries, this was a cause for concern for the missionaries. However, instead of taking the route of breaking away from the church and forming or joining an African Initiated Church (AIC) as other disgruntled Africans were doing, the Basotho chose to carefully negotiate their relationship with DRC missionaries by insisting on having the power to run their affairs with minimal interference from missionaries. This was aided by the fact that they owned a community farm and were also united through their historical links and kinship ties.

Thus, although they desired to have a measure of autonomy from the DRC missionaries, Basotho clearly did not wish to completely disengage from the DRC. They, however, sought a flexible arrangement which would allow them to manage their own affairs without necessarily seceding from the church. They still desired to have DRC missionaries' minister to them as long as they did not seek to exert any control on the community. Their strategy was therefore based on 'hesitation and contingency-rather than fierce certainties', to borrow Hughes' concept.<sup>577</sup> They neither wanted complete secession nor desired DRC missionaries' paternalism. Their appeal to religion in their negotiation of belonging was marked by ambivalence and suspicion. They therefore decided to keep ties with DRC missionaries, their long-time allies, with the proviso that it would be on their own terms. In a way, they also felt that they had spiritually grown up that they could now run their own affairs with little help from missionaries. The purchase of their community farm had given them a new site and a base from which to negotiate and bargain on the forms of tolerable missionary interference. As a community perceived by colonial officials as

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<sup>576</sup> S1859 C. S. Davis Circuit Inspector Gwelo to the Director of Native Education, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1935.

<sup>577</sup> D. M. Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, landscape, and the problem of belonging* (New York: Palgrave, 2010), p.142.



progressive and an example for other Africans to follow, joining African Initiated Churches, which were taking foothold in the district and surrounding areas, would have brought them into a collision course with colonial officials given the fact that such churches were viewed as subversive. Hence, although they had many grievances against the missionaries and were aware that NCs were also concerned about the missionaries' maltreatment of Africans, they chose to negotiate their space in the church by keeping missionaries at arm's length rather leaving the church. Basotho's careful negotiation of their relationship with DRC missionaries was therefore both about their desire to resist missionary patronage and also about how they wanted colonial officials perceive them, which would have dramatically changed if they had joined African Independent Churches. Thus, in spite of their distrust of DRC missionaries because they needed to keep their image of being good and progressive Africans in the eyes of colonial officials, they could not turn to African Initiated Churches. They therefore had to stick with DRC missionaries, although they had to hold them at arm's length.

DRC missionaries were concerned by Basotho's policy of denominational diversity because they sought to maintain their sphere of influence in the district. The DRC was in direct competition with other religious denominations in Gutu district, especially the Roman Catholic Church and a number of African Initiated Churches which were emerging. DRC missionaries were rapidly establishing congregations and setting up schools as a way of spreading their influence and carving out a territory in the district. The NC's office also noted, with great concern, this rapid expansion of the DRC in the district. DRC adherents were usually forced to attend DRC run schools even if there were other schools nearby and Roman Catholic adherents also had to attend Catholic run schools. Competition with other denominations was thus arguably one of the key reasons why DRC missionaries saw the need to keep the Basotho community within their sphere of influence and avoid a situation where another denomination would possibly gain influence in the community. Similarly, in colonial Kenya 'different missions and Christian denominations colonised certain regions as their "mission fields" sometimes barring "other" missionaries from operating in the area. This was characterised by denominational superiority and "otherisation" of other denominations.'<sup>578</sup> According to Comaroff and

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<sup>578</sup> E. Kamaara 'Towards christian national identity in Africa: A historical perspective to the challenge of ethnicity to the church in Kenya', *Studies in World Christianity*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2010), p. 135.

Comaroff, missionary encounter in Africa was a ‘long conversation’ which created imaginative dualisms such as white/black, Christian/heathen as well as denominational dichotomies.<sup>579</sup> Although they were drawn into this dialogue and identified themselves as protestant Christians, Basotho were reluctant to get involved in DRC missionaries’ turf wars with other denominations in the district as they sought to maintain their community’s denominational diversity.

Like many other Christian converts across Africa, Basotho were expected to drop most of their cultural practices which were considered to be incompatible with Christianity. Whilst in Sotho culture and traditions, like most Bantu groups, *Modimo* (the Supreme Being) is worshiped through the spirits of one’s ancestors (*Balimo*) and the *Balimo* have the powers to bring health or sickness to a person or family, their conversion to Christianity meant that they had to abandon these beliefs.<sup>580</sup> However, due to the lack of definite equivalent for the Christian God in their cosmology, *Modimo* (or *Mwari* in local *Chishona* language) became the accepted name of God.<sup>581</sup> Similar adoptions of African cosmologies into Christians were done in other communities across Africa. However, Africans also had to abandon other practices that were viewed as incompatible with Protestant Christianity such as polygamy, propitiation of ancestors, and consultation of diviners among others.<sup>582</sup> In spite of this, a number of practices continued even among those Africans who had converted to Christianity. One practice that endured for some time however was endogamy. Marriages between *batsoala* (cousins) are one of the most distinctive Sotho practice and it continued to be encouraged among the Basotho in the Dewure Purchase Areas although the practice gradually waned. Thus, although they abandoned some aspects of their culture and traditions, some remnants of their cultural practices, especially endogamous marriages, endured for some time.

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<sup>579</sup> J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Of revelation and revolution*, Volume II: *The dialectics of modernity on a South African frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p.7.

<sup>580</sup> <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/artsmediaculture/culture%20&%20heritage/cultural-groups/sesotho.htm>

visited on 12 May 2011.

<sup>581</sup> For similar adoption of African cosmologies in Protestant Christianity see B. Meyer, ‘Translating the Devil: An African appropriation of Pietist Protestantism, the case of the Peki Ewe in Southern Ghana, 1847-1992’ PhD Thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1995.

<sup>582</sup> Interview with Fredrick Komo, Farm No. 392 Dewure, Gutu, 28 December 2005.

Parallels can be drawn between Basotho's appropriation of Christianity and the case of the Peki Ewe in Southern Ghana's where the German Missionaries of the *Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft* (NMG) established the Ewe Presbyterian Church (later called the Evangelical Presbyterian Church or EPC).<sup>583</sup> Basotho's changing relationship with DRC missionaries unravels the nature of the encounters between western missionaries and their African converts. As Meyer argues, 'African Christianity is not merely an extension of the missionary impact, but a product of the encounter between missionaries and Africans.'<sup>584</sup> In the case of the Peki Ewe, when the German Missionaries of the EPC were expelled after World War 1, Ewe pastors and teachers were left to run the mission without the assistance of the missionaries.<sup>585</sup> They were able to appropriate Pietist Protestant Christianity whilst at the same time also incorporating some aspects of their own cosmology. Similarly, although they had played a pivotal role in the establishment of DRC missions in the country, the Basotho community decided to establish their own local church which was free of the control and patronage of missionaries. This was helped by the fact that there were a number of evangelists and lay preachers within the community.

Although academics have for a long time largely focussed on African Initiated Churches, viewing mission churches as uninteresting, a focus on mission churches and the myriad small local Christian communities such as the Peki Ewe in Southern Ghana studied by Meyer<sup>586</sup> or the Basotho discussed in this study, reveals new and interesting insights. Apart from showing Africans' appropriation of Christianity such studies can also unravel the nature and consequences of encounters between African Christian communities and western missionaries. It is also important to explore Africans' creative responses' to the challenges they faced in their interactions with western missionaries. The next section analyses how Basotho used a dispute over a church bell donated to their local church by DRC missionaries to articulate their

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<sup>583</sup> B. Meyer, 'Translating the devil'

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*, p1.

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*

autonomy from the missionaries as well as highlighting their recognition of denominational diversity within the community.

### **The Bell incident**

The inter war years saw the emergence of African Initiated Churches as disgruntled Africans broke away from missionary churches. These African Initiated churches included a 'wide range of prophetic groups, varying from semi-Messianic to simple Zionist or Apostolic Churches.'<sup>587</sup> Beginning in South Africa, this phenomenon spread rapidly across southern Africa threatening the mainline churches.<sup>588</sup> Apart from these Messianic and Apostolic Churches, Pentecostal Churches also grew rapidly. Pentecostal Churches give their new converts a new sense of belonging based on the phenomenon of being born again, speaking in tongues, being smartly dressed and prosperity among other issues which differentiate them from those belonging to other churches.<sup>589</sup> Thus, religious denominations and their unique doctrines created a sense of unity among converts and at the same time also accentuated differences between individuals belonging to different religious denominations.

As one of the earliest churches to establish missions in Gutu district (Gutu Mission and Alheight Mission) and also with a huge network of schools, the DRC was threatened by the emergence and spread of African Initiated Churches in the district. Although African Initiated Churches, especially Zionists and Apostolic churches, were rapidly spreading in Gutu district, the majority of Basotho largely stuck with the DRC.<sup>590</sup> Instead of breaking away or joining African Initiated Churches, they chose to remodel their relationship with missionaries and insisted on having a great measure of autonomy. Their decision not to take the route of African Initiated Churches was arguably a result of their long history in the DRC and its linkage with

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<sup>587</sup> M. L. Daneel, *Old and new in southern Shona Independent Churches Volume 1: Background and rise of the major movements* (Mouton, The Hague, 1971), p.285.

<sup>588</sup> See B. Sundkler, *Bantu prophets in South Africa* (Cambridge: James Clark and co., 1948).

<sup>589</sup> see D. Maxwell, *African gifts of spirit: Pentecostalism and the rise of a Zimbabwean transnational movement*, (London: James Currey, 2006).

<sup>590</sup> See M. L. Daneel, *Old and new in Southern Shona Independent Churches Volume 1*.

their identity. Thus, whilst other Africans saw joining African Initiated Churches as the solution for their grievances in the mainline churches, the Basotho chose to negotiate space within the church instead of breaking away. This move was also probably inspired by the fact that NCs generally distrusted African Initiated Churches given the fact that a number of them were mellernarian and challenged white domination.<sup>591</sup> Thus, as a community who valued their image of being progressive Africans and sought to align themselves with NCs, Basotho may have felt that it was safer for them to stay within the DRC and negotiate their space within the church rather than secede and risk losing the trust and support of the colonial officials.

Tensions between Basotho and DRC missionaries revolved around the Basotho community's Bethel Church and by extension their farm and school. Many subtle battles were fought over control of these institutions. As the Orlandini case showed, there was tension between colonial officials and missionaries due to the fact that the missionaries were effectively establishing fiefdoms by imposing control on converts and communities around their missions.<sup>592</sup> The complex relationship between Basotho and the DRC missionaries can best be explained in light of the Basotho's desire to forge a new form of autonomy from the DRC missionaries and aligning themselves more with the colonial officials.

The community was broadly divided into two sections. One section believed that it was important for the group to continue having close ties with the DRC missionaries and to get donations and other forms of assistance. The larger section of the community, which included the vocal Jacob Molebaleng, was however against the dominance of any religious denomination in the community. They feared that getting any assistance from the DRC would give the missionaries the power to control them and influence decisions in the community. Interestingly, the 'pro-missionaries' section failed to pay for the purchase of the community farm and solicited for a donation from the missionaries. They received a £40 donation from the missionaries which was however turned down by the rest of the community as they feared that it would allow the DRC missionaries to have an influence in their affairs, and possibly also enable them to claim ownership of the farm. The rejection of the missionaries' donation showed some of Basotho's

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<sup>591</sup> Some of the leaders were actually making prophesies about the end of white rule.

<sup>592</sup> B. Davis and W. Dopcke, 'Survival and accumulation in Gutu'

determination to have total control of their community farm and also their desire to avoid missionary patronage.

Thus, in spite of the Basotho community's determination to escape from missionary paternalism, DRC missionaries continued to have some influence in the community, perhaps because of the existence of those whose religious sympathies remained with the DRC missionaries. This meant that tension continued to simmer because of the 'pro-missionaries' clique's desire to maintain strong ties with missionaries and the rest of the community's determination to shed off missionary control.

The 1938 impasse between a larger section of the Basotho community and DRC missionaries (with the support of the smaller section of the community) over a donation of a church bell encapsulated the transmogrification of the relationship between the Basotho community and DRC missionaries since their resettlement in Dewure Purchase Areas. It should be noted, that although they were making plans to build a proper church on Bethel Farm, Basotho were yet to build a church so they were holding services in the open. Two DRC missionaries, Rev. Louw and Rev. Hofmeyr, went to Bethel farm to conduct a church service.<sup>593</sup> Since missionaries did not conduct church services among Basotho every week this was an important occasion. Jacob Molebaleng, the leader of Basotho community, had purchased a bell from Johannesburg for the sum of £7.10.0 for use by the church and the school.<sup>594</sup> However, Rev. A. A. Low and Rev. Hofmeyr produced another bell which they presented to the community 'on behalf of the DRC missionaries.'<sup>595</sup> They proceeded to demand that the bell that had been bought by Jacob Molebaleng on behalf of the community be taken away and the 'mission bell' be installed instead.<sup>596</sup> It is possible that the 'mission bell' may have been brought at the behest of the 'pro-missionaries' section which saw no problem in the missionaries taking

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<sup>593</sup> S1859 Schools 1933-1949 Basutu community: Gutu, Minutes of Interview: J. Molebaleng, M. Phosa, S. Molebaleng (No date). , S1859 Summary of Minutes of Meetings held at Bethel School on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1938.

<sup>594</sup> S1859 Minutes of Interview: J. Molebaleng, M. Phosa and S. Molebaleng. (No Date). One important dynamic in this case was that Jacob Molebaleng was not a member of the DRC but was a Lutheran, which may explain his determination to avoid the domination of DRC missionaries in the community. In spite of this, he attended the service which was conducted by the two DRC clergymen.

<sup>595</sup> Interview with Fredrick Komo, Farm No. 392 Dewure, Gutu, 28 December 2005.

<sup>596</sup> S1859 Minutes of Interview: J. Molebaleng, M. Phosa and S. Molebaleng. (No Date).

charge of the running of affairs on Bethel Farm.<sup>597</sup> The majority of the members of the community, except the ‘pro-missionaries’ section, refused to accept the bell as they saw it as a symbol of DRC missionaries’ paternalism which they were fighting against. It is important to note that bells have been part of the paraphernalia of a number of churches (such as the Roman Catholic and DRC) for a long time and have, through history, been invested with a lot of meaning.<sup>598</sup> They are therefore very important religious symbols in some Christian communities, defining the local auditory landscapes.<sup>599</sup> Thus, because of the significance of the church bell, Basotho saw the need to have their own bell to be installed instead of the one donated by the missionaries.

Although the DRC missionaries may have had other intentions when they donated the bell, the majority of Basotho interpreted it as the most explicit sign of the missionaries’ intentions not only to take control of their church, but also to take over their community farm. They viewed the replacement of their bell with that of the missionaries as signifying the return of missionaries’ domination in the community. Consequently, the bell became an object of conflict between the DRC missionaries, represented by Rev. Louw and Rev. Hofmeyr, who brought the presumably unsolicited donation and the Basotho community represented by Jacob Molebaleng.

This incident exposed the cleavages within the Basotho community as the same people who had earlier solicited for donations from the missionaries towards the purchase of community farm and were failing to make their contributions towards its purchase were the ones who were taking sides with the missionaries on the issue of the bell. The ‘pro-missionaries’ section was obviously seeing an opportunity to use the missionaries in their own struggles for influence in the community. It can also be argued that they used missionaries’ support to cover their own failure to pull together with the rest of the community as they were failing to make their contributions towards the purchase of the farm. It is also likely that this section was being used

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<sup>597</sup> S1859 Schools 1933-1949, Basutu Community, Gutu: Position on Basutu Community Plot and summary of meeting held at Bethel School on 8 October 1938.

<sup>598</sup> I. A. Weiner, ‘Religion out loud: Religious sound, public space, and American pluralism’ PhD Dissertation, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2009, p.55.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*, p.186., However, in the case of the Basotho community it would be an exaggeration to say that the bell defined the local auditory landscape due to the fact that homes are spaced and the church is in the middle of a farm.

by the missionaries to thwart the influence of the non-DRC adherents in the community. Whatever reason behind this section's support for the missionaries, it is clear that the rest of the community who also involved other members of the DRC could no longer allow the missionaries to have any control of the way they ran their affairs. As a result of the negative perceptions that many Basotho had towards the 'mission bell' Molebaleng advised the two DRC missionaries to take their bell away and reminded them to respect the community's sovereignty over their farm and all institutions they had established on it.<sup>600</sup> Molebaleng also reminded Rev. Louw that 'the rest of the community were carrying his followers (DRC adherents, especially the pro-missionaries section) who had not worked on the buildings or contributed towards the cost and had ceased paying subscriptions for the plot (Bethel Farm).'<sup>601</sup>

The majority of the Basotho saw accepting the 'mission bell' as being tantamount to accepting missionary patronage. The incident caught the attention of 'Kingfisher', who reported that,

there was a big gathering at Bethel recently when Minister, Dr. Van der Merwe, [accompanied by Rev. Hofmeyr] preached a touching sermon on 'Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing.' Matt.5:13... *Two gifts of bells were given to Bethel, one by Chief J. Molebaleng and the other by the Rev. A. A. Lonns (A. A. Louw) (Senior). How shall they be hung and how shall they be rung?* (my emphasis).<sup>602</sup>

It is evident from Kingfisher's report that Basotho sought to carefully negotiate their autonomy from DRC missionaries by refusing to accept potentially contentious donations. They therefore resolved to refuse to accept the mission bell because of its association with missionary control. Since both bells could not be hung or rung together, it was obvious that one of them, in this case the mission bell, had to be taken away.

The impasse was only resolved after the intervention of the NC who, after talking to Jacob Molebaleng, approached Rev. Van der Merwe, a DRC missionary at Alheight Mission, to help break the deadlock. He wrote to Rev. van der Merwe stating; 'I have been asked by

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<sup>600</sup> S1859 Minutes of Interview: J. Molebaleng, M. Phosa and S. Molebaleng. (No Date).

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>602</sup> Kingfisher, 'Fort Victoria News' *The Bantu Mirror*, Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May 1938, p.4.



Molebaleng's followers (the bigger section of the community) to enquire whether you would act as mediator or otherwise help all sections in settling their differences which led to the bell incident.<sup>603</sup> Calm only returned a month later after Rev. van der Merwe ensured that both parties had agreed that the 'mission bell' be removed and that the missionaries stop interfering with the activities of Basotho for peace to prevail.<sup>604</sup> The fact that Molebaleng approached the NC to help resolve this impasse further demonstrates how Basotho had thrown their lot with colonial officials as they endeavoured to disentangle themselves from the clutches of missionary control.

Although it is possible that the Basotho's rejection of the bell donated by the missionaries may have been a reaction triggered by events which unfolded on that particular day, the incident reveals Basotho's growing disenchantment with the missionaries and the extent to which they were prepared to go to assert their autonomy. The incident also shows the undercurrents in the relationships between Basotho and the missionaries as well as the fissures within the Basotho community itself. In the end the 'mission bell' became the symbol of DRC missionaries' paternalism which Basotho robustly resisted.

As an object which was part of the paraphernalia of the church, the bell was important in the community's ownership of Bethel Church. It was, thus, not only the physical presence of the mission bell that Basotho despised, but the meaning which it carried. Consequently, the two bells created an interesting dichotomy; one representing Basotho autonomy whilst the other being a symbol of missionary domination. It is even more interesting that the bell purchased by Jacob Molebaleng, which was later erected instead of the mission bell, has remained on the church up to the present day. The bell is mounted on a wooden pole at the entrance of the church yard and is still being used by the community.<sup>605</sup> It is important to highlight that at this stage ethnicity was not a key issue in Bethel church since during its formative years it was an almost exclusively

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<sup>603</sup> S1859 N. C. Gutu to W. J. van der Merwe Alheight Mission, 30 August 1938.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>605</sup> See photograph of the church below. The bell which is mounted on a wooden pole close to the entrance of the church yard is still rung every Sunday as members of the Basotho community and other members of the RCZ gather for church services.

Basotho church. However, as non-Sotho farmers gradually began to join the church ethnic tensions began to emerge.<sup>606</sup>



*Figure 7: Bethel church (with the bell in the foreground)*

The problem of the DRC missionaries' involvement in the affairs of Basotho however continued to fester even after the bell incident. Soon after the incident the 'pro-missionaries' section

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<sup>606</sup> This will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

demanded the right to build a church on the farm. This was turned down by other members of the community on the grounds that most of the members of this section had not paid up their contributions towards the purchase of the community farm.<sup>607</sup> The community demanded that everybody was to pay up their contributions first before the church could be built. It was also resolved that the community was not going to accept any assistance or donation from the DRC missionaries in building the church because of the connotations that such donations were likely to have and the potential exclusion of people belonging to other denominations.<sup>608</sup>

The conflict between the 'pro-missionaries' section and the rest of the Basotho community over the building of the church again caught the attention of the NC of Gutu, who was constantly called to resolve disputes between Basotho and DRC missionaries as well as internal disputes in the community. The NC lamented that Basotho were the most troublesome people he had ever come across since he had arrived in the district.<sup>609</sup> In March 1941 the NC reported that, 'in the last six months there has been constant bickering if not quarrels and threats of blood being shed because a certain section (the pro-missionaries section) wish to build a church in which to follow their particular creed against the desire of headman (Jacob Molebaleng) and his section of followers.'<sup>610</sup> This shows the amount of attention the conflict over the building of the church and the role of the DRC missionaries in the community attracted from the NC and his growing frustration with their constant 'bickering'. Although they had initially been praised for being progressive and modernising Africans when they arrived in the district, the Basotho were failing to live up to this image due to their constant disputes with DRC missionaries and among themselves.

The NC realised that the saga surrounding the building of this church could escalate into a more serious internecine conflict and again sought to find an amicable solution to the problem. On 29 May 1941 H. A. Cripwell, the NC of Gutu district, held a meeting of the Basotho

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<sup>607</sup> S1859 Schools 1933-1949 Position on Basutu Community Plot and Summary of Minutes of Meeting held at Bethel school on 8 October 1938.

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>609</sup> S1859 Schools 1933-1949 NC Gutu CNC Salisbury, 27 March 1941.

<sup>610</sup> *Ibid.*

community at Bethel Farm, with the aim of resolving Basotho's religious disputes. The meeting was also attended by E. T. Palmer, the Assistant Chief Native Commissioner and Rev. van der Merwe of Alheight Mission.<sup>611</sup> The fact that the Assistant Chief Native Commissioner attended the meeting shows the extent to which the colonial officials were increasingly getting concerned with Basotho community's internal squabbles. During the meeting Jacob Molebaleng highlighted the following resolutions which the community had made on the matter concerning the building of the church on the community farm:

the church should be erected by Basutus (sic) for the use of members only; that the church should be the Dutch Reformed Church but should be available for the use of other denominations; that the church should be the property of Basutu (sic) people; *that they feared the DRC European ministers would obtain possession of the church and land on which it was situated, plot 24*; that a building should be erected open or available for worship (my own emphasis).<sup>612</sup>

These were major concerns which the Basotho community wanted the NC and the Assistant Chief Native Commissioner to address, especially given that Rev. van der Merwe who represented the DRC missionaries, was present. The community was, thus, prepared to make the concession that the church would be principally a Dutch Reformed Church but with a proviso that other denominations would be allowed to use it. It is evident from Molebaleng's declarations that the Basotho community was not going to countenance a situation whereby DRC missionaries would impose any control on their community through their religious influence especially given the community's fear of losing its farm to the missionaries. Although he was prepared to accept some of the proposals put forward by Molebaleng, what Rev. Van der Merwe, however, found difficult to accept was the suggestion that other denominations be allowed to use the proposed church building. He saw such an arrangement as unacceptable, more so given the turf wars that different denominations fought in the district and in other areas. Moreover, there were also obvious differences between different religious denominations' iconography which influenced how the inside of their churches look like.<sup>613</sup> It was, therefore, quite unprecedented

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<sup>611</sup> S1859 Schools 1933-1949 Memorandum of Meeting held at Plot No. 24 Dewure native Purchase Area, Gutu District on Thursday May 29<sup>th</sup> 1941.

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*

for different denominations to use the same church given the differences in doctrines and also their battles to attract converts. As a result, Rev. Van der Merwe threatened that ‘if a DRC (church building) were erected and other denominations were permitted to hold services therein he personally would cease to officiate in that church.’<sup>614</sup> Although Rev. Van der Merwe never carried out his threat, it is clear that Basotho’s desire to allow denominational diversity in the community and also to keep the missionaries at arm’s length did not go down well with the missionaries. Even though they still wished to have DRC missionaries’ minister to them, the Basotho did not want the church to be exclusive to DRC adherents and were prepared to fight for the right of non-DRC adherents to use the church. This shows the transformation in the relationship between the Basotho and DRC missionaries since the former’s resettlement in Dewure Purchase. No longer could missionaries expect to impose their tutelage on the Basotho without expecting some form of resistance.

It was against the background of the meeting held between the NC and the Basotho community that in 1941 Silas Molebaleng presented an application to the community requesting approval for ‘a site to build an “un-denominational” church.’<sup>615</sup> He cited in his application twenty other individuals who supported his proposal.<sup>616</sup> The application was turned down on the grounds that three individuals who supported it were not farm owners in the Dewure Purchase Areas and one of them was already deceased at the time the application was submitted.<sup>617</sup> In spite of the committee’s refusal to grant Silas Molebaleng and his colleagues the right to build this ‘un-denominational’ church, it is vital to note that the community was in agreement that for the avoidance of any internal squabbles there was need to avoid creating a situation where one denomination would dominate over others. This could only be achieved through the building of this ‘un-denominational’ church without the assistance of the DRC missionaries. Basotho’s aim

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<sup>614</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>615</sup> S1859 1933-1949 Schools Gutu Minutes of an Advisory Committee Meeting for the Bethel Community Plot-Dewure No. 24-held at Bethel School in Tuesday, July 29<sup>th</sup> 1941. Silas Molebaleng was Jacob Molebaleng’s brother and like his brother, he was not a member of the DRC.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.*

in showing such unprecedented levels of religious accommodation was to show that they were a united community in spite of their religious differences and that they did not wish to see the DRC missionaries taking over any of the assets that they had accumulated as a community, especially their community farm.

The controversies surrounding the building of Bethel church exposes the challenges Basotho faced in trying to use religion to establish their belonging in the Dewure Purchase Areas. Basotho projected themselves as protestant Christians with a very strong DRC element in the community. This image was quite strong as it was at the core of their migration history as the large part of the community was composed of descendants of the Basotho evangelists who worked with a number of missionaries. Although it is without doubt that the majority of the members of this community were DRC adherents whose historical links with DRC missionaries meant that they were more inclined to support the missionaries, and in spite of the existence of a small clique within the DRC adherents which was keen to maintain links with the DRC missionaries, the community resolved to maintain unity by allowing denominational diversity. Thus, the community strove to make all religious denominations have equal access to Bethel church. This was to some extent achieved by making both their school and church building ‘un-denominational’. ‘Un-denominational’ therefore became an important label that Basotho used to articulate a form of belonging which was based on denominational diversity and tolerance. It also became a symbol of their defiance of DRC missionaries’ paternalism.

In spite of these tensions it is crucial to avoid over-playing the differences between missionaries and their converts as DRC missionaries continued to conduct church services at Bethel church and also to engage with their Basotho converts. Maxwell warns us against ‘simplistically pitting missionaries against Africans as if they were polar opposites.’<sup>618</sup> He further argues that ‘it is important to weigh up missionary hegemony against African agency, but, as some of the best work on religious encounter has demonstrated, it is equally important to study how missionaries and Africans interacted to create new cultural forms and new types of

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<sup>618</sup> D. Maxwell, ‘Writing the history of African Christianity: Reflections of an editor’, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 36, No.3-4,(2006), p.387

knowledge.’<sup>619</sup> Hence, although Basotho showed their agency by resisting missionary hegemony, there continued to be some space for engagement as the missionaries continued to conduct church services at Bethel and to play other roles in the community such as serving as superintendent of Bethel school.

The Basotho community later managed to build their ‘un-denominational’ church in the 1940s and, despite Rev. van der Merwe’s earlier threats, the missionaries continued to come to Bethel to conduct church services. Gradually the church began to be used almost exclusively by the DRC as members of other denominations began to go elsewhere to attend church services. In spite of the dominance of the DRC, the church however remained the property of the Basotho community. Another dynamic which gradually emerged was the gradual increase in the number of non-Sotho DRC adherents who were attending church services at Bethel church. This made the congregation more and more cosmopolitan as it became a platform for the interaction between Basotho and their non-Sotho neighbours in the Dewure Purchase Areas and surrounding areas.

### **Bethel congregation: Ethnicity, religion and belonging**

In spite of the cohesion that Christianity engendered among farmers in the Dewure Purchase Areas, there were instances when ethnic tensions between Basotho and non-Sotho church members flared within the DRC. Missionaries’ tendency to create territories during the colonial period often accentuated ethnic differences and at times led to the creation of artificial differences between groups. Such carving out of territories among missions was often expressed through the translation of the Bible into different languages and regional dialects depending on where the missionaries were based. In colonial Zimbabwe, the DRC for example, were dominant among the Karanga in Victoria and they translated the Bible into the local Chikaranga dialect. Throughout the colony missionaries worked with their converts to create translations of the Bible

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<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*

into vernacular languages and by so doing also creating ethnic and linguistic differences which had not existed in the pre-colonial period.<sup>620</sup> As Ranger puts it,

Missionary linguists created discrete dialect zones by developing written languages centred upon a number of widely scattered bases. The American Methodists at Old Umtali, the Anglicans at St Augustine's and the Mariannahill fathers at Triashill together produced Manyika; the Jesuits at Chishawasha, near Salisbury, produced Zezuru; the Dutch Reformed Church at Morgenster produced Karanga. Differences were exaggerated, obscuring the actual gradualism and homogeneity of the real situation.<sup>621</sup>

This, Ranger reasons, inevitably contributed to the creation of ethnicity and heightening of feelings of difference. Language was obviously the vehicle that missionaries used to spread the gospel and it also had the effect of widening divisions between groups.

However, apart from the ethnic differences created by the different denominations working in their territories, it is also important to note that internal ethnic tensions also arose within churches. According to Sundkler and Steed, ethnic tensions within churches would often arise during appointment of new church leaders such as Bishops, especially if they got deployed into an area dominated by another ethnic group other than their own.<sup>622</sup> Language difference is another potential source of tension in congregations, especially if one group chooses to use a minority language in the church.

In the case of the DRC, apart from the fact that it operated in a predominantly Karanga region and translated the Bible into the local dialect, there were also some internal differences in the church. Basotho, who belonged to a different and non-autochthonous group, continued to hold an important position in the local church because it was located on their community farm and they owned it. As already indicated, the church had been established by Basotho and was, during its formative years, almost exclusively a 'Basotho Church'. Thus, in spite of the fact that a number of non-Sotho DRC adherents attended church services at Bethel, the church was by and large a 'Basotho church'; a situation which later caused tensions in the church. The differences

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<sup>620</sup> T. O. Ranger, 'Missionaries, migrants and the Manyika: The invention of ethnicity in Zimbabwe' in L. Vail and L. White (ed.) *The creation of tribalism in Southern Africa* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989)

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>622</sup> B. Sundkler, and C. Steed, *The history of the church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.1011.



between the two groups were also widened by the fact that Basotho sought to preserve their language. This had the effect of perpetuating feelings of difference between Basotho and the rest of other DRC adherents.

Due to the role that they had played in the establishment of Morgenster Mission and the evangelisation of the region, Basotho continued to have a feeling that they were right at the centre of the church and perhaps considered themselves to be above other African adherents in the church.<sup>623</sup> Such a feeling was aided by the fact that apart from the initial Basotho evangelists and volunteers who helped Rev. A. A. Louw establish Morgenster Mission, the community also produced many evangelists and teachers who worked in the DRC. Moreover, their establishment of Bethel Church, in spite of it being officially ‘un-denominational’, placed the community in a position of respect within the DRC. This, however, made the relationship between the Basotho DRC adherents and their Karanga counterparts rather uneasy, as some Karanga members of the church felt that Basotho were dominating the local church in spite of the fact that they were a minority group and ‘late-comers’ in the area.

In 1977 the DRC mission was handed over to the African Reformed Church in Rhodesia by the DRC (Cape) as the church began decentralising. The DRC in Rhodesia had hitherto been part of the DRC (Cape). In line with this transformation, when Zimbabwe attained its independence in 1980, the church changed its name from African Reformed Church in Rhodesia to the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (RCZ). Meanwhile, Bethel church continued to grow in membership and significance. By 1987 Bethel had become the centre of a new RCZ congregation ‘covering areas from the Gutu and Chingombe congregations.’<sup>624</sup> This resulted in ethnic tensions emerging in congregation as some Karanga members did not want the centre of congregation to be the Basotho owned and dominated Bethel Church.

One of the factors that may have led to ethnic tensions emerging in the Bethel Congregation was the fact that Basotho sought to maintain their identity in the church by seeking to preserve their language. In chapter four, I alluded to the fact that Basotho members of the

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<sup>623</sup> Interview with LM, 26 November 2009.

<sup>624</sup> A. R. Mutumburanzou, D. P. Mandebvu and E. C. Esterhuysen, *Ten years of development in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe* (Masvingo: Morgenster Mission, 1988), p. 18.

church formed a choir which sang hymns in *Sesotho*, both at church and at other Basotho gatherings. This choir is, in a way, a vehicle through which Basotho articulate difference and celebrate their history in the church. Since it is not possible for non-Sotho members of the church to join the choir given that it uses *Sesotho*, the choir has effectively divided the church into the Basotho section, which owns the church and the farm, and the rest of the members who are Karanga and do not own the farm and did not take part in the building of the church. Consequently, this heightened notions of exclusion in the church. Thus, Bethel church has had a dual impact in Basotho's belonging project. On one hand, it helped construct Basotho's image as Christians and also provided a platform for interaction with other farmers. On the other hand, however, it led to the accentuation of ethnic differences between Basotho and Karanga church members. Thus, Basotho's use of *Sesotho* as one of the strategies to articulate difference had an extra and unintended result of stimulating ethnic tensions in the church. The fact that Basotho owned Bethel Farm and the church together with their tendency to revert to *Sesotho* during some occasions such as funerals and other ceremonies did not help the situation as non-Sotho members of the church continued to feel excluded even though they claimed to be the autochthons in the area.

The ethnic tensions in Bethel congregation have sucked in the pastor of this congregation. Since Bethel Church is the centre of the RCZ's Bethel *Chiunga* (congregation) the pastor in charge of the congregation normally resides at the pastor's house at Bethel church. Although a number of pastors have stayed at Bethel, the current pastor, Mrs. Mazenenge (who is a non-Sotho), decided to move to Dewende Business Centre, which is almost eight kilometres from Bethel, arguing that, being in the middle of a farm, Bethel Church was a very lonely place which is far away from schools, grocery shops and other services.<sup>625</sup> However, below this veil of seemingly reasonable arguments for the pastor's transfer from Bethel to Dewende are however some intriguing stories exposing the tensions between Basotho and Karanga members of the church. Some farmers in the area spread rumours of ghosts of the Basotho buried at Bethel

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<sup>625</sup> Interview with Jairoso Moyo (pseudonym) Bethel School closed during the colonial period and Masema primary school is four kilometres away from Bethel and the closest Secondary School is at Dewende Business Centre which is about eight kilometres away. Bethel is now rather desolate; there is only the church and two homesteads, one belonging to Sangu Musindo the caretaker of the farm and the other belonging to Seroka Morudu the caretaker of the church.

cemetery haunting the pastor's house.<sup>626</sup> What has fed the rumour is obviously the presence of Basotho graves in the area. As Karanga farmers could not associate with graves of the Basotho, they saw them as a potential source of ghosts. This became one way through which they expressed their misgivings about Basotho's dominance of the local church and the *chiunga* (congregation).

The argument that the ghost stories are an expression of the ethnic tensions between Basotho and Karanga farmers is given credence by the fact that there have been debates in the last decade in the congregation over proposals by some members to move the centre from Bethel to another area. According to one Karanga farmer who is also a member of the Bethel *chiunga*, the actual reason why the Bethel Congregation pastor moved away from Bethel may have been the constant conflicts between the Basotho and Karanga members of RCZ over the control of Bethel church and the fact that Bethel was made the centre of the *chiunga*.<sup>627</sup> He argued that some Karanga members of this congregation believed that since Bethel Farm belongs to the Basotho community, making Bethel church the centre of the *chiunga* has given Basotho too much power in the congregation when they are an ethnic minority in the area and 'late-comers'.<sup>628</sup> Most of the people who were said to be disgruntled with the Basotho dominance in the Bethel *Chiunga* belong to the Nemashakwe Dynasty of the Gumbo Madyirapazhe Clan, who were displaced from the area in the 1930s to pave way for the creation of the Purchase Areas.<sup>629</sup> They felt that as the autochthons of the area they deserve to have greater say in the congregation which can only happen if the centre of influential positions cannot continue to be under the influence of Basotho who are late comers in the area. Furthermore, the association of the whole Chiunga with a minority ethnic group did go down well with those members of the church who believed that as the dominant ethnic group, Karanga members should wield more power. With such murmurings from other members of the church, it is clear that there are observable instances when the Basotho's belonging is challenged and they are viewed as 'outsiders'. These

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<sup>626</sup> *Ibid.* These ghosts are said to manifest themselves in the form a fire roaming around the farm lace at night

<sup>627</sup> Interview with EDC, 9 July 2009.

<sup>628</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>629</sup> Interview with LM, 26 November 2009.

members of the church generally feel that they cannot have any control of the church even if they are elected into influential positions in the *chiunga* as long as the centre of the Chiunga remained at Bethel, which is owned by Basotho community. Moreover, even though they have always occupied a prominent position in the church because of their historical links with the pioneering missionaries, some members of the congregation loathed what they considered to be their dominance especially in Bethel Chiunga.

Some members of the church who support the idea of moving the centre of the *Chiunga* from Bethel argue that it is not centrally located which makes it difficult for members from far flung areas to travel for important church gatherings.<sup>630</sup> However, Basotho feel strongly about the need to keep the status quo as they consider themselves to have established the first church in the area, hence moving the centre from Bethel would be seen as tantamount to downplaying the role their forefathers played the evangelisation of the area.<sup>631</sup> A combination of ethnicity, ownership of Bethel Farm, on which the church is located, and their perceived important position in the church has therefore been a source of tension in the Bethel *Chiunga*. As one of the non-Sotho members of the church narrated:

There have always been disputes in the church since the establishment of the Bethel *Chiunga* in the late 1980s as some members of the church see this as giving the Basotho, who own Bethel Farm and built the church, too much influence in the church. In 2000 the debate on moving the centre of the congregation from Bethel to Dewende or another place reached a critical point. I remember one particular occasion when this case was brought before the church *dare* (council) at Bethel. There was a heated debate, with some members arguing that the centre of the *chiunga* should be moved whilst others, who even included some non-Sotho members, insisting that the centre remain at Bethel. I particularly recall this incident because elder brother, who was one of the church elders and a farm owner in the Dewure Purchase Area, had a heart failure during the debate and later passed away. He tragically died as a direct result of this meaningless dispute. Having seen the bad side of this dispute, I personally believe that as Christians we should not focus on the ethnic differences between members but concentrate on spreading the gospel.<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>630</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>631</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>632</sup> Interview with Edman Chitare, Dewure Purchase Areas, 9 July 2009. He has inherited the family farm from his late brother and his family has remained members of the RCZ.

This poignant story captures the extent to which ethnic tensions between Basotho and Karanga members of the RCZ have had an impact on Basotho belonging. On their part, most Basotho believe that the significance of the ownership of Bethel Farm and Bethel church is overplayed by some church members with an agenda to move the centre of the *chiunga* from Bethel.<sup>633</sup>

As a non-Sotho myself, I noticed during fieldwork that my Basotho informants were not very comfortable telling me what they felt about ethnic tensions in the church. However, whilst having a conversation with one of my informants I made the mistake of referring to the Basotho as ‘*Masvutu*’, a term often used by the Karanga to refer to the Basotho.<sup>634</sup> The informant was angry with me and warned me never to use such a term pointing out that Basotho consider the term to be derogatory.<sup>635</sup> He also made a point of informing me that although he knew that the Karanga refer to them as ‘*Masvutu*’ it was a term they loathed. ‘If you call us *Masvutu* you imply that we are things not people. ‘Ma’ is used to refer to things. We are Basotho’<sup>636</sup> he explained. This incident showed me that although on the surface Basotho and their Karanga neighbours appeared to have enjoyed cordial relationships in their everyday interactions and also at the church, notions of difference were almost always present.

It is clear that both Basotho and their Karanga neighbours still resort to exclusionary politics by playing the ethnic card when they find it advantageous for them to do so. By challenging the idea of having a Basotho dominated *chiunga*, the Karanga members of the church showed that although Basotho may have felt that they had successfully negotiated their belonging they still had to contend with the idea of being the minority and ‘late-comers’ in the area. As long as they felt that Bethel was a ‘Basotho church’ located on a Basotho owned farm, some Karanga members of the Bethel *chiunga* continued to harbour the idea of moving it to a ‘more neutral’ site where they could feel they also owned the church.<sup>637</sup> This has resonance with Lewis’ argument that belonging(ness) is crafted in the context of formal rights and

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<sup>633</sup> Interview with Rachel Mphisa, Bethel Farm (Farm No.24), 17 July 2009.

<sup>634</sup> Interview with CM, 22 August 2009. This is a shonaised version of ‘Basotho’.

<sup>635</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>636</sup> Interview with CM, 22 August 2009.

<sup>637</sup> Interview with EDC, 10 July 2009.

entitlements.<sup>638</sup> Thus, without any formal entitlement to the church and the farm, Karanga members of the church were finding it difficult to assert themselves at Bethel Church and, by extension, Bethel *Chiunga* which became the source of tensions in the church.

Perhaps, more than anything else, the ethnic tensions in Bethel congregation reveal the extent to which Basotho have managed to negotiate their belonging in the area since they arrived. The main reason why such issues did not emerge in the church in the early years of the establishment of Bethel church is that the church was almost exclusively a Basotho church. However, gradually other farmers joined the church making it more ethnically diverse. This later led to ethnic tensions within the church as some Karanga members began to challenge Basotho's dominance in the church. The heightening of notions of difference between Basotho and the Karanga members of the church in the Bethel *Chiunga* and the fact that some Karanga still viewed the Basotho as 'late-comers' or 'outsiders' shows that Basotho still have some way to go in negotiating their belonging in the area. These tensions, especially in the last decade, can reflect the political context in the country which saw the heightening of discourses of exclusion and inclusion.

## Conclusion

It is apparent that religion, especially Christianity, is becoming one of the key factors in the construction and articulation of belonging among immigrant communities. Not only do religious institutions provide platforms on which belonging can be negotiated but they can also be a stage on which notions of difference can be played out. Thus it is important to understand the centrality of Christianity in the Basotho community. This chapter has shown how, through a long historical period, the Basotho have used religion to construct and negotiate their belonging within the Dewure Purchase Area and also within the DRC. It has also shown that different historical contexts brought unique challenges for Basotho which required specific strategies. While their identity as DRC adherents was an important label given their history in the church,

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<sup>638</sup> G. Lewis, "'Do not go gently...': Terrains of citizenship and landscapes of the personal' in G. Lewis (ed.) *Citizenship: Personal lives and social policy* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2004).

the diversity in the community meant that the Basotho had to ensure that all religious denominations had equal status in the community. Hence, although DRC missionaries were keen to carve out a territory through establishing DRC schools and churches in the area; the Basotho did not always share the same vision leading to the blurring of denominational boundaries in their everyday interactions. Basotho even took this further by resisting missionary patronage and by resolving to make their local church ‘un-denominational’.

Although religion has continued to be a key factor in the lives of Basotho, there have been significant shifts in how Basotho have framed their religious belonging over time. Basotho have had the image of being Christians who played a significant role in the establishment of the DRC Morgenster Mission and the evangelisation of the surrounding areas. However, when they moved to the Dewure Purchase Areas in the 1930s they reframed their relationship with DRC missionaries as they sought to avoid missionary patronage. It is against this background that Basotho refused to accept help from DRC missionaries in purchasing their communal farm, building the church and the school. Yet, in spite of all these conflicts with DRC missionaries Basotho did not break away to form an Independent Church as was common during this period. While a number of other Africans in the district and beyond either formed or joined African Initiated Churches, Basotho instead chose to negotiate their space within the DRC and maintained a special form of autonomy from the DRC missionaries. This uneasy relationship was best illustrated by the ‘bell incident’ and the impasse it triggered. Basotho’s refusal to accept the bell donated by the missionaries was a significant move which showed their determination to maintain their autonomy from DRC missionaries and preserve their social and religious cohesion.

Whilst unity with non-Sotho DRC adherents was forged by the fact that they belonged to the same religious denomination, Basotho particularism and their desire to preserve their language meant that non-Sotho members of Bethel congregation often felt excluded. The denominational binaries of DRC and non-DRC were therefore not the only critical cleavages within the community. Ethnic differences between Basotho and Karanga members of the DRC were also critical in shaping Basotho’s belonging. Thus, even though Bethel church provided Basotho with a place of worship where they could interact with non-Sotho members, the fact that

the church remained the property of Basotho created tensions with non-Sotho members. In the end, notions of exclusion surfaced within the congregation as divisions between Basotho and Karanga church members became more apparent. Basotho's relationship with other DRC/RCZ adherents, thus, fluctuated between inclusion and exclusion depending on the context.



## CHAPTER 7

### BASOTHO AND THE POLITICS OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION IN CONTEMPORARY ZIMBABWE

#### Introduction

In January 2006, while studying at the University of Zimbabwe, I was involved in an oral history project called ‘Capturing a Fading National Memory’. The main objective of the project was to collect oral accounts of Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle.<sup>639</sup> The project was entirely funded by the government through the Ministry of Home Affairs and run by the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) and National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) in collaboration with the University of Zimbabwe’s History Department. One of the highlights of the project was a field excursion to Kamungoma Farm, the site of the massacre of about 105 civilians by Rhodesian Forces during the liberation war. The oral accounts collected during this excursion were generally narrow, mainly highlighting the brutality of Rhodesian Forces and the suffering of civilians during the war. When, in 2009, I began doing fieldwork for this study, it began to be clear to me that although Kamungoma Farm was owned by a member of the Basotho community, the accounts collected by the ‘Capturing a Fading National Memory Project’ had not highlighted these connections or even the fact that the Kamungoma family also lost one of their family members during this brutal attack. Basotho’s voices were thus silenced in spite of the community’s obvious connections with this site and also in spite of the fact that some members of the community had been victims of the massacre. This silencing of Basotho voices shows the challenges that Basotho have faced in negotiating their belonging since the colonial period. One of the main reasons why this oral history project sidelined Basotho and did not even consider collecting their accounts was that they were, in some contexts, still considered to be ‘outsiders’ and their belonging challenged.

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<sup>639</sup> This project was not part of my PhD thesis. I have, however, had the opportunity to do fieldwork in the same area for my PhD research and compare the accounts collected by the project with those I collected during my PhD fieldwork.

The emergence of the Movement of Democratic Change (MDC) as a political rival to the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), in particular, significantly changed the political landscape in the country, broadly dividing the country into those supporting ZANU PF and those supporting MDC and other opposition political parties. With Job Sikhala, one of the members of the Basotho community, being a founder member of the MDC, the Basotho community has had to contend with being labelled supporters of the MDC. Within this context, ZANU PF has also sought to use history, especially that of the liberation struggle, to legitimate itself and cast the other political parties as ‘sell outs’ or ‘puppets’ of the west.

This chapter examines discourses of inclusion and exclusion in post-colonial Zimbabwe and their impact on the Basotho community. The first section examines how the Basotho negotiated politics of inclusion and exclusion during the first decade of independence. Focussing on the Kamungoma massacre, the second section analyses the silencing of Basotho voices in the liberation war meta-narrative. The third section examines how Basotho have dealt with the politics of inclusion and exclusion in the post 2000 period. The last section examines how some members of the Basotho community have resorted to ambivalence or multiple belonging in the face of challenges in their struggles for belonging. The chapter concludes by arguing that the myriad challenges that Basotho have faced in establishing themselves in Zimbabwe, and in fitting into the hegemonic vision of the nation imagined by ruling elites reveals that, in spite of the many years they have lived in Zimbabwe, their belonging has largely remained ambivalent.

### **Politics of inclusion and exclusion in the first decade of independence**

The first decade of independence was marked by violence as the ZANU PF government resorted to coercion to forge national unity. According to Munro, the Prime Minister Robert Mugabe was determined to ‘centralize regime power on the basis of “national unity” and a one-party state rather than on ethnic domination.’<sup>640</sup> Opposition parties were brutally crushed and, in the case of ZAPU, also incorporated into ZANU PF. The Matabeleland massacre is one example of how the

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<sup>640</sup> W. Munro, *The moral economy of the state: Conservation, community development, and state making in Zimbabwe* (Ohio University Press, Athens, 1998), p.237.

Mugabe regime was prepared to coercion to thwart any significant opposition to its hold on power.<sup>641</sup> Thus, many people found themselves being forced to support ZANU PF because of its coercive methods.

The decade was also marked by the new regime's focus on development and its ideological orientation towards socialist policies. As part of this socialist project, the government sought to 'embark on a vigorous program of resettlement, reconstruction, and rehabilitation in the countryside.'<sup>642</sup> The land resettlement programme which the government initiated involved purchasing land from white commercial farm owners on a 'willing-buyer willing-seller' for the purposes of resettling landless peasants.<sup>643</sup> Since the land resettlement programme targeted white owned commercial farms and not the former Purchase Areas, Basotho's farms were never under threat. There were, however, attempts by one local politician in the district in the late 1990s to buy Bethel Farm from the community on the pretext that it was lying 'idle' since very little agriculture was being done on the farm.<sup>644</sup> The community resisted these overtures, arguing that they could never sell the farm because it was central to the community's identity and also that selling the farm amounted to 'selling' the graves of their forefathers on Bethel cemetery.<sup>645</sup>

As a community which, throughout their history in the country, had projected themselves and had been viewed as 'progressive' and 'modernising', a number of members of the Basotho community had acquired a level education at independence and most of them joined the civil service.<sup>646</sup> Others, like Solomon Nkomo, whose father was one of the Basotho farm owners in the Mungezi Purchase Areas, also attained influential positions in ZANU PF and in the civil

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<sup>641</sup> See J. Alexander, J. McGregor, and T. O. Ranger, *Violence and memory: One hundred years in the 'dark forests' of Matabeleland* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000).  
James Currey, 2000).

<sup>642</sup> W. Munro, *The moral economy of the state*, p.225.

<sup>643</sup> This was in accordance with the Lancaster House constitution land clause which stipulated that the new government could only buy land for purposes of resettlement on a willing buyer willing seller basis until after a period of ten years when they could amend the constitution.

<sup>644</sup> Interview with Sangu Musindo, Bethel Farm, 17 July 2009.

<sup>645</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>646</sup> A number of the members of the community worked as teachers. Some of them were already working in the civil before the country's attainment of independence and continued in their jobs after independence.

service in the early 1980s due to the roles they had played in the liberation struggle.<sup>647</sup> Solomon Nkomo, received combat training in various countries during the liberation struggle in the 1960s and 1970s and became a key member of the ZANU PF party in Masvingo Province in the early years of independence. His political consciousness began during the days when he was a student at Dadaya and later at Zimuto Mission in the 1950s. He later joined the National Democratic Party (NDP) and was arrested after the party had been banned in 1961.<sup>648</sup> After his release, he joined Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and later left the country after the banning of ZAPU. He received military training in Ghana, Algeria and China.<sup>649</sup> He also trained together with influential ZANU PF figures such as Emmerson Mnangagwa (the current Minister of Defence).<sup>650</sup> During the 1980 general elections he was the ZANU PF Publicity Secretary for Masvingo Province. Soon after independence he joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in 1981 he was made Zimbabwe's ambassador to Algeria.<sup>651</sup> Solomon Nkomo's story shows that, even though in some instances they were still viewed as 'late comers' or 'outsiders', some members of the Basotho community managed to rise to influential political positions in post-independence Zimbabwe.

Although members of the community contributed towards the liberation struggle in a number ways, this was generally not represented in the local and national accounts of the war. This was mainly due to the heightening of the politics of exclusion in the country, especially from the late 1990s, and the spectre of being 'outsiders' which continued to affect the community. The country's attainment of independence in 1980, therefore, did not bring closure to Basotho's struggles to belong. Instead, it ushered in a new historical phase with its own challenges and requiring deployment of certain strategies.

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<sup>647</sup> His father Matthew Nkomo, also spelt Komo, owned a farm in Mungezi Purchase Areas. Matthew Nkomo was also related to Fredrick Komo who owned a farm in the Dewure Purchase Areas.

<sup>648</sup> Dennis Rwafa, 'Nkomo-Bwerudza wedding' *Masvingo Advertiser*, 2 September 1983. NDP was formed in 1960 and it was banned in 1961 after which the nationalists formed ZAPU which was also banned in 1962. In 1963 ZAPU split with some of the leaders who included Robert Mugabe forming ZANU.

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>650</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid.*

## The Basotho community, Kamungoma massacre and Patriotic History

The work of the Fallen Heroes Trust, a non-governmental organisation mainly composed of war veterans, which exhumes the bodies of people killed during the liberation struggle, has gone a long way in drawing the nation's attention to the importance of reburying the remains of those who died during the struggle and appeasing their spirits.<sup>652</sup> Their exhumation work in Chibondo in Mt Darwin district in 2011, however, caused a lot of controversy.<sup>653</sup> The grotesque images of exhumed bodies were shown on national television, often accompanied by commentaries by ZANU PF politicians condemning the colonial regime and accusing the opposition parties of working with the former colonisers. Although such exhumations have been an ongoing process since the late 1980s, the current political environment has seen the exhumations being highly politicized. A number of civic and political organisations in the country argued that ZANU PF is using these exhumations to gain political mileage by sensationalising atrocities committed during the war.<sup>654</sup> Some political analysts have argued that ZANU PF is using the exhumations to deflect attention from its own atrocities.<sup>655</sup> This has sparked a battle between ZANU PF and other political and civic organisations over the bodies and, by extension, over control of the liberation war memories. For example, the revived Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) claimed

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<sup>652</sup> The national exhumers is linked to ZANU PF and works with the war veterans who help them identify the unmarked graves of their former comrades in arms. In most cases the exhumations are captured on camera and is characterised with spirit possession of a member of the family whose relative is being exhumed. To authentic the occasion, it is normally the person possessed with the spirit of the deceased who points the site where 'my remains are laid'.

<sup>653</sup> The exhumations have been a subject of debate in the media in Zimbabwe with the state media supporting them whilst private and international media condemning them as unscientific and politicized. Owen Gagare, 'Government not involved in exhumations-Mohadi' *Newsday* 22 March 2011, Nathaniel Manheru, 'The wailing bones of Chibondo' <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/opinion/opinion.aspx?newsid=4877> accessed on 10 April 2011, Kuda Bwititi, 'Exhumations bring back gory memories' [http://www.zimpapers.co.zw/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2393:exhumations-bring-back-gory-memories&catid=37:top-stories&Itemid=130](http://www.zimpapers.co.zw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2393:exhumations-bring-back-gory-memories&catid=37:top-stories&Itemid=130) accessed on 17 June 2011.

<sup>654</sup> PF ZAPU took the government to court over the exhumations and won an interdict to stop the exhumations until proper scientific processes of identifying the bodies were put in place. There is a belief that some of the bodies maybe of people who were killed during *Gukurahundi* in the 1980s or even victims of the post-2000 political violence.

<sup>655</sup> There have also been speculations that some of the bodies possibly belong to victims of recent political violence.

that some of the bodies could have been those of its members since its military wing operated in that area. They managed to get a high court order to halt the exhumations.<sup>656</sup>

The ZANU PF political rhetoric surrounding these exhumations emerged within the context of the party's use and abuse of liberation war history since 1999. Ranger argues that, having seen the threat coming from the MDC since 1999, ZANU PF has turned to history, especially that of the liberation to legitimate itself as patriotic while casting the MDC and other players as 'sell-outs' and enemies of the country.<sup>657</sup> The liberation war became the centre piece of ZANU PF propaganda and unsurprisingly the Rhodesian Front massacres during the liberation began to take a new significance as ZANU PF portrayed the MDC as having very close ties with, and could be associated the former colonisers and their brutality. It was within this renewed interest in the liberation war history that sites where civilians or combatants were massacred and/or buried during the liberation struggle such as Kamungoma Farm in the Dewure Purchase Areas have gained prominence in national political discourse. Ranger argues that this brand of history, which he terms 'patriotic history', 'offers a selective and streamlined version of the anti-colonial struggle. It is a doctrine of "permanent revolution" leaping from *Chimurenga* to *Chimurenga*. It has no time for questions or alternatives'.<sup>658</sup> This brand of history, therefore, assumes that Zimbabwean history is a history of struggles, one leading to another, and that nothing happens outside or between these episodes of struggles. Ranger argues that patriotic history has largely been churned out by state controlled media and through the National and Strategic Studies introduced at teacher training colleges and polytechnics.<sup>659</sup> It was also within

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<sup>656</sup> 'Zimbabwe exhumations must be done by forensic specialists' <http://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-2668-article-Zimbabwe+exhumations+must+be+done+by+forensic+specialists.html> visited on 10 April 2010.

<sup>657</sup> See T. O. Ranger, 'Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: The struggle over the past in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2004)., B-M. Tendi, 'Patriotic history and public intellectuals critical of power', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (2008).

<sup>658</sup> T. Ranger, 'The uses and abuses of history in Zimbabwe' in M. Palmberg and R. Primorac (eds.) *Skinning the skunk-Facing Zimbabwean futures* (Uppsala, NAI, 2005), p.8.

<sup>659</sup> T. O. Ranger, 'Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: The struggle over the past in Zimbabwe'. However, N. Bhebe 'The golden age of Zimbabwean Historiography and its decline from 1967 to present' paper presented at the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, Japan, June 2004, argues that Terrence Ranger is unduly concerned with journalistic writings in the papers. Overall, Bhebe argues that patriotic history has not managed affect academic historians at Universities.

this context that the government initiated an oral history project to gather liberation war memories. The oral history project mentioned in chapter one.

The involvement of ZANU PF politicians was one of the reasons why this project was viewed by some scholars as having been one of the linchpins in the ‘patriotic history’ project, championing a singular version of the liberation war at the expense of other narratives and crudely dividing the country between ‘revolutionaries’ and ‘sell outs’.<sup>660</sup> The project was viewed as a response to calls by the government for ‘level headed historians to correct the distortions of Zimbabwe’s history which were supposedly being produced by white racists.’<sup>661</sup> The Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Home Affairs, in which NAZ and NMMZ fall, stated that the oral history project was ‘a response to a challenge thrown to the three institutions [NMMZ, NAZ and University of Zimbabwe’s History Department] by President Mugabe to record for posterity the facts of the national struggle.’<sup>662</sup> The project was, therefore, at great risk of falling into the trap of being an appendage of ZANU PF’s patriotic history project and becoming hamstrung by government involvement as it was both funded and directed by government. It was also affected by the fact that it was launched at a time when the country was politically polarised following the highly contentious 2002 presidential elections in which the ruling ZANU PF’s Robert Mugabe narrowly won against MDC’s Morgan Tsvangirai.

In January 2006, the project sent a team of research assistants to collect liberation war memories in Gutu and Gwanda districts.<sup>663</sup> In Gutu district the project team visited Kamungoma Farm, the site of the May 1978 massacre of civilians at a *pungwe* (all night political rally). A total of 105 civilians were massacred by Rhodesian Forces during this *pungwe*, making it one of

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<sup>660</sup> T. O. Ranger, ‘Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: the struggle over the past in Zimbabwe’ *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (June 2004), see also T. O. Ranger, ‘The rise of patriotic journalism in Zimbabwe and its possible implications’ *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* Special Issue, October 2005, p.11

<sup>661</sup> ‘Lest we forget’ *Chronicle* 10 August 2003, quoted in T. O. Ranger, ‘Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: the struggle over the past in Zimbabwe’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (June 2004), p.229

<sup>662</sup> T. O. Ranger, ‘Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: the struggle over the past in Zimbabwe’, p.229.

<sup>663</sup> I was part of the team of research assistants sent from the University of Zimbabwe, History Department.

the most brutal massacres to happen inside the country during the war.<sup>664</sup> The farm was owned by Hopwood Washington Kamungoma. Although Kamungoma was not ethnically Sotho, he became integrated into the community through his marriage to Aletta Mphisa, a member of one of the most influential families in the Basotho community.<sup>665</sup> Hopwood Kamungoma and his wife participated in many Basotho activities at Bethel Farm and also took part in other Basotho community gatherings. He also contributed some money towards the purchase of Bethel Farm, the Basotho community farm.<sup>666</sup> Hence Kamungoma Farm was part of the Basotho farms in the Dewure Purchase Areas.

Research assistants conducted a number of interviews with key informants, including survivors of the massacres, villagers who helped bury the dead, war collaborators and also war veterans in the area.<sup>667</sup> The accounts collected were generally narrow, focusing on the brutality of the Rhodesian Forces (RF) and failing to highlight the culpability of the guerrillas in this massacre. For example, in his historical novel, Modesai Hamutyinei narrates how, before the fateful *pungwe*, the guerrillas were drinking heavily and buying a lot of food and beer. As one of the political leaders in the community, Hamutyinei argues that he found this heavy drinking by the guerrillas very unusual.<sup>668</sup> He further notes that, the huge amounts of food and drinks purchased for the *pungwe* attracted so many people that this became a very large gathering making it dangerous for the civilians.<sup>669</sup> McLaughlin also notes that,

the guerrillas as well as the local youth then spent the afternoon drinking, *failing to exercise caution or vigilance*. Only one unarmed guerrilla addressed the meeting while

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<sup>664</sup> See G. Baumhögger, *The Struggle for Independence: Documents on the recent Development of Zimbabwe (1975-1980)* Vol. IV Doc.477-695 (March 1978-February 1979) (Institute Of African Studies, Hamburg, 1984) Doc. 521: Reports on the Kamungoma Massacre, 14.5.1978

<sup>665</sup> As a Jeanes Teacher at one point Aletta Mphisa worked as a Home Demonstrator at Bethel Clinic and was also elected secretary of the Basotho community.

<sup>666</sup> S1859 1933-1949 Schools Gutu, Basuto Community's Plot: Bethel: Holding 24, Dewure Division, Gutu, 25 October 1941.

<sup>667</sup> I was one of the team leaders of the research assistants who conducted interviews at Kamungoma and I also managed to interview some of the eye witnesses of the massacre.

<sup>668</sup> M. A. Hamutyinei, *Zvakanga Zvakaoma muZimbabwe* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984), p. 69.

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid.*, p.69.



others were still in outlying areas gathering people or in nearby homes with local girls. A warning that security forces were approaching was ignored.<sup>670</sup>

The guerrillas organising this gathering were warned by a *mujibha* (male war collaborator) that many soldiers were coming their way but they refused to listen. According to Hamutyinei, if the guerrillas had listened to the advice and intelligence which they had been given by the *mujibhas* and the common people about the dangers of holding a *pungwe* when the soldiers were in the vicinity there would not have been such a massacre of innocent civilians.<sup>671</sup> It is quite clear from these accounts, that though ZANU PF did not publicly admit it, the massacre could, in a way, be blamed on the guerrillas' lack of vigilance which had made them fail to adhere to basic security measures before and during the *pungwe*.

The accounts collected by the 'Capturing a Fading National Memory' project, however, failed to capture these nuances. For instance, in spite of the massacre having happened on a farm belonging to a member of the Basotho community, no mention is made of the Kamungoma family or the Basotho community at large. It should also be highlighted that, in spite of the fact that the majority of the people who attended the *pungwe* were from surrounding communities under Chief Chin'ombe and in the Dewure Purchase Areas, a number of Basotho also attended the *pungwe* and some became casualties. Among those who were killed during the massacre was one of Hopwood Kamungoma's sons.<sup>672</sup> That the project did not consider interviewing any members of the Basotho community was a great omission which resulted in the muting of Basotho voices.

One of the reasons why the accounts collected tended to be narrow and failed to incorporate memories of minorities was that the project used government and political structures to access informants. Ivan Murambiwa, the Director of the National Archives of Zimbabwe and the co-director of the project, noted that the use of local leadership structures, which is a euphemism for ZANU PF structures, in identifying potential informants compromised the

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<sup>670</sup> J. McLaughlin, *On the Frontline: Catholic missions in Zimbabwe's liberation war* (Harare: Baobab Books, 1996), p. 197.

<sup>671</sup> M. A. Hamutyinei, *Zvakanga zvakaoma muZimbabwe*, p.70.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.*

integrity of this project.<sup>673</sup> Explaining why the project was not a great success Murambiwa noted that,

the political environment in Zimbabwe coupled with the need to identify and approach informants through local leadership structures is not very conducive. Local leadership invariably refers to very politicized local government or ruling ZANU PF structures. Informants invariably tell you the story that they think you want to hear as a Government agent. I have no doubt that the same informants, in other settings, would offer different versions of their stories. Along the way we have, however, been able to collect some very candid and informative accounts of the war.<sup>674</sup>

This was indeed a telling admission from a person who was at the helm of the project. It ultimately meant that the accounts were arguably influenced by ZANU PF structures lending some credence to accusations that the project was part of ZANU PF's patriotic history project. The official nature of the project meant that informants had to be careful about what they included in their accounts for fear of being victimised. It is, therefore, highly probable that in other settings, far from prying eyes of government officials, it would be possible to extract richer and more nuanced narratives of the massacre from the same informants.<sup>675</sup> It might also have been possible to hear the accounts of the silenced minorities such as Basotho, whose accounts have not been represented in the meta-narrative.

It is, however, ironic that even though the name 'Kamungoma' has assumed so much national significance, there has been little effort to make the accounts of the Kamungoma family and the Basotho community at large heard. In most accounts of the massacre, the story of the Kamungoma family, and by extension, the Basotho community is largely left untold, even though Kamungoma lost one of his own sons in the massacre.<sup>676</sup> At the national level, what remains is only the name, bereft of any connections with the Basotho community. This omission

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<sup>673</sup> I. Murambiwa, 'The Zimbabwe archive', Paper presented at the Expatriate Archives in Museums Workshop, British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, Bristol, UK, 19 April 2008.

<sup>674</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>675</sup> For example when the project team was conducting interviews with informants in Gutu while camped at Alheight Mission a few kilometres from Kamungoma a certain woman came to the mission when the team was about to leave the place and implored the team to interview her arguing that when other villagers were interviewed she had not been home.

<sup>676</sup> Interview with Paul Mugariwa, 19 January 2006. He mentioned that one of the people was killed during the massacre was one of the children of Hopwood Kamungoma. The Kamungoma family sold the farm soon after the end of the war and moved to one of the towns.

was arguably due to the fact that associating such a key liberation war incident with the Basotho, who are viewed as a non-indigenous group, would not fit well in the meta-narrative of the war especially given the centrality of notions of inclusion and exclusion in the country in the last decade. Yet the fact that the Kamungoma farm became a 'base' for the guerrillas and a venue for the fateful *pungwe* is indicative of the family's support of the liberation struggle.

Due to its growing national significance, there have been efforts by local ZANU PF politicians to have the site of the massacre declared a national monument and they approached NMMZ officials with their proposal. According to Fontein, 'in 2006, the NMMZ's acting Deputy Director, Crispin Chauke, described how local people requested NMMZ to "construct a sort of museum or memorial" at the site.....'<sup>677</sup> Although the politicians have not been able to make the NMMZ to declare the site a national monument, the site has remained vital in ZANU PF propaganda. The massacre is usually re-narrated during occasions such as Heroes Day and Independence Day celebrations. However, the current state affairs indicate that if such as a memorial or museum is established it is likely to, again, ignore Basotho's history and connection to the Kamungoma Farm.

The Kamungoma massacre, together with the role played by Solomon Nkomo during the liberation struggle, provides a window into Basotho's participation in the liberation struggle. That among the members of the community were some individuals who left the country to join the armed struggle illustrates how much the community had moved from their initial close ties with the colonial officials to supporting the liberation struggle. The fact that the massacre happened during a *pungwe* held at a farm belonging to a member of the Basotho community was therefore not a mere coincidence, but a result of the community's support of the liberation struggle.

It is apparent that the popular liberation war history that has been championed by political elites in the last ten years has little space for multiple narratives. As a result, minority groups are often silenced in these liberation war meta-narratives and local figures and events are appropriated into the larger national discourse. Although they had enjoyed the patronage of missionaries and colonial officials during the colonial period, Basotho supported the liberation

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<sup>677</sup> J. Fontein, 'Between tortured bodies and resurfacing bones: The politics of the dead in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Material Culture* Vol.15, No.4 (2010), p.6.

war as evidenced by the role played by individuals from the community like Solomon Nkomo and the sacrifices made by families such as the Kamungoma family. Against this background, one would expect that Basotho liberation war experiences would have a positive impact on their belonging, both locally and nationally. However, as the ‘Capturing a Fading National Memory Project’ revealed, the post-colonial state has not been tolerant to plurality which has meant that liberation war accounts of minorities like Basotho have at best been muted. On their part, Basotho did not actively seek to challenge the totalising accounts of the Kamungoma massacre propagated by ZANU PF. They were, thus, arguably, complicit in the muting or silencing of their own voices. This was largely because of the uncertainties of this period emanating from the polarisation of the country between ZANU PF and MDC. It, therefore, became desirable for them to avoid exposing themselves to exclusionary politics by being less assertive.

### **Political crisis and politics of belonging**

A number of scholars have observed that the democratization process in Africa in the 1990s led to the upsurge in the politicisation of autochthony and the widening of insider-outsider divide.<sup>678</sup> Faced by political competition, incumbent political leaders often resort to exclusionary policies such as questioning the citizenship of their political opponents and encouraging divisions between groups so that they do not unite against them. As Whitaker argues, ‘many leaders have adopted the rhetoric of democracy while devising creative ways to limit political competition.’<sup>679</sup> Thus, increased political competition brought about by the emergence of multi-party democracy in Africa has had the unanticipated effect of heightening discourses of exclusion. In the case of Zimbabwe, there has been a significant shift in the politics of citizenship and belonging in the past decade. The upsurge in the politics of exclusion was, in part, a result of the Fast Track Land

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<sup>678</sup> B. Ceuppens and P. Geschiere, ‘Autochthony: Local or global? New modes in the struggle over citizenship and belonging in Africa and Europe’, *The Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 34 (2005), F. Nyamnjoh and M. Rowlands, ‘Elite associations and the politics of belonging in Cameroon’, *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (1998).

B. E. Whitaker, ‘Citizens and foreigners: Democratization and the politics of exclusion in Africa’, *African Studies Review*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (2005), P. Konings ‘Mobility and exclusion: Conflicts between autochthons and allochthons during political liberalization in Cameroon’ in M de Bruijn, R van Dijk, D Foeken (eds.) *Mobile Africa: Changing patterns of movement in Africa and beyond* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

<sup>679</sup> B. E. Whitaker, ‘Citizens and foreigners: Democratization and the politics of exclusion in Africa’, p.110.

Reform Programme. This programme targeted White commercial farmers who were viewed as beneficiaries of the colonial injustices. It therefore created a great challenge for white farmers, whose belonging was never constructed on the basis of inclusion and integration.<sup>680</sup>

The farm workers, most of whom were descendents of migrants from Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi, were also targeted in this exclusionary discourse as they were accused of supporting their white employers.<sup>681</sup> They were largely denied the opportunity to benefit from the land reform on the basis that they worked and ‘belonged’ to the white farmers and were still considered to be ‘aliens’. According to Rutherford, ‘many Zimbabweans, including policy-makers and politicians, often view farm workers as not-Zimbabweans, as foreigners’ largely because until the 1960s most of the farm workers were from Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi).’<sup>682</sup> Consequently, although some of them were beneficiaries of the land reform a number were sidelined. Having been irked by the fact that most farm workers were voting for the MDC, Prof. Jonathan Moyo, who was then the Information Minister in the ZANU PF government, once stated that ‘as for pro-MDC farm workers most of whom are Zimbabwean born but whose origins are Malawian and Mozambican, they were foreigners and would be sent home if they gang up with whites.’<sup>683</sup> His statement illustrated how notions of exclusion permeated throughout the country’s political rhetoric and how this impacted on the belonging of people of ‘foreign descent’.

The Citizenship Amendment Act of 2001 took the politics of exclusion in Zimbabwe to a new level. The act outlawed dual citizenship and required that all Zimbabweans of foreign origin renounce their other citizenship by taking an oath with the registrar’s office after paying a Z\$100 000 administration fee or else they would lose their Zimbabwean citizenship.<sup>684</sup> According to Ridderbos, ‘the Act’s main aim was to disenfranchise the estimated 30,000 white Zimbabweans,

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<sup>680</sup> See D. M. Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe*.

<sup>681</sup> B. Rutherford, ‘Commercial farm workers and the politics of (dis)placement in Zimbabwe: Colonialism, liberation and democracy’, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, Vol. 1, No.4 (2000), p.635.

<sup>682</sup> *Ibid.*, p.638.

<sup>683</sup> M. Power quoted in B. Rutherford, ‘Commercial farm workers and the politics of (dis)placement in Zimbabwe: Colonialism, liberation and democracy’, p.638.

<sup>684</sup> *The Herald*, 25 January 2002.

many of whom held British passports and who were accused by ZANU-PF of using their dual citizenship to discredit the ZANU-PF regime abroad and of bankrolling the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).<sup>685</sup> In spite of having being crafted with the aim of outlawing white farmers' dual citizenship, however, it ended up mostly affecting the former farm workers of Malawian, Zambian or Mozambican origin. In spite of qualifying as Zimbabwean citizens, former farm workers could not be granted their rights until they renounced their other citizenship; a long and expensive process. Thus, most of these former workers were at great risk of being left stateless by the law as they lacked the wherewithal to go through the process of renouncing their other citizenships and claiming Zimbabwean citizenship. As a result of this, they continued to be marginalised in Zimbabwe's politics of race and ethnicity and land redistribution.<sup>686</sup>

This discourse gained more traction with the violent displacements of Operation *Murambatsvina* in 2005 when, again, the national belonging of the descendents of former migrants was questioned by political elites because of their perceived political affiliation. Prominent ZANU PF Members of Parliament were quoted in several media as arguing that former farm workers and urban dwellers of foreign descent were 'aliens' who could not be afforded full citizenship. Phineas Chihota, a ZANU PF MP that 'it is common cause that the definition of an indigenous person is one who has a rural home allocated to him by virtue of being indigenous...'<sup>687</sup> This was obviously a very narrow definition of national citizenship which was arguably based on ZANU PF politicians' desire to displace urban voters who had been voting against them since 2000.

The Basotho in the Dewure Purchase Areas have also been caught up in the politics of exclusion, especially given their perceived association with MDC. It should be noted that

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<sup>685</sup> K. Ridderbos 'Stateless former farm workers in Zimbabwe' <http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR32/73.pdf> visited 12 May 2011.

<sup>686</sup> J. Muzondidya, 'Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans': Invisible subject minorities and the quest for justice and reconciliation in post-colonial Zimbabwe', in B. Raftopoulos and T. Savage (eds.), *Zimbabwe: Injustice and political reconciliation* (Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2004), p.26.

<sup>687</sup> Solidarity Peace Trust, 'Discarding the filth: Operation *Murambatsvina*' interim report on Zimbabwean government's "Urban Cleansing" and forced eviction campaign' 27 June 2005, p.22.

farmers in the Dewure Purchase Areas have largely voted for the MDC since the 2000 elections. This has meant that together with other farmers, the Basotho community has been associated with the MDC and as a result, bore the brunt of ZANU PF electoral violence since 2000. Their association with the MDC was accentuated by the fact that one of the members of the community, Job Sikhala, remained one of the major critiques of ZANU PF.

Thus, the labelling of Basotho as MDC supporters made them targets of political violence. The Sikhala family has been one of the most conspicuous targets of political violence since 2000 in the Dewure Purchase Areas. Job Sikhala's mother, who passed away in 2011, was described by her neighbours as a 'strong woman who suffered untold political victimisation at the hands of ZANU PF since 1999. In 2002 her homestead was ransacked by the party's militia who looted every item they could lay hands on including some \$200 in cash.'<sup>688</sup> Job Sikhala himself described his mother as having been a pillar of strength in his political career.<sup>689</sup> Thus, the political polarization in the country since 1999 and Basotho's general association with MDC put the community in a very precarious position. In the end, a number of the people in the community became victims of political violence because of their association with ZANU PF's political opponents. The contentious 2008 general elections had a strong impact on Basotho's already growing image as 'political outsiders' with links to MDC. Although Job Sikhala left the Morgan Tsvangirai-led MDC when the party split in 2005, he remained a key member of the opposition and a symbol of resistance to ZANU PF domination.<sup>690</sup> He was arrested numerous times during which he claims to have been tortured. He also claims to have survived many assassination attempts.<sup>691</sup>

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<sup>688</sup> <http://nehandaradio.com/2011/05/16/sikhalas-mother-dies-of-food-poison> visited on 20 May 2011, she was 65 at the time of her death in May 2011. She died of food poisoning.

<sup>689</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>690</sup> He initially joined the Arthur Mutambara led MDC when the party split in 2005, in 2009 he was expelled from the Mutambara led MDC and he formed his own party in 2010 named MDC 99.

<sup>691</sup> Irene Madongo, 'Job Sikhala arrested and tortured' <http://www.swradioafrica.com/news280211/jobsikhala280211.htm> visited 28 February 2011; 'Job Sikhala arrested over party launch' <http://www.zimbabwesituation.org/?p=13862> visited 22 May 2010.

A number of other Basotho families have also been targets of political violence. In June 2008, Jeremiah Masoha a Sotho farm owner and the MDC-T Chairman for Ward 18 was abducted from his farm and badly beaten by some ZANU PF supporters. This was largely because he was a well known member of the MDC in the area who had actively campaigned for the party in the March 2008 elections.<sup>692</sup> With four out of the five constituencies in Gutu district having been won by the MDC in 2008 elections, the district became a target of ZANU PF's violent campaigns on the run up to the presidential run-off in June 2008. At the height of political violence in 2008 one online publication reported that,

in Gutu District, the local branch of the ZANU-PF militia has been on the rampage, setting homes belonging to the MDC supporters and activists on fire, assaulting, torturing and etc suspected MDC activists. Their campaign has a military feel to it, a credit to the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) soldiers who have been embedded within the ranks of the ZANU PF militia.<sup>693</sup>

Although it is possible that some members of the Basotho community are not MDC supporters, their image as people who do not subscribe to ZANU PF policies has stuck with them. With the violence against MDC activists having been so widespread, it would be misleading, however, to speculate that there may have been an ethnic undercurrent to the violence against some Basotho families. What is clear is that these families were targeted because they were well-known members of the MDC party, a label that made them 'legitimate' targets in the eyes of the perpetrators of the violence. With the Dewure Purchase Areas having largely voted for the MDC the most conspicuous members of the party such as Jeremiah Masoha became targets, especially during the run up to the presidential runoff election in June 2008. Although, as minorities, it would have made sense for members of the Basotho community to support ZANU PF it should be noted that at the time of its establishment, a large number of Zimbabweans welcomed MDC as an alternative to ZANU PF's domination. Therefore, it was not much of a risk for Basotho to openly support the new party more so given that one of the members of the community was a founder member of the party. Basotho's support for the MDC was also a result of the fact that when the party emerged in 1999 it represented values such as 'modernity', democracy, and

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<sup>692</sup> Interview with Jeremiah Masoha, Farm 223, 16 July 2009.

<sup>693</sup> 'ZANU PF militia violence in Gutu', [www.hararetribune.com](http://www.hararetribune.com) 8 July 2008.



development which resonated well with the community's own identity as a 'progressive' and 'modernising' community. Thus, since the then ruling ZANU PF party no longer represented these values Basotho turned their support to the MDC.

### **Dual/multiple belonging: Basotho and ambivalent belonging**

By the post-colonial period the Basotho community, through using various but interrelated strategies, had established material relationships with the land. They no longer needed to use freehold tenure to negotiate belonging as the materialities of graves and other features were increasingly becoming important in their articulation of belonging. It is also important to note that when war veterans and peasants started violently seizing mainly white owned commercial farms in 2000, Basotho farms were not affected.

In spite of Basotho's reluctance to sell their farms, there were some who actually sold their farms and left Dewure Purchase Areas and settled in towns and other areas. Moreover, like many other Zimbabweans, a number of members of the Basotho community left the country in the wake of Zimbabwe's crisis since 2000. Yet most of the Basotho who left Dewure Purchase Areas have continued to have some kind of attachment to the area. This is a result of the strong kinship ties within the Basotho community, which are built on the practice of endogamous marriages. Moreover, Basotho's communal ownership of Bethel Farm and the practice of burying their dead in the Bethel cemetery have also meant that even though some individuals have migrated to other areas, they still consider Dewure Purchase Areas their home. They even continue to refer to Bethel Farm as 'our farm'.<sup>694</sup> As Marchetti-Mercer argues, 'being connected to one's home does not necessarily imply being physically part of it and may in fact require a process of leaving it and separating from it.'<sup>695</sup> Thus, for them, Bethel has remained a key reference point in their construction of belonging because it is where some of their relatives are buried and also because a number of their kinsmen still live there. However, in spite of the strong feelings of attachment to Bethel and Dewure Purchase Areas, there are also instances when some

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<sup>694</sup> Interview with Jeremiah Masoha, Farm 223, 16 July 2009.

<sup>695</sup> M. Marchetti-Mercer, 'New meanings of "home" in South Africa', *Acta Academia*, Vol. 38, No.2 (2006), p.203.

individuals have also sought to retrace their belonging to South Africa. The cases discussed below help to interrogate notions of inclusion and exclusion in contemporary Zimbabwe and examine Basotho's appeal to multiple belonging in the context of Zimbabwe's economic and political crisis. This raises questions of dual or multiple belonging in the Basotho community.

The Masoha family is one of the examples of the few Basotho families who sold their original farms. After the death of Joshua Masoha Snr (who owned farm number 19) in the 1950s his eldest son, Andries, inherited his estate including the farm. Andries had two brothers, Joshua Jr and Hans, who also stayed on the farm.<sup>696</sup> When his wife passed away, Andries decided to sell the farm and he went to stay with Kesary, his other son, who was working in Salisbury (now Harare) and later purchased a residential stand in Seke Township.<sup>697</sup> The farm was sub-divided into four units with the sub-divisions being sold to Makamure, Zindoga, Dzingiso and Sitemere, none of whom were members of the Basotho community.<sup>698</sup>

Although they sold their father's farm, one of the Masoha brothers, Joshua Jr decided to continue the tradition of farm ownership by buying a farm in the Dewure Purchase in 1956.<sup>699</sup> After his death, the farm was inherited by his son, Jeremiah who is still living on the farm.<sup>700</sup> The case of the Masoha family, thus, presents a slightly different picture to most of Basotho families. Whilst one section of the family decided to continue the tradition of farm ownership and remained an integral part of the Basotho Community in Dewure Purchase Areas, the other section, led by Andries, left and established itself in Seke. Nonetheless, due to strong kinship ties between those who left and those who remained behind, and also because of their attachment to Bethel Farm, ties between the two groups have continued. Links with graves of their family members at Bethel cemetery has also ensured that those Basotho who have since left the area

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<sup>696</sup> Blessing Chiromo, 15 September 2010 (email). He got married and had three sons, Kesary, Komu and Faniwell Mpalewa.

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>698</sup> Interview with Jeremiah Masoha, Farm 223, 16 July 2009.

<sup>699</sup> Joshua Masoha bought farm number 223 in Dewure East Purchase Areas. The farm was inherited by his son Jeremiah. The farm is however more than 10 kilometres away from other farms owned by Basotho because it was bought in the 1950s while the other Basotho farms were bought in the 1930s.

<sup>700</sup> Interview with Jeremiah Masoha, Farm 223, 16 July 2009.

have continued to have ties with the place and continue to identify with it although they now live elsewhere.

Interestingly, when Andries Masoha died in Seke, some members of his family suggested that he be 'brought back' to be buried in Dewure Purchase Areas where other members of the family were buried.<sup>701</sup> Although he was later buried in Seke, the debate over his burial shows the complexity of Basotho belonging and how burials bring to the fore questions about belonging. For some members of the family, Dewure Purchase Areas was the place where Andries truly belonged and had to be buried. However, other members of the family saw no point in returning to bury him in Dewure Purchase Areas, an area he had left a long time ago.<sup>702</sup> As many studies have shown, one's burial place is often regarded as a true sign of where they truly belong.<sup>703</sup> It also helps determine the belonging of the surviving relatives. In a manner reminiscent of the case described by Cohen and Atieno Odhiambo<sup>704</sup>, the family debates over the place to bury Andries Masoha, is illustrative of the intricacies and multi-locality of belonging among the Basotho.

Apart from their attachment to Dewure Purchase Areas, it is interesting to note that some Basotho still feel strongly about their historical roots in South Africa, more than a century after their forefathers' migration into what is now Zimbabwe. One case which shows how Basotho have continued to have a strong attachment to their original roots in South Africa involves Catharine Mphisa. She visited to South Africa in 1992, where her husband was working, and decided to visit the clan where her family and a number of other Basotho families in Dewure Purchase Areas originate from. She was well received and spent a night at the homestead of one of the village heads who was her distant relative. She stated that,

I was very happy to be back in our village; where we originally came from. When I told the village elders my family name I was shown where my great grandfather lived and where descendants of his siblings still live and I was well received. I was very happy to

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<sup>701</sup> Middleton Masoha, 12 September 2010 (email).

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>703</sup> Seke is in Chitungwiza a dormitory town of Harare (formerly Salisbury) For a more detailed study of burials and belonging see D. W. Cohen and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Burying SM: The politics of knowledge and the sociology of power in Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1992), P. Geschiere, *Perils of belonging*.

<sup>704</sup> D. W. Cohen and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, *Burying SM*.

be back home. However, at that time I never thought of claiming South African citizenship. In any case I was already married to somebody who was not even a Sotho. I was just happy to have managed to retrace my roots. My family was also very happy to know that I had managed visit the very village we originate from and was welcomed by people from my clan.<sup>705</sup>

Although her objective was merely to retrace her roots, her desire to establish where she ‘actually’ belongs shows how she strongly felt about her family’s historical roots with and possibly her lingering doubts about her own belonging in Zimbabwe. In spite of the many years after her family’s migration to Zimbabwe, she still continued to consider South Africa her ‘real’ home. This is, however, arguably related to the political crisis in Zimbabwe which has made many people of foreign ancestry seek to retrace their roots and if possible emigrate and change their citizenship.

In a slightly different case, after a chance meeting on one of the social networking sites, I began to regularly exchange emails with one of my Basotho informants who lives in the UK.<sup>706</sup> I contacted him realizing that his name was strikingly similar to that of one of the Basotho evangelists who helped Rev. A. A. Louw establish the DRC Morgenster Mission. I therefore became interested in knowing his family history. When he confirmed that he was indeed a member of one of the Basotho families, although his family had left Dewure Purchase Areas to settle in one of the towns during the colonial period, I began to send him emails asking him questions concerning his family history. In some instances he would consult with his family members to verify a few details before responding to my questions. However, one day he surprised me by asking if I could help him retrace his family history and assist him claim South African citizenship since his great grandfather, whom we had discussed in great detail in our correspondences, had migrated from South Africa to what is now Zimbabwe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. He also told me that some members of his extended family had already managed to successfully claim South African citizenship thereby successfully ‘returning home’.<sup>707</sup> Although I could not help him in his quest, this made me realize how multi-local his conceptualization of

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<sup>705</sup> Interview with Catherine Mphisa-Hakata, Harare, 17 September 2010.

<sup>706</sup> This is based on my email correspondences with an informant I will here only refer to as TM.

<sup>707</sup> He was however not sure how they had managed to successfully apply for South African Citizenship.

belonging was. Although he was living in the UK and considered himself to be Zimbabwean, he strongly felt that his true roots were in South Africa. Thus, he felt that the attainment of South African citizenship was a major step in retracing his roots and returning to where he truly belonged.<sup>708</sup> A possible reason why my informant was very keen to retrace his South African roots is Zimbabwe's economic and political crisis since 2000 which made many Zimbabweans migrate to other countries in the region and beyond (especially South Africa). The economic opportunities in South Africa as well its political stability are obvious attractions for many Zimbabweans. In spite of this, however, the same politics of exclusion play itself out in South Africa as witnessed in the recent xenophobic violence in the country.

As the two cases described above have shown, in spite of all the efforts that Basotho have put in negotiating their belonging in Zimbabwe, there are still some among them who feel strongly about their historic links with South Africa. Whilst some individuals have made efforts to retrace their roots back to South Africa, others have taken a further step to pursue the possibility of 'returning' to South Africa. Some Basotho actually managed to return to South Africa during the colonial period and others did so quite recently.<sup>709</sup> Their desire to retain their historical links with their 'original homes' is not only a sign of their frustrations with the challenge of negotiating belonging in their adopted country but also their quest for autochthony. Although these two Basotho informants have a great attachment to Basotho community in Dewure Purchase Areas and to Zimbabwe, it is clear that their belonging is based on ambivalence rather than certainties as they continue to have doubts about the place they 'truly belong'. Writing about the belonging of White settlers, Hughes argues that when confronted by the challenges of belonging some white Zimbabweans decided to 'belong awkwardly' as they discovered that they could not fully belong and at the same time found leaving the land, on which they had invested so much in and established an attachment with, quite unthinkable.<sup>710</sup> Although the case of the Basotho is significantly different from that of white settlers in

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<sup>708</sup> For an analysis of multiple and multilocal belonging see for example, F. Christiansen and U. Hedetoft, 'Introduction' in F. Christiansen and U. Hedetoft (eds.) *The politics of multiple belonging: Ethnicity and nationalism in Europe and East Asia* (Burlington, Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>709</sup> Email correspondence with TM, 26 September 2010.

<sup>710</sup> D. Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe*, p.143.

Zimbabwe, both groups have in some instances resorted to ambivalence or multiple belonging. Thus, as the contours of belonging have continued in to change, ambivalence has become one of the most important strategies employed by minority groups in their quests for belonging.

However, even though they succeed in returning to their roots in South Africa, they may even discover that the place is unfamiliar or even unwelcoming to them. As Marchetti-Mercer observed, in South Africa, the people who went into exile during the apartheid and returned after its collapse, found that they returned to a different and unfamiliar place in which they had to find a 'home' and renegotiate their belonging.<sup>711</sup> The fantasies of returning 'home' are seldom transmitted into reality when one physically returns. Because belonging is a relational concept, which requires one to be accepted into a group, returning to one's roots does not always result in acceptance. As Christiansen and Hedetoft argue, 'belonging implies that individuals identify with a certain type of community and, conversely, that communities see and construct themselves as containers for individual belonging.'<sup>712</sup> Thus, Grinberg and Grinberg's argument that, 'no return is simply a return; it is in fact a new migration' seems plausible.<sup>713</sup> In spite of the allure of the notion of multiple belonging among ethnic minorities or immigrant communities, the fact that belonging is a bilateral concept, involving claiming attachment to a group and being accepted, makes multiple belonging difficult to achieve. Thus, simply returning to South Africa would not, in itself, bring closure to Basotho's quest for belonging because they would need to renegotiate their belonging there.

One of the factors creating multi-locality among Basotho and other communities is the rural-urban nexus. A large number of people spend most of their time in urban areas, only returning to rural areas occasionally for holidays or special occasions such as funerals and other ceremonies. As discussed in chapter four, Bethel Farm becomes a hive of activity during public holidays such as the Heroes and Defence Forces days in August and the Christmas and New Year celebrations as the Basotho and their families return to be with their kinsmen and to attend ceremonies such as memorial services, funerals, and weddings among others. These urban

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<sup>711</sup> M. Marchetti-Mercer, 'New meanings of "home" in South Africa', p.210.

<sup>712</sup> F. Christiansen and U. Hedetoft, 'Introduction' in F. Christiansen and U. Hedetoft (eds.) *The politics of multiple belonging*, p.4

<sup>713</sup> L. Grinberg and R. Grinberg quoted in M. Marchetti-Mercer, 'New meanings of "home" in South Africa', p.210.

dwellers see coming back to the farms as a way of reconnecting with home although they live elsewhere.

The foregoing reveals the challenges that Basotho and other minorities have had to contend with in post-colonial Zimbabwe in the last decade and the re-emerged centrality of the liberation war history in the construction of national belonging by political elites. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni aptly puts it, 'the Zimbabwean national project is overburdened by a crisis of state-driven politics of memory and commemoration of a highly fetishised nation beholden to a political monologue that is not tolerant of pluralism and diversity.'<sup>714</sup> This has affected minority groups like Basotho and others whose voices have largely been silenced by the state. Disenchanted by this singular imagination of the nation and national belonging by ruling elites, a number of Zimbabweans have reacted by disengaging from the state either by ignoring national events or by migrating to other countries.<sup>715</sup> According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni, this disengagement from the state by various people shows how the state is failing to invite various groups to join the state and the ambivalence of national belonging.<sup>716</sup> Other groups have, nevertheless, seen opportunities in working with ZANU PF and have benefited from their close ties with political elites.

However, one important issue that multiple belonging raises is the possibility of the erosion of the idea of a citizen belonging to a single nation.<sup>717</sup> This has the effect of threatening the idea of national belonging. By disengaging from the state, migrating to other countries and possibly changing citizenship, Zimbabweans are effectively challenging the notion of national belonging imagined and deployed by political elites. Thus by appealing to multiple belonging, a number of Zimbabweans are deconstructing the singular notion of national belonging. According to Christiansen and Hedetoft,

the citizen who does not belong....is therefore to be understood as the citizen who feels (s)he belongs to multiple settings in different ways, whose sense of attachment is in a

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<sup>714</sup> S. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Do Zimbabweans exist? Trajectories of nationalism, national identity formation and crisis in a postcolonial state* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), p.4.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33.

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>717</sup> S. Castles and A. Davidson, *Citizenship and migration: Globalization and the politics of belonging* (London, Macmillan, 2000), pp.156-157.

state of temporal and spatial constructedness, who is able to instrumentalize such individualized “identity diversity” in and for their life trajectories, and who has shed the hegemonic assumptions of national identity as homogeneous, absolute and unchanging.<sup>718</sup>

Hence, for Basotho and other Zimbabweans of foreign descent, resorting to multiple belonging has been one of the ways through which they have reacted to hegemonic assumptions of national identity and the blurring of the boundaries between belonging and non-belonging. Basotho’s attempts to re-establish links with their historical roots either by reconnecting with their distant relatives in South Africa or by finding ways to gain South African citizenship, should therefore be understood in the context of the existence of a singular and hegemonic construction of national belonging which has tended to downplay the diversity of the country. It is therefore easy to agree with Hedetoft’s conclusion that national belonging ‘has never been more than an ideal model, always practically contradicted by messy borders, migratory movements, ethnic minorities, dual citizenships and multicultural policies.’<sup>719</sup> This resonates with Bhabha’s argument that ‘the nation is no longer the sign of modernity under which cultural differences are homogenized in the ‘horizontal’ view of society. The nation reveals, in its ambivalent and vacillating representation, the ethnography of its own historicity and opens up the possibility of other narratives of the people and their difference.’<sup>720</sup>

In spite of all this drive towards multiple-belonging and towards reconnecting with their historical roots in South Africa, there is also evidence that those Basotho who have remained on their farms in the Dewure Purchase Areas have continued to have a strong attachment to the area. As has been highlighted in preceding chapters, the material significance of Basotho’s community farm (as well as the cemetery and church on the farm), coupled with the importance of Basotho’s individual farms have gone a long way in helping Basotho establish a form of attachment to the place. It is, therefore, important to highlight the importance of the materialities of graves and

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<sup>718</sup> F. Christiansen and U. Hedetoft, ‘Introduction’ in F. Christiansen and U. Hedetoft (eds.) *The politics of multiple belonging*, p.11

<sup>719</sup> U. Hedetoft, ‘Discourses and images of belonging: Migrants between new racism, liberal national and globalization’ in F. Christiansen and U. Hedetoft (eds.) *The politics of multiple belonging*, p.26

<sup>720</sup> H. Bhabha, ‘DissemiNation: Time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation’, in H. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and narration* (London and New York: Routledge), p. 300.



farms in Basotho's constructions of their belonging. These features have been key pillars in Basotho's constructions of belonging since the 1930s when they moved to the Dewure Purchase Areas. In addition to this, ceremonies such as funerals and memorial services have also served as platforms where Basotho identity is played out and the divisions between Basotho and their non-Sotho neighbours become more pronounced, as Basotho revert to their *Sesotho* language and Sotho etiquette. Thus, Basotho belonging in Dewure Purchase Areas is built on both social integration, attachment to the landscape and Basotho particularism.

## Conclusion

Discourses of inclusion and exclusion have been at the centre stage of politics in contemporary Zimbabwe and the post-colonial government has failed to integrate the subject minorities. In the end, by trying to champion a singular and hegemonic national identity, the state has cloaked other identities. Zimbabweans of foreign descent have, therefore, been marginalized by this national identity. This marginalization took a new dimension in 2000 with the violent farm occupations which saw the displacement of many farm workers of foreign origin. The displacements of 2000 saw the reconstruction of the definition of citizenship in Zimbabwe by the government and the narrowing of principles of inclusion. Whilst locally Basotho used their ownership of freehold farms, religion, graves and funerals, among other things, to construct and negotiate their belonging, they have faced a number of challenges in negotiating political and national belonging. Their association with MDC has made them targets of political violence.

The chapter has shown that although Basotho invested in their belonging in the Dewure Purchase Areas and in Zimbabwe, there have continued to be some instances when their historical links with South Africa take centre stage. This has created a form of dual or multiple belonging. Thus, in spite of the existence of a seemingly hegemonic national imaginary that is not tolerant to plurality, by appealing to notions of multiple belonging, Basotho have been able to confront this singular national identity. As a strategy, multiple belonging empowers minorities without necessarily eroding the idea of national belonging. As Christiansen and Hedetoft argue, 'national belonging is no longer universally regarded (and treated) as hegemonic, singular and morally beyond question. "Multiple belonging" as well as politics and policies related thereto are

imaginable and pursuable and as such are a real factor in many people's social, cultural and political lives.<sup>721</sup> Hence in spite of the obvious impediments, Basotho have been able to make use of a number of strategies to construct and articulate multiple belongings. As been shown in previous chapters, different historical contexts brought about peculiar imperatives which called for different but interrelated strategies.

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<sup>721</sup> F. Christiansen and U. Hedetoft, 'Introduction' in F. Christiansen and U. Hedetoft (eds.) *The politics of multiple belonging*, p.11

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the various strategies that the Basotho community in Dewure Purchase Areas used in their struggles to belong since their migration into what is now Zimbabwe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has shown how a multiplicity of experiences and processes of belonging can work in different ways for different individuals and communities. Basotho had to use different but interrelated strategies to construct and articulate their belonging at different times. The community, thus, had to continually negotiate and re-negotiate their belonging, whether by appealing to their strong in-group ties, aligning with DRC missionaries or colonial officials, or by making efforts to integrate into the local community. The thesis has, therefore, demonstrated the importance of taking a long historical trajectory in analysing the problem of belonging in Africa.

The migration history of Basotho has illustrated the vital role played by Africans in the evangelisation of Africa. As Mashingaidze has argued, African evangelists like the Basotho, who worked with the DRC and other missionaries, were the frontiersmen of evangelisation in southern Africa.<sup>722</sup> Their role in evangelisation was as important as that of the European missionaries. This thesis has analysed the role played by Basotho evangelists in the evangelisation of areas to the north of the Limpopo River and especially how they became the core of the group of African evangelists who assisted Rev. A. A. Louw in establishing Morgenster Mission, the first DRC mission in the country. Similarly, the Wesleyans employed a number of African evangelists who helped them in their evangelisation work, with others becoming pioneers in their own right. For instance, Josiah Ramushu a Sotho evangelist was given the task of establishing a school at Chiremba (Epworth), just outside Harare, with other African evangelists being sent to several other areas.<sup>723</sup> Thus, African evangelists served as both intermediaries and frontiersmen in the spread of Christianity in southern Africa which also resulted in their migration and permanent resettlement in their mission fields.

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<sup>722</sup> E. K. Mashingaidze, 'Forgotten frontiersmen of Christianity's northward outreach'.

<sup>723</sup> *Ibid.*

This study has also shown how litigation was one of the most important strategies used by Africans in negotiating space and access to resources in the colonial period. Africans, in various colonies, used colonial laws and courts as a platform on which to resolve their disputes and to negotiate space.<sup>724</sup> Being among the first Africans to own land on freehold tenure basis, Basotho faced a number of challenges with regards to inheritance of land. Without a clear legal precedent in African inheritance cases in which the estate included immovable property (land), the Komo and Leboho vs Holmes case discussed in chapter three became one of the most important legal disputes to set a precedent. This and other legal cases involving members of the Basotho community and other Africans raised important legal issues about gender and ownership of land, inheritance, the legal minority status of women and the legality of African wills. These cases reveal how Basotho and other Africans used litigation as a strategy to resolve inheritance and other land disputes and these legal disputes on their position as colonial subjects.

The study has also demonstrated the significance of the names which Purchase Area farmers gave their farms. These names became important markers of the owner's aspirations, historical background, ethnicity, and religion among other issues. This was a common practice in Purchase Areas around the country which ended up attracting the attention of readers of *The Bantu Mirror*. Basotho gave their farms various names, each with a specific meaning or aimed at articulating important issues in the owner's life. By giving their farms names such as 'Bethel Farm', 'Progress Farm', and 'Sekukuniland Pioneer Farm', Basotho were expressing their historical roots as well as their image as Christians and 'progressive' or 'modernising' Africans.

This thesis has demonstrated the need to consider the salience of the materialities of graves, farms and old homes in the belonging matrix. As shown in a number of chapters, although initially legal title to land was a key factor in their strategies, the emotive presence of graves, farms, old homes increasingly became central as they realised that freehold tenure on its own was never going to be enough. Thus, graves became important as they helped them create the material links with the land itself, through which they could substantiate their claims of autochthony. This explains why Bethel Farm, their community farm, and most importantly the community cemetery on the farm became a key rallying point in the community's construction of

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<sup>724</sup> See for example: K. Mann and R. Roberts (eds.) *Law in colonial Africa*.

belonging in the Dewure Purchase Areas. It can be argued that the very act of interring the remains of the deceased in the soil, thereby turning the body into soil, helps the living to establish an attachment to the land as the body of the deceased becomes part of the soil. This resonates with Chabal's argument that burials keep alive the links between the individual, the community and the land.<sup>725</sup> Even though some members of the community chose to bury their dead on their private graveyards located on their individual farms, Bethel cemetery continued to have great emotive significance to the Basotho community. It is, thus, the affective and emotive presence of the cemetery and numerous Basotho graves located on individual farms which have been important in Basotho's establishment of an attachment to the area. Consequently, *kuBhetere*, as Bethel Farm is commonly called by surrounding communities, is generally viewed as a farm which, in a number of ways, materialises Basotho's attachment to the area. The emotive presence of Basotho graves at Bethel cemetery and various individual farms therefore helped the community in making a claim to the area and develop some form of autochthony by anchoring themselves on the land. Attachment to graves and old homes has allowed many communities to articulate their belonging to the said lands and to claim entitlement.

Alongside their attempts to become locals, Basotho also appealed to notions of particularism and in some occasions celebrated their historical roots. This was largely articulated through their activities at Bethel Farm and most importantly during funerals and family gatherings. It was during occasions such as funerals that the kinship web was unravelled and *Sesotho* became the language of choice. The salience of *Sesotho* language was also shown by the importance given to the Basotho Choir (which sang church hymns in *Sesotho*) on occasions such as funerals, memorial services, church services and other gatherings. By reverting to *Sesotho* during special occasions, when they used *Chikaranga*, the local dialect of *Chishona*, in their everyday interactions, Basotho were building their sense of unity by appealing to ethnicity and kinship, and their own particularism as 'outsiders'. Thus, Basotho's constructions of belonging fluctuated between particularism and attempts to integrate into the local community. Their construction of belonging has, thus, been a dual process involving trying to become autochthons and at the same time remaining 'outsiders'.

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<sup>725</sup> P. Chabal, *Africa: The politics of suffering and smiling*, p.49

The attainment of a level of education was one of the ways through which Africans attained respectability as progressive or modernising in the colonial period. Most farmers in purchase areas, therefore, made efforts to establish schools in their areas to cater for their children, with very little help from the colonial administration or missionaries. Although projects such as the establishment of Bethel School, designed to showcase and accentuate a distinct Basotho identity and also to show that they were 'progressive' Africans, were not always successful, nonetheless, they showed Basotho's underlying intentions. Established in 1938, Bethel School became an important institution in Basotho's everyday lives in the Dewure Purchase Areas. By establishing their own school, Basotho were both addressing an obvious need in the community and also appealing to ideals of 'progress' and 'modernisation' through acquiring western education. In spite of this, however, the school also became a platform for struggles among Basotho which exposed the cleavages within the community. The numerous clashes over the running of the school also exposed the futility of Basotho's bid to establish a school to primarily cater for their own children and ostensibly to teach them *Sesotho* and Sotho culture. The challenges that they faced in running the school and its ultimate collapse illustrate Basotho's attempts to advance their particularism whilst at the same time making efforts to integrate in the local community. As revealed during debates in the Dewure Division Native Council, by the late 1940s even some members of the Basotho community were beginning to have doubts about the significance of the school to the community and were openly questioning even the idea that the school was a 'Basotho School' which, apart from the usual academic and practical subjects, had also to teach Basotho children aspects of their culture. Thus, the challenges that Basotho faced in running Bethel school again illustrate the delicate balance that the community had to strike between particularism and attempts to appeal to colonial ideals of 'progress' and 'modernisation'.

Although the Basotho remained a closely knit group due to their shared history, ethnic and religious ties as well as interconnected kinship ties, this study has avoided projecting the community as a very cohesive group without any internal fissures. Instead, the study has shown that in spite of their unity, there indeed existed some cross-cutting cleavages within the community which resulted in the emergence of a number of cliques built on friendship, kinship, and religion among other factors. Such fissures demonstrated that members of the Basotho

community did not always share the same vision. As illustrated in chapter six, whilst the majority of the members of the community resolved to avoid missionary patronage by establishing their local church without the assistance of the DRC missionaries, other members saw no problem in enjoying the patronage of the missionaries. These internecine struggles caused so much tension within the community that it threatened its progress. This caught the attention of the local NC who began to view Basotho as a quarrelsome community. By exploring both Basotho's struggles as a community and their internal fissures, this thesis has demonstrated the complex dynamics within this community. It also showed how the community sought to use their 'unity in diversity' as a tool to negotiate their autonomy from DRC missionaries and also how the diversity of the community also became a source of internal schisms. Basotho internal squabbles were, in essence, largely about struggles over who controlled institutions, such as Bethel School, which helped mediate their identity and also about the community's external relations with DRC missionaries and colonial officials. Sometimes it was the external factors such as the community's relationship with DRC which triggered these internal squabbles. There was, therefore, an interface between Basotho's internal struggles and their external relations with DRC missionaries and colonial officials. The long historical trajectory of Basotho's history, therefore, reveals that the community's struggle for belonging was not a singular and unified affair.

The Basotho were, indeed, strategic in building alliances with dominant colonial groups, with place and time playing a crucial role. Tensions with DRC missionaries over the running of Bethel School and Bethel church were indicative of how Basotho's displacement from Niekerk's Rust and Erichsthal had changed their relationship with the DRC missionaries. Whilst from the time they migrated to what is now Zimbabwe up until the 1930s when they were displaced to the Purchase Areas, Basotho had aligned themselves with missionaries, when they moved to Purchase Areas this changed. Upon their resettlement in Dewure Purchase Areas, they chose to align themselves with the Native Commissioners than the missionaries. This was prompted by DRC missionaries' paternalistic tendencies and their exploitation of their African converts. Basotho's careful negotiation of their relationship with DRC missionaries was informed by both their desire to negotiate space within the church by keeping the missionaries at arm's length and

also their relationship with the colonial officials which they were not prepared to jeopardise by turning to African Initiated Churches which were taking hold in the district.

Although for a long time scholars focussed on African Initiated Churches (African Independent Churches), viewing mission churches as uninteresting, a focus on mission churches and the myriad small local Christian communities, such as the Peki Ewe in Southern Ghana<sup>726</sup> or the Basotho discussed in this study, provide interesting insights in African Christianity. Apart from showing Africans' appropriation of Christianity such studies also illuminate the nature and consequences of encounters between African Christian communities and western missionaries. It is evident from this study that, African Christian communities who remained within the mission churches shaped African Christianity as much as those who joined African Initiated Churches. The complex relationship between the Basotho community and DRC missionaries revealed how some African communities appropriated protestant Christianity and negotiated their position within the church without necessarily breaking away from these mission churches. By establishing their local church and maintaining a level of autonomy from missionaries, Basotho managed to establish a form of autonomy within the church. However, in spite of the grievances they had against DRC missionaries, they made a calculated move not to break away and join the African Initiated Churches. One of the reasons why they took this decision was arguably the fact that African Initiated Churches were generally viewed by colonial officials as subversive. Thus, by joining these churches Basotho would have seriously altered colonial officials' perception of them as 'progressive' Africans from which the rest of the communities in the district had to learn. Hence, they chose to swim against the tide by continuing to fight for their autonomy within the DRC.

The post-colonial period brought new imperatives for Basotho and other Zimbabweans of foreign descent. In the last decade politicians have endeavoured to build the country by constructing a new national identity which is singular and downplays plurality. A corollary to this was that ethnic minorities, people of foreign descent, and other categories felt increasingly excluded from this national imaginary. As has been shown in chapter seven, ambivalence and

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<sup>726</sup> B. Meyer, 'Translating the devil', p.2.



multiple belonging have been some of the strategies employed by some individuals and communities especially since 2000.

In terms of their use of Bethel Church to forge unity and construct a sense of belonging in the Dewure Purchase Area, the post-colonial period presented Basotho with new challenges. For instance, while ethnicity had never been such a crucial issue within Bethel Church during the colonial period because of the small number of non-Sotho people in the church, with the increasing number of non-Sotho people attending the church in the post-colonial period some Karanga members of the church began to challenge what they considered to be Basotho's dominance of the local church. This shows how surrounding communities' perceptions of the Basotho community tended to oscillate between accepting them as locals and seeing them as 'outsiders' who could not be allowed dominate the local church.

It is clear that the recent political crisis in Zimbabwe has had an impact on the politics of belonging in the country. With its emphasis on the patriot-sell-out dichotomy, ZANU PF's patriotic history has sought to create a singular national identity which casts anyone who does not conform as a traitor or sell-out. With one of the founder members of the Movement for Democratic Change being a member of the Basotho community, Basotho could not avoid being labelled supporters of the opposition and by extension being viewed as political 'outsiders'. The polarisations of the last decade also reflected the uncertainty and precariousness of belonging as shown by the heightening of politics of inclusion and exclusion which saw many people having their citizenship and belonging questioned.

The cases presented in the last section of chapter seven clearly show the level of ambivalence and the multiplicity of Basotho's strategies in constructing their belonging. Although most of the Basotho, both in the Dewure Purchase areas and those who have emigrated to other areas, have continued to see Dewure Purchase Areas (especially Bethel Farm) as their home, due to the heightening of politics of exclusion in Zimbabwe in recent years, some of them are beginning to try to re-establish their connections with their historical roots in South Africa. This should, however, be viewed within the context of a politically-unstable country which is

championing a singular national identity at the expense of plurality.<sup>727</sup> Faced with such challenges, the Basotho in Dewure Purchase Areas made use of a wide variety of different mechanisms at their disposal for establishing their rights to belong gathered through many decades. Against this background, belonging should be understood as continuous process; always in the state of becoming and requiring continuous negotiation. It can also be easily undone and seemingly autochthonous people unmasked as strangers. Different historical contexts have had their own imperatives requiring particular and context specific strategies. Basotho's quest for belonging in the Dewure Purchase Areas and in Zimbabwe at large should, therefore, be viewed in the light of belonging as both relational and always in a continuous state of becoming.

Since farms were passed on from one generation to the other, this meant that, over the years, the community engaged with the active materialities of place which substantiated their attachment to the land. Their strong kinship ties and attachment to their individual farms and especially to Bethel Farm has meant that even the few families who sold their farms and moved to other areas have continued to identify with Dewure Purchase Areas and consider it to be their home. In the end, it was no longer about their legal ownership of the land but the attachment they had managed to establish through the emotive presence of graves and old homes. This gave the members of the community the opportunity to move to towns and other areas while at the same time continuing to claim that they belonged to Dewure Purchase Areas or *kuBhetere* (Bethel Farm).

There are, however, a number of themes discussed here that require further enquiry. For example, although gender and inheritance of immovable property, is one of the themes discussed in chapter three, there is need for a more in-depth study of Africans' uses of litigation in inheritance and other disputes during the colonial period.<sup>728</sup> It is also important to explore further

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<sup>727</sup> S. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Do Zimbabweans exist?*, p.4.

<sup>728</sup> George H. Karekwaivanane's forthcoming University of Oxford PhD thesis examines Africans in Southern Rhodesia's use of the law in their social and political struggles.

the impact of landscape and the materiality of things on how communities construct and articulate their belonging and establish an attachment to particular places.

Overall, the study has made a contribution to debates about politics of belonging in Africa by analysing how Basotho dealt with the problem of belonging since their migration into Zimbabwe. Whilst debates on migration and belonging in Africa have largely focused on the dual process of exclusion and inclusion or the insider-outsider dialectic, this study has shown that the situation is more complex than that. In most cases there is no clear distinction between autochthons and allochthons and sometimes it is beneficial for some communities or individuals to maintain this ambiguity. As the case of the Basotho has shown, some immigrant communities seek to strike a delicate balance between maintaining a particularistic identity and making efforts to establish an attachment to their new homes and integrating in the local community. The Basotho community sought to both become autochthons of sorts by making use of various strategies and also to remain 'outsiders' by also maintaining some form of particularism. This has a larger impact on the broader debates about politics of migration, citizenship and belonging in Africa as it shows the importance of historically grounded analyses in understanding the intricacies of the politics of belonging. Thus, while similarities can be drawn between this study and a number of other studies on belonging, Basotho's peculiar experiences and the variety of strategies they deployed in their struggles to belong over the last century enriches our understanding of the intricacies of belonging in Africa. Moreover, whilst a number of studies have largely looked at the problem of belonging in the contemporary period, this study has shown how an analysis of a long historical period, with its many contours, can help illuminate the changing nature of the politics of belonging in Africa. The study has shown how belonging is multiple, changing, precarious and always in a state of becoming, and how individuals and communities can use different but interrelated strategies to construct, negotiate and articulate it.

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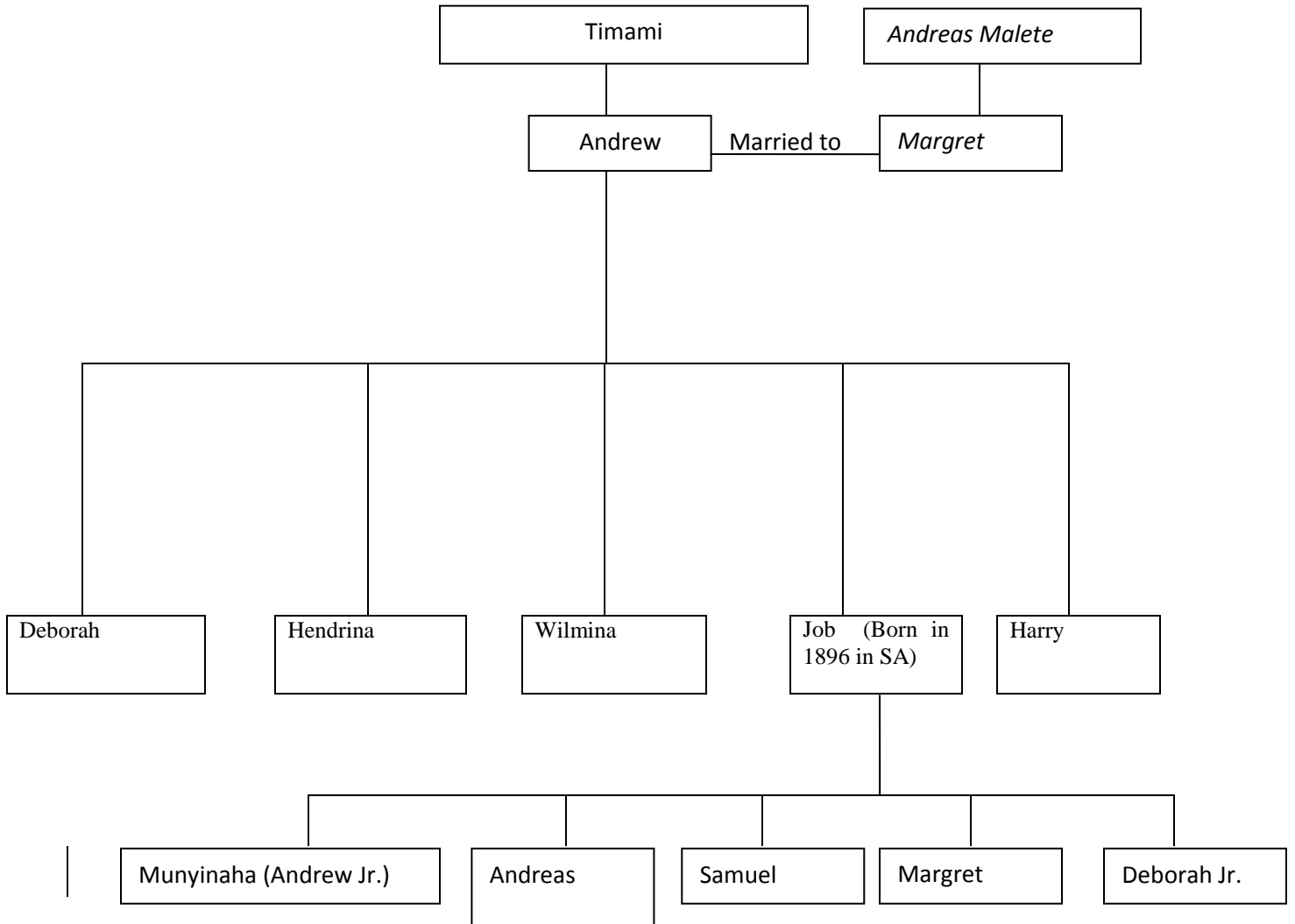
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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1

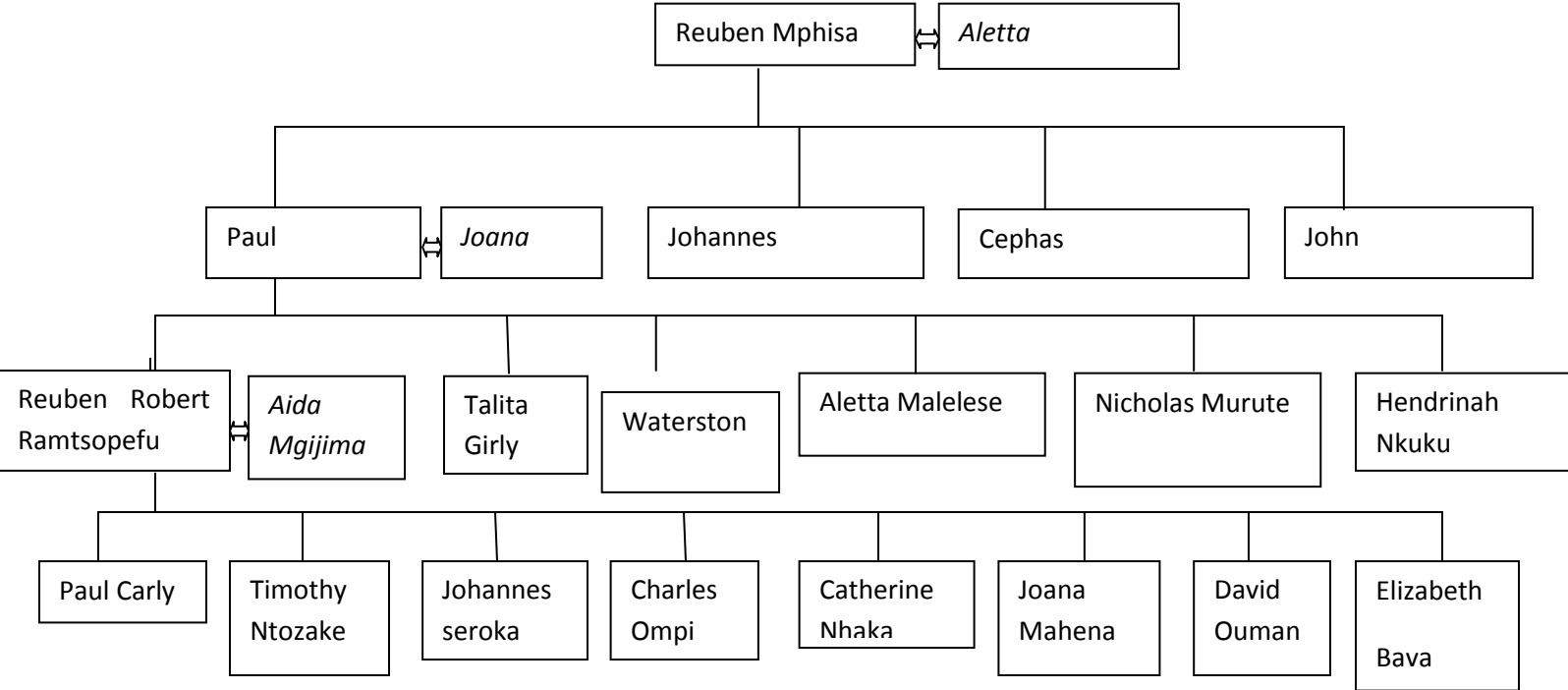
The Sikhala Family Tree (as given by Samuel Sikhala)





Appendix 2

The Mphisa Family Tree (as given by Catherine Mphisa-Hakata)



### Appendix 3

#### Basotho Farms in Dewure Purchase Areas

Name	Farm Number	Title/Deed of Transfer
Morudu, Jeremiah	16	
Morudu, Ephraim	17	1014
Morudu, Seroga	18	Henry/239/1969
Masoha, Andries	19	5441/1972 Nongai Makamwe
Kekane, J	20	1097/1965 Efas Tsambaindisa/Sigauke
Kumalo, I	23	1422/1978 Jemitias Mubayi
Molebaleng, Jacob	24	35 The Basotho Community in Gutu, Chief Rep.
Mokwile, Lucas	25	1535/1972 Stephen Zvarevashe
Mphisa, Samuel	26	472 Samuel Mphisa
Mphisa, Paul	28	
Mphisa, Paul	29	930 Paul Mphisa
Mukoka, J	31	
Sikhala, Job	35	548 Job Sikhala
Phosa, Laban	36	7049/1974 Eria Munyika
Phosa, Edward	37	33/1958 Edward Phosa
Mujapelo (Mrs)	38	188/1969 George Mubairo
Mphisa, K	40	1432/1989 Aaron Brian Chademana
Rasetlo, Jacob	49	1053 Jacob Raseta (Rasetlo)
Matlau, Hendrik	51	
Moeketsi, John Reginald	52	2927/1985 Joice Zizhou Makaraudze
Molebaleng, Jacob	53	3545/1973 Cephas Molebaleng
Malete, Andries	54	2724/1966 Kilapos alias Alex
Molebaleng, Silas	55	
Thema, Nathaniel	56	1927 Nathaniel Thema
Komo, Fredrick	58	27/1959 John Komo

Galbes, W	59	6569/1971 Erita Gonese
Mphisa, M (Mrs)	60	7029/1992 John L. Mlambo
Makguloa, Jona	63	6687/1995 John Makwanda
Maghatlo, Timothy	65	897 T. Maghatho
Muroli, Jestiel	69	923 Jestiel Muroli
Masoha, Joshua	223	
Leboho, David	235	
Kanongoma, Washington H	340	8923/2001 Maxwell Gosta Jacob Muzivi
Memuka, David	368	
Ramaru, J. C	383	
Pirikisi	159/53	Subdivision
Thema, Nathaniel	388/20	6964/95Thema N,
Komo, Fredrick	392/58	16 -26/1959 F. Komo
Thema/Dzingiso	407	6964 Dzingiso
Molebaleng, Silas	158/53	

**Source:** This table was constructed using information obtained from the Registrar of Deeds Files, Archival Files as well as oral interviews. It, however, does not include the farms purchased by Basotho in Mungezi Purchase Areas.

## Appendix 4

### List of Basotho who contributed towards the purchase of Bethel Farm

Name	Farm No	Amount Paid
1. Galbes, W. 4946 Gutu/a	59	£2.10.0 plus 10:od
2. Kekane, J 13626 do.	20	£2.10.0
3. Komo, Matthew	-	£ 2.10.0 plus £1.10: od
4. [Komo] , Mrs.	-	-.10:0 (Dead)
5. [Komo], Fredrick 13059 Victoria/a	58	£2.10.0 plus £1.10: od
6. Kumalo, Isaac 1345 do.	23	£2.10.0 plus £1.10: od
7. Lekhula, Franz	-	£2.10.10 plus £1.10: od
8. Leboho, Shadreck	-	£2.5.0
9. [Leboho],D	-	-10.0
10. Molebaleng, Jakob 14226 Gutu/a	53	£2.10.0 plus £1.10: od
11. [Molebaleng], S. J	-	-.10.0
12. [Molebaleng], Silas 14227 Gutu/a	55	£2.10.0 plus £1.10:od
13. Mmakola, J Mungezi [PA]	4	£2.10.0 plus £1.10:od
14. [Mmakola], K	-	£2.0: od
15. [Mmakola], Koenelis	-	£2.10.0: od
16. [Mmakola], Jena	-	£2.0:od
17. Morudu, Ephraim 13548 Gutu/a	17	£2.10.0
18. [Morudu], Seroga 14732 do.	18	£2.10.0: od

20. Mokwile, Lucas	14356 Victoria/a25		£2.10.0 plus 10.od
21. Moeketsi, J. R.	x9602 Gutu/a	52	£2.10.0: plus £1.10: od
22. Mphisa, Paul	x5826 do.	28	£2.10.0: od
23. [Mphisa], Mrs. M		60	£1:0: od
24. [Mphisa], K	x6556 Victoria/a	40	£2:10: 0 plus £1:10:od
25. Makgutloa, Jona	x6699 Gutu/a	63	£2.10.0:od
26. Mujapelo, Mrs		38	£2.0:od
27. Makgatlo, Timothy	x6003 Gutu/a	65	10:od
28. Matlau, Hendrik	9770 do.	51	£2:10: od
29. Masoha, Andries	x5425 do.	19	10:od
30. Malete, Andries	x4814 do.	54	10: od
31. Mukoka, J	3600 do.	31	£1:0: od
32. Phosa, Laban	113993 Bikita/a	36	10: od
33. [Phosa], Malachi	x7314 Gutu/a		£2:10.0 plus £1:0:od
34. [Phosa], Michael	x4419 do.		£2.10.0 plus £1:10l: od
35. Ramaude, S			£1: 10:od
36. Rasetla, B			10: od (dead)
37. Sekghala, Hendrik			£1:0:od (dead)
38. [Sekghala], J	7139 Gutu/a	35	£2:10:od
39. [Seghala ], Harry			£2:10:od
40. Kamungoma, H.W			£2:10:od

**Source:** S1859 1933-1949 Basuto Community's Plot: Bethel: Holding 24, Dewure Division, Gutu, 25 October 1941.