

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO MAKGABENG

### The name, “Makgabeng”

There are different answers to the questions of the origin and meaning of the name “Makgabeng”. Although there are different explanations for the name, according to the Northern Sotho grammar, it is a word which indicates the place (adverb of place) because of the ending “-eng”, which indicates location. Therefore, the original noun – before adding the location suffix – would be “makgaba”. A lot of different interpretations exist about what “makgaba” actually is. But for the name itself – Makgabeng – apparently it has been used from a very long time ago. It is very difficult to determine precisely when it was first used mainly because of the lack of written records by the earliest occupants of the area, namely, the Khoikhoi and the San and the Bantu-speakers. The earliest literate groups such as the German missionaries referred to that name in their earliest records and documents. In some of such documents the name was spelt as “Makchabeng”<sup>1</sup>. Some earliest German documents date as far back as 1868.

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<sup>1</sup> Anon, Berliner Missionsberichte. Vol. 11. No. 12. 1878, p. 249.

This indicates that the name had been used for a long time even before the arrival of the Europeans in that area in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The following discussion focuses on some of the different interpretations and meanings attached to the name “Makgabeng”. According to Martin Jackel, the Berlin missionary who succeeded Robert Franz at the Blouberg mission station of Leipzig in 1914, “[t]ranslated in German Makgabeng means: ‘of little grain’, and this area is indeed despairingly unfertile [sic], also in the spiritual sense of the word”<sup>2</sup>. The missionary Jackel did not give further elaboration on the German translation of that word except the reference, “of little grain”. The problem with this interpretation is that the name was being used long before the first appearance of Germans (missionaries), and therefore the suggestion that infertility of that area (of little grain in real and metaphoric terms), as construed by Jackel, does not relate to the original naming of that area. In other words, the German missionary only assumed that the direct translation of the word was attributed to what he came to experience about the area, namely, its agricultural infertility as well as the lack of (or little) enthusiasm of the local communities about Christian teaching which they, the missionaries, tirelessly strove to achieve.

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<sup>2</sup> M. Jackel, *Gananoa: In Memory of Robert Franz*, Unpublished, p. 17.

There are very few written records on the Makgabeng area and as a result, the subject of written interpretation of what the word “Makgabeng” actually means, is virtually limited. However, besides the scanty written interpretations, there are also different views on the name which were obtained from oral evidence. According to Eric Setumu, the name Makgabeng derives from a potato-like plant which is peculiar to that area, known as “mogaba”<sup>3</sup>. He further explained that the bulb of this plant is edible, and when the Matebele arrived in that area during their raids, probably during the Mfecane/Difaqane, they enjoyed that potato-like bulb<sup>4</sup>. According to Setumu, the Matebele then began to refer to the area as “Mogabeng” (the place of the “mogaba” plant), and according to him, the name gradually slid to “Makgabeng”<sup>5</sup>. This explanation is doubtful, especially the reasoning that the word “mogaba”, became “mogabeng” and eventually became “Makgabeng”. No grammatical explanation is there for such a transformation in which the word suddenly acquired the letters “-a-” and “-k-” (as in “**M**akgabeng”) in the place of “-o-” (as in “mogabeng”).

In her radio cultural programme, Thobela FM presenter Mmanoko Semenya, described the name as having originated from the “round, yellow, sweet fruits” found in the Makgabeng area<sup>6</sup>. Apparently, she was referring to

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<sup>3</sup> Interview, 26 July 2002, Early Dawn village.

<sup>4</sup> Interview, 26 July 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Radio Programme, “Ma-Afrika Tumelong”, 12 August 2002.

the wild hard fruits which are known as “makgwaa”, in the local language. Again, here also, there is no grammatical explanation in which the word “makgwaa”, can actually transform into “Makgabeng”.

According to Ephesia Mokobane, the name Makgabeng is derived from “makgaba”, which in the local language refers to the sorghum plants which have not yet produced stalks<sup>7</sup>. These young, fresh, green plants are called “makgaba”, and according to Ephesia, when outside people visited the area during the early rainy seasons, they saw the “makgaba”, and they then referred to the area as Makgabeng<sup>8</sup>. On grammatical grounds alone, this explanation is logical, because if you add the location suffix “-eng” to “makgaba”, you end up with the place adverb, “makgabeng”. However, it is very difficult to conclude this matter on grammatical reasons alone, given the various interpretations available.

Some of the interpretations given are simplistic as most of them have no explanations. In his 1993 MA thesis, Tlou John Makhura only stated that Makgabeng means “boiling place”<sup>9</sup>. Nkadi Ngwepe only said that Makgabeng means “dikgaa” (cliffs) which are shining<sup>10</sup>. Mautla Ramoroka

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<sup>7</sup> Interview, 26 July 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> T. J. Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity in the North-Western Transvaal and the South African*, c. 1836 – 1896, p. 26.

<sup>10</sup> Interview, 26 July 2002.

said that Makgabeng means “people”<sup>11</sup>. This last definition that Makgabeng means people was also given by Kgadi Ramoroka<sup>12</sup>. There is also a short phrase on Makgabeng which is usually recited or sung at social gatherings such as beer drinking and weddings. This recital goes like: “*A kgabakgaba makgaba a gana ge letšatši le wela*”. This is loosely translated as, “the makgaba (which there is no consensus on its meaning) gets more serious at sunset”. This recital also does not give a conclusive answer as to exactly what are actually these “makgaba” from which the name Makgabeng, is apparently derived.

Even if there is no consensus about the origin and the meaning of the name Makgabeng, the fact of the matter is that the name does exist. It appears in many different documents and records as well as in earliest writings, as already pointed out. It is also known and used in conversations by people from far and near. The main geographical feature which bears this name in that area is the mountain. The Makgabeng mountain is one of the three ranges in the province of Limpopo, South Africa. The other two mountain ranges are Soutpansberg and Blouberg. Makgabeng is the smallest of the three. The Makgabeng is a rugged and well-bushed plateau rising about 200 metres above the surrounding plains. It covers approximately 400 square kilometres and lies just south of the 23<sup>rd</sup> degree parallel line. It is

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<sup>11</sup> Interview, 26 July 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Interview, 26 July 2002.

situated about thirty kilometres west of the small town of Senwabarwana (originally Bochum) within the Blouberg municipal area.

The villages and communities which surround this mountain are collectively known as belonging to Makgabeng. As already pointed out, with the difficulty of the origin and meaning of this name, it is not clear whether the name was firstly given to the mountain and it spread to the surrounding villages, or it was given to the whole area and then the mountain was then automatically called Makgabeng. However, whatever the case might have been, the mountain and its surrounding villages bear the name, Makgabeng. These surrounding villages include: Bays Water, Disseldorp (Mothakgale), Cracow, Calsruhe (Khala), Harrietswish (Garaweshi), Ketting (Lehwaneng), Goedetrouw (Kgatu), Norma A and B, Uitkyk No. 1, 2 and 3, Schoongezicht, Early Dawn, Rosamond, Groenpunt, De La Roche, Devilliersdale, Mont Blanc, Bonne Esperance, Niewe Jerusalem, Too Late, Milbank (Ga Monyebodi), Langbryde, Old Langsyne, Lamonside (Ga Lekgwara), Baranen, Gemarke, Rittershouse (Mokumuru), Normandy (Madibeng), Kirtenspruit (Sadu) and Non Parella.

The issue of the names of different Makgabeng villages and communities will be fully discussed in Chapter 8, MAKGABENG TODAY: CURRENT IDENTITIES, in which the significance of names and why some names have to be changed – according to the present laws – will be looked into. What will suffice here is to note that all the farms were given European

names after they were surveyed and demarcated. Most farms in the Makgabeng area acquired Dutch and German names because their surveyors were of those nationalities<sup>13</sup>. However, some of the farms/villages continued to be referred to by their indigenous names such as Garaweshi, Lehwaneng, Ga Monyebodi, Ga Lekgwara, Sadu and so on.

## **Aims, objectives and focus of this study**

In this work, the history of the entire Makgabeng area will be studied. Although the major historical trends and events will be unpacked, the main focus of the study will be on creation of rural communal identities, in which Makgabeng will be a case study. Defining identity will be an important aspect for this study. Here identity will mean how the Makgabeng communities viewed themselves and were also viewed by those outside the area. The various aspects which shaped and led them to view themselves and be viewed that way over time will all be investigated.

For a long time the indigenous communities of South Africa did not have the opportunity of being able to participate in the production of their own

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<sup>13</sup> Interview, Mr. Neville Field, Deeds Office, 18 May 2003.

history<sup>14</sup>. Most of the existing primary texts on these people have been documented by “outsiders”. These authors who were foreign and alien to them were the European travellers, missionaries and White colonial government officials. The early history of South Africa is therefore Eurocentrically subjective, distorted, with gaps, because the perspectives of the formerly illiterate communities were not incorporated.

This study is on Makgabeng, which was mostly (and still is) occupied by the Bantu-speaking communities, and its history was never included in the mainstream just like the history of most of the previously marginalised communities in South Africa. The early history of such communities was documented by Europeans, while those communities did not participate in the production of their own histories and the history of South Africa in general. The history of indigenous communities has been told from the other people’s perspectives resulting in huge gaps as well as distorted, prejudiced and subjective accounts of the past. The past of these indigenous communities was mostly preserved in the form of oral history. Therefore, one of the principal aims of this study is to work towards filling the gaps as well as attempting to rectify distortions and myths prevailing in the current texts which were made by authors alien to the indigenous people.

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<sup>14</sup> A. Joubert and J.A. van Schalkwyk, A War and remembrance: the power of oral poetry and politics of Hananwa identity. Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol. 25, No. 1, March 1999, pp. 29 - 47.

This study aims to portray the history of the Makgabeng area beginning with the aspects of the earliest occupation of the area (which will basically form the background) until the most recent important developments and changes. As will be pointed out in the study, the area in many ways represents a microcosm of the history of South Africa. This is because the area was successively occupied by different communities in different periods, ranging from the San, the Khoikhoi, the Bantu-speakers, the early European travellers, the missionaries, Afrikaner farmers and British colonial settlers. In other words, the Makgabeng area has all elements and ingredients representative of the South African society.

The main question to be investigated is: How were identities formed in the Makgabeng area from the earliest occupation by the San up to the present moment? Processes of identity changes, formation and destruction resulting from the successive occupation by various groups and interaction among those groups will be looked into. With this successive occupation by representatives of almost all population groups in South Africa, Makgabeng is therefore important to any research which aims to capture the experiences of those groups. Identities continued to change as new ones were constructed partly because of interactions and experiences which were constantly shared by different individuals and groups and within groups. Another related question will be to trace the trajectory of these changing identities in Makgabeng.

Another aim which will concurrently receive attention will deal with the social and economic changes in 20<sup>th</sup> century South Africa and how these affected the lives of people in the area and consequently contributed to their current identity. In this regard, the study specifically aims to incorporate theories on globalisation – especially with regard to its impact on culture; and its alleged contribution to the widening gap between the rich and the poor and to analyse to what extent these were applicable – or not - to remote and rural communities such as those living in the Makgabeng area. Opposing views that globalisation deepens people's poverty will be briefly referred to as the main thrust of the study will be on identity. The actual link between globalisation and identity changes in the Makgabeng area will be fully dealt with in subsequent chapters, particularly, MIGRANT LABOUR SYSTEM, TRADE AND TECHNOLOGY IN MAKGABENG (Chapter 7) and MAKGABENG TODAY: CURRENT IDENTITIES (Chapter 8).

Finally, the intention is to apply the concept of identity in Makgabeng on the following key focus areas which influenced the lives of the residents of Makgabeng, especially during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: land, politics, religion, social customs, health, education, the migrant labour system, trade and technology. In this way, the creation of rural communal identities in the Makgabeng area will be made clearer.

## **Methodology**

In this study on identity creation in the Makgabeng area, the earliest forms of occupation are traced. There are some challenges in trying to trace the history of South Africa back to the pre-colonial period. One of the most important difficulties in this regard is that the pre-colonial societies such as the San, the Khoikhoi and the Bantu-speakers did not leave written documents as in libraries and archives. As a result, reconstructing the history of such societies has difficulties. Archaeologists, physical anthropologists and linguists provide information, but such sources are not adequate and are in many instances prejudiced against those indigenous communities, as they were Eurocentrically generated. All these result in our knowledge of the history of these societies in the pre-colonial period to be patchy. When literate eyewitnesses, particularly those of European origin, began to produce written descriptions, such accounts had their limitations as they were made by foreign observers which were alien to the indigenous communities.

When discussing the earliest societies in South Africa in general, and the Makgabeng area in particular, one immediately faces rather confusing terminology. One of the most challenging approaches is the categorisation of the earliest societies into Stone Age and Iron Age in which these ages are further subdivided into early, middle and late categories. According to Thompson, this approach is “positively misleading” because these “terms are illogical, ahistorical and inaccurate: illogical because they confuse chronological phenomena with cultural phenomena, ahistorical because

their ages do not correspond with the historian's chronology, and inaccurate because they imply that, for example, every member of an Iron Age community used iron tools and weapons"<sup>15</sup>. For this work, when tracing the earliest occupation of the Makgabeng area, these terms, Stone Age and Iron Age, were avoided as much as possible in order to eliminate the problems around them as well as the confusion they cause. Historical chronology was followed instead.

In this study, the creation of communal identities in Makgabeng is first be contextualised, i.e., moving from general South African context, to the specific context, which is about the Makgabeng communities. The South African context in general (macro-context) was used as a reference of what happened — and is still happening — in the Makgabeng area (meso-context). From the meso-context level, there was a movement to the micro-context level, in which everyday activities of people in villages and families of Makgabeng were looked into.

In the following few paragraphs, it will be shown how theoretical propositions were applied in the subsequent text as cross-references. In line with the theoretical proposition that links identity to globalisation, it was noted how the Makgabeng communities view themselves and/or are viewed by others. Do they see themselves/are they seen as part of the currently much-talked-about "global village"? Or do they subscribe to the currently

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<sup>15</sup> L. Thompson, A History of South Africa, p. 29.

emerging continental spirit of Pan-Africanism (characterised by concepts such as African Renaissance and the structures, African Union and NEPAD)? Do they regard themselves/are they regarded only as South Africans? Their attitude and alignment to the current provincial, district and municipal demarcations (and the previous demarcations, including the homelands) are also important in determining how all these shaped – or continue to shape – their identities. Therefore, the impact of the interplay between macro-, meso- and micro-level contexts (including the global level) that are applicable to the Makgabeng communities, regarding the process of communal identity formation, are the main focus of this study. The viewpoint held in this study is that all these contextual levels had shaped – and continue to shape - the identities in the Makgabeng area in one way or another.

Although the contexts distinguished above have a profound impact on the formation of identities in the Makgabeng area, they are not only contexts that influenced the process of identity formation in that area. There are other aspects which play a role in identity processes such as the media (especially radio, television and popular magazines) as well as other forces which infiltrated the Makgabeng area from outside, especially as a result of the movement of people, ideas and goods – another important trend of globalisation. In this study, the importance of fashion, music, and role models in influencing identities in the Makgabeng area was also looked into.

In this study it is demonstrated how and why other identities created in the Makgabeng area were a result of them being “enforced over time” and that there were superficial as well as profound identities in that area. In some instances, even if identities were enforced over time, they did not last. The example here was, according to missionary accounts, the constant reversion to “heathendom” by some communities and individuals in the Makgabeng area even if the missionaries impressed the Gospel over time.

This study also looks into how dominant actors in the Makgabeng area used their strength in the creation of imposed identities, consciously or unconsciously. This refers to how dominant social and political actors imposed their will over the other groups, resulting in their identities being dominant. This was traced from the macro-level context in which political power by dominant actors was even applied and felt up to the micro-level, viz., the Makgabeng communities (villages, families and individuals). Linked to the trend of globalisation, the impact of the dominant global socio-economic political forces on the Makgabeng communities is also demonstrated. On the other hand, the organically created identities were traced against the examples in which people spontaneously identified with one another through shared experiences, habits, interests and tastes without imposition and coercion.

The theoretical proposition that cultural, political and social aspects are decisive in identity creation is also applied to the Makgabeng context.

Related to this issue, is the tribal nature of communities in Makgabeng. While racial politics of the South African past is referred to at the macro-level context analysis in this study, a closer look of the tribal character at the meso- and micro-level contexts is discussed. The Makgabeng tribal communities are a mixture of people from different origins. There are the Bakone, Bahananwa, Babirwa, Batšhadibe, Batlokwa, Batau, and so on. An interesting observation is how these various groups organically fused and developed into the current identities visible today.

## Sources

The main sources that were used are archaeological materials, rock art, European travellers' journals, official records, geological surveys, archival records, written records and oral evidence. Because of the fact that this study focuses mainly on late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century history, rock art and archaeological materials in Makgabeng were only used to construct the background information. One of the outstanding features of Makgabeng is the Khoisan and Bantu-speaking rock art paintings in the mountains. The fine paintings are evidence of traces of earliest human occupation in the area. Therefore, the paintings themselves are an important source of information. In addition to visiting rock art painting sites, documentation recorded on the Makgabeng rock art were also used. There are studies which were made and those that are currently underway on the Makgabeng rock art, and the most extensive one was made by Ed Eastwood, the renowned rock art scholar assisted by the Makgabeng locals, Jonas Tlouamma and Elias Raseruthe. Johny van Schalkwyk, from the African Window museum, and Benjamin Smith, from the Wits University rock art institute, also made studies on the Makgabeng rock art. The documents produced in these rock art studies were important sources for the background information of the study.

In addition to the information of the rock art paintings in Makgabeng, there are quite a number of archaeological sites on top of the Makgabeng plateau as well as the surrounding areas. The Venda archaeological sites are some of the finest evidence of human traces as well as an important source of information on the history of Makgabeng. These sites, together with information recorded about them, were used in this study. There are also artefacts which were collected from some of these sites and housed in some of the museums such as African Window in Pretoria, and those artefacts were used as sources of information as well. Most of these are archaeological artefacts whose collectors have produced information on them, and it is that information that was helpful in the reconstruction of the history of where they were collected, i.e., the Makgabeng area. Other artefacts are arts and craft materials which are also kept with their helpful information.

There are quite a lot of archival records on the Makgabeng and the surrounding area. These records date as far back as the days of the ZAR (Transvaal Republic) in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and cover the period up to the last purchases of Makgabeng farms in the early 1950s. Most of these records were made by the departments which were responsible for running the affairs of Black people, particularly the Department of Native Affairs (Blacks were then called "natives"). Most of the archival documents on Makgabeng - and the surrounding areas - are about the purchase of farms,

especially after the South African War (commonly known as Anglo-Boer War) and the establishment of the White-only Union of South Africa. These archival documents were used in conjunction with other records as sources of information on Makgabeng.

Official records, particularly records from the Deeds and Surveyor General offices were also useful for this study. These offices have valuable information on who owned which portion of land during which period in the Makgabeng area. The records of these two offices in particular are valuable because they contain information which shows us how the face of Makgabeng was drastically changed when the White authorities sent out surveyors to demarcate land and fenced it off into privately owned units. These records show who was allocated those farms and to whom were they later transferred. The records in these offices give us a picture of how identities in the Makgabeng radically changed around land occupation and ownership with the arrival of European colonial settlers who destroyed the communal land system traditionally practised in that area.

There are very few published documents on Makgabeng, especially books and other forms of researched publications. This is one of the principal motivations for the need to record the history of the area. Therefore, the bulk of secondary sources are the available general works on South African history. Most of such works deal scantily with Makgabeng as a topic as they mainly deal with the Black communities in general, rather than Makgabeng

in particular. These sources were used to contextualise the history of Makgabeng. Secondary sources were mostly used in developing the theoretical framework of this study.

Oral evidence formed an important part of this study. This is because most of the history of the previously disadvantaged communities in South Africa, such as those in Makgabeng, was not written and it is to be expected that very few written records do exist on subjects such as Makgabeng. As a result, the few written records which are available were used in conjunction with oral evidence. Most importantly, the other sources which have been mentioned thus far were used to corroborate oral information, and vice versa. The combination of all these sources resulted in a more balanced and objective study on the Makgabeng area.

Because oral evidence was one of the core sources of information for this study, the following will be a discussion on its methodological challenges. Best practices in oral research were thoroughly followed in order to achieve the best possible outcome. Like any other forms of collecting evidence, and as well as other sources of information, oral evidence has its own problem areas. In the next seven paragraphs I will briefly describe some of the salient problem areas of oral history as well as some benefits of it. Thereafter, I will explain how I dealt with the actual and practical interviewing processes against the problem areas mentioned.

There are three main problem areas of oral history, whose finer details will not be necessary here. Firstly, the limitations of the interviewee which include, unreliability of memory; deliberate falsification; unfairness through vindictiveness; excessive discretion; superficiality and gossip; over simplification; distortion of interviewee's role; lack of perspective; distortion due to personal feelings; self consciousness; influence of hindsight; and repetition of published evidence<sup>16</sup>.

Secondly, the interviewer has limitations which include, unrepresentative sampling; biased questioning; deference and bias towards interviews; and interviews as a replacement for reading documents<sup>17</sup>. The third and the last problem area of oral history is about the limitations inherent in the nature of interviewing itself. These include, time expenditure; financial expenditure; influence of variable factor; failure of some people to communicate well in interviews; misinterpretation of what the interviewee has said; inability of oral history to be verified by others; interview transcripts missing the essence of an interview; impossibility of true communication; and dependence on survivors and those who agree to be interviewed<sup>18</sup>.

Besides the problem areas mentioned above, there are benefits to be derived from collecting oral evidence. Firstly, evidence collected orally can

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<sup>16</sup> A. Seldon and J. Pappworth, By Word of Mouth. "Elite Oral History", p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> A. Seldon and J. Pappworth, By Word of Mouth, p. 3.

help to fill the gaps in documentary evidence in which personalities – with their mannerisms, habits, etc. – can make the richest contribution. Oral evidence can be particularly effective in supplying information about relationships of personalities whose information is being collected, because how relationships function in practice is often different from how they are officially supposed to work.

Secondly, where for instance, organisational development may pose problems, witnesses can often help to piece together events by, for example, explaining why certain jobs, officers and whole departments were created, what their role was, or why they disappeared. This particularly refers to the politicians and government officials (especially at local government level) that might be interviewed in order to shed light regarding the records they had inherited about the subject such as the Makgabeng area.

Thirdly, oral evidence can help in the interpretation of documents in which it can give the researcher synoptic accounts of whole areas for which no overall evidence exists. Where documents frequently contradict one another, oral evidence can save time and clear the blockage. Interviews might well be essential for providing missing facts to complete the picture.

Finally, other benefits of oral evidence collection include, adding atmosphere of colour in evidence; discovering new information; adding

insight into the subject's personality and thought processes; add evidence from non-elite witnesses; enrichment of experience and understanding; as well as adding an extra dimension: sound. In other words, oral interview, because of the human element, the voice, the humour, and so on, makes it livelier than other "passive" sources. In addition to the audible sound of human voice in an interview, there is an added advantage of asking follow up questions for clarification, something that is totally not there in other sources.

With the brief description about oral interviewing above, I will now contextualise my interviewing process for this study. According to Seldon and Pappworth, there is no one correct way to conduct an oral interview, and interviewing is to a certain extent an art which can be acquired through experience, observation, awareness of, practice of, and following certain procedures<sup>19</sup>. Because of the fact that there are no fast rules of interviewing, there are different choices, each with its draw-backs and advantages. For this study I followed these guidelines throughout:

### **When to interview?**

After deciding on conducting interviews, a researcher has to make up his/her mind whether to carry out interviews at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the research. There are advantages and disadvantages of

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<sup>19</sup> A. Seldon and J. Pappworth, By Word of Mouth, p. 55.

each and every approach, depending on various circumstances. For this study, after considering all practical circumstances, I decided to carry out interviews at all stages of my interview – beginning, middle and end – but putting much emphasis on the first stage, in which I familiarised myself with the territory, in order to absorb and assess what I would be hearing. Another reason why I put emphasis on early interview was because I needed to form an overall view of the territory, and also to be able to interview the very elderly, frail and those who were seriously ill – who are all key witnesses at the earliest possible time.

### **Selecting potential interviewees.**

On deciding on whom to interview, the most relevant questions are: how long were the potential informants acquainted with the subject under study, and was this first hand information or not? Fellow academics or authors could also help to identify helpful interviewees which they themselves relied upon in their works. Ed Eastwood, a rock art specialist who was recording and studying Khoisan and Sotho rock art paintings in Makgabeng, as well as Tlou Makhura, who wrote his masters thesis on the 1894 Malebogo-Boer War, were some of the professionals I relied upon in identifying helpful informants. Other academics whose studies are based on the Makgabeng, those whom I have consulted, were Benjamin Smith as well as Johny van Schalkwyk. They all helped me to identify the most informative interviewees about the Makgabeng area.

Geography is another practical consideration because the distance to be travelled to see an interviewee might determine the decision to see him/her or not. Makgabeng is a vast rural area with scarce public transport among villages. At first, without my own vehicle, I had to walk for long distances sometimes because public transport was only flowing to and from urban centres such as Senwabarwana and Polokwane. This situation slowed the pace of my interviews down, but because I knew it, I planned accordingly. However, later my access to a motor vehicle enhanced my ability to easily cover my field of study.

Another determining factor was the fact that those who are currently in office may not have enough time for an interview, while the subordinates, for whom the interview might be more of a novelty, will often put more thought on it. Politicians are found to be the most difficult and far less useful as witnesses because they distrust each other as well as the interviewer, and they tend to change their evidence according to circumstances. The politicians I interviewed were mostly those at the Blouberg municipality and I started by tracing information of their predecessors regarding developments in the Makgabeng area. As expected, politicians gave subjective information which put them and their political formations in good light. However, such information was not useless as it only needed to be evaluated according to history's methodological procedures before being used.

Like politicians, traditional leaders were also useful sources of information. About traditional authorities who are currently in office, I decided to consult two local *magošī*<sup>20</sup>, Malebogo and Matlala, because each of them has a stake of jurisdiction over the Makgabeng area. Their information was also used cautiously taking into account their determination to protect their current power interests.

On this crucial question of selecting potential informants, for this study I decided to work with the local communities in Makgabeng villages because I was convinced that they were acquainted with the subject under study. I also believed that the selected interviewees – especially the elderly – would yield first hand information which is valuable. I also relied upon fellow academics, authors, as I indicated earlier, and other community members to identify more helpful, informative witnesses.

As far as geographical context of this study is concerned, I decided to conduct interviews in the villages (farms) around Makgabeng. These villages include New Jerusalem, Ga-Tlhako (Gallashiels), Ga Monyebodi (Milbank), Ga-Lekgwara (Lamonside), Mokumuru, Old Langsyne, Early Dawn, Lehwaneng (Kitting), Cracow, Bays Water, Mothakgale (Disseldorp), Khala (Carlsruhe), Sadu, Nompotala (Non Parella), Ga-Mojela (De Villiersdale), and Silwermyn. In all these Makgabeng villages, the most successful, informative interviews were in Early Dawn, Lehwaneng, Sadu,

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<sup>20</sup> Traditional rulers [*Kgošī* in singular].

Non Parella, Old Langsyne, Kgatu, Ga Monyebodi and New Jerusalem. These latter villages in particular yielded more information than the others because for example, Early Dawn is my home village, and as a result I knew all potentially informative witnesses even before I planned to visit them. I also knew many of them and to access them was very easy as I just walked to their homes. The fact that they knew me also relaxed them and they were free to give me information.

Again, the other villages next to Early Dawn - Lehwaneng, Old Langsyne, and Kgatu – were easy to access. The fact that witnesses there also knew me, made my job easy. In Sadu and Non Parella the witnesses were fascinated by the fact that they belong to Makgabeng. This was because most of the people who still live in those villages, are direct descendants of the original inhabitants of Makgabeng<sup>21</sup>. They are mostly the sons and daughters of the inhabitants who were found there by the farm purchasers who came mostly from the east. The witnesses in those villages were eager to give out information about Makgabeng which they were very proud of. In villages to the north of the Makgabeng mountain such as Ga Monyebodi, interviewees were inclined to give more information on the Bahananwa-Boer War of 1894. Most of these villages are under the jurisdiction of the Bahananwa dynasty and they seem to still take pride of their ancestors' brave war against the colonial forces. However, in other villages where

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<sup>21</sup> Interview, Headman Phukubje, Lehwaneng village, 17 September 2003.

conditions were not as favourable as those mentioned, acquired methodological plans and procedures were followed in order to find information even under those challenges.

### **Approach and acceptance.**

One of the challenging aspects of oral evidence gathering is the status of the researcher in which up-and-coming researchers will not be taken seriously by informants as compared by well-known researchers<sup>22</sup>. In this regard, emphasis was on convincing informants that I was actually engaged in a serious research in which I could be entrusted with confidential information. I also relied on assistance from my supervisor, as well as SAHRA officials, in order to build confidence in the informants. I did this by producing written materials which indicated that I was indeed doing academic research. My academic documents which I carried around, helped to convince witnesses that my job was really authentic and as a result, they genuinely gave out information.

To formalise my approach to my informants, I sent them letters which contained information such as:-

- \_ a brief outline of my own background and relevant experience in the subject.
- \_ the scope and aim of my research.

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<sup>22</sup> D. Henige, Oral Historiography, p. 5.

- \_ the subjects (in general terms) which I hope to focus on.
- \_ emphasis that all the materials would be treated with informants' wishes and confidentiality.

Because of its negative implications and consequences, I avoided any promise of payment to my informants. In few exceptional cases I paid travelling costs of those informants who came up to see me, and on rare occasions I even spend some few rands in order to entertain some of my informants, sometimes over a meal or a drink.

Location of the interview is also important and it is always advisable to accept the informant's suggestion if he/she chooses a venue<sup>23</sup>. For this study, I preferred to chat to my informants in their homes where they were relaxed and felt less vulnerable in their own environments. I also interviewed some of my informants in their offices where they had documents which were used as references in our interview.

### **Before the interview.**

I did a preliminary research on my topic in order to be familiar with all the facts readily available in other sources. I also arranged preliminary meetings

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<sup>23</sup> P. Thompson, The Voice of the Past: Oral History, p. 19.

with my informants and reassured them of any anxieties they had about the interview. I also pointed out the value of their contribution.

### **Method of recording the interview.**

According to Seldon and Pappworth, there are four basic ways of recording interviews:-<sup>24</sup>

- \_ memory (with notes written up subsequently).
- \_ notes written during the talk.
- \_ tape recorder (from which a transcript is made).
- \_ video.

Each one of the four ways of recording an interview has its own advantages and disadvantages. It is for this reason that I preferred to switch from one method to the other, depending on the circumstances, and of course, the comfort of the informants.

### **Preparing questions and background information.**

I prepared my questions thoroughly before the interviews and I interchangeably followed three basic approaches:-

- \_ the questionnaire approach.
- \_ questions and answers tailored to each individual informant.

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<sup>24</sup> A. Seldon and J. Pappworth, By Word of Mouth, p. 62.

\_ informal, loose, open questions.

In a questionnaire approach, I ensured that I edited my questions very well, and also put them in a logical or chronological order. I also ensured that my questions were straightforward and were in a readily understandable language. Because of the fact that some interviewees are repelled by formal, rigid interviews in which technological devices such as tape recorders are used, I sometimes switched to a more flexible, open-ended, informal approach. This was achieved by allowing interviewees to speak freely, but developing themes which arise from my questions. Of course, because time is of paramount importance, I had to be able to control the length of the talk of the interviewee.

It was also essential for me to know about my informants' official lives – including their jobs and other responsibilities. That helped to colour their oral evidence as they felt that their contributions were important as I acknowledged and appreciated what they were also involved in.

### **My responsibilities as an interviewer.**

One of my first responsibilities – which I have already alluded to – was to explain absolutely clearly, in outline in my initial letter, and more fully at the outset of the interview, what the subject was, aim and the end-product of my research. I drew up a form, had it typed, duplicated, and made a copy to be

sent to the interviewees before the interview. That form contained the following information:-

- \_ names of the researcher and the interviewee.
- \_ space for the day of the interview.
- \_ the fact that the interviewee agrees to talk.
- \_ the fact that the interviewee agrees to the record of the interview to become available to others.
- \_ the fact that the interviewee transfers copyright of the talk to the researcher.
- \_ space for the signature of both the interviewer and interviewee.

After the interviews, I sent the copies of the interviews to the interviewees, and all this procedure impressed on the interviewees the seriousness of the exchange and motivated him to give his/her best.

### **The interview.**

On arrival I asked each interviewee as to how long would we talk, where that was not ascertained beforehand. I then had to reveal that I knew enough about the subject for the informant to feel that he/she was talking to someone competent and interesting.

During the interviews, I remained in command, but I avoided show-off as well as arguments and expressions of dissent and ridicule. When the

informant was speaking, I had to preferably communicate with my eyes, face or hands, rather than using my voice, especially when I was using a tape recorder. Sensitive or difficult matters such as personal relationships, death, personal beliefs, etc., were tactfully asked because I avoided offending the interviewees.

Follow-up questions were necessary where I felt that the interviewee did not give me the type of information I was after. I was also time conscious because the value of an interview begins to diminish after ninety minutes or two hours, and if I had to continue, a break was arranged.

With the elderly, I didn't have to rush and I usually gave them time to "warm up", slowly gathering their thoughts about the topic. When I was about to end the talk, I normally asked the interviewee if he/she objected talking for, say, another ten minutes. Sufficient time was also allowed to ask if the interviewee still had anything else to say.

Finally, I had to always reassure the informant that he/she had been of help to me, and also stressed how valuable his/her contribution had been.

**After the interview.**

Within twenty-four hours of conducting the interview, I ensured that I did the following:-

- \_ where I was using a tape recorder, I labelled the tape with the name of the interviewee, my name, date, place and length of the talk, and the number of the tape in my own series.
- \_ I sent a letter of thanks – enclosing a photocopy of the completed interview form – to each interviewee.
- \_ where memory was relied upon, I wrote down all I could remember about the interview.
- \_ where I took down notes, I went back to them and wrote clearly above any illegible or semi-legible words, and filled in gaps.
- \_ I also decided whether follow up interviews were necessary or not.

### **Preparing interview records.**

There are different methods I actually used in recounting the interviews, each with its advantages and disadvantages. These methods were:-

- \_ I could reconstruct the questions asked and typed the interviewee's replies after each question, using his/her own words as much as possible.
- \_ I could group all the evidence given under various headings, regardless of where in the talk the words were spoken, and

probably switch to the third person.

- \_ I could also type the record in continuous prose using my own words.

Although I sometimes switched between the three methods, I mainly preferred the third one because it is more practical and simple to paraphrase than to try and put down the interviewees' actual words. Where the tape recorder was used, I had to make transcription myself, although it was a long, arduous task. Finally, I had to file the comments I made about the interviewees with the interview record, on a separate paper.

As already pointed out earlier, other sources were used in addition to oral evidence in the body of this study. Their combined usage was important in producing a balanced, objective history of the Makgabeng area.

## **Historiographical discussion on Makgabeng**

There is no academic work on the history of Makgabeng. However, there are a few general anthropological works which shed some light on the area. Of relevance to this study are the works by J.A. van Warmelo (Van Warmelo, 1977) in which he documented and analysed the origins and short histories of almost all Black polities and communities in South Africa. This is of particular importance as far as the communities such as the

Bahananwa and Bakone in Makgabeng are concerned. W.D. Hammond-Tooke's works (Hammond-Tooke, 1937 and 1993) are also general studies where the Bakone and Bahananwa are dealt with generally under a broad group of the Sotho, as part of the whole Bantu-speaking communities of South Africa.

The Makgabeng area seemed to have attracted individuals and researchers mainly because of its rock art. Some of these individuals and researchers then wrote about their experiences in that area. As early as 1916, the Reverend Noel Roberts, a missionary in the Makgabeng area, wrote about several rock art sites which contained paintings of fat-tailed sheep and other images<sup>25</sup>. These were found to have been painted by the San. There were also late white finger paintings of trains and long-horned cattle.

From 1947 onwards, Clifford Thompson, a botanist, visited Makgabeng on many occasions and wrote about at least twenty rock art sites<sup>26</sup>. Thompson's son, Nipper, later located and documented several sites in the eastern plateau of Makgabeng in the 1960s and 1970s<sup>27</sup>. Other sites were mentioned by Revil Mason (1962) and Jalmar and Ione Rudner (1970)<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> E. B. Eastwood and J. van Schalkwyk, *The rock art of the Makgabeng Plateau. Volume 1. Introducing the Makgabeng and rock paintings of Gallashiels*, p. 48.

<sup>26</sup> E. B. Eastwood and J. van Schalkwyk, *The rock art of the Makgabeng Plateau*, p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

During the 1970s Harold Pager, a renowned rock art recorder, mapped most of the sites that were known<sup>29</sup>. Adrian Boshier, a young Englishman, was also fascinated by the Makgabeng rock art, of which he wrote about<sup>30</sup>. E.B. Eastwood (rock art specialist), J. van Schalkwyk (National Cultural History Museum) and B. Smith (Wits Rock Art Research Institute) extensively researched and published volumes on the Khoisan and Sotho rock art in Makgabeng. These reports and other documents on the rock art and archaeology of Makgabeng are some of the few available written works on the Makgabeng.

From an archaeological point of view, a thesis of M. van der Ryst (Van der Ryst, 1998) focuses on archaeological materials of the Waterberg during the Later Stone Age and compares them with those in the surrounding areas, including Makgabeng. In other words, Van der Ryst's work touches slightly on Makgabeng without focusing directly on the area.

The thesis of T.J. Makhura (Makhura, 1993) addresses late 19<sup>th</sup> century politics of the Bahananwa and contains some references to Makgabeng. Reverend Beyer of the Berlin Missionary Society arrived in Blouberg in 1868 and in 1870 the first mission station was built in Makgabeng. Consequently, missionary documents such as reports and diaries were made about Makgabeng. S.J. Botha's study (SJ Botha, 1983) documents the histories of

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 48.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 48.

almost all the Black communities that constituted the former homeland of Lebowa, including on the peripheral communities such as the Bahananwa and the Bakone communities in Makgabeng.

Another historiographical aspect is that in the following chapter of the theoretical discussion of the topic, vast literature will be reviewed. The literature reviewed in this section will be on various theories and schools of thought on the aspect of identity.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL DISCUSSION OF THE TOPIC**

#### **What is identity?**

In this theoretical chapter, various issues pertaining to “identity”/ “identities” will be looked into. Current debates around the concept, particularly those of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, will be discussed, in which some of the important aspects of the debates will be analysed. It will also be investigated as to what extent such issues have been part of debates on identity/identities because there are other issues which were more prominent to the debate than others. General viewpoints of various schools of thought and theories will be looked into as an overview. Then, the theoretical points which are particularly applicable to the topic will be incorporated as cross-references in the entire text. The theoretical propositions will form a foundation upon which factual information will be laid.

“Identity” is a concept that invokes and relates theories from various fields of psychology, social psychology, anthropology, sociology, and also from such

interdisciplinary fields as cultural studies<sup>31</sup>. Being a subject of such a wide range of fields of study, it is not unexpected that the concept of identity should have varying theories, interpretations and approaches.

Perhaps the obvious place to start is with the most basic question: what is identity? The word “identity” is derived from the Latin root, “identitas”, (from “idem”, which means, “the same”). According to R. Jenkins, the word, “identity” has two basic meanings, the first one being the concept of absolute sameness: “this is identical to that”, while the second one is that distinctiveness which presumes consistency or continuity over time<sup>32</sup>. Jenkins further states that approaching the idea of sameness from two different angles, the notion of identity simultaneously establishes two possible relations of comparison between persons or things: similarity, on the one hand, and difference on the other<sup>33</sup>. Taking this matter further is that the verb, “to identify” is a necessary accompaniment of identity: there is something active about the word which cannot be ignored. Identity is not “just there”, it must always be established<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> D. Holland, et al, Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> R. Jenkins, Social Identity, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, pp. 3 – 4.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, pp. 3 – 4.

For Manuel Castells, identity is people's source of meaning<sup>35</sup>. Identity is a process of construction of meaning on the basis of cultural attributes, or related set of cultural attributes, that is/are given priority over other sources of meaning. Identities, according to Castells, must be distinguished from what, traditionally, sociologists have called "roles", in which the latter only become identities when and if the social actors internalise them, and construct meaning around this internalisation<sup>36</sup>. In simpler terms, identities organise meaning while roles organise functions. There are also collective as well as individual identities. Whoever constructs collective identity, and for what, largely determines the symbolic content of this identity, and its meaning for those identifying it or placing themselves outside of it<sup>37</sup>.

J. Muller et al (2001) agree with Castells as they define identity as the construction of meaning, the meaning of actions by social actors on the basis of social attributes<sup>38</sup>. They further mention that identity is an experience, arguing that "identity which is not rooted in experience is fantasy, not identity"<sup>39</sup>. According to these authors, identity works on the materials of experience, experience that is historical and can be collective and/or individual, and that anyone can invent his or her own identity, but it

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<sup>35</sup> M. Castells, the Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture: The Power of Identity, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> J. Muller et al, Challenges of globalisation: South African debates with Manuel Castells, p. 115.

<sup>39</sup> J. Muller et al, Challenges of globalisation...., p. 115.

will be a weak identity<sup>40</sup>. People, from the very moment they exist, have meaning – and this meaning comes from something, and this something is a shared experience.

The study on identity and its related theories is not a new phenomenon. However, a psychological theory of identity is a belated development, considering that nineteenth century writers were already studying such problems as the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation on personal adjustments<sup>41</sup>. In the nineteenth century, Marx and Durkheim, among others, grappled with problems of social identity in their attempts to illuminate anomalies and alienation, and William James (1890) and George Herbert Mead (1934), for example, wrote detailed accounts of the development of the self, including discussions of the development of a social self<sup>42</sup>.

## **Identity, globalisation and nation states**

One of the most prevalent issues within the current 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries debates on identity is its link and association with the current trend of

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 115.

<sup>41</sup> T. R. Sarbin and K. E. Schebie, Studies of Social Identity, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

globalisation. This point is emphasised by Castells's declaration that "[o]ur world is, and our lives, are being shaped by the conflicting trends of globalization [sic] and identity"<sup>43</sup>. This is because the information technology revolution, and the structuring of capitalism, according to Castells, has induced a new form of society, the network society<sup>44</sup>. According to M. Burawoy (2000), as capitalism spread across the world, the truth of the local moved outside itself in which people and ideas flow across the borders<sup>45</sup>. The new world order has emerged devoid of visible structures and of an obvious logic. The more general and pertaining feature of this new order is the way national and cultural frontiers have been blurred. The role of the nation states as containers of social and cultural identity has been questioned and in some instances, undermined. The purification of space and identity has been challenged by the trans-nationalism and cultural hybridity inflicted by processes of globalisation (Eriksen 1994; Waters 1995; Morley and Robins 1995; Friedland; and Boden 1995). According to Anthony G. McGrew (1998), globalisation contributes to the "de-nationalisation" of territorial space and so challenges the modern institution of sovereign statehood based upon the principle of exclusive territorial

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<sup>43</sup> M. Castells, Information Age, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> M. Burawoy, Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World, p. 1.

rule<sup>46</sup>. Castells sums up this seeming loss of national identity within nation-states as follows:

The nation-state, defining the domain, procedures, and object of citizenship, has lost much of its sovereignty, undermined by the dynamics of global flows and trans-organizational [sic] networks of wealth, information, and power. Particularly critical for its legitimacy crisis is the state's inability to fulfil its commitments as a welfare state, because of the integration of production and consumption in a globally interdependent system, and the related process of capitalist restructuring<sup>47</sup>.

Globalisation has brought about a new form of identity: "global identity", in which all humans regard themselves as belonging to the "global village". The symptoms of (and causes) of this fragmentation and dissolution are numerous. The apparatuses of discourse, technologies and institutions (print capitalism, education and mass media) which were formerly confined and designed to produce (and invent) national cultures, no longer obey these boundaries for transmission (Donald 1988).

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<sup>46</sup> A. G. McGrew, "The Globalisation Debate: Putting the Advanced Capitalist State in its Place", Global Society, Volume 12, No. 3, 1998, p. 303.

<sup>47</sup> M. Castells, Information Age, p. 97.

The compression of time and space brought about by the global technologies also creates the feeling of “abstract” space, a global image space – the heterotopias of world bazaar (‘global village’) (McLuhan 1964; Morley and Robins 1995). The same mass produced messages reach out to every village of the world, making each of a “global” one. Satellite transmission means that an event happening in one part of the world can be “watched together” by people in different parts of the globe, creating potentials for new varied “imagined communities” (Brah 1996). In this way, a new “global identity” is being created.

Globalisation also meant that culture and people seem to have lost their “original” places. This process has accelerated rapidly during the last decades. Driven by poverty, famines, civil war and political unrest, and pulled by material considerations, people move to find new places everywhere. These migrations are creating new displacements, new diasporas and new identities. Networks of diasporas create space in-between. Cultures, identities and people are no longer tied to place (Eriksen 1994; Hall 1992; and Brah 1996).

However, contrary to the above views, even if national borders have become increasingly blurred as jet transport, satellite communication and electronic information technology makes the world “shrink”, these developments may in some cases result in self-awareness which will shift emphasis to people’s differences. In some instances, the flow of people,

information, cultures, commodities and capital, bring about a more immediate and direct articulation and definition of local and global spaces, and a disruption of place as a self-evident reference for cultural distinctiveness and belonging (Giddens 1990; Eriksen 1994; Bhabha 1994; Waters 1995; Morley and Robins 1995). While globalisation can result in the formation of one global identity, it may on the other hand, lead to people and nations become more aware of how they differ from “others”. Therefore, even if there is the emergence of the notion of a “global village”, “national identity” is still upheld as people continue to define themselves according to the state within which they belong. In the quest for the idea of nation-building, people within nation-states are often inclined to advocate a national identity such as South African, American, Israeli or British.

Castells sums up the impact of another manifestation of fragmentation, i.e., nationalism on identity awareness in this age of globalisation:

If nationalism is, most often, a reaction against a threatened autonomous identity, then in a world submitted to cultural homogenization [sic] by the ideology of modernization [sic] and the power of global media, language, as the direct expression of culture, becomes the trench of cultural resistance, the

last bastion of self-control, the refuge of identifiable meaning<sup>48</sup>.

Nationalism – as expressed by language in the above example – can result into different fragmented groupings with distinctive identities, which would appear to negate the overall trend of globalisation.

Again, the whole world (and especially Europe), according to Kauer (2002), is currently trying to find new paradigms for the construction of identity, while at the same time embracing the age of globalisation<sup>49</sup>. According to Kauer, resistance against a global identity still seems to be strong, reflecting the fear of losing cultural individuality<sup>50</sup>. “Multiculturalism in Europe is still as much a myth as the Rainbow Nation in South Africa”<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> M. Castells, Information Age, p. 51.

<sup>49</sup> U. Kauer, “Nation and Gender: Female Identity in Contemporary South African Writing”, Region, Nation, Identity: The Ninth International Conference on the Literature of Region and Nation, 30 July – 2 August 2002, Durban, South Africa.

<sup>50</sup> U. Kauer, “Nation and Gender...”

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

## **Identity creation through Afrocentric perspective**

An important theoretical foundation of this study on the communal identity creation in the Makgabeng area is the Afrocentric perspective. The Afrocentric theory, which advocates multiculturalism, will be employed to analyse the field of study which is deeply rooted in Africa not only in geography, but also in culture. According to Molefi Kete Asante, the architect of Afrocentricity, "Afrocentric theory is an Afrocentric viewpoint on texts which establishes two fundamental realities in situating a text: location and dislocation. Afrocentricity is for multicultural literacy which can lead to a critical transformation in the way any discourse can be approached in

contrast with the Eurocentric pathways of mono-culturalism and mono-historicalism”<sup>52</sup>.

Afrocentricity places African values and ideas at the center of African life and it espouses the cosmology, aesthetics, axiology and epistemology that characterise African culture. Karenga identifies as the core cultural African characteristics the following “share orientations”: (a) the centrality of the community, (b) respect for tradition, (c) a high level of spirituality and ethical concern, (d) harmony with nature, (e) the sociality of self-hood, (f) veneration of ancestors, and (g) unity of being<sup>53</sup>.

The concept of centre (also location, place) occupies, as it could have been expected, a critical place in the Afrocentric conceptual apparatus. It is fundamentally based on the belief that one’s history, culture and biology determine one’s identity. That identity in turn, determines our place in life, both material and spiritual. To practice one’s culture and to apprehend oneself in a manner that is consistent with one’s history, culture and biology, is to be centred or to proceed from one’s centre. On the other hand, dislocation occurs either when one lives on borrowed cultural terms and/or when one apprehends reality through another group’s centre. Therefore, the

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<sup>52</sup> M. K. Asante, “Locating a Text: Implications of Afrocentric Theory”, Selected scholarly papers, 2005.

<sup>53</sup> A. Mazama, “The Afrocentric Paradigm: Contours and Definitions” Journal of Black Studies, 3, 4, March 2001, 387 – 405.

concept of centre encompasses both our African identity and our disposition toward that identity.

Molefi Kete Asante continues to elaborate on how the pluralism of the Afrocentric perspective is better placed than the narrow approach of Eurocentricism:

For more than twenty five years and in more than thirty five books I have tried to deal with the question of African identity from the perspective of African people as centred, located and oriented and grounded. This idea I have named Afrocentricity to convey the profound need for African people to be re-located historically, economically, socially, politically and philosophically. For too long we have held up the margins of the European's world and have been victimised by the illusion that we are working in our own best interests, when in fact, we have become the chief apologists of Europe.

Afrocentricity seeks to re-locate the African person as an agent in human history in an effort to eliminate the illusion of the fringes. For the past five hundred years Africans have been taken off of cultural, economic, religious, political and social terms and have existed

primarily on the periphery of Europe. Because of this existence we have often participated in an anti-African racism born of the same Western triumphalism that has entrapped our minds in the West. We know little about our own classical heritage and nothing about our contributions to the world knowledge. To say that we are decentred means essentially that we have lost our cultural footing and become other than our cultural and political origins, dislocated and disoriented. We are essentially insane, that is, living in absurdity from which we will never be able to free our minds until we return to the source. Afrocentricity is a theory of change intends to re-locate the African person as subject, thus destroying the notion of being objects in the Western project of domination.

Afrocentricity is therefore a philosophical and theoretical perspective. The Western dogma, which contends that Greeks gave the world rationalism effectively marginalises those who are not European and becomes the leading cause of disbelief about African achievements. In the standard Western view, neither the Africans nor the Chinese had rational thinking. Only the Europeans had the ability to

construct rational thought. Thus, the Afrocentrists contend that the Eurocentric view has become an ethnocentric view which elevates the European experience and downgrades all others. Afrocentricity is not the reverse of Eurocentricity but a particular perspective for analysis which does not seek to occupy all space and time as Eurocentricism has often done. For example, to say classical music, theatre, or dance is usually a reference to European music, theatre and dance. However, this means that Europeans occupy all of the intellectual and artistic seats and leave no room for others. The Afrocentrists argue for pluralism in the philosophical views without hierarchy. All cultural centres must be respected; this is the fundamental aim of Afrocentricity<sup>54</sup>.

A multi-cultural consciousness brought about by a new historiography is based on the idea that ancient Kemet and Nubia are to the rest of Africa as Greece and Rome are to the rest of Europe. This new historiography has insinuated itself into contemporary thinking in education, anthropology, sociology, history and literature. There is a common belief among Whites that philosophy originates with Greeks. The idea is so common that almost

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<sup>54</sup> M. K. Asante, Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change, p. 37.

all of the books of philosophy start with the Greeks as if the Greeks predated all other people when it came to discussion of concepts of beauty, art, numbers, sculpture, medicine and social organisation. In fact, this dogma occupies the principal position in the academies of the Western world, including the universities and academies of Africa. In the view of this dogma, other people and cultures may contribute thoughts, like the Chinese, Confucius, but thoughts are not philosophy; only the Greeks can contribute to philosophy. The African people may have religion and myths, but not philosophy, according to this reasoning. Thus this notion privileges the Greeks as the originators of philosophy, the highest of the sciences.

Even though the Eurocentrists painfully tried to marginalise other cultures and civilisations, the presence and importance of other cultures and civilisations cannot be wished away. In the face of such vigorous – but futile – attempts to falsify and distort world history by Eurocentrists, Dr. Kwame Nantambu emphasises the importance of African history to world history as follows:

Life began in Afrika and it will end in Afrika. For the first 110 000 years of human existence on this planet, only Afrikan people existed. The fact of the matter is that Afrikan history is vital part of world history, a very old and very important division of the total study of humankind. Students at all levels can now profit from a better appreciation of the contributions of Afrikan

culture to the other cultures of the world and to world civilization as a whole.

Afrika is the birthplace or origin of all humankind and was, for many centuries, in the forefront of human progress. As such, Afrikan history must be looked at anew and seen in its relationship to world history. What is usually referred to as world history is only the history of the first and second rise of Europe and Europeans. Yet, the history of Afrika was already old for thousands of years when Europe was born. This reality has been ignored by the false Eurocentric notions based on supremacist nature of European scholarship<sup>55</sup>.

Africa has been betrayed by missionaries and imams who have called its priests and priestesses false while holding up Africa's enemies as its saviours. Africa has been betrayed by education, the academy, and the structure of knowledge imposed by the Western world. Africa has been betrayed by the ignorance of its own people of its past. Africans are, consequently, the most betrayed of contemporary humans. People so often betrayed must take serious look at their own approach to phenomena, to life, to existence, to knowledge.

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<sup>55</sup> K. Nantambu, "Afrikan History is World History", Kent State University, 11 August 2002.

Afrocentricity seeks neither hegemony nor domination over others. It abhors the idea that one group should impose its will on others against their wills – as Eurocentricity does. Not only has the time run out on this type of domination, there is no longer a willing audience for it. But the lingering effects of more than three hundred years of psychological and cultural domination have left Africa off of economic and political terms. Eurocentricity was possible as a normal expression of culture, although it has remained an abnormal human system because it seeks to impose its cultural particularity as universal while denying and degrading other cultural, political or economic views. The suppressing of anyone's personality, economic or cultural expression, civilisation, gender or religion creates the state of oppression.

## **Identity creation (formation)and contexts**

Another important aspect in debating identities is about contextualising those identities. Within the debates, contexts are referred variously by different schools of thought<sup>56</sup>. The notion that the salience of identities is

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<sup>56</sup> While contexts are generally referred to as macro-, meso-, and micro-levels, C. Soudien refers to the macro-level context as the “Official Discourse”, the meso-level context as the “Formal

dependent on the nature of the context is widely discussed within secondary sources <sup>57</sup>. For instance, religious identity becomes important within the context of a particular church, while outside the church situation, another identity marker such as gender may become important, while religion takes a back seat. In other words, in a church situation, members of a certain congregation express a particular identity, while outside the church situation, each member may have other identity marker, such as a different political affiliation.

The issue of identity formation (creation) – which is one of the most prevalent aspects of identity in secondary sources - is much about the question as to “how do we know who we are? and how do others identify us?” In everyday situations, one’s identity is called into question and established (or not). However, identity is often in the eye of the beholder. Individuals’ valuations of themselves – their self-respect and self-esteem – will depend upon the particular reference group or groups that are important to them. One of the prime contributions of reference group theory and research has been to demonstrate that individual self-valuations vary over time as a function of variation in reference groups (Hyman and Singer 1968). Reference group theory has also illuminated the paradoxical

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Discourse”, and the micro-level context as the “Informal Discourse”.<sup>56</sup> The “Official Discourse” refers to the broad socio-political arena, especially operating at national level. The “Official Discourse” refers to the more regional level, while the “Formal Discourse” is at the most localised level.

<sup>57</sup> A. Gramsci, Selections From the Prison Notebooks, p. 104.

independence of individual discontent and apparent well-being (Pettigrew 1964, Stouffer 1946). People may not be able to think well of themselves unless they know that they are accepted by their peers<sup>58</sup>.

People are constantly faced with the necessity of locating themselves in relation to others. This process of location in the role system may be described as the formulation of answers to the recurrent question, “who am I?” The answers to this question mean nothing without explicit or implicit answers to the reciprocal questions, “who are you?” or “who is he?” Mulford and Salisbury (1964) provide an empirical illustration of the way self-conceptions emerge in response to this question, and it was found that one’s social identity is defined as a multiple product of attempts to locate oneself in the role system – symbolically represented by asking and answering the question, “who I am?” For instance, the assertion, “I am a father”, is valid only if the person has at least minimal interactions with his children.

Again, identities are changing, overlapping and multiple. Within us, contradictory identities are pulling in different directions. The notion of multiple identity means that an individual or group may have more than one identity, although some identities may be more salient than others. This hybrid experience should help us stop from treating identity as a “thing”, as something eternally fixed and given, and make us understand the

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<sup>58</sup> T. R. Sarbin and K. E. Scheibe, Studies in Society, p. 7.

contested, negotiable and constructed character of identities, in short, to help draw our attention to it as an ongoing process of self-making and dialogue (Hall 1992; Gilroy 1997; and Melucci 1997). When we discover our culture as one among several cultures, we may, as Paul Ricoeur once noted, realise the possibility that there are just “others”, that we ourselves are an “other” among “others” (Ricoeur 1965).

## **Expression and observation of identity**

Another aspect on identities debate, which is closely related to the above points, is that identities can be expressed, observed, perceived, conceptualised, or denied. In other words, identities may be expressed by an individual or a group out of choice. People have a tendency to express what they think and feel they are. The example of such expressed identity is when people prefer to be called Africans, rather than Blacks, and vice versa, for instance. On the other hand, identities of a particular group or individual may be observed by others, without necessarily being expressed by the identified group. For instance, an individual or group may be called African

by others, while that individual or group does not express such an identity. What one expresses does not always mean that others observe it in that way. Rehana Ebr.-Vally argues that “identities formation is a two way dynamic process in which the presence of the other is an essential component”<sup>59</sup>. In this case, obvious identity markers such as race, gender, age and class apply here. For instance, for someone to express his/her identity as Black, somewhere there must be a White identity as opposed to the Black one expressed.

On this point, Jenkins argues that what people think about us is no less important than what we think about ourselves<sup>60</sup>. Identity must also be validated (or not) by those with whom we have dealings. Identity is never unilateral. Although people have (some) control over signals about themselves which they send to others, we are all at a disadvantage in that we cannot ensure either their correct reception or interpretation, or know how they are received or interpreted. Hence the importance of what Goffman (1969) calls “impression management strategies” in which individuals consciously pursue goals seeking to “be” – and to be “seen to be” – “something” or “somebody”, to assume successfully particular social identities<sup>61</sup>. Not only do we identify ourselves, of course, but we also identify

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<sup>59</sup> R. Ebr.-Vally, Kala Pani. Caste and Colour in South Africa, p. 28.

<sup>60</sup> R. Jenkins, Social Identity, p. 21.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

others and are identified by them in turn, in the internal-external dialectic between self-image and public image.

Identities can also be perceived by those who express them as well as those who observe them. Identities can also be conceptualised, especially at the macro-level context (“Official Discourse”), in which certain rules and laws are laid down to foster such kind of identities. The labelling and categorisation of people in rigid racial and tribal lines by the past apartheid authorities in South Africa, is an example of how identities can be conceptualised and fostered. However, identities can be denied, especially in cases where they are being imposed. Still on the example of apartheid South Africa, people used to deny being identified as “non-Whites”, for instance. The expression, observation, perception, conceptualisation and denial of identities form an integral part of the current 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries debate on identities<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> R. Jenkins, Social Identity, p. 22.

## Identity as “shared experience”

Theoretical arguments on identity creation also indicate that interaction with others plays a significant role in identity formation<sup>63</sup>. Interaction with others which results in identity formation can either be accommodative or frictional. Interaction - be it friendly or hostile – is likely to impact identity formation. The friendships formed by other groups influence their identities, and the basis of such friendships serves to distinguish one friendship group from another. This is further explained by Castells’s notion of identity as a “shared experience”<sup>64</sup>. In this case, Castells maintains that sharing the same experiences, interests, habits and tastes allows people to relate to, and identify with, one another on some level. This fosters shared meaning of situations, which makes it possible to have shared identities. These

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<sup>63</sup> R. Jenkins, Social Identity, p. 22.

<sup>64</sup> M. Castells, “Globalisation, Identity and the State”. Social Dynamics, p. 7.

shared identities can transcend obvious identity markers such as race, gender, age and class. In this case, people of different tribal origins might find themselves sharing the same experiences, for instance, of being under colonial threat, to such an extent that they identify with one another as a result of that shared experience.

Castells's position is advanced by A. Leon (1970) in relation to Jewish identity<sup>65</sup>. G. de Vos and L. Romanucci-Ross (1975) also maintain the same position of the "shared experience" notion. They argue that a sense of common origin, common beliefs and values, a common sense of survival – in brief, a common cause – has been of great importance in uniting men into self-defining groups<sup>66</sup>. They further argue that growing up together in a social unit, sharing common verbal and gestural language allows men to develop mutually understood accommodations, which radically diminish situations of possible confrontation and conflict.

The notion that identities can only become an experience if only enforced enough over time is also still espoused by Castells<sup>67</sup>. Castells argues that shared experiences can be contrived, but that the resultant identities will be superficial until they are forced enough over time<sup>68</sup>. Identity can be built

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<sup>65</sup> A. Leon, The Jewish Question, p. 9.

<sup>66</sup> G. de Vos and L. Romanucci-Ross, Ethnic Identity: Cultural Communities and Change, p. 5.

<sup>67</sup> M. Castells, Globalisation, Identity ..., p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

artificially, but it only becomes a material force and a material source of meaning when it has been enforced enough over time and in depths of people's bodies and souls<sup>69</sup>. However, short-lived experiences also play a role in fostering identities. Some identities are transient in nature, while others may last longer, even after the actual interaction of groups has ceased to exist<sup>70</sup>.

However, this "shared experience" notion is challenged by A. Gramsci (1971) who advances the conception of "dual consciousness". Gramsci argues that verbally-expressed identity is often at odds with people's experiences, especially when they engage in struggle, and it is this dialectic that gives rise to the development on new identities<sup>71</sup>. In other words, it is the "differentiation", rather than the "sharing", according to Gramsci, which gives rise to the development of new identities. However, these two opposing views can both be applicable as identity creation can happen in both instances. Sharing experiences such as living together, schooling together and going to church together, can result in creation of common identities. On the other hand, in a dialectic situation where there are differences, people or groups develop contrasting characteristics which form the basis of their definitions against other individuals or groups. Differences

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<sup>69</sup> J. Muller et al, Challenges of Globalisation..., p. 115.

<sup>70</sup> J. Muller et al, Challenges of Globalisation..., p. 115.

<sup>71</sup> A. Gramsci, Selections From the Prison Notebooks, p. 333.

in identities help individuals or groups to be “more distinguished” from one another.

## **Imposed versus spontaneous identity creation (formation)**

Related to the above theoretical proposition, is the distinction between imposed identity and spontaneous identity (the latter which Castells [2000] refers to as having grown organically). Usually, identities are imposed by dominant social actors. A common example of imposed identity is usually by the state. In the modern age, national states, often use their power and influence to impose new identities<sup>72</sup>. The values of society are going to be the values that the state decides. On the other hand, identities which have grown organically are those which have developed not through coercion. These identities develop out of the mechanisms such as shared education; language teaching; the media; and the Internet<sup>73</sup>.

On the issue of imposed identity, R. Jenkins talks about “a model of internalisation which may occur if one is authoritatively labelled within an institutional setting”<sup>74</sup>. However, according to Jenkins, this model is not

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<sup>72</sup> J. Muller et al, Challenges of Globalisation, p. 116.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, pp. 123 – 124.

<sup>74</sup> R. Jenkins, Social Identity, p. 22.

sufficient. Significant in the process whereby people acquire the identities with which they are labelled, is the capacity of authoritatively applied identities effectively to constitute or impinge upon individual experience<sup>75</sup>. This is a question of whose definition of the situation counts (put differently: power). Identification by others has outcomes; it is often the capacity to generate those observations which matters. Labelling may also, of course, evoke resistance (which, no less than internalisation, is an 'identity effect' produced by labelling). For instance, social actors with power like the state, may use labelling as a form of imposing identities, and this may result in resistance of such labels like in when most people in South Africa rejected labels such as "kaffirs", "natives" and "non-Whites".

## **Social, cultural and political aspects on identity**

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<sup>75</sup> R. Jenkins, Social Identity, pp. 22 - 23.

Another theoretical argument is that cultural, social and political contexts are decisive when it comes to identity<sup>76</sup>. This is mainly because these three aspects are important in each society, hence they are decisive as far as identities creation is concerned. On this theoretical aspect of identity formation, Dolby [1999] and Swain [2002] refer to the role of popular culture, especially regarding the youth. Dolby argues that among the youth, music tends to take on racial characteristics<sup>77</sup>. D. Posel singles out race as a significant identity marker with a model referred to as “race as a common sense”<sup>78</sup>. Here race, as a cultural aspect, is given prominence in identity creation over other identity markers, especially by the South African authors precisely because race has been a hotly contested and debated issue in this country.

On this issue Asante-Darko (2002) explores the range of conceptual and empirical implications of the manner in which space or nature or environment affects socio-political identities. The author argues that space, rather than race, class or language, is the ultimate determinant of identity<sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> M. Castells, “Globalisation, Identity...”, p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> N. Dolby, Youth and the Global Popular: The Politics of Practices and Race in South Africa”. European Journal of Cultural Studies, 2(3), p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> D. Posel, “Race as a Common Sense: Racial Classification in the Twentieth Century South Africa”. African Studies Review, 44 (2), p. 50.

<sup>79</sup> K. Asante-Darko, “Ecocriticism and the poetics of multiple identities”, Region, Nation, Identity: The Ninth International Conference on the Literature of Region and Nation, 30 July – 2 August 2002, Durban, South Africa.

Environmental factors such as vegetation, rainfall and mountains, according to the author, are very important in shaping people's ways of life and identities. Asante-Darko, with his emphasis on space, disagrees with Castells's emphasis on cultural, social and political contexts as decisive determinants of identity. In his argument, Asante-Darko identifies various connotations that the evocation of flora, fauna and the landscape, have in the determination of social, racial and socio-cultural identities<sup>80</sup>.

On the other hand, G. de Vos and L. Romanucci-Ross (1975) put culture ahead of the other two aspects in identity formation. They point out that the cultural bases for social groupings in society are varied, some of these groupings are defined reciprocally and horizontally; others are stratified vertically, with emphasis on the status of an individual or group with respect to other persons or groups<sup>81</sup>. In their emphasis on culture, De Vos and Romanucci-Ross identify "another form of group separation", which is "ethnic identity", which they say can be a source of conflict, since ethnic groups in many instances do not remain in a fixed position within a stratified system<sup>82</sup>.

On this issue, Zimitri Erasmus highlights the importance of culture in this case by asserting that, "since cultural formations involve borrowing from

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> G. de Vos and L. Romanucci-Ross, Ethnic Identity, p. 5.

<sup>82</sup> G. de Vos and L. Romanucci-Ross, Ethnic Identity, p. 6.

cultural forms,... thus all identities could be seen/read as cultural hybrid...<sup>83</sup>

Still on culture, William Ray argues that it is paradoxical in relation to identity formation:

‘Culture’ thus articulates the tension between the two antithetical concepts of identity: it tells us to think of ourselves as being who we are because of what we have in common with all the other members of our society or community, but it also says we develop a distinctive particular identity by virtue of our efforts to know and fashion ourselves as individuals. In abstract terms, culture simultaneously connotes sameness and difference, shared habit and idiosyncratic style, collective reflex and particular endeavour [sic], unconsciously assimilated beliefs and consciously won convictions, the effortlessly inherited residue of social existence, and the expression of a striving for individuality<sup>84</sup>.

Having taken into consideration these arguments, it is clear that the people’s political traditions, cultural beliefs and social customs are usually

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<sup>83</sup> Z. Erasmus, Coloured by History. Shaped by Place. New Perspective of Coloured Identities in Cape Town, p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> W. Ray, New Perspectives on the Past: The Logic of Culture: Authority and Identity in the Modern Era, p. 3.

very important in defining who they are. And again, environmental factors are not less important in determining people's identities.

The theoretical aspects discussed thus far are going to be illustrated and interpreted in the subsequent text. For this study, the most important identity markers that will be focused on will include race (and tribal ways), politics, religion, social customs, language, education, health, economy, class (status), behaviour, gender, age and habits.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **HOW ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS AFFECTED IDENTITIES FROM THE EARLIEST OCCUPATION OF MAKGABENG, 1600 AD – 1850s**

In this chapter, the earliest occupants of the Makgabeng area will be traced, and it will be investigated as to how their identities were shaped by the environment they lived in. This will be analysed over time in relation to the

environmental changes. Focus will be on the topography, climate, flora and fauna, which will all be put into a historical perspective. In this chapter, I will look into how the environmental factors contributed in the shaping of identities in the Makgabeng area from the earliest occupants, the Khoisan and the Bantu-speaking communities. The subsequent chapter will proceed through to the European travellers, the missionaries, the colonial settlers (Boers and British), up to the present situation.

According to the theoretical proposition advanced by Asante-Darko (2002), space or nature or environment affects socio-political identities, in which the author argues that space, rather than race, class or language, is the ultimate determinant of identity<sup>85</sup>. Environmental factors such as vegetation, rainfall and mountains, according to the author, are very important in shaping people's ways of life and their identities. In his argument, Asante-Darko identifies various connotations that the evocation of flora, fauna and the landscape, have in the determination of social, racial and socio-cultural identities<sup>86</sup>. The environmental factors in the Makgabeng area will be studied and their shaping of identities there will be determined in this chapter.

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<sup>85</sup> K. Asante-Darko, "Ecocriticism and the poetics of multiple identities", *Region, Nation, Identity: The Ninth International Conference on the Literature of Region and Nation*, 30 July – 2 August 2002, Durban, South Africa.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

## **Geology and geography of Makgabeng**

With the notion that environmental factors shape people's identities, geology is one of those factors as it forms the basis on which people actually settle. Almost all human activities take place on – and are dependent upon – geology. The geology of the Makgabeng area produced particular types of soils which in turn gave rise to peculiar kinds of vegetation in the area. Peculiar kinds of vegetation on the other hand, resulted in the breeding of peculiar kinds of fauna in that area. And the fauna and flora in that area became the lifeline of different population groups which settled in that area. All these environmental conditions would therefore explain the attractions of humankind to the Makgabeng area. Ever

since the origin of humankind, its identity has always been shaped by the surrounding environment. Human beings will not be defined as complete without the soils, mountains, trees, animals and such related natural features. Human life is impossible without these environmental features.

Human beings have since depended on soil for their survival activities such as cultivating crops and settlement, and from the earliest occupation of the Makgabeng, soil was very important for both purposes. The Makgabeng mountains were not only significant strongholds for security against possible attacks, they also provided grazing grounds for livestock. They also harboured hundreds of wild animals which formed food supplements for hunting communities. Various species of trees in that area provided food for both human beings and animals. Humans also used them for building and medicine.

The Makgabeng is a rugged plateau rising about 200 meters above the surrounding plains. The plateau is underlain by characteristic, fine-grained sandstone, and in some places younger, coarser sandstone and conglomerate outcrops form the steep-side spires which tower over the northern parts of the plateau. The finer sediments are thought to be almost 2 billion years old and represent the remains of fossilised pre-Cambrian desert<sup>87</sup>. The characteristic sloping strata represent windblown sands which

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<sup>87</sup> E. B. Eastwood, et al., "Archaeological and rock art survey of the Makgabeng plateau, Central Limpopo Basin", The Digging Stick, 19, 1, p. 1.

formed crescent-shaped barchans and longitudinal dunes. In this arid, pre-Cambrian landscape, there were also rivers and lakes, at the edges of which is evidence of fossilised cyanobacteria, which were the precursors of life on earth<sup>88</sup>. Cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae, grew in sub-aqueous conditions at the edges of water pools<sup>89</sup>. These layers of algal deposits were able to photosynthesise, turning carbon dioxide into oxygen, thus enabling the development of life on earth. This is a particular case in the Makgabeng area as evidenced by the unique sand-stone rocks of the Makgabeng plateau. These types of rocks have weathered into sandy soil which covers most of the Makgabeng area.

The Makgabeng plateau is one of the main mountain ranges in the northern part of Limpopo Province, the other two being Soutpansberg and Blouberg. Therefore, to put Makgabeng into a proper geological context, the other two neighbouring ranges need to be briefly looked into. This is precisely because mountains have been important in the creation of people identities. As people occupied mountainous areas for security reasons, they became attached to that particular mountain. For instance, there will be references to the Makgabeng people, the Soutpansberg people and the people of Blouberg. Thus, the environmental feature – the mountain – becomes the people's source of identity. The people in these three mountain ranges have

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

been interacting with one another in the form of marriages, trade and other forms. It is therefore necessary to briefly look into the natural features of the Soutpansberg and Blouberg ranges as their occupants related to the shaping of identities in the Makgabeng area.

The Soutpansberg range which is found to the north-east of Makgabeng, is coeval with the middle to the upper part of the Waterberg Group and its reddish sedimentary rocks and associated lavas were originally assigned to the Waterberg System by the Geological Survey<sup>90</sup>. From 1973 to 1975, H. Jansen, senior official of the South African Geological Services, co-supervised the Geological Survey team which provisionally divided the Soutpansberg succession into lower, middle and upper portions<sup>91</sup>. It was also found that the Soutpansberg correlated on the 1955 edition of the geological map with the Dominion Reef, Loskop and Waterberg Systems, all belonging to the Waterberg System<sup>92</sup>. According to Jansen, however, the Soutpansberg succession, which now constitutes an independent group, represents accumulation over a much larger time interval, i.e., from early to post- Waterberg<sup>93</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> L. E. Kent, Stratigraphy of South Africa. Part 1: Lithostratigraphy of the Republic of South Africa, South West Africa/Namibia and the Republics of Bophuthatswana, Transkei and Venda, p. 327.

<sup>91</sup> L. E. Kent, Stratigraphy of South Africa, p 327.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 328.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p 335.

The area from Belabela (formerly Warmbad) to the Blouberg was systematically mapped and studied by the Geological Survey over the period 1967 to 1974<sup>94</sup>. It was found that the area belongs to one major lithostratigraphic unit, the Waterberg, representing a major sedimentary cycle that was predominantly continental and erinaceous.

The Blouberg formation, which is also to the north-east of Makgabeng, has been divided into eight members and its deposition was largely in small, partly isolated yoked basins and troughs formed on down-faulted blocks in the basement<sup>95</sup>. The predominantly feldspathic members may be correlates of the Setlaole formation (middle Waterberg) and the predominantly non-feldspathic and volcanic ones are taken to be late Waterberg<sup>96</sup>.

The Makgabeng formation itself, which locally overlaps on to pre-Waterberg rocks, is characterised by large-scale cross-bedding and is probably largely of aeolin origin<sup>97</sup>. The overlying Mogalakwena formation, which consists of sandstone, coarser than that of Makgabeng, together with coarse conglomerates, is considered to have been deposited by a braided river system<sup>98</sup>. The Makgabeng sandstone formation overlies between about 500

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<sup>94</sup> L. E. Kent, Stratigraphy of South Africa, p 327.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 329.

<sup>96</sup> G. Brandl, The Geology of the Pietersburg area, p. 3.

<sup>97</sup> L. E. Kent, Stratigraphy of South Africa, p 335.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 336.

and 1200 metres<sup>99</sup>. It represents a monotonous development of a medium-grained, thinly laminated, yellowish sandstone which displays a large-scale cross bedding and, sparingly, asymmetrical ripple mark. Locally, a poorly sorted conglomerate containing angular clasts is developed at the base.

Next to the Makgabeng, on the south-east is a small Setlaole formation, which is at the base of the Waterberg Group<sup>100</sup>. It is part of the Hout River Gneiss, the Rooiberg Group and the Nebo Granite<sup>101</sup>. It has a maximum thickness of about 1 000 metres South Villa Nora but thins gradually towards the Blouberg area<sup>102</sup>. Setlaole consists of medium- to coarse-grained, dark-coloured sandstone with intercalations of conglomerate, feldspathic grit, arkoses and blackish mudstone<sup>103</sup>. Locally, around Setlaole Hill, a 6-metre-thick volcanoclastic bed represented by fine-grained, blackish tuffaceous shale and ignimbrite is developed at the base. The ignimbrite occasionally exhibits flow banding<sup>104</sup>.

The rock types found in the Makgabeng range and the surrounding formations, have weathered into various soil types. (See the map in annexure). These soil types, with their various chemical characteristics,

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<sup>99</sup> G. Brandl, The Geology of the Pietersburg area, p. 24.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, p 24.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

have grown various types of plants according to how various plant species are adapted to that kind of soil.

The landscape of Makgabeng is very rugged with tall spires and hills made up of horizontal conglomerates. Some of these hills and formations constituting the Makgabeng range are Thabanantlhana, Lerataupše, Ngwanantšwana, Sekamonyane, Bodiela and many others. The Makgabeng plateau has other pathways in the form of gorges, which enable movement of people and animals. Some of these poorts and gorges include Madibeng, Mmotwaneng, Sefata sa Basadi, Ditorong, and Masebe (See map in annexure).

Numerous river valleys criss-cross the landscape. Through the deep Masebe gorge runs the Masebe River westward into the Mogalakwena River. In the gorge, the rock shelters were formed by years of slow weathering by water, and are usually large oval caverns with smooth rock faces. The Mogalakwena River, which starts from the Modimolle (formerly Nylstroom) area, flows into the Limpopo River. Other rivers and rivulets in the Makgabeng area include Natse, which is a tributary of Seepabana, which is also a tributary of Mogalakwena (See map in annexure).

The mountain ranges, pathways and rivers in the Makgabeng area, are very important in identities of people of that area. The names given these natural features indicate how they are closely related to the people's identities.

These names help people to define and express who they are, as well as reflecting on how they see their immediate surroundings. For instance, the pathway, Sefata sa Basadi<sup>105</sup>, metaphorically refers to the easiness with which it is crossed, as it is less steep and even suitable for women crossing<sup>106</sup>. It must be remembered that traditionally among most Black societies, women were regarded as weak, and a less steep pathway could even be crossed by women, in contrast to men who could cross even the steepest pathways. The river, Seepabana<sup>107</sup>, was believed to have healing powers for people who were unable to bear children<sup>108</sup>. The pathway, Ditorong<sup>109</sup>, is named after the large number of prickly-pear trees found in that area.

## **Fauna and flora**

The vegetation of Makgabeng forms part of the Savannah Biome, which is the largest biome in South Africa, occupying 46% of its area, and over one-third the area of South Africa<sup>110</sup>. This biome is characterised by a grassy ground layer and a distinct upper layer of woody plants. Where this upper layer is near the ground, the vegetation may be referred to as Shrubveld,

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<sup>105</sup> Literally means “pathway for women”.

<sup>106</sup> Interview, Samson Phukubje, Lehwaneng village, 17 September 2003.

<sup>107</sup> Literally means “where children are dug”.

<sup>108</sup> Interview, Samson Phukubje, Lehwaneng village, 17 September 2003.

<sup>109</sup> Place of “ditoro”(prickly-pears).

<sup>110</sup> A. B. Low and A. G., Rebelo, Vegetation of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, p. 19.

where it is dense as Woodland, and the intermediate stages are locally known as Bushveld<sup>111</sup>. The availability and the thickness of grass have over the years succumbed to population explosion of people and their livestock. The fencing of land into purchased farms saw the gradual diminishing of grass as people and livestock increased within those farms.

Within this biome, altitude ranges from sea level to 2 000 metres, while rainfall varies from 235 to 1 000mm per year, and frost may occur from 0 to 120 days per year<sup>112</sup>. A major factor delimiting this biome is the lack of sufficient rainfall and as a result, the Makgabeng area is semi-arid. Summer rainfall is essential for the grass dominance in that area. The grass in the area has fine material which is vulnerable to veld fires. However, almost all species are adapted to survive fires, usually with less than 10% of plants, both in grass and tree layer, killed by fire<sup>113</sup>. Even with severe burning, most species can resprout from their stem bases.

The grass layer in this biome in general, and in the Makgabeng in particular, is dominated by C4-type<sup>114</sup> grasses, which are at an advantage where the growing season is hot, but where rainfall has a stronger winter component,

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>113</sup> A. B. Low and A. G. Rebelo, Vegetation of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, p. 19.

<sup>114</sup> In Agricultural terms, grass is categorised in C-types according to their types and lengths.

C3-type grasses dominate<sup>115</sup>. The shrub-tree layer may vary from 1 to 20 metre height, but in the Bushveld, typically varies from 3 to 7 metres<sup>116</sup>. The element may dominate the vegetation in areas which are used for grazing, mainly by cattle or game. In the southernmost savannah vegetation types, goats are a major stock. In some types, crops and subtropical fruit are cultivated.

The vegetation on the plains surrounding Makgabeng is dominated by Mixed Bushveld, while vegetation in the Makgabeng itself is Sourish Mixed Bushveld<sup>117</sup>. Makgabeng therefore has a variety of plant communities which characterise the bushveld. The vegetation in this kind of bushveld in general, and Makgabeng in particular, varies from a dense, short bushveld to a rather open savannah.

On shallow soil, Red Bush willow (*Combretum apiculatum*) dominates the vegetation. Other trees and shrubs include Common Hook-thorn (*Acacia caffra*), Sickle-bush (*Dichrostachys cinerea*), Live-long (*Lannea discolor*) and various Grewia species. Grass species include Finger-grass (*Digitaria eriantha*), Kalahari Sand Quick (*Schmidtia pappophoroides*), Wool Grass (*Anthehora pubescens*) and various Aristida and Eragrostis species. Species which dominate on deeper and sandier soils are Silver Cluster-leaf

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<sup>115</sup> A. B. Low and A. G. Rebelo, Vegetation of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, p. 19.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>117</sup> J. A. Van Schalkwyk, "Excavation of a Late Iron Age site in the Makgabeng, Northern Province, Southern African Field of Archaeology, 9, 2000, p. 75.

(*Terminalia sericea*), Peeling Plane (*Ochna pulchra*) and Wild Raisin (*Grewia flava*). In scanty grass sward species which are characteristically present are Broom Grass (*Eragrostis pallens*) and Purple Spike Cat's-tail (*Perotis patens*)<sup>118</sup>. Almost all these grass species are important as they mostly feed game and livestock.

The rich original vegetation of the Makgabeng area discussed above was to become negatively affected by the overcrowding and overpopulation and subsequent overgrazing. Human beings have sometimes been blamed for the disturbance of nature tranquillity as if they are not part of nature! The first occupants of the Makgabeng area obviously used trees for their needs such as shelter. Other plants were cut for food, medicines, and building. As a result, from the first occupants, the San, the Khoikhoi and the Bantu-speaking communities, natural vegetation in the Makgabeng area has been part of the people's ways of life, defining who they were. Therefore vegetation itself helps to shape people's identity as it shapes their life by providing their needs. People define themselves by the homes they build out of trees and grass, as well as the food they derive from vegetation. The size of a home built out of trees and grass, and the amount of food derived from vegetation, help to define the living standards of families. Resourceful families would go for meticulously chosen trees and grass types which will define the higher standards of living they set themselves, while poorer families (like those of widows) would settle for less quality woods to erect

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<sup>118</sup> A. B. Low and A. G. Rebelo, Vegetation of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, p. 26.

their homesteads<sup>119</sup>. In the Makgabeng area, the wood of *moretšhe* and *monganga* are regarded as durable in homestead construction<sup>120</sup>. The *motšhikiri* and *kgolane* grasses are commonly used to thatch huts in the Makgabeng<sup>121</sup>.

After the arrival and political take over by the colonial settlers in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Makgabeng area – and other parts of the country - was surveyed into farms which formed different communal villages. The survey, fencing and sale of these farms will be fully discussed later in the chapter on land. Each tiny village/farm carried a population which was constantly expanding. Whereas the population was ever expanding, the fenced borders of the farms did not expand. In other words, the descendants of the original farm purchasers built their homes on the same farms continually, even up until this day. Few of these descendants find places to live elsewhere, like in urban areas. But the rest remain. This trend has an impact on identities in the Makgabeng area because as the able-bodied young men and women are attracted by urban greener pastures, the brain-drain suffered by that rural area becomes enormous. As a result, the Makgabeng area becomes characterised by the aged, unemployed as well as the children who are still at school. With the abolition of apartheid laws which some of them restricted the settlement of Blacks in urban centres, the

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<sup>119</sup> Interview, Samson Phukubje, Lehwaneng village, 17 September 2003.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

exodus from rural villages by the young men and women intensified, leaving areas such as Makgabeng with the weaker members of society.

In addition to cutting settlements plots, these descendants were also allocated cultivation plots. The increase in livestock numbers also added to the congestion in those tiny fenced farms, especially in the 1960s and 1970s when the second generation of the farm purchasers became adults who established their own homes. All these put a lot of strain on the vegetation in the Makgabeng area. Most farms experienced heavy soil erosions due to overpopulation and overgrazing. The exceptions were those farms which are mountainous. These farms offered good grazing area as grass and different kinds of vegetation are abundantly available in the mountains. However, those farms are not helpful in terms of cultivation which cannot take place on mountains. For instance, the farms such as Too Late and Rosamond are almost covered by mountains and are mostly used for grazing while there are no settlements nor cultivation areas there.

In addition to the flora discussed above, Makgabeng was originally a habitat of diverse and abundant fauna, ranging from mega-herbivores to small mammal, bird and reptile populations. Unfortunately, there are few wild animals left in the area owing to human intrusion. The presence of domestic stock and the human practice of hunting with dogs, snares and steel traps led to the disappearance of most faunal species in the Makgabeng area. In game reserves nearby, Blouberg, Waterberg and Limpopo Valley, a wide

range of wild animals indigenous to Makgabeng are found. Game has always been part of people's existence as they often hunted it for meat, skins and ivory. The original abundance and later diminishing of some faunal species in the Makgabeng area, had a direct link with the people there. Firstly, they were responsible for the depletion of these once abundant species. Secondly, the diminishing of these species meant that they had to change and adapt to new ways of life without the meat, skins and other products of those species.

Certainly, in the past – as recorded in the rock art - there were populations of elephant, giraffe, rhinoceros, lion, leopard, hyena, sable antelope, hartebeest, kudu, eland, gemsbok, tsessebe, plain zebra, blue wildebeest, mountain reedbuck, and a number of smaller animals. The animal species that are still found in the Makgabeng include the bushbuck, duiker, bush pig, velvet monkey, samango monkey, baboon, leopard, brown hyena, ant-bear, hyrax, African wild cat, porcupine, genet cat and some small mammals and reptiles. These animals which are still available in the Makgabeng area, are mostly in thick bushes in the mountains where people do not have access. The significance of animals on identity creation in the Makgabeng area is reflected in how people intimately took animals as part of their existence. Except for meat and other faunal products, the Makgabeng people were adopting animals as their totems and also named themselves after animals. These ritualistic and symbolic identity markers will be fully discussed later in the chapter on social customs.

Just like with flora, the human encroachment in the Makgabeng area, also disrupted the faunal peace which had existed before the arrival of man there. All the animal species which roamed the Makgabeng area came to be disturbed by human activities such as settlement, grazing and hunting. This was worsened by the European colonialists' policies of fencing off of land and having it purchased by Black communities.

The closing of the frontiers between man and animals in the Makgabeng area had begun with the first arrivals of the Khoisan. This meeting of human beings and animals was never a pleasant one and confrontation or shifting of the other group has always been inevitable. The interaction between animals and the earliest occupants of Makgabeng, namely, the Khoisan and the Bantu-speakers, was that of man hunting animals. This resulted in extinction and flight of many species from the area. As a result, today in that area there is no slightest trace of the species such as elephant, giraffe, rhinoceros, lion, leopard, hyena, sable antelope, hartebeest, eland, gemsbok, tsessebe, plain zebra, blue wildebeest and mountain reedbuck – the species which roamed the Makgabeng area before. With this extinction, the people's ways of life in relation to these species were also lost. People can no longer feed on their meat; they can no longer wear aprons made of their skins; and they can no longer perform rituals and derive medicinal values with those extinct species. However, the Makgabeng people still continue to use totems and names of those diminished animals.

In addition to the contact between animals and the earliest occupants of Makgabeng, the Khoisan and Bantu-speakers, the early European travellers also hunted game in large numbers. Their possession of firearms made them effective hunters, thereby hastening the extinction of game from the Makgabeng area. The Buys, for example, people were reported to have formed strong hunting parties in which they established strong trade in meat, skins, ivory and other animal products<sup>122</sup>. In addition to the European travellers, the missionary records also reflect their contact with animals. In 1888 Rev. Sack wrote on how animal species bothered him at his mission station on the northern foot of Makgabeng:

If the ants were a nuisance, the snakes, which had established themselves in the ruined walls that had so long been uninhabited, were downright dangerous... Everyday the situation with snakes is getting worse. The day before yesterday, I discovered a very big Rinkals Cobra between the stones of the kraal walls; Samuel killed it with a spear. That evening I heard the Christians screaming. When I got there I found a 3 foot Puffadder, which the men had killed. Today, just after morning service, as the Christians settled down in the shade of a tree in front of the church and were reading the Catechism, a Tree snake suddenly fell down in

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<sup>122</sup> T. J. Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity ...* p. 74.

their midst... May the Lord protect us from this misfortune!<sup>123</sup>

Missionary Martin Jackel's records in his 1925 document also reflect the abundance of animal species in the Makgabeng area at that time:

During the night of 29 May 1868 four lions came close to the house in which [Rev.] Endemann was sleeping and killed an ox and a calf. In February of '69 [Rev.] Beyer was in great danger. On the way from Matlala he encountered some lions. In October during the same year he came across a lioness when he hunted for guinea fowl... In 1919, a young hunter met his death when he was bitten by a wounded lioness close to the outside station of Huilbosch... Numerous leopards (called tigers by the Boers) can be found near the Blouberg Station. The writer [Jackel] himself killed five leopards in close range of his station. At the moment hyenas are exterminated, but wild dogs (wolves) are common. Wild boars, baboons, giant snakes and all sorts of poisonous snakes today still romp around in the Blouberge. Big game, kudu, wildebeest, hartebeest, sable antelope, etc. are common enough<sup>124</sup>.

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<sup>123</sup> Rev. Sack, Berliner Missionberichte, "Nachrichten von station Makgabeng", Vol. 19. No. 20. 1890, p. 1.

<sup>124</sup> M. Jackel, Gananoa, p. 11.

The above accounts indicate how the Makgabeng area had been endowed by the abundance of animal species. But the human activities in that area marked the beginning of the end of some species in that area, especially large game.

## **Earliest human habitation in Makgabeng**

The environmental conditions discussed thus far had contributed to the attraction of various communities in the Makgabeng area. Among the important environmental/natural features which attracted man were the mountains which provided shelter and security. As a result, various groups chose to settle in Makgabeng area. During those times of conflicts, the Makgabeng mountains became secure strongholds in which various communities could hide and strategically manoeuvre against their enemies. In addition to the shelter and stronghold positioning, the high plateau offered occupying groups strategic advantage to overlook their approaching enemies. Among the various groups which occupied the Makgabeng, the

Bantu-speaking communities attached too much security importance to the mountains, hence the Bahananwa came to occupy the Blouberg range, while the other groups of the Bakone, Batšhadibe, and other smaller groups, occupied the Makgabeng range. The safety of these communities which was offered by the mountain strongholds, was actually part of how they defined themselves as people (i.e., their identity). The notion of “shared experience”, which is important in identity creation, is applicable here as communities identified themselves as one as they occupied the same mountain fortresses in the face of common threat of attacks.

With such habitable and secure environmental conditions, it was not surprising that the Makgabeng area attracted so many different communities, from the San, the Khoikhoi, the Bantu-speakers, the European travellers, hunters, traders, explorers, missionaries, the Boers and the British. During these successive occupations by different communities, various identities were formed in the Makgabeng area while others were destroyed. This is also in accordance with the notion of “shared experience”<sup>125</sup>, in which interaction with others (whatever form of interaction) plays a role in identity formation – in this case, identities were shaped by the interaction among various groups which were attracted and met in the Makgabeng area.

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<sup>125</sup> M. Castells, “Globalisation, Identity...”, p. 7.

## **Early occupation.**

Archaeological evidence indicates that the earliest South African inhabitants were people who fell in two broad divisions – those who lived by hunting and gathering, and those who had herds of domesticated cattle and sheep and some pottery. The hunter/gatherers who had probably been here for at least ten thousand years were the “ancestors” of the San or Bushmen of today, while the herders who had probably arrived much later were the “ancestors” of the Khoikhoi<sup>126</sup>. During that earliest period, groups of people practicing agriculture in addition to herding, filtered into South Africa from the north. These people also worked metal and archaeological evidence indicates that these were the forerunners of the later waves of people who were called Bantu-speakers or Blacks. In the subsequent paragraphs the identity formation among the earliest occupants of the Makgabeng – the San, the Khoikhoi and the Bantu-speakers – will be traced.

## **The San.**

The San “can be regarded as the first real inhabitants of South Africa”<sup>127</sup>. In the Makgabeng area, the San began to settle in about AD 700<sup>128</sup>. Rock art and archaeological evidence in the Makgabeng area indicate that the San

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<sup>126</sup> H. C. Woodhouse, Rock Art, p. 2.

<sup>127</sup> H. J. Van Aswegen, History of South Africa to 1854, p. 16.

<sup>128</sup> E. B. Eastwood, et al., “Archaeological and rock art survey, p. 1.

were the earliest to occupy the area, although there are indications of later interactions with both the Khoikhoi and the Bantu-speakers.

The San were expert artists and some of the best preserved and most impressive remains of these people are the rock art—paintings and engravings found in areas such as Makgabeng. Paintings are mostly found in mountainous areas and are therefore more peculiar to Makgabeng than engravings. The world-class rock art paintings in Makgabeng are vast and impressive and have struck the investigators and researchers such as Noel Roberts, Adrian Boshier, Revil Mason, Harold Pager, as well as Jalmer and lone Rudner. Information produced by their works and findings has been extensively consulted and used as reference for this study. Rock art sites are often found close to streams and most of them provide a panoramic view of game below and, usually, a supply of wood for fuel, adds up to a highly desirable living space.

The fine nature of the San rock art indicates the fineness of the object with which they were drawn. They occasionally use palette knife, quill pen, animal hair as well as brushes from bird feathers stuck on reeds. Their paint consists of pigment mixtures made, for example, of red ochre, yellow ochre, bird droppings, charcoal and manganese oxide.

Different writers have advanced various theories to explain why the San art was created. The explanations provided for the creation of rock art by the

San include “sympathetic magic”<sup>129</sup> in which it was believed that the creator of the image of an animal gave him power to capture it in a hunt. Other writers state that the rock art is a form of communication, while another theory explains that the art is an expression of religion and ritual. Whatever motivated the creation of San rock art, the image classes found in Makgabeng include men and woman, animals such as elephant, giraffe, kudu, hartebeest, eland, impala, aardvark, sheep, felines and zebra<sup>130</sup>. The themes which are expressed in the rock art deal with the total life experience and way of thinking of the San. With these drawings of people, animals and hunting scenes, the San portrayed their own communities and their ways of life such as their clothing, adornments and implements – in short, their own identity. Great emphasis is also placed on animals, explaining the San’s dependence on them for survival<sup>131</sup>.

The images made by the San on rocks shed light on the ways of life of the San as well as their identities. Archaeological evidence and the positions of rock art sites in Makgabeng indicate that the San preferred mountains and hilly areas. Their habitats ranged from cave and rock overhangs to open veld where they sometimes built shelters with branches to protect themselves. The Makgabeng area, with its abundance of game, thus not only provided the San with shelter, but also with food for their survival. The

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<sup>129</sup> H. C. Woodhouse, Rock Art, p. 7.

<sup>130</sup> E. B. Eastwood, et al., “Archaeological and rock art survey,” p. 3.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

San had to adapt to the migration patterns of game as they lived on it. Because of this, they did not have fixed abodes. Some groups moved around the Makgabeng area from winter to summer rainfall areas on a seasonal basis<sup>132</sup>.

The way of life of the San was generally very simple and in a certain sense, uncomplicated. Their daily existence revolved mainly around the finding of food. The abundant food supplies in the Makgabeng made life easier for the San. With game, wild fruits, and water readily available in that area, the Makgabeng San would not wander for long distances for their survival. This made them to be more attached to the Makgabeng area which formed part of their identity. It will later be shown that the San of the Makgabeng area stuck to that area even after the arrival of other groups, contrary to some views that they were wiped out of the Makgabeng.

Archaeological artefacts in the Makgabeng area indicate that San's food was prepared over an open fire and tortoise and ostrich eggshells were used as receptacles for food and water<sup>133</sup>. The techniques of making clay pots developed over centuries and indications are that they had earlier been obtaining their pots by bartering with Blacks<sup>134</sup>. This is one of the most important indications that the San in the Makgabeng area had actually

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<sup>132</sup> E. B. Eastwood, et al., "Archaeological and rock art survey, p. 3.

<sup>133</sup> A. Smith (et al), The Bushmen of Southern Africa: A Foraging society in transition, p. 20.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, p. 40.

interacted with other groups, especially the Bantu-speaking groups from whom they traded such commodities as pots. The San's clothing appeared to have been very simple<sup>135</sup> and the materials used for clothing reflect the locality in which they were living. Their clothing was mostly made of the animal material of the species found in the Makgabeng area. This further emphasises the fact that the San were who they were because of the environment they occupied. Their identity had been shaped by the Makgabeng environment: the mountains, vegetation, game and its products, such as meat and skins. For clothing the men mostly wore a loin cloth, whereas the women wore a kind of apron and skin cloth<sup>136</sup>. The women also wore adornments consisting of a variety of beads made of ostrich eggshells, seashells and bone, as well as necklaces or headbands and bracelets made of the same material<sup>137</sup>.

As far as their social structure was concerned, the San never formed one homogeneous group, but consisted of a variety of communities which spoke more or less the same San language<sup>138</sup>. The Makgabeng rock art shelters and archaeological remains in those shelters, indicate that the San groups were usually small. A group usually consisted of 10 to 14 individuals with a single family (father, mother, children – married and unmarried) as its

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>138</sup> P. V. Tobias (ed), The Bushmen: San hunters and herders of Southern Africa, p. 10.

core<sup>139</sup>. From the rock art paintings in Makgabeng, it can also be deduced that larger groups of 20 to 25 members also occurred. Family life was simple and was adapted to their hunting and nomadic way of life. Marriages were concluded without much ceremony and few children were born from such marriages<sup>140</sup>. Their way of life militated against large numbers of children. It can also be surmised that the death rate among children must have been very high.

The size of the San groups was naturally determined by their nomadic life and the fact that they lived off hunting and the gathering of food. With this way of life, it was impossible to sustain large groups of people. The organisation of their groups was very elementary. There was no specific group leader or internal structure of authority<sup>141</sup>. The groups were not closed. Members could leave the group at will and new members could join it.

There was little contact and co-operation between various small San groups, except in times of great danger<sup>142</sup>. In such instances they apparently co-operated temporarily in order to deal with the situation at hand. In the Makgabeng area, apparently there is no evidence of any large

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<sup>139</sup> H. J. Van Aswegen, History of South Africa, p. 17.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>141</sup> H. J. Van Aswegen, History of South Africa, p. 17.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, p. 18.

scale crisis between the San groups and other groups which arrived later. Interaction between the Makgabeng San and later groups appeared to have been fairly accommodative as compared to other confrontational situations such as those between the San and the Dutch in the Cape in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. However, mutual conflict between San groups occurred. Such situations of conflict are often dramatically depicted in the Makgabeng rock art. Conflict was probably a result of one group intruding on another's hunting area. For the San, the hunting terrain – the area that provided them with food – was of cardinal importance and they protected it with their lives<sup>143</sup>.

Economically speaking, one of the most important functions of each member of the San group was to provide food. In this regard, there was a clear division of labour between men and women. The men had to hunt to provide meat, and the women had to provide the veld foods<sup>144</sup>. For hunting, the men used the bow and arrow, which it will be shown how they were improved as they interacted with other groups in the Makgabeng area. This weapon was reasonably small and light, with the result that the San, with their small build, could handle it easily. Arrowheads were made mainly of bone and stone, securely fastened to a wooden shaft and dipped in poison to paralyse or kill the prey<sup>145</sup>. Since the striking distance of the bow and

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<sup>143</sup> E. M. Shaw, Bushmen, p. 45.

<sup>144</sup> E. M. Shaw, Bushmen, p. 18.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

arrow was not very great, the San developed hunting techniques to get as close as possible to their prey. Many rock art paintings in the Makgabeng illustrate this important aspect of the life of the San in a very special way.

In the course of time the San also used arrowheads made of iron which they most probably bartered with the Khoikhoi and the Bantu-speaking communities, because they themselves did not have the technology to smelt and process iron. The archaeological evidence indicates the remains of the Bantu-speaking iron smelting furnaces found around the Makgabeng area which were used to produce iron objects some of which they traded with the San. The Makgabeng San therefore had the advantage of developing and shaping their lives due to their proximity and accommodative interaction with groups which later arrived in that area.

The San also used traps to get hold of their animal preys which were roaming the Makgabeng area in abundance at that time. The traps or snares were made of various types of plants, branches, or skin thongs and were mostly used to catch smaller kinds of animals<sup>146</sup>. Unlike the San in other areas with lack of food supplies, the Makgabeng San also lived on gathered food such as fruit, vegetables, bulbs, tubers and roots which came in various species in the Makgabeng mountains. These were mostly gathered by women with special implements with which they dug

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<sup>146</sup> H. J. Van Aswegen, History of South Africa, p. 19.

underground foods<sup>147</sup>. These consisted of long, sharp sticks with round stone weights attached to them to be able to dig deeply. Insects such as locusts and ants also supplemented the San diet while honey was also popular among them.

On the aspect of religion, the Makgabeng rock art depicts various images in which the San often got into a trance state. This often occurred during dance ceremonies and this is depicted in complicated images believed to be those of medicine men who had the power to cure the sick and also drive away all evil. Medicine men were also believed to have power to make rain and these powers were also exercised during the dance ceremonies while they were in trance. Although these medicine men had special powers, they were normal members of the group and also participated like all other men, in the everyday activities of the group.

Our limited knowledge of the beliefs of the San in the earliest time can be aided by studies on the remaining San groups of today, such as those in Botswana and Namibia. From these surviving groups, it is established that the San in general, believed in the Great God, the Creator of the world, food and water<sup>148</sup>. Apart from the Creator they also believed in other lower gods which were supernatural beings. The San believed that they could make contacts with these gods through their medicine men as well as their own

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<sup>147</sup> E. M. Shaw, Bushmen, p. 45.

<sup>148</sup> H. J. Van Aswegen, History of South Africa, p. 18.

prayers<sup>149</sup>. These prayers were often directed towards the moon, especially the new moon<sup>150</sup>. The god in the new moon was requested to provide sufficient food and water<sup>151</sup>. Some groups also directed their prayers to the stars and the sun<sup>152</sup>.

The earliest identities formed in the Makgabeng area were those among the San as they were the first to be identified with the area. Their simple nomadic way of life did not result in complex identity formation within their communities as indicated with the discussion of their social structure above. Rock art was another important expression of the San identity. It mostly expressed who they were and how they perceived themselves within the world they lived in. There is evidence that the San at some point co-existed with other population groups particularly, the Khoikhoi and the Bantu-speakers. Interaction with these groups was mainly characterised by trade and this interaction obviously came to shape identities in the Makgabeng area. This point will later be expanded together with the theoretical notion that interaction with others is important in identity creation.

The simple and mobile way of life of the San made them weak and vulnerable, especially in the face of other stronger, better organised

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>151</sup> H. J. Van Aswegen, History of South Africa, p. 19.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

population groups which later appeared in the Makgabeng area. The San's ways of life made it impossible for them to grow in number. People were left to die when they were too old to walk, and twins and other children were killed when they were too numerous to carry<sup>153</sup>. Death rate among children by other causes seemed to have been very high. When successive stronger groups encroached on the land which the San occupied, their physical presence disappeared. Where did the San go?

There are various – and sometimes conflicting – theories and explanations on the whereabouts of the San in the Makgabeng area – and other parts of the world such as southern Africa - today. Views range between the extinction of the San; their assimilation; and their continued existence. Among the scholars who advocated the extinction theory of the San is W. J. Sollas (1924) who wrote:

We have spoken of the Bushmen in the past tense, for they are practically extinct; a miserable remnant of inferior character still lingers on in the Kalahari desert, but even this is slowly dwindling away under the terrible hardships of an unfavourable environment”<sup>154</sup>.

The Reverend S. S. Dornan (1925) supported this view, “They [the San] are a dwindling race and in a comparatively short space of time, they will have

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<sup>153</sup> L. Thompson, A History of South Africa, p. 33.

<sup>154</sup> W. J. Sollas, Ancient hunters and their modern representatives, pp. 489 – 490.

ceased to exist as a separate people”<sup>155</sup>. In his 1930 work, Sir G. E. Smith was mourning the disappearance of “this remarkable race” [the San], which was almost extinct and reduced to a few scattered groups still lingering in the Kalahari Desert, which in a few years the world will know them no more<sup>156</sup>. Another author to pronounce the doom of the San is Professor I. Schapera (1930) who wrote:

There seems little doubt that the Bushmen are steadily dying out as a race. What relentless persecution at the hands of other peoples has not achieved is being slowly accomplished by disease and racial intermixture. Racially pure Bushmen are already in a minority and their ultimate absorption by their neighbours is probably inevitable<sup>157</sup>.

All these authors pessimistically believed in the eventual extinction of the San. It was only Schapera who went further to list some of the causes of this extinction, namely, “persecution”, “disease” and “intermixture”. The focus of the fate of the Makgabeng San will be on what Schapera refers to as “intermixture”. Some authors refer to this phenomenon as “assimilation”. The reason for this focus is that in the Makgabeng area, there have never

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<sup>155</sup> S. S. Dornan, *Pygmies and Bushmen of the Kalahari*, p. 199.

<sup>156</sup> G. E. Smith, *Human History*, pp. 207 – 208.

<sup>157</sup> I. Schapera, *The Khoisan peoples of South Africa*, p. 40.

been any reports and evidence of “disease” and “persecution” of the San which might have led to their “extinction”.

The general extinction theory of the San is opposed in the work of P. V. Tobias (1978):

... it came as a surprise to many people when in 1956 I published an estimate of 55 531 surviving San at that date. Most of them were living in Botswana and South West Africa; there were a sizeable number in Angola, and very small numbers in Zambia, Rhodesia and South Africa<sup>158</sup>.

Contrary to the notion of the extinction of the San, this work also provide the statistics in which it is stated that there are about 55 000 to 60 000 San alive “today”, of whom about half are in Botswana and about half in Namibia: (Botswana: 24 652 – 29 600; Namibia: 26 000; Angola: 4 000; Zambia: 200; South Africa: 25)<sup>159</sup>. To further support the viewpoint of the continued existence of the San, this work groups the existing San people into five categories:<sup>160</sup>

1. Those born in the veld, who had remained “wild” ...;

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<sup>158</sup> P. V. Tobias (ed), The Bushmen: San hunters and herders of Southern Africa, p. 10.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>160</sup> P. V. Tobias (ed), The Bushmen..., p. 14.

2. Some born on the veld, but periodically came to farms ... but later returned to the veld...;
3. Some born in the veld... took residence in farms, but often journeyed to the veld to hunt and collect food...;
4. Some veld-born San lived on farms and never wandered away...; and
5. New generation of San, born on farms, who have experienced no other than farm life and did not hunt or collect wild foods.

Taking all the viewpoints pointed out thus far, the study of Makgabeng indicate that the San in that area are not extinct, instead, they have been “assimilated” and “intermixed” as “the strong survived and the weak adapted to new circumstances...”<sup>161</sup>. With accommodative contacts between the San and other groups which arrived later in the Makgabeng area, “assimilation”/ “intermixture” seemed to have been easier. The San biological features such as phenotype and genetic remnants, are still traceable within the Makgabeng communities up to this day. However, the only drawback on the point is the denial to associate with the San by most of the Makgabeng people. The San had been traditionally regarded as inferior race, and to admit to have San blood in one’s veins, is taboo in Makgabeng. In other words, many San descendants in that area deny this identity out of inferiority complex. This is according to the theoretical proposition that identities can be expressed, observed, perceived, conceptualised, or denied. In other

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<sup>161</sup> B. Barrow, South African people, p. 6.

words, identities may be expressed by an individual or a group out of choice. People have a tendency to express what they think and feel they are, like those San descendants in Makgabeng who chose to be the Bakone or Bahananwa instead of expressing themselves as the San.

Again, identities of a particular group or individual may be observed by others, without necessarily being expressed by the identified group. This is where Rehana Ebr.-Vally argues that “identities formation is a two way dynamic process in which the presence of the other is an essential component”<sup>162</sup>. On the Makgabeng San’s case, even if they deny their link with their descendants out of inferiority complex, they are still linked to them by observations made out of their physical and cultural traits, for instance. On this point, Jenkins points out that what people think about us is no less important than what we think about ourselves<sup>163</sup>. Identity must also be validated (or not) by those with whom we have dealings.

According to E. B. Eastwood, an expert in rock art studies of the Khoisan and Sotho in the Makgabeng area, most of the Makgabeng people still bear the San physical features like slit eyes, small physiques and lighter complexions<sup>164</sup>. These features are peculiar to the Makgabeng area because, according to Eastwood, moving away from the Makgabeng area

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<sup>162</sup> R Ebr.-Vally , Kala Pani. Caste and Colour in South Africa, p. 28.

<sup>163</sup> R. Jenkins, Social Identity, p. 21.

<sup>164</sup> Interview, E.B. Eastwood, 26 April 2005, Makhado.

northwards towards Venda, the people are darker in complexion and bigger in physique<sup>165</sup>. In addition to these biological traits which link the Makgabeng people with the San, there is still a family/clan name (surname) in that area known as Morwane (most probably originating from “morwana”). In the Northern Sotho language, the word, “morwana”, means the San. According to Chuene Thomas Morwane, even if his surname indicates him to be a San descendant, openly accepting such a relationship is viewed as degrading<sup>166</sup>. What is important though, is that the San identity in Makgabeng has been assimilated by dominant groups.

### **The Khoikhoi.**

Earliest identities in Makgabeng which were represented by the San communities, changed when the Khoikhoi began to move into the area. The migrations of the Khoikhoi with their different cultural traditions, came to have some impact on the aboriginal San. The San’s general ways of life were to be influenced by this contact. The contact between the San and the Khoikhoi became so close that it appeared that they both lost their original identities and they formed one group. This link is sometimes exaggerated by these groups being referred to by a collective term, the Khoisan, giving impression that they were one group. In this processes of physical and

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Interview, Thomas Morwane, 22 December 2002, Mongalo.

cultural mixing and influencing, the Khoikhoi, because of their large numbers and their stronger organised social structure, as well as their material possession, influenced the San more than it was the case vice versa. This is in accordance with the theoretical notion that identities of dominant social actors usually prevail over those of less dominant social actors, in which new identities are usually imposed<sup>167</sup>. The values of society then become the values that the dominant actors decide.

The Khoikhoi introduced fat-tailed sheep and later introduced the art of pottery-making and brought cattle and domesticated dogs generally in South Africa<sup>168</sup>, and later in the Makgabeng area. These new innovations were to have a profound effect on the ways of life of the San who then learned the art of keeping domestic stock, in which the introduction of dogs added their arsenal for hunting purposes. However, contact between the San and the Khoikhoi was not always peaceful. As much as there was co-operation in some instances, there was also conflict. Apparently, the San initially resisted penetration of the cattle farmers into their hunting grounds. The San drove away the intruders and took as loot or killed some of their cattle<sup>169</sup>. The San also had a tendency of stealing cattle from the Khoikhoi.

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<sup>167</sup> J. Muller et al, Challenges of Globalisation, p. 116.

<sup>168</sup> E. B. Eastwood, et al, "Archaeological and Rock Art Survey of the Makgabeng Plateau, Central Limpopo Basin, The Digging Stick, 19: 1, 2002, p. 12.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

However, the San must have retreated frequently when confronted by larger groups of Khoikhoi<sup>170</sup>.

Perhaps one of the main reasons for the San and the Khoikhoi identities to be so closely linked was their similar physical features. Except that the Khoikhoi tended to be taller and lighter in colour, the physical differences between the two groups could not be clearly demarcated<sup>171</sup>. Both groups had slight and short stature, with small hands and feet, a soft light yellow to light brown skin which had a tendency to wrinkle early<sup>172</sup>. They both had fine, but very curly hair which curled in tufts on the head. The women in both groups had a marked tendency to steatopygia, that is, the accumulation of great deal of fat on the buttocks<sup>173</sup>. These similar physical features between the San and the Khoikhoi led them to be identified as one group, especially by various authors who prefer the reference: Khoisan. Because of the “intermixture” of the San and the Khoikhoi, as well as the Bantu-speaking communities which later arrived, these physical features were genetically transmitted from generation to generation, and are still observable in the Makgabeng area up to this day.

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>171</sup> H. J. Van Aswegen, History of South Africa, p. 22.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

As already alluded to, the Khoikhoi were socially stronger and more organised than the San whom they encountered in Makgabeng. The rock art paintings and archaeological evidence in the Makgabeng area indicate that the Khoikhoi had developed a greater degree of political and social organisation than the San. However, they were also not a homogenous group, but were divided into a variety of communities<sup>174</sup>. The core of the Khoikhoi community was the family and apparently it was the custom of those people to form large family units by integrating the married male children (patrilineally) with the parents<sup>175</sup>. The Khoikhoi families fused to form a clan. Each clan had its own organisation, with a captain at the head who guided the community<sup>176</sup>. There was also a tendency among the Khoikhoi to form larger social and political groups (tribes) by joining several clans under a chief, who was accepted by all as their leader. The chieftaincy was hereditary and the eldest son was the successor after the death of his father.

This political identity of the Khoikhoi, which was absent from the San who arrived before them in the Makgabeng area, came to influence that of the later Bantu-speakers. In the Makgabeng area, the society came to have discernable layers of families, clans and political units (tribes/polities). This is according to the theoretical notion that cultural, social and political

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<sup>174</sup> B. Barrow, South African people, p. 12.

<sup>175</sup> H. J. Van Aswegen, History of South Africa, p. 22.

<sup>176</sup> E. M. Shaw, Hottentots, p. 58.

contexts are decisive when it comes to identity<sup>177</sup>. This is mainly because these three aspects are important in each society, hence they are decisive as far as identities creation is concerned. G. de Vos and L. Romanucci-Ross (1975) put culture ahead of the other two aspects in identity formation. They point out that the cultural bases for social groupings in society are varied, some of these groupings are defined reciprocally and horizontally; others are stratified vertically, with emphasis on the status of an individual or group with respect to other persons or groups<sup>178</sup>. In their emphasis on culture, De Vos and Romanucci-Ross identify “another form of group separation”, which is “ethnic identity”, which they say can be a source of conflict , since ethnic groups in many instances do not remain in a fixed position within a stratified system<sup>179</sup>. Zimitri Erasmus highlights the importance of culture in this case by asserting that, “since cultural formations involve borrowing from cultural forms, ... thus all identities could be seen/read as cultural hybrid...”<sup>180</sup>.

The Khoikhoi’s economic way of life was based on the possession of cattle, hunting, the gathering of veld foods and trade<sup>181</sup>. The Khoikhoi possessed sheep before arriving in South Africa and they apparently acquired larger

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<sup>177</sup> M. Castells, “Globalisation, Identity...”, p. 5.

<sup>178</sup> G. de Vos and L. Romanucci-Ross, Ethnic Identity, p. 5.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>180</sup> Z. Erasmus, Coloured by History. Shaped by Place. New Perspective of Coloured Identities in Cape Town, p. 16.

<sup>181</sup> H. J. Van Aswegen, History of South Africa, p. 22.

stock probably through their contact with Bantu-speaking cattle owners. Their identity as stock herders matched and influenced that of the Bantu-speaking communities which later arrived in the Makgabeng area. The large cattle herds provided the Khoikhoi with a fixed supply of meat and milk. The cattle were also slaughtered during ritual ceremonies and to obtain fat to rub onto their bodies. Rubbing fat on the bodies was a sign of wealth, and the more wealthy chiefs and headmen did this regularly<sup>182</sup>.

Trade was an important economic activity of the Khoikhoi. Trade originated from a need for certain products that were not freely available and the Khoikhoi then traded with other outside communities. For instance, they traded with the Blacks in iron and copper. Iron was used mainly to manufacture arrowheads and spearheads, as well as ornaments. Copper was used particularly for making earrings, pedants and bangles. The Khoikhoi also traded in dagga which was used apparently for aesthetic and religious purposes. Trade between the Khoikhoi and other groups in the Makgabeng area was another important factor which shaped identities in that area. This is according to the theoretical notion that interaction with others plays a significant role in identity formation<sup>183</sup>. Interaction with others which results in identity formation can either be accommodative or frictional. In this case, trading, which was an accommodative interaction, rather than a confrontational one, led to the shaping of identities among the trading

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<sup>182</sup> H. J. Van Aswegen, History of South Africa, p. 22.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

partners in the Makgabeng area. This is further explained by Castells's notion of identity as a "shared experience"<sup>184</sup> because as the Makgabeng trading partners shared the same experience of trading among themselves, new identities were being created. That is why other processes such as "intermixture" occurred as a result of interaction among those groups.

With regard to rock art, in contrast to the San who emphasised animal and human figures, the Khoikhoi art in Makgabeng mainly consisted of geometric forms such as circles, rayed circle, concentric circles, circle-and-dot motifs, circle-and-cross motifs, rows of finger lines, rows and clusters of finger dots or microdots, and handprints. These are most commonly painted in red pigment, sometimes in red and white, and occasionally only in white. In contrast to the fine-line brushwork of the San, the geometrics were applied by finger. The San's rock art tells much about their ways of life and their identity. In contrast to that, the geometric forms of the Khoikhoi are very difficult to interpret with regard to their ways of life and up to now, there is uncertainty about the meanings of these paintings.

Just like with the San, the whereabouts of the Khoikhoi has been a subject of debate. Again, like the San the Khoikhoi had been assimilated by the dominant Bantu-speaking communities who appeared after the Khoikhoi.

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<sup>184</sup> M. Castells, "Globalisation, Identity...", p. 7.

## **The Bantu-speaking communities.**

The groups which followed the San and the Khoikhoi in occupying the Makgabeng area were the Bantu-speaking communities of the Venda, Bakone, Bahananwa, as well as the smaller groups of the Batau, Bakwena, Baroka, Batšhadibe, Matebele and Babirwa. There are different theories and sub-theories about the actual origin of the Bantu-speaking communities. However, much evidence points to the fact that the Bantu-speaking communities originated from central and eastern Africa. Archaeologists and linguists point to the Niger-Cameroons area as the most likely point of emergence of Bantu-speakers more than 2 500 years ago<sup>185</sup>. The Bantu-speaking communities then began to move southwards in different waves of migration in various periods. The mass exodus of the Bantu-speaking communities is attributed to the population explosion which followed technological innovations such as the iron hoes which revolutionised agriculture<sup>186</sup>. Population explosion led to increased competition on resources resulting in wars – fought with iron assegais – and then migration of people to different directions, Makgabeng being one of the eventual destinations.

Although it is not possible to point to the actual year in which the Bantu-speaking communities arrived in South Africa and the Makgabeng area in

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<sup>185</sup> B. Tyrrel, and P. Jurgens, African Heritage, p. 18.

<sup>186</sup> B. Barrow, South African people, p. p. 6.

particular, however, we do know that “by A.D. 300 the Early Iron Age people (referring to the Bantu-speakers) had settled in South Africa”<sup>187</sup>. The migration of the Bantu-speaking communities brought far-reaching changes in southern Africa in general, and in the Makgabeng area in particular. Although the Khoikhoi had brought the first domesticated animals into South Africa, it was only the coming of the Bantu-speaking communities that the first kinds of grain became available and that domesticated animals, especially cattle, spread all over. The coming of domesticated plants and animals ushered the so-called Nolithic revolution which represented the transition from a nomadic existence of people as hunters and gatherers of food to a more settled existence as food producers<sup>188</sup>. This ushered an important new form of identity in the Makgabeng area: permanently settled, stable communal communities. This was shaping, changing and replacing the nomadic ways of life which were represented by the Khoisan who were by then roaming the Makgabeng area.

Abundant archaeological materials in the Makgabeng area indicate that the cultivation of crops and the livestock brought by the Bantu-speaking communities, affected the San and the Khoikhoi. Most of the San became servants and herders for the Bantu-speakers, while others became their trackers and hunters. On the other hand, the Khoikhoi, who were also herders, became important trading partners in livestock with the Bantu-

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>188</sup> H. J. Van Aswegen, History of South Africa, p. 31.

speaking communities. Because of the theoretical proposition of identity creation by dominant social actors, because of their large numbers and their well-organised social and political structures, the Bantu-speaking communities came to dominate the Makgabeng.

The implications of the arrival of the Bantu-speaking communities in Makgabeng, had extensive impact as settlement of communities became more permanent in one area as compared to the previous nomadic existence of the San and the Khoikhoi. There was also constant provision of food from communities' own sources in which people had more balanced diet, including meat, milk and grain. Less time was spent on hunting and gathering veld food, and more time was available for better organisation of households and living environment. The gradual engulfing of the San and the Khoikhoi within the Bantu-speaking communities' realm in Makgabeng meant that the latter groups' identities were being diluted within the former. Population began to increase faster and the faster growth rate of communities led to a greater need for social and political organisation, ushering the emergence of polities and polities. New political identities were emerging. The arrival of the Bantu-speaking communities in the Makgabeng area also led to greater competition between communities over control of land, grazing and water, and that increased potential for conflict.

Archaeological evidence around the Makgabeng area indicates that the Venda were among the earliest Bantu-speaking communities to settle in that

area. From central Africa, the Venda moved south, and their strong Shona-influenced culture suggests that they had settled for a certain extent of time around Zimbabwe, before crossing Limpopo River to settle in the Soutpansberg<sup>189</sup>. Excavations in that area have yielded much of the Venda artefacts, especially pottery, which is connected to the traditions of Soutpansberg and Mapungubwe, the directions from where the Venda came from. The presence of the Venda in the Makgabeng area helped to further shape identities in that area as an assortment of cultures of the San, the Khoikhoi, Batau, Bakwena, Baroka, Batšhadibe, Matebele, Babirwa and the Venda, blended. Like those who remained in the Soutpansberg, the Venda who migrated further south, reaching Makgabeng, used the mountain ranges as their home and fortress. The process of “assimilation”/ “intermixture” has resulted in the absence of distinctive Venda communities in the Makgabeng today.

Of all the population groups in the Makgabeng area, the Bakone and the Bahananwa are still the most identifiable up to this day. The identities of the other groups of the Batau, Bakwena, Baroka, Batšhadibe, Matebele, Batlokwa and Babirwa appear to be overshadowed by the Bakone and the Bahananwa. Although those smaller groups still maintain their identities in the form of clans, family names, totems, praise poems and other cultural traits, the Bakone and the Bahananwa identities still tower over theirs. This

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<sup>189</sup> E. B. Eastwood, et al, “Archaeological and Rock art Survey...”, p. 12.

is precisely because of the theoretical proposition that politics is one of the aspects which is decisive in identity creation. The Bakone of Matlala and the Bahananwa of Malebogo have been the strong dominant political forces in the Makgabeng area, hence their influence – and their identities – has since dominated the area.

The Bakone originally came from somewhere near Zambezi<sup>190</sup> almost at the same time when all the Bantu-speaking communities migrated from north and central Africa about 2 500 years ago<sup>191</sup>. On their migration route, they travelled southwards along the coast and passed the Phalaborwa area. Archaeological evidence indicates that they settled there for a while as they were also involved in copper mining. When they eventually moved southwards, they split into three sections<sup>192</sup>. One portion took the direction of the present-day Middleburg, while another one remained in the Bokgaga country, around the present-day Leydsdorp. The third and the largest section of the Bakone, which was to reach the Makgabeng area, settled at the place which later came to be known as Ga-Matlala (Matlala's Location). The area and the mountains were named after the Bakone ruling family: Matlala. Around the Matlala mountains, this section of the Bakone found a small polity under Ngwepe. The small polity was easily subjugated by the

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<sup>190</sup> Transvaal Native Affairs Department, Short History of the Native Tribes of the Transvaal, p. 44.

<sup>191</sup> B. Tyrrel and P. Jurgens, African Heritage, p. 18.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, p. 44.

Bakone, but later allowed to move on to Makgabeng as their land in Matlala Location had been confiscated<sup>193</sup>.

The royal house name, Matlala, was hereditary for the Bakone chiefs. They adopted *thlhantlhagane* (scaly-feathered finch) as their totem. This has been a distinctive Bakone identity marker up to this day. After the Bakone had settled for some time, one of Kgoši Matlala's sons, Rakodi, travelled to Makgabeng, followed the small Ngwepe group, and settled there with his own people<sup>194</sup>. Kgoši Matlala, fearing that Rakodi intended to establish himself as an independent leader, sent a force to attack him. Rakodi and a number of his people were killed<sup>195</sup>. Rakodi's sons, Mathekga and Mojela then separated. The former settled in the Soutpansberg mountains, and the latter occupied the area along the banks of Mogalakwena River<sup>196</sup>. However, Mathekga and Mojela later returned to Makgabeng due to stressful periods of attacks especially by the Matebele during Mfecane/Difaqane. Mojela was succeeded by his son Maphutha, who was also succeeded by his son, Matsena<sup>197</sup>. The Bakone of Matlala had influence and also wielded authority over most of the Sotho groups in the

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<sup>193</sup> B. Tyrrel and P. Jurgens, African Heritage, p. 44.

<sup>194</sup> Transvaal Native Affairs Department, Short History, p. 45.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, p. 45.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, p. 45.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, p. 45.

Makgabeng area, even though the royal capital remained in the Matlala mountains.

The moving in of the Bakone to the Makgabeng definitely gave the area a new character. With their well-organised political structure under the Matlala dynasty, the Bakone not only succeeded to establish themselves in the Makgabeng area, they were also able to stamp their authority over the smaller groups they found in that area. This is evidenced by fact that as dominant social actors, their identity (particularly political), is still prevalent to this day. The Matlala polity is still ruling over almost half of the Makgabeng communities today.

Another dominant group in the Makgabeng area is the Bahananwa. They arrived a bit later than the other Bantu-speakers which have already been mentioned, but they came to stamp their authority over most of the smaller communities in that area. The Bahananwa originated from North of Africa, probably as a portion of the Bahurutse, and settled down in Maletse's Mountains, present-day Botswana<sup>198</sup>. Their totem is *tšhwene* (baboon) and their first leader as an independent people after breaking from the Bahurutse was Lebogo<sup>199</sup>. Due to their tradition of female regency, the prefix, "mma" (mother), was added to their royal surname (Lebogo), to

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<sup>198</sup> British War Office, The Native Tribes of the Transvaal, p. 53.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

become, “Mmalebogo”, mostly spelt as “Malebogo” in literature<sup>200</sup>. This name became famous and became synonymous with the Bahananwa royal house as it identified and symbolised it.

After breaking away from the Bahurutse, because of succession disputes within the royal house, the Bahananwa crossed the Limpopo River and occupied the Blouberg mountains, where they still dwell today. In the Blouberg area the Bahananwa found a small polity of the Batau of Madibana which they easily subjected<sup>201</sup>. The Bahananwa polity later split due to power struggle between the sons by the leader’s separate wives. The smaller group, which was later known as the Kibi people, broke away due to succession disputes, and settled on the north-eastern side of the Blouberg mountains. The largest section, under the Malebogo dynasty, remained on the western side of the mountain and even spread its influence and authority as far as the Makgabeng mountains, Mogalakwena River, and beyond. The Bahananwa even subjected some powerful groups such as the Monyebodi, who were the Bakone. The Monyebodi later became important senior members within the Malebogo royal house.

Smaller groups in the Makgabeng area, came to be subjects of either of the two dominant social actors, the Bakone of Matlala or the Bahananwa of Malebogo. These smaller groups aligned with either of the two for

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<sup>200</sup> Interview, Robert Manaka, Inveraan village, 29 December 2004.

<sup>201</sup> British War Office, The Native Tribes of the Transvaal, p. 55.

protection. The alignment of various groups with either the Bakone or the Bahananwa saw the emergence of new political identities which were of a bipolar nature. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Makgabeng communities were defining themselves as having been ruled either by Matlala or Malebogo. This had replaced the loose political ways of the San and the Khoikhoi in that area.

In addition to this bipolar political identity created in the Makgabeng by that time, the social, religious and economic identities in that area were different from those which appeared with the earliest occupants of the Makgabeng area. Interaction between the San, the Khoikhoi and later the Bantu-speakers – in various forms – resulted in these identity changes. Dominant social actors of the Bahananwa and the Bakone imposed their identities which became strong and lasted, while identities of less dominant groups, such as the San and the Khoikhoi suddenly disappeared from Makgabeng.

Within the broader political entities of the Matlala and Malebogo were smaller communal units led by headmen. These units of communities were formed by various clans. Clans were in turn formed by families (which were in most cases extended) which were formed by individuals. In other words, families – which were sometimes extended by including husband, wife, children, aunts, uncles, grand parents and grand children – settled in clans which were made mostly of relatives, and in turn, different clans formed a communal unit under a headman, and different communal units comprised a

polity. For example, on the southern part of the Makgabeng area, most families were of the following clans: Ngwepe, Setumu, Mojela, Ramoroka, Masekwa, Phukubje, Moremi, and so on<sup>202</sup>. These clans formed different communal units under different headmen who were all under the Matlala polity. The northern end of the Makgabeng area was where the subjects of the Malebogo polity resided. The clans of Manaka, Tauetswala, Moremi (related to the above-mentioned), Morwane, Bodirwa, and so on, were also divided into various communal units under different headmen<sup>203</sup>.

Therefore, the arrival of the Bantu-speaking communities in the Makgabeng area brought new political structures according to which communities defined themselves. New identities were thus formed, while others disappeared by either being lost, or assimilated into dominant ones. In the final analysis, identities of the San, the Khoikhoi and the Bantu-speaking communities merged in what some scholars referred to as “assimilation”/ “intermixture”, to form the type of society we have today in Makgabeng. The political, cultural, religious, economic, biological, physical and other identities marking the Makgabeng today, are all results of the processes of identity formation which took place over a long period since the arrival of the first people in the Makgabeng area. Of course the environmental factors were also instrumental in shaping the identities of those occupants of the Makgabeng area.

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<sup>202</sup> Interview, Robert Manaka, Inveraan village, 29 December 2004.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **POLITICAL CHANGES BROUGHT BY EUROPEAN TRAVELLERS, MISSIONARIES, BOERS AND THE BRITISH, 1850's – 1910**

In the previous chapter it was shown how the environmental factors in the Makgabeng area attracted and shaped the identities of the earliest occupants: the San, the Khoikhoi and the Bantu speaking communities. Now, this chapter looks at the arrival of the early European travellers, the Mfecane/Difaqane, the missionaries' activities and the colonial invasion, and how all these factors brought changes in the Makgabeng area. It will be investigated as to how these developments further shaped identities in that area. All these developments led to the flow of people and ideas which

eventually found their way to different parts of the world, including the Makgabeng area. This movement of people and ideas across the world – which is today known as globalisation – is what Castells says results in a “network society”<sup>204</sup>. This movement of people and ideas through the processes and developments mentioned earlier, resulted in the shaping of identities in areas such as Makgabeng, because even today, there is still a link between globalisation and identity creation (formation)<sup>205</sup>.

In addition to theoretically linking identity creation with the movement of people and ideas in the Makgabeng area, this chapter investigates how different population groups which were attracted to the Makgabeng area – the San, the Khoikhoi, the Bantu speakers, the early European travellers, the missionaries and the colonial settlers – expressed, observed, conceptualised or even denied identities among themselves. How did each group locate itself among others? How did each group refer and perceive other groups? Again it will be investigated as to how the identities of these groups were shaped as they “shared experience”<sup>206</sup> in the Makgabeng area. Their common stay and experiences in that area led them to perceive themselves and attach their meaning as belonging there.

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<sup>204</sup> M. Castells, Information Age, p. 1.

<sup>205</sup> M. Castells, Information Age, p. 1.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

The earliest inhabitants in the Makgabeng area were the San and the Khoikhoi, and these groups were relatively weaker and less organised as compared to the later groups of the Bantu speakers and the Europeans. As a result, because of the fact that political, social and cultural aspects are decisive in identity creation<sup>207</sup>, and that identities of dominant social actors prevail over weaker ones, the identities of the San and the Khoikhoi in the Makgabeng area became overshadowed by those of the larger and stronger Bantu speaking communities. However, later the Europeans, with their determination to subjugate other groups, came to dominate the Makgabeng area, thus imposing their values and identities.

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<sup>207</sup> M. Castells, Information Age, p. 5.

## **Earliest European appearances in Makgabeng**

The first Europeans appeared in the Makgabeng area long after the earlier inhabitants of the San, the Khoikhoi and the Bantu-speaking communities. The earliest Europeans to arrive in the area were mostly travellers, traders, hunters and such related smaller groups who temporarily visited the area and then passed. However, these groups were not passive objects who were not struck and attracted by the potential of the area for future settlement. In actual fact, these earliest groups were responsible for paving the way for more permanent European settlement later in the Makgabeng area as their reports reflected some attractions to be found further north. These initial sporadic, exploratory and experimental expeditions by the earlier smaller groups of Europeans were later replaced by the more purposeful movement into the area by the missionaries, who continued to widen and clear the way for later colonial settlers: the Boers and the British.

In the previous chapter, the earliest occupation of the Makgabeng by the San, the Khoikhoi and the Bantu-speaking communities was discussed. These earliest occupants of Makgabeng were not literate, and therefore could not leave written records, and as a result the engravings and

paintings they made on rocks, as well as the artefacts which were uncovered by archaeologists, and by word of mouth, are mostly relied upon when reconstructing the past of such communities. Unlike those pre-literate occupants of Makgabeng, the earliest Europeans brought with them the ability to read and write, and as a result, they left written records which are available for the reconstruction of their past. Although such earliest records were usually subjective, distorted, stereotyped and biased in favour of those who produced them (the Europeans), they are nonetheless important sources of basic information for the reconstruction of history of such communities.

The appearance of the Europeans in the Makgabeng area therefore represented the new era of literacy and the production of written records about the area. Thus the new identities of literate people appeared in the Makgabeng area with the arrival of Europeans. This ability to read and write - together with Christianity (which will be looked into later) – exposed the people in the Makgabeng area to the new ways of life which would permanently influence their outlook as people. These developments ushered new identities of literate individuals who became teachers and converted Christians.

As the first appearances of the early Europeans around the Makgabeng area were sporadic and temporary, that did not bring about any remarkable changes in the area. The brief passing of such travellers, traders, hunters

and explorers, did not immediately affect the ways of life of the communities who had already settled in the area. Apparently, these temporary, occasional visitors to the interior areas such as Makgabeng, kept very few and scanty records, and this explains why their stories on local communities were not as extensive in literature as that of the later groups - the missionaries, the Boers and the British. This explains why the earliest European travellers, hunters, traders and explorers seemed to have had little impact in shaping the identities in the Makgabeng area.

The theoretical explanation of the result of the earliest Europeans' brief, temporary visits to areas such as those in Makgabeng is that change and creation of identities become experiences over a longer period<sup>208</sup>. Using this notion of Castells on identity creation, the earliest Europeans would have shaped the Makgabeng identities to a large extent had they not been there for only shorter periods. The later European groups, the missionaries, the Boers and the British, had a lasting impact on identity formation in the Makgabeng area because of their more permanent settlement there.

There seems to have been very minimal contact between those early European travellers and the San hunter-gatherers. Rock art and archaeological evidence does not indicate any meaningful contact between these groups, as the San retained their nomadic identity in the Makgabeng

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<sup>208</sup> M. Castells, "Globalisation, Identity...", p. 7.

plains. However, it is clear that the early Europeans only impacted on the San's ways of life by encroaching on their hunting and gathering grounds. As the frontier was gradually closing between these groups, the San, because of their disorganised social system, were pushed out of the way in most cases<sup>209</sup>. In some instances, some of the San became servants of the dominant groups, and this is what is referred to as coerced identity formation [Castells 2000], in which dominant social actors impose their will over the less dominant ones.

The Khoikhoi appeared to have had more interaction with the earliest Europeans in Makgabeng. This was because of the well organised, stable lifestyle of the Khoikhoi who were in a position to negotiate space and resources better than the San. Trading was one of the cornerstones of such interactions and the nature of the Khoikhoi to keep material possessions, enabled them to interact with those early European groups. Trading appeared to have been in livestock as well as in other goods such as ivory, feathers, beads and pottery<sup>210</sup>. New identities of traders – be it a San, a Khoikhoi or European traveller – were created in the Makgabeng area.

Trading and hunting interactions seem to have changed identities even within communities in the Makgabeng as some clans and individuals became more powerful than the others in the process. Even among the

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<sup>209</sup> P. V. Tobias (ed), The Bushmen: San hunters and herders of Southern Africa, p. 10.

<sup>210</sup> E. M. Shaw, Bushmen, p. 45.

Bantu-speaking communities, the commodities acquired from the early Europeans changed the fortunes and status of those who acquired them. Trading and hunting led to the other groups within communities to become wealthier than others. The wealthier these groups became, the more powerful and dominant they grew. Power and domination became visible identity markers in the area. One important commodity which impacted heavily in local communities was the firearm. This was mostly sought after as conflicts among various groups escalated because of competition for resources<sup>211</sup>.

The Mfecane/Difaqane was the early 19<sup>th</sup> century period of strife and wars among Black polities and communities sparked mainly by the Nguni polities' conflicts along the coast. These upheavals led to a chain of reactions which stretched into the interior, and these consequently brought changes even in remote areas such as Makgabeng. Loose political structures and fluid social identities were replaced by more stable and united structures in the face of Mfecane/Difaqane upheavals. The arrival of the Boer Voortrekkers in the Soutpansberg area in 1836, brought far-reaching changes in the surrounding areas, including Makgabeng<sup>212</sup>. The Boers' primary aim was to establish their independent state in the interior, free of British authority from which they had escaped from the Cape. They later achieved that by

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<sup>211</sup> The significance of the firearm in the Makgabeng area, and its impact on the identity changes and creation, will be dealt with later in the chapter, where conflicts in the area escalated, particularly with the arrival of the Boers and the British.

<sup>212</sup> T. J. Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity...* p. 75.

establishing the South African Republic (ZAR/Transvaal), and in the process, the identities, especially social and political, of the affected communities were completely changed<sup>213</sup>. New form of governance came to impact on all who live within what was regarded as a Boer state. The Makgabeng communities were expected to submit under the new Boer state. Their new political identity was that they were then the subjects of the ZAR. This is what is theoretically referred to as imposed identity,<sup>214</sup> in contrast to organically evolved identity.

The annexation of the Transvaal by the British in 1877 overtook the shaping of that state by the Boers. The British administration brought changes which were also felt in the northernmost colony of the Transvaal which included the Makgabeng area. The Boers reclaimed control of the Transvaal in 1881 and with the administrative system which was improved by the British, they continued to consolidate their power. One of their main aims in that regard was to dismantle the independence of Black polities and subjugate them. Whereas the Boers and the British were mostly responsible for dismantling and creating new identities in the Transvaal, including the Makgabeng area, by imposing their dominant ways of life and values, it was the missionaries who were responsible in shaping the religious, medical, educational and social ways of life of those communities. The Berlin missionaries, and to a

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>214</sup> J. Muller et al, Challenges of Globalisation, p. 116.

certain extent the Wesleyans, played major roles in making those communities look like they are today<sup>215</sup>.

Thus, in the final analysis, it becomes clear that identities in the Makgabeng area towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were complex. This complexity was because of macro-context of interests between all the groups in Makgabeng, i.e., the San, the Khoikhoi, the Bantu-speakers, the Boers, the British and the missionaries. Because the San and the Khoikhoi were gradually being assimilated by the dominant groups, their distinct identities as separate groups were diminishing.

These broadly-categorised groups in the Makgabeng area were themselves not homogenous, as among them were multiple identities of hunters, traders, chiefs, sub-chiefs, would-be-chiefs, farmers, labour recruiting agents, tax collectors, land speculators, mineral prospectors, Christian converts, etc. All these various groups had their interests and ways of operation. Some acted individually to achieve their goals while some formed alliances with others and in a process, identities were further complicated. In forging such alliances and undoing others ones, some old identities were destroyed along the way while new ones were being created. Therefore, whereas identity changes and creation in the Makgabeng area took place at micro- and meso-levels, a macro-level context was unfolding as more global

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<sup>215</sup> Interview, Sania Ramoroka, Norma A village, 19 May 2003.

developments such as the arrival of European travellers and missionaries, the Boers and the British was taking place in that area.

At macro-level, frontiers were closing between all these groups – the San, the Khoikhoi, the Bantu speakers and the Europeans. The Europeans were gradually consolidating their authority over the indigenous groups all over South Africa. These processes were also taking place at meso-level, where the San, the Khoikhoi, the Bantu speaking communities and the Europeans were meeting one another in the Makgabeng area. This “meeting” took various forms and happened at various times. At micro-level, the day-to-day activities of clans and families were also affected by interaction of those groups. People’s identities were shaped by those interactions, in which for example, the values of the dominant groups overshadowed those of the other groups. No wonder the Bantu-speaking communities of the Bakone and the Bahananwa dominated the Makgabeng area until their domination was overthrown by the Europeans towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

At this stage, a closer look at the agents which brought changes in the Makgabeng area after the San, the Khoikhoi and the Bantu-speakers is necessary. Among the earliest Europeans to appear and roam around the vicinity of the Makgabeng were the Buys people, under their leader Coenraad de Buys. On their way up north to the Soutpansberg mountains where they eventually settled, the Buys people should have in all probability arrived in the Makgabeng area during the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

And even after settling in the Soutpansberg, there is evidence that they continued to interact with communities around the Makgabeng-Blouberg vicinity in the form of trading and hunting<sup>216</sup>. The pioneering role of the Buys people in that area motivated other smaller European groups to continue to explore the area.

In addition to the Buys people, other early European travellers around the Makgabeng area included Thomas Baines and Alexander Struben, who were explorers who were involved in various activities such as hunting and trading<sup>217</sup>. Individual travellers did not have the same impact like a group such as the Buys people, hence the need to further look into the origins and impact of this group in the Makgabeng area. Individual travellers like Baines and Struben, passed communities in shorter space of time while a group such as the Buys, took longer periods on the same area, due to the logistics involved in moving and settling with their belongings which included livestock.

Coenraad was the great-grandson of a French Huguenot, Jean du Buis who was a late seventeenth-century Cape settler<sup>218</sup>. Coenraad, together with his group of Khoi/African women and children crossed the Orange River into the Highveld from about 1814 after he was banished from the Cape by the

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<sup>216</sup> T. J. Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity...*, p. 72.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

British<sup>219</sup>. On his fugitive way, Coenraad interacted with different communities, and even earned himself many nicknames among those who met him. For instance, the Batlhaping called him “the king of Bastards”; while the Bahurutse referred to him as “Moro”; the Bamagwato called him “Kgowe”; while the Transvaal Sotho referred to him as “Motanapitsi” or “Kadija”<sup>220</sup>. These various references indicate how extensive did the Buys people travel until they reached the Makgabeng-Blouberg-Soutpansberg area in the 1820s.

Although the Buys people were Europeans in origin, they adopted most of the ways of life of indigenous people, such as polygamy and mixture of African languages. Coenraad was the only member of his community who was really literate. The arrival of the Voortrekkers in the Soutpansberg area in the 1830s led to the Buys people to lean more to them than they have been with the Black communities earlier on<sup>221</sup>. This also led to the Buys people to revert to the Christian ways of their European ancestors. The Buys people had also brought new identities in that region because their European-Khoikhoi-Black mixture. This kind of non-racial identity was the main cause of the Buys to be abhorred and disowned by most Europeans who regarded other races as inferior to them. As a symbol of long years of rejection and hardships, the Buys gave their settlement in the Soutpansberg

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<sup>219</sup> T. J. Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity...*, p. 69.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid*, p. 70.

<sup>221</sup> T. J. Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity...*, p. 70.

the name Mara, which means “Bitterness”<sup>222</sup>. They had carved themselves a new identity of being between black and white.

The Buys people mainly interacted with their indigenous neighbours by constantly being visible during their extensive hunting expeditions. They possessed guns, horses, wagons and oxen, all which made them effective, mobile hunters. They also on occasions plundered and attacked some of their neighbours in a commando style. The Buys people also employed some of the African labourers, especially for domestic work. The new identity of labourers (domestic servants) was thus created in the Makgabeng area. However, this was done in a small scale because only those who were impoverished could be drawn into domestic labour relations. Evidently, the Buys traders transported and bartered their merchandise such as ivory, hides, salt and feathers with neighbouring communities<sup>223</sup>, including those as far as Makgabeng.

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Makgabeng area was mostly occupied by stable, permanent communities which lived mainly on agriculture and livestock-keeping. However, the San continued with their nomadic lifestyle of hunting and gathering while the Khoikhoi still lived their semi-nomadic life in which they also kept some livestock. The Bantu-speaking communities scattered around the Makgabeng plains and

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>223</sup> S. J. Hofemeyr, Twintig Jaren, p. 70.

occupied areas which best suited their economic and security needs. The Bantu-speakers who were under the Bahananwa dynasty of Malebogo, or those who subjected themselves under this political authority, mostly occupied the north-eastern side of the Makgabeng mountains. The Bahananwa subjects lived in clans and the major ones were the Monyebodi, Batau of Madibana, the Manaka people, people of Kobe, Babirwa and other smaller groups<sup>224</sup>. On the south-western side of the Makgabeng plateau lived the clans which were mostly under the Matlala royal house, and these included the Ngwepe people, Batšhadibe, the Mojela people, people of Seanego, the people of Ntsoko as well as smaller units of the Matebele and other minor groups<sup>225</sup>. (See the map on VILLAGES/COMMUNITIES AND FARMS).

The early European travellers, explorers, traders and hunters, such as the Buys people, who were discussed above, had an impact on the Makgabeng communities to a certain extent, especially by trade, which made some groups more powerful than others. As a result, political identities in Makgabeng were affected by these developments as wealth influenced political strength of various groups. This is according to the theoretical proposition that political (as well as cultural and social contexts) are decisive when it comes to identity creation<sup>226</sup>. Class identities were also created as

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<sup>224</sup> Interview, Robert Manaka, Inveraan village, 29 December 2004.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> M. Castells, "Globalisation, Identity...", p. 5.

wealthy groups became distinguished from poor ones. As European intrusion accelerated and intensified in the Makgabeng area, some identities were changed, some were destroyed, while new ones were formed, especially as a result of acquisition of wealth and power by various groups. For instance, as a result of increased levels of interaction, groups of traders, cattle-herders, landlords, preachers, messengers, and other identities which resulted from group contacts, emerged among those groups who assembled in the Makgabeng area.

## **The impact of Mfecane/Difaqane on political identities in Makgabeng**

Taking place almost simultaneously with the intensification of the European movement into the Makgabeng area was an important phenomenon which was known as the Mfecane/Difaqane. These two processes – arrival of Europeans in the Makgabeng area and the Mfecane/Difaqane – took place

at a macro-level and also filtered through to the micro-levels. Their effects were also manifested in the Makgabeng area. The phenomenon known as Mfecane in Nguni and Difaqane in Sotho, which is a hotly debated historical issue, is “an essentially African revolution”<sup>227</sup>. The merits and demerits of the Mfecane/Difaqane debate is beyond the scope of this study. It will only be sufficient to point out that this phenomenon had begun with the Ndwandwe/Zulu war of 1818-19 and has lasted for nearly twenty years. The widespread warfare left thousands dead: killed in battle, assaulted by bandits or died of starvation. Thousands of cattle, sheep and goats were captured, recaptured and slaughtered. In many areas cultivation stopped because of the Mfecane/Difaqane<sup>228</sup> upheavals.

Around the area south of the Limpopo River, which included the Makgabeng area, Mfecane/Difaqane took place at the time when the area was experiencing burgeoning population density, diminishing resources, famine due to periodic droughts, diseases particularly malaria due to mosquitoes and presence of the tsetse fly, a growing social stratification and political amalgamation among societies<sup>229</sup>. Heightened competition and conflict resulted in movements of people around the area. Therefore, the Mfecane/Difaqane upheavals found the Makgabeng as a restless area.

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<sup>227</sup> J. D. Omer-Cooper, “Has the Mfecane a Future?” Unpublished, Colloquium paper, University of Witwatersrand, 19991, p. 1.

<sup>228</sup> The Nguni and Sotho names for it, meaning “crushing” and “scattering,” aptly describe what the period meant to so many people.

<sup>229</sup> T. J., Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity...*, p. 65.

It is evident that the Nguni warriors, the “Mapono”, as they were called among the Sotho then, raided the Makgabeng area. There is also evidence that Mzilikazi warriors reached the Makgabeng mountains when a group of the Bakone of Rakodi had split into the Mathekga and Mojela sections<sup>230</sup>. This indicates how the Mfecane/Difaqane had directly affected the Makgabeng communities. The Kgoši Sekwati of the Bapedi was also dislodged by the Nguni warriors and as a result, he was on the move, raiding other communities along the way. Sekwati, the son of the revered Kgoši Thulare, reached the Makgabeng area in about the early 1820s and invaded the Bahananwa who thwarted this invasion<sup>231</sup>.

One of the most important significant consequences of the Mfecane/Difaqane was the creation of new powerful polities. The communities which were previously loosely spread became concentrated in certain compact areas under new political leaderships. This was mainly because thousands of individuals fled as refugees and went on to seek security under stronger groups. While those thousands sought refuge under stronger polities, other individuals took to banditry or even cannibalism. Around the Makgabeng area, the fleeing groups of the Batsorwana, Batlhaloga, Batlokwa, Babirwa, the Venda, Bakone, Bakwena, Matebele

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<sup>230</sup> Transvaal Department of Native Affairs, *Short History* ..., p. 41.

<sup>231</sup> T. J. Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity*..., p. 66.

and Batau, sought sanctuary under the two stronger polities in that area, viz., Bakone of Kgoši Matlala and Bahananwa of Kgoši Malebogo. It can therefore be concluded that the Mfecane/Difaqane strengthened both the Matlala and Malebogo polities. The values of the ruling Bakone and Bahananwa polities continued to overshadow those of the refugees as they were the dominant social actors with power at their disposal.

Mfecane/Difaqane also changed identities in the Makgabeng area as the fleeing refugees led to mixture of people which brought far-reaching changes within the affected communities. The violent movement of people into the Makgabeng area due to Mfecane/Difaqane resulted in the importation of new cultural identities into the area. The above-mentioned fleeing refugees brought their own religious beliefs, social customs and other ways of life which came to influence those which already existed in the Makgabeng. For instance, the Matebele, the Batlokwa and the Bakwena brought their dance forms, murals arts and ways of initiations to the Makgabeng, during the Mfecane/Difaqane. In this process, inevitably, some identities were destroyed, while new ones were being created. The most evident were the new stronger political identities as a result of communities uniting in the face of Mfecane/Difaqane.

## **Makgabeng political identities and the arrival of the colonial settlers, the Boers and the British**

Whereas the occasional visits of the early Europeans and Mfecane/Difaqane upheavals brought few changes in the Makgabeng area, it was the arrival of the Boer settlers which came to heavily impact on politics, land, religion and social customs of the communities in that area. As already shown, the early European travellers – particularly the Buys people – changed political identities around the Makgabeng area through various forms of interaction, while the Mfecane/Difaqane brought further political changes by uniting and consolidating stronger polities. Later it was the colonial settlers, firstly the Boers and later the British, whose settlement were not as temporary as the earlier European groups. The Boers arrived in the Soutpansberg area in 1836<sup>232</sup> and were part of the mass exodus of the Voortrekkers known as the Great Trek<sup>233</sup>. One of the main dreams of the Voortrekkers who were fleeing from the British subjection was to establish their own independent government in the interior. Their dream was realised

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<sup>232</sup> T. J. Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity...*, p. 75.

<sup>233</sup> A movement which was a rebellion against the British authority in the Cape.

when in 1852 when the British recognised their autonomy by the Sand River Convention through which the ZAR (South African Republic/ Transvaal) was established in 1860<sup>234</sup>.

The communities in the Makgabeng area, who until then knew only authority of both the Matlala and Malebogo royal houses, found themselves facing another form of authority, that of the Boer settler government. Through their new state, the Boers claimed authority over the entire area from Lekwa River (which they had named Vaal) up to the Limpopo River, including the communities which inhabited that whole area. This arrangement seemed to have been applicable only on paper as most of the communities were not aware of it, and therefore still regarded themselves as independent<sup>235</sup>. The new Boer state then had a task of consolidating its authority over those polities which had just been united and strengthened by the Mfecane/Difaqane upheavals<sup>236</sup>. Therefore, it was not going to be easy for the Boers to stamp their authority over the communities who had been alerted and cemented by the outside threat of the Mfecane/Difaqane magnitude. In other words, the Mfecane/Difaqane put the Makgabeng communities almost on a war footing, and when the Boers arrived, those communities were alert and sensitive to external threats.

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<sup>234</sup> T. J. Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity...*, p. 77.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid*, p. 77.

<sup>236</sup> It must be noted that although the Mfecane/Difaqane broke communities elsewhere, in the Makgabeng area, the fleeing refugees joined the Bakone and Bahananwa polities which became stronger as a result.

The new Boer state was divided into administrative units and the Makgabeng area found itself under the Soutpansberg District (or Division). At first, the administrative machinery of the new state was not up to scratch. In the Soutpansberg Division, the administrative scaffold consisted of representatives of the Boer, Buys and Portuguese communities<sup>237</sup>. For instance, Joao Albasini was appointed “Superintendent van Kafferstammen” who was also responsible in collecting taxes<sup>238</sup>. And the Buys brothers, notably David, Gabriel and Michael, performed duties such as tax-collecting, wagon driving and as guides<sup>239</sup>. Location functionaries like Landrosts, Field-cornets and Commandants did administrative duties, although they were ineffective as they sometimes competed over holding office.

This administrative framework proved to be generally rudimentary and inefficient in controlling the communities in the Soutpansberg division. The attempts by the new Boer state to extend its authority over communities as far as Makgabeng represent the highest macro-level context of political identity creation in that area. This is because this trend of colonial expansion was a global phenomenon which was not only taking place in the Makgabeng area, but also in other parts of the country and the world. The

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<sup>237</sup> T. J. Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity...*, p. 80.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

significance of these developments was that the Makgabeng communities were beginning to be exposed to external influences which came to shape their identities.

The Makgabeng communities gradually came to feel the pressure of the presence of the Boer settlers. The struggle to control resources such as land, water, grazing, hunting grounds and labour inevitably led to the competition which led to conflicts between these communities and the Boers. The Boers, who were also pastoralists, coveted fertile grazing and water areas, as well as the livestock of the Black communities, and their attempts to control such means of production led to clashes<sup>240</sup>.

Land was one of the most valuable, hotly contested assets. Initially the Makgabeng communities allowed the Boers to use their land in exchange of goods such as guns and gunpowder. However, such regulation was mistaken by some Boers as a passport to individual landownership. Some of these Boers went as far as employing land speculating companies such as Oceana Land Company<sup>241</sup> to survey and develop land which the local communities still regarded as theirs. Another source of conflict between the locals and the Boers was taxation. In order to consolidate their authority

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<sup>240</sup> T. J. Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity...*, p. 82.

<sup>241</sup> T. J. Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity...*, p. 79.

over local communities, the Boers had to carry out census and then collect poll tax, hut tax, dog tax and annual tax<sup>242</sup>.

The British were the other colonial agents which made their presence felt in the Makgabeng area. In 1877 the British annexed the Boer-controlled Transvaal and this brought the new order in the new colony. The new rulers began with the creation of a state structure and society better tuned to the consolidation of the British administration and expansion of the British political and economic interests. The Makgabeng communities were thus also arbitrarily brought under the British administrative framework from 1877, as were other Black communities in the Transvaal. Commissioners were appointed, and as state functionaries on the ground, they endeavoured to implement policies, maintain law and order, procure and control land transactions, labour and guns for European settlers in the area.

The British were determined to bring their colonial rule closer to the Black communities than the Boers. Taxes were collected, and the Native Police Forces were established in order to implement the British laws. In the Makgabeng vicinity, the members of those forces were mostly recruited from the chiefs, Kibi and Matlala<sup>243</sup>, the traditional rivals of the Bahananwa

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<sup>242</sup> The Boers had established their administrative base at Bochum, on the north-eastern side of the Makgabeng mountain, from where the police service could operate in enforcing laws such as those on taxation.

<sup>243</sup> Kibi was chief of the other Bahananwa section which broke away in 1879 due to succession disputes while Matlala was chief of the Bakone, occupying the southern side of the Makgabeng mountains.

of Malebogo<sup>244</sup>. The police force, especially the one at Kalkbank, was not only instrumental in maintaining European law and order, but also in tax collection and bringing the defaulters as well as “rebels” to book.

In 1878 the Native Commission was sent to the Blouberg-Makgabeng vicinity in order to inform communities there that they were British subjects and that they would as a consequence, be given a location and expected to pay the taxes to the new regime<sup>245</sup>. Thus the political identities had changed by shift from the Boer to the British authority as communities became British subjects. This is according to the phenomenon of identities being imposed by dominant social actors. This was of course also a coerced identity creation at a macro-level because the British had forcefully annexed the Transvaal, making all communities within the colony their subjects, with the new (forced/coerced) identity: the British subjects. Apparently, the Black communities were more inclined to regard themselves as British subjects than the Boers’ as they had a negative attitude to the latter<sup>246</sup>.

The British consolidation of authority was short-lived as their fortunes tumbled towards the close of the 1870s. The assassination of Kgoši Matsiokwane of the Bahananwa in 1878, and the subsequent split of the

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<sup>244</sup> Zoutpansberg: Magistrate Letterbook (1873-1877), No. 127.

<sup>245</sup> C. Sonntag, My friend Maleboch. Chief of the Blue Mountains, pp. xv – xvi.

<sup>246</sup> Interview, Mofotoloko Mashilo, Ga Monyebodi village, 4 May 2004.

polity, brought political instability around the Blouberg-Makgabeng vicinity<sup>247</sup>. The British were unable to intervene decisively as they became embroiled with the war with the Zulus of Inkosi Cetshwayo and the Bapedi of Kgoši Sekhukhune in 1879<sup>248</sup>. From 1880 the British were further drawn in the battle with the Boers which cost them the Transvaal colony in 1881. Although the British interregnum, 1877 – 1881, was too brief to have had an overwhelming impact around the Makgabeng area, it was the state structure which was inherited by the Boers which they used to further stamp their authorities over Black communities.

After reclaiming the Transvaal from the British in 1881, the Boers immediately took advantage of the improved state structure to further subjugate the Black communities. Apparently, most of the Black communities were either confused or ignorant about the change of government, from the British to the Boers. Around the Makgabeng area, most communities were either not aware that the Boers were in power or they deliberately pretended to ignore the Boer authority. There was also a feeling among communities that the British – whom they respected and perceived as more powerful than the Boers – would come to their rescue, in case of trouble with the Boers<sup>249</sup>. Such communities identified themselves as British subjects rather than Boer ones. Those communities were

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<sup>247</sup> Anon, *Negotiating Identity in Contested Space...* p. 10.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>249</sup> Interview, Mofotoloko Mashilo, Ga Monyebodi village, 4 May 2004.

therefore very reluctant – if not unwilling – to comply with the Boers laws, such as the payment of taxes. This resulted in tensions between the Boers and those communities who did not comply with their demands.

As a result of the tensions brought by the above problems, the communities around the Makgabeng area began to openly resist Boer authority. In response to this resistance, the Boers applied force in which they used the Portuguese and the Buys surrogates, as well as their Black allies to crush any form of resistance. Around the Makgabeng area, the notable Black allies of the Boers were the chiefs, Kibi and Matlala. These two became natural Boer allies as they were at logger-heads with the powerful chief, Malebogo, for various reasons. In these conflicts the Boers had apparent advantages over Black communities because of their massive possession of guns, ammunition, horses and wagons. As a result, although most of the Makgabeng communities put brave resistance against the advancing Boer settlers' authority, they later succumbed. Although Boers used their strength and tactics to subjugate the communities in the Makgabeng area, it took them the whole of the 19<sup>th</sup> century before they could totally take control of the area. They only succeeded to defeat the Bahananwa of Malebogo in a fierce battle in 1894<sup>250</sup>.

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<sup>250</sup> Interview, Mofotoloko Mashilo, Ga Monyebodi village, 4 May 2004.

With the gradual subjugation of the Makgabeng area by the Boers, the area slowly adopted a new political identity. The power of the chiefs, Matlala and Malebogo were usurped and replaced by those of the Boers. The former voluntarily gave in to the Boer authority as their ally, while the latter fought until his final defeat and imprisonment in 1894. With the new Boer authority in place, the Makgabeng communities were forced to adapt to its new demands and expectations. Their traditional ways of looking up to the chiefs for protection, allocation of land, administration of justice, etc., were replaced by the new system of Boer governance.

The defeat of the Bahananwa and the imprisonment of their chief, Ratšhatšha Lebogo (Malebogo) in 1894, and the voluntary alliance of Kgoši Matlala to the Boers, meant that the ZAR had an overall authority in the entire north-western part of the Transvaal, up to the Limpopo River. The imprisonment of Ratšhatšha meant that the Makgabeng communities who were his subjects, were left leaderless, although his mother, Mmaseketa, his nephew Sephuti, and Maemeletša, were left to take care of the Bahananwa<sup>251</sup>.

After their defeat, the Bahananwa were expected to be out of their mountain strongholds of Blouberg, and were ordered to settle on the flat plains, making anyone who still occupied the mountains, an outlaw. With the

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<sup>251</sup> Interview, Elias Monyebodi, Acting Headman of Ga-Monyebodi village, Ga Monyebodi village, 22 December 2002.

Boer triumph on the north-eastern side of the Makgabeng mountains, their political identity was once more enforced upon communities in that area, as they began to enforce their laws. With the forceful defeat of the Bahananwa tribal political system, and the voluntary alliance of the Matlala, the entire Makgabeng area became under the dominant political system of the ZAR Boers. The laws and the new policies which the new rulers enforced, led to the creation of new political identities, in which communities were expected to become Transvaal subjects.

The new triumphant Boer authorities over the Transvaal enforced various policies, laws and regulations regarding taxation, land and justice administration upon the subjugated communities. Land became an important tool in weakening and controlling the subjugated communities. Land dispossession disarmed local communities and they became helpless in the face of the dominant colonial settlers. After the 1894 war, large tracts of land were divided among the victors, while the victims were lumped together on designated locations where they were kept under surveillance.

The close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the consolidation of the Boer political power, not only around the Makgabeng area, but in the entire Transvaal colony. However, the situation was disrupted by the renewed tensions between the Boers and the British which resulted in the 1899 South African War. It was during this war that the 1894 Bahananwa war prisoners, including Ratšhatšha, were released. Kgoši Malebogo returned to rule his

people after his release in 1900, although this time his power was greatly reduced. However, even if most of his powers were stripped, his people still looked upon him as their legitimate ruler. Actually, his imprisonment, in addition to his brave resistance against the Boer invasion, elevated his stature among his people. His spectacular reception back among his people proved that he was highly regarded. He was actually a sign of political identity around which the Bahananwa were united. According to Steve Lebogo, the close aide of the present (1995) Kgoši Malebogo (Ben Seraki Lebogo), Ratšhatšha is still mostly revered by the Bahananwa<sup>252</sup>. The significance of Ratšhatšha's image is that he is still viewed as a symbol of the Bahananwa identity, pride and unity as evidenced by praise poems and legends about him.

Dispossession of land was one of the European colonialists' primary objectives. After being forcefully removed from their land, colonialists went on to even expect Black communities to purchase land. The system of the purchase of farms complicated political identities in the Makgabeng area. After usurping almost all powers of the chiefs, the White colonial authorities, especially after the South African War, accelerated the land reform programmes in which Black communities were required to purchase farms which were in a process of being surveyed and demarcated. The purchase of farms brought communities from far afield to the Makgabeng. For instance, people as far as Botlokwa, Ga-Dikgale, Moletji and Ga-Mamabolo

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<sup>252</sup> Interview, Steve Lebogo, Blouberg, 3 September 2004.

driven by various reasons, found themselves purchasing farms in the Makgabeng area. Those new immigrants to the Makgabeng area obviously brought new ideas and ways of life, which inevitably changed identities in the Makgabeng area. As far as political identities were concerned, those immigrants did not sever ties with their original chiefs as they moved into Makgabeng. For instance, the Batlokwa farm purchasers in Makgabeng still regarded the Batlokwa chiefs, Ramokgopa and Machaka as their rulers, while those from Moletji still regarded Kgoši Moloto as their chief<sup>253</sup>. The retention of this previous political allegiance went against the fact that in the Makgabeng area, they bought farms within the jurisdiction of either Kgoši Malebogo or Kgoši Matlala. This complicated political identity among the Makgabeng communities was compounded by the symbolic nature of the Malebogo and Matlala chieftainships, whose real powers had been usurped by the White colonial authorities<sup>254</sup>. This was because the White authorities imposed their value systems on the Makgabeng communities and these communities were expected to be identified as the subjects of those authorities.

## **Missionaries and political identities**

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<sup>253</sup> Interview, John Machaba, Norma B village, 25 July 2003.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

At macro-level, whereas the missionaries' main objective was to convert the indigenous communities to Christianity, for their part, Black communities valued them more for their political and diplomatic roles than for their religious functions<sup>255</sup>. In the confusion of early years of colonisation, the missionary, alone among the Europeans, seemed to the Blacks to be well disposed, trustworthy and accessible. It was a time in which conflict between European and African was continual and bitter, and negotiation was not made easier by their ignorance of each other's beliefs and habits of thought. The political value of the missionaries soon became clear to many Black authorities who sought them because they could be useful as diplomatic agents or intermediaries between themselves and the Europeans<sup>256</sup>. Although such a role was strictly outside the religious task of the missionaries, many of them accepted it as a means of establishing confident and friendly relations with those whom they wished to convert. They then aided the Black polities in negotiations with Europeans on issues such as land, cattle-raiding, frontier incidents, and other matters which exacerbated relations between Blacks and Whites<sup>257</sup>.

As a result, even if the missionaries were supposed to be religious agents, their roles in impacting on political identities among communities which they operated, became inevitable. In other words, the missionaries came to

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<sup>255</sup> United Presbyterian Church, Missionary Records, vii, 1852, pp. 57-58.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., pp. 57-58.

<sup>257</sup> United Presbyterian Church, Missionary Records, vii, 1852, pp. 57-58.

shape political identities in the Makgabeng area just like the early European travellers, the Boers and the British.

As much as the missionaries were valued by the Black polities, the White colonial settlers also had hopes and expectations on missionaries<sup>258</sup>. Although they were more racially tolerant than the colonial settlers, the missionaries believed in the destruction, or at least the change of most aspects of traditional ways of life of Blacks, including the tribal political system<sup>259</sup>. There were certain aspects which the missionaries wanted to eradicate before Blacks could be transformed Christians. With their teaching of rudimentary education, European crafts and Christian individualism, the missionaries were for instance, working towards transforming the Black communities into a reservoir of labour for the growing European economy<sup>260</sup>. For this reason, and because of their pacifying influence upon communities antagonistic to Europeans, the missionaries enjoyed the support of colonial settlers. They thus became part of the political agenda of the colonial authorities.

The political roles of the missionaries also manifested itself in the Makgabeng area in which successive missionaries, from Rev. Beyer through to Rev. Franz, found themselves entangled in political and

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<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>260</sup> United Presbyterian Church, *Missionary Records*, vii, 1852, pp. 57-58.

diplomatic issues. The missionaries found themselves in a situation where they were unable to focus purely on religious issues. They regarded themselves as guardians of Black communities who had to intervene in other aspects of the lives of the Makgabeng communities when they felt it was necessary. Of all the missionaries in the Makgabeng area, Christoph Sonntag, as will be shown later, became the most involved in political and diplomatic affairs. This was because Sonntag arrived in that area when tensions between the Boers and the Bahananwa were at boiling point.

Because of this approach, the Black communities soon came to suspect that the missionaries were having the same goals of undermining their sovereignty as the colonial settlers. There was widespread suspicion that missionary effort was deliberately directed towards the undermining of chiefly authority; that the Black families moved to mission stations in order to organise political opposition to the chief; that missionaries were acting as informers for colonial governments (as, indeed, they often did). The Bahananwa chief, Matsiokwane, who became wary of the missionaries once lamented:

I like very much to live with the teachers (i.e. missionaries) if they would not take my people, and give them to the Government; for they are my people. Let these school people pray for me. How is it that the Government takes them to spill blood? How is it that your teachers take them away? Whenever one believes, he goes away from me.

Why is it that you call them to live all in one place? Is it God who tells you to do so? I do not like your method of breaking up my kraal. Let the believing kaffir look to his own country men, and not go away, but teach others<sup>261</sup>.

As the Black communities, especially the chiefs, came to realise that the political and diplomatic advantages of the missionaries were more than counterbalanced by his subversive influence upon them, antagonism grew and opposition against them became widespread. It became widely believed that missionary activities were an important factor in the confusion that was overwhelming personal, familial and tribal relationships. In most cases families broke up as parents and children clashed because of conversion to Christianity. Parallel to this schism between parents and children, conversion was responsible for acute differences between husband and wife when one is converted but the other was not<sup>262</sup>.

In the Makgabeng area, antagonism and opposition against the missionaries also took place. Missionary Beyer's activities - similar to those mentioned above - soon brought him at loggerheads with Kgoši Matsiokwane. In his quest to fulfil his duties, Beyer worked towards dismantling the tribal system which he viewed as a stumbling bloc to his plans spreading the Gospel. The traditional ways of life of the Makgabeng

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<sup>261</sup> United Presbyterian Church, Missionary Records, vii, 1852, pp. 57-58.

<sup>262</sup> United Presbyterian Church, Missionary Records, vii, 1852, pp. 57-58.

communities – including their tribal authority – were obviously totally different from what the missionaries needed as an ideal society receptive of their goals.

With the missionary activities trampling on his traditional value systems, Kgoši Matsiokwane then unleashed persecutions against the missionary and the converts at the beginning of the 1870s<sup>263</sup>. On 18 February 1872, Matsiokwane decided to have those who took on new faith be attacked and killed by his warriors<sup>264</sup>. At the mission station, a certain Moses Makeere, who was a leading convert, was to be executed, but he succeeded to escape to the Makgabeng mountains, from where he fled to Ga-Matlala<sup>265</sup>. Kgoši Matsiokwane continued to harass missionary Beyer and his family and he even threw him off land, only to change his mind when the missionary expressed that he wanted to move to Kibi, the chief's rival. The missionary's torment mounted up to a point where the missionary could no longer bear the pressure. Beyer then left in 1874 and was replaced by C.H. Stech<sup>266</sup>. The fact that Beyer was replaced by Stech, indicates that the Bahananwa did not necessarily dislike missionaries, but had particular problems with Beyer, who was seen as a political agent of the colonial forces, thus confirming the political roles of missionaries. Instead of the

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<sup>263</sup> M. Jackel, *Gananoa*, p. 13.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14.

missionaries shaping only religious identities by converting more people into Christians, they were also trapped in politics in which they intended to exert their influence.

After the departure of Beyer under pressure, his successors were more cautious in meddling with political matters. However, even if they tried hard to stay out of politics, it was usually not possible to do so. The souring of relations between the Bahananwa and the ZAR Boers towards the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, led to the missionary at that time, Christoph Sonntag, to be actively involved in political matters. Sonntag, who wrongfully regarded himself as an impartial negotiator between the ZAR authorities and Kgoši Malebogo, found himself more involved in politics than in religious matters. In his “mediation”, Sonntag encouraged Kgoši Malebogo to surrender to the Boers, something which made him partial. By failing to restrain, or at least disapprove, the Boers quest to attack the Bahananwa, and at the same time request the Bahananwa to submit, clearly put him on the side of the Boers. That was vindicated later during the war when treatment of wounded Boers took place right at his mission station, while there was no attempt on the part of the missionary to aid the wounded Bahananwa. To the Boers forces he was also very helpful in giving them valuable intelligence information about their enemies, the Bahananwa. He knew the area fully well and as a

result, he was in a position to supply such crucial intelligence information to the attacking Boers<sup>267</sup>.

The main reason for the missionaries' involvement in politics was because of their direct interest in shaping and creating certain identities. It should be borne in mind that the desired outcomes of the missionary activities were the conversion of Black communities into Christianity. This ideal was usually frustrated by the Blacks' ways of life, including the tribal political system. As a result, the missionaries naturally preferred the White colonial political system which was more congenial to their goals than the Black tribal political system which was often their stumbling bloc. It was against this background that the missionaries actively supported the destruction of Black political identities and favoured their replacement with those of the White colonialists. This is precisely what alarmed leaders such as Kgoši Matsiokwane who began to persecute the missionaries, whose resolve to destroy (are assist in destroying) Black tribal system was further strengthened. Therefore, the missionaries, from the macro- to the micro-level, contributed to the shaping of political identities as they worked with colonial forces which enforced them.

The missionaries and the colonial settlers mostly worked towards the same goal of "taming" the Blacks, but what only differed were the means to achieve that. This was confirmed by Sonntag when he visited the Waterberg

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<sup>267</sup> C. Sonntag, My Friend Malaboch, p. 75.

military camp during the Bahananwa-Boer War on 22 June 1894. When he was chatting to the military leaders, one of the Boers at the camp was sarcastic about the work of the missionaries as he said: “Our manner of taming the Blacks is much faster”, and Sonntag countered: “Yes, that is quite true. You as soldiers shoot them dead and then they are quite tame. We as the servants of the Gospel are concerned with human hearts which cannot be tamed so easily”<sup>268</sup>. Even if the missionaries and the Boers came from different backgrounds, they were involved in imposing their respective identities upon the Makgabeng communities. While the missionaries aimed to convert them into “God fearing” Christians, the Boer authorities wanted to turn the Makgabeng communities into loyal and obedient subjects – in both cases, imposition of foreign will and values being common factors.

The appearance of Europeans in the Makgabeng area completely changed identities in that area. Since the appearance of early European travellers, hunters, traders and explorers, identities in that area were never to be the same. These early Europeans brought changes as their trading goods, particularly the firearm revolutionised the balance of power as well as class formations in that area. Later the missionaries’ active involvement in politics also shaped identities, while the Boer and British settlers, with their more purposeful intention to subjugate and rule, enforced their will, thereby imposing their own identities over those of the communities who were already at the Makgabeng area. With the new laws and ways of governance

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<sup>268</sup> C. Sonntag, My Friend Malaboch, p. 78.

enforced by the new colonial rulers, the communal system characterised by families, clans, headmanships and polities, were greatly disrupted. As the new authorities stripped the powers of chiefs and headmen, the magistrates, commissioners and the police, became new forms and custodians of authority. Value systems of the new authorities were imposed on the Makgabeng authorities and they were expected to be identified as such. In the Makgabeng area, the small settlement of Bochum, became a centre of power as it became an administrative hub, replacing the two capitals of Matlala and Malebogo, whose authorities had been usurped. Later, when groups of Blacks came together to purchase farms, new identities in communal villages were formed.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CHANGES IN RELIGION, SOCIAL CUSTOMS, HEALTH AND EDUCATION SINCE 1850's**

The previous chapter focused on the political changes which were brought to the Makgabeng area by the arrival of the early European travellers, the

missionaries, the Boer farmers and the British colonial settlers. It was shown how those political changes shaped identities in that area. This chapter focuses more on changes of social nature which were mostly brought by the missionaries. The missionaries brought to the Makgabeng area ideas and innovations of global nature (most of them came from Europe) and their activities represented a direct link between identity creation and movement of people and ideas across the globe – the concept which today is known as globalisation<sup>269</sup>.

The activities of the missionaries and their shaping of identities will be contextualised in accordance with the notion that the salience of identities is dependent on the nature of the context<sup>270</sup>. It will be shown how the missionaries' interaction with the Makgabeng communities led to the salience of the identities of religion, social customs, health or education, depending on different contexts. The missionary activities took place from the broad macro-context level, i.e., throughout the country (or even the continent). Their activities filtered through to the meso-context level (Makgabeng) and impacted of the smallest units at the micro-context level, i.e., the Makgabeng families and individuals.

Compared to the Boer and British colonialists, the missionaries' interactions with the local communities were more peaceful than coercive. Their identity

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<sup>269</sup> M. Castells, Information Age, p. 1.

<sup>270</sup> A. Gramsci, Selections From the Prison Notebooks, p. 104.

creation was thus more spontaneous (which Castells [2000] refers to as having grown organically) than imposed. They preferred persuasive methods of converting communities to Christianity as compared to the colonialists who forcefully subjugated communities into their subjects. The missionaries stayed for longer periods among the communities as their subjects, and according to the notion that identities can only become an experience if only enforced enough over time, as espoused by Castells<sup>271</sup>, their impact on identities was more extensive than, for instance, the early European travellers who just temporarily touched on communities. However, some identities are transient in nature, while others may last longer, even after the actual interaction of groups has ceased to exist<sup>272</sup>. That is why in the Makgabeng area, there are still some traces of the missionaries activities such as Christian congregations, while in other areas communities reverted or continued to practise their traditional ways and customs.

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<sup>271</sup> M. Castells, *Globalisation, Identity ...*, p. 7.

<sup>272</sup> J. Muller et al, *Challenges of Globalisation...*, p. 115.

## **Lutheran and Wesleyan missionary conversions in Makgabeng**

The missionary activities in South Africa started in the nineteenth century with the Moravian, Hermannsburg and Berlin Missionary societies establishing their stations all over the country<sup>273</sup>. The primary aim of the missionaries was to spread the Gospel among the indigenous communities. They made it their duty to uproot the religions and ways of life of the indigenous communities and then replace them with values and customs which they believed were good and civilised. In short, the missionaries regarded themselves as torch-bearers who brought light to communities which, according to them, were trapped in darkness, barbarism and heathendom. As a result of this perception which was basically Eurocentric

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<sup>273</sup> L. Zollner and J. A. Heese, The Berlin Missionaries in South Africa and their descendants, p. 14.

and White supremacist, the missionaries viewed Blacks' ways of life, values and customs as backward and savage.

Whereas the missionaries' objectives of easily and completely converting Blacks into Christians, their impact on Black communities was extensive because they lived among the communities, and thereby interacted with them directly. Among the various missionary societies which operated in South Africa, the Lutherans from Germany, and the Wesleyans from Britain, worked among the Makgabeng communities. It was the former which started earlier and therefore had more impact on the local communities than the latter. However, the contribution of the Wesleyans in Makgabeng cannot be underestimated, and will also be discussed.

The missionary activities around the Makgabeng area commenced in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century by the Berlin Missionary Society (BMS) of Germany(Lutheran) which had been established in the early 1820s<sup>274</sup>. Before spreading to the Makgabeng, the BMS had already established stations in other parts of the South Africa, such as in the land of Kgoši Sekhukhune of the Bapedi from as early as 1860. Since 1865, the German missionaries were working among the Bakone of Kgoši Mongwati Matlala at Ga-Matlala<sup>275</sup>. Missionary E.B. Beyer, who occupied Ga-Matlala station, always longed to adventure into the Makgabeng area which impressed him

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<sup>274</sup> L. Zollner and J. A. Heese, The Berlin Missionaries, p. 14.

<sup>275</sup> M. Jackel, Gananoa, p. 4.

with its scenic beauty<sup>276</sup>. One of the missionaries at Ga-Matlala station, Moschutz, travelled to Makgabeng in 1865 and spoke to Kgoši Radira Monyebodi about starting a new mission station in the area. Although Moschutz's attempt failed because of misunderstandings with community leaders, it nevertheless paved the way for his colleague, Beyer, to travel to the neighbouring Blouberg, to meet Kgoši Matsiokwane of the Bahananwa<sup>277</sup>. All these developments marked the arrival of the missionaries who would extensively shape identities in the Makgabeng and the surrounding areas.

The Bahananwa reached the height of their power as they fed on refugees of small groups of the Mfecane/ Difaqane, including the Monyebodi people who later became their most important subjects on the foot of the Makgabeng mountains. The Monyebodi people, who were of the Bakone origin, became one of the trusted component of the Bahananwa ruling class after the former voluntarily submitted under the latter's authority<sup>278</sup>. One of the Monyebodis, Lerapela, even moved to Blouberg to become one of the principal advisers of Kgoši Malebogo (Ratšhatšha) during the 1894 Bahananwa-Boer War<sup>279</sup>. Lerapela was killed during that bloody war<sup>280</sup>.

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>277</sup> M. Jackel, Gananoa, p. 4.

<sup>278</sup> Interview, Robert Manaka, Inveraan village, 29 December 2004.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

Under the Malebogo royal family, the Bahananwa were divided and governed by the senior headmen Kubu, Molebo, Theledi, Pholoba, Phala and Manaka (Phatudi)<sup>281</sup>. The other junior leaders who were referred to as *borammotwana* included Kobe, Mamokhibidu, Manaka (Radimang), Mochemi, Nailana, Sebaiwa, Bodirwa, Molele (Ga Maponto), Molele (Ga Molete), Motsepa and Tefo<sup>282</sup>. The missionaries began to spread the Gospel in all these communities and hoped to convert them to Christianity. Indeed new identities emerged as some people became converts. Christian congregations mushroomed in most villages of the above-mentioned senior and junior headmen.

Negotiations between missionary Beyer and Kgoši Matsiokwane yielded positive fruits for the missionaries as the chief allowed the establishment of a mission station on his land. On 9<sup>th</sup> March 1868, Beyer founded the first mission station in Blouberg and he called it Leipzig, in remembrance of his city of birth back in Germany<sup>283</sup>. Although Beyer was initially welcomed by the Bahananwa authorities, his activities soon proved to be in conflict with the Bahananwa ways of life. The differences between the missionary and the authorities - which will be discussed later under social customs - led to

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<sup>281</sup> Interview, Robert Manaka, Inveraan village, 29 December 2004.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> M. Jackel, Gananoa, p. 6.

the expulsion of Beyer, and his replacement by C.H. Stech in 1874<sup>284</sup>. However, even if the missionary activities seemed to have suffered this setback, Christianity had come to be a new form of religious identity marker in that area as communities tasted this new kind of religion.

The Lutheran mission station in Makgabeng was established in 1870 after two visits to the area by Moschutz in 1865 and in 1869<sup>285</sup>. Superintendent Grutzner and Gustav Trumpelmann arrived in Makgabeng in February 1870, and the latter took over the activities of the station<sup>286</sup>. The Makgabeng station was an outstation of that one in Leipzig and it was built among the people of Kgoši Monyebodi. In 1871 missionary Baumbach joined Trumpelmann in Makgabeng and he later took over the activities of the station<sup>287</sup>.

After Baumbach left the station in 1882, Stech, who was at the helm of the Leipzig station in Blouberg, took over the running of the Makgabeng station in 1888, but was replaced by missionary Sack between 1888 and 1890<sup>288</sup>. In 1893 the Makgabeng station was abandoned owing to a heavy fever-

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<sup>284</sup> M. Jackel, *Gananoa*, p. 21.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17.

<sup>286</sup> Interview, Robert Manaka, Inveraan village, 29 December 2004.

<sup>287</sup> M. Jackel, *Gananoa*, p. 17.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17.

epidemic which brought missionary Herbst's family to the brink of death<sup>289</sup>. Much of missionary activities shifted to Leipzig, where Christoph Sonntag took over in 1892. In 1897 Robert Franz took over from Sonntag until 1908 when Franz moved to Bochum<sup>290</sup>. Between 1908 and 1914 there was no White missionary in both Leipzig and Makgabeng stations, but Franz overlooked those stations from Bochum<sup>291</sup>. Martin Jackel took over from Franz from 1914 up to 1923, whereby a Black convert, Henrich Tsita, formally took over the reigns<sup>292</sup>. With these successive missionaries in the Makgabeng area, Christianity was entrenched as a new form of religious identity. This form of religion competed with traditional beliefs of local communities because as other people became converts, others retained their traditional beliefs, while others were caught in the middle of those religions.

Since the appearance of the first missionaries in the Makgabeng area in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ways of life of communities in that area were never going to be the same again. From the earliest appearance of the Berlin missionaries, concerted efforts were made to spread the Gospel in the Makgabeng area. Although at some times the missionaries were tempted to be involved in political matters, as shown in the previous

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<sup>289</sup> M. Jackel, *Gananoa*, p. 17.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

chapter, however, their core function remained the preaching of the Christian Gospel. The extent of the Lutheran missionary activities and their remarkable legacy in the Makgabeng area is evidenced by the number of stations which had been built since they first appeared in that area. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in addition to the Leipzig and Makgabeng mission stations, there were already outstations at Ga Manaka, Ga Maunatlala, Setupung, Monobeng, Mokumuru, Ga Mojela, Okuli, Silwermyn, Non Parella, Bayswater, Ga Mokobane, Sankobela, Slaaphoek, Schoongezicht and Ga Hlako<sup>293</sup>. Although some of these outstations were sometimes abandoned, their congregations in most cases remained to continue with their activities. Some of the earliest staunch Black Lutheran converts who also became leaders of congregations in the Makgabeng area included Simon Setumu (in Bays Water), Joshua Monyebodi (in Ga Monyebodi), Matheus Ngwepe (in Schoongezicht) and Adolf Mamabolo (in Bochum)<sup>294</sup>. Black Christian converts were a clear, visible new form of religious identity brought to the Makgabeng area.

Even though there is this traceable legacy of the missionary activities in the Makgabeng area, the missionaries were sometimes discouraged by their efforts which were at times fruitless and their progress sometimes very slow. Reversion to old ways of life by those who had been converted to Christianity was one of the major setbacks which undermined the

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<sup>293</sup> M. Jackel, *Gananoa*, p. 25.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

missionary activities. On 31 March 1889, missionary Sack made this entry in his diary about some reversions:

The Lord had already bestowed upon [me] four people, who to be baptised and who seemed eager to learn. But [I] was disappointed in this hope, as [I] later met one of them in the midst of heathen drinking bout, and two others could not bear the ridicule and persecution from their own people and again became weak. But in place of these, others came, from the kraal of Chief Sankobela, where hope of success seemed warranted<sup>295</sup>.

The little signs of missionary successes in the Makgabeng area were also summed up by missionary Martin Jackel who succeeded Robert Franz. He wrote this in 1921:

The Gananoa [sic] congregation remained small despite more than 50 years' patient work by the missionary. The peculiar character of the Bagananoa [sic], quarrelsomeness and laziness, and the people's defects, immorality and drunkenness have poisoned the innermost marrow of the tribe and the consequences of immorality –

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<sup>295</sup> Rev. Sack, Berliner Missionberichte, p. 5.

Lues, leprosy and insanity – terribly spread amongst the people despite all fighting against it<sup>296</sup>.

The above examples are contrary to Castells' [2000] theoretical argument that identities can only become experience if only enforced over time<sup>297</sup>. Castells notion is proven incorrect by the fact that even if the Lutheran missionaries toiled for so many years, some individuals and communities who once defined themselves as Christians (converts), constantly reverted to their traditional ways of life, to the disappointment of the missionaries.

However, even if some communities and individuals reverted to their old traditional ways of life, few of them continued to carry the torch of the Gospel in the Makgabeng area until today, hence there are still sporadic Lutheran congregations in that area. Again here, the theoretical proposition that cultural, social and political contexts are decisive when it comes to identity [Castells 2000] is true in this case. The political traditions, the social customs and the cultural beliefs of the Makgabeng communities were very important (decisive) in defining who they were even if they were bombarded with the Christian teachings of the missionaries.

With the help of oral evidence, most of the activities of the Lutheran missionaries and their converts are still freshly traceable. Professor Robert

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<sup>296</sup> M. Jackel, Gananoa, p. 28.

<sup>297</sup> M. Castells, Globalisation, Identity ..., p. 7.

Franz, the grandson of the missionary Robert Franz, shed important light on the missionary activities in the Makgabeng area with his oral accounts as well as important documents he had inherited from his parents and grandparents, as well as information on other missionaries<sup>298</sup>. The direct descendants of earliest staunch Lutheran convert, Simon Setumu, are presently living in Matjijileng and Schoongezicht villages, while the descendants of Adolf Mamabolo are residing at Bochum. The buildings of most of the mission stations, are still intact while some of them are only ruins now. The number of mission stations, as well as outstations and sub-stations, and the numbers of Lutheran converts in the Makgabeng area, bear testimony of the impact the missionary activities had on religious identities in that area, even though in some cases missionaries' activities suffered setbacks due to reversions.

The Wesleyan Methodist mission reached the Makgabeng area much later than the Lutherans. But in the Blouberg area, the two men who had been baptised as Wesleyans in Natal during their stay as migrant labourers, joined the Lutherans. Solomon Maloba and Samuel Modiba converted to Christianity in Natal under the well-known Wesleyan missionary, J. Allison<sup>299</sup>, only to join Beyer's Lutheran congregation when they returned to

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<sup>298</sup> Interview, Prof. Robert Franz, 20 July 2002, Senwabarwana (formerly Bochum).

<sup>299</sup> D. W. van der Merwe, Die geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootska in Transvaal, 1860-1900, p.14.

Blouberg<sup>300</sup>. The British-originated Wesleyans' activities in the former Transvaal were inspired by the annexation of that colony by Britain in 1877. Operating from Natal, the Wesleyans had been exploring possibilities of establishing themselves in the Transvaal by sending out a handful of White preachers in the early 1870s. The efforts of establishing Wesleyan presence in the Transvaal were continued even after the Boers regained the rule of that colony in 1881. Reverend Owen Watkins was assisted by George Weavind in this regard<sup>301</sup>. In the northern Transvaal, the Wesleyan activities were initiated by Samuel Mathabathe, who was operating around Pietersburg in the early 1880s<sup>302</sup>. The appearance of the Wesleyan activities introduced yet another religious identity marker in the Makgabeng area.

In the Makgabeng-Blouberg area, where the Berlin Missionary Society was already established, the Wesleyans opted for co-operation with the Lutherans. In the mid-1886, both Wesleyans and Lutherans jointly participated in the Berlin Mission's synod in Moletji and from there they travelled to Good Hope to attend the Wesleyan conference<sup>303</sup>. Although the

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<sup>300</sup> Because of the proximity between the Makgabeng to Blouberg, there was no line dividing missionary activities in those areas.

<sup>301</sup> J. P. Dugmore, *The beginnings of Methodist Missionary policy in the Transvaal*, M.A. Dissertation, p. 29.

<sup>302</sup> <sup>302</sup> J. P. Dugmore, *The beginnings of Methodist Missionary policy in the Transvaal*, M.A. Dissertation, p. 29.

<sup>303</sup> KAZB: BMG, SA: *Das Eindringen der Wesleyaner unser Missionsgebiet von Blauberg*, pp. 2 – 3.

Wesleyans and the Lutherans often co-operated, there were sometimes conflicts. Carl Stech (Lutheran) and George Lowe (Wesleyan) used to exchange hostile correspondence<sup>304</sup> and their conflict manifested itself in the Blouberg-Makgabeng area when Solomon Maloba broke away from the Lutheran station of Leipzig to establish his own station. Samuel Modiba, who had been a Lutheran helper on the Derben outstation under headman Manaka, also left the Berlin society service and joined the Wesleyans, taking the majority of the Derben Christians with him when he got permission from Kgoši Kibi of the other section of the Bahananwa, to settle in his domain<sup>305</sup>. It must be borne in mind that Maloba and Modiba were both first baptised as Wesleyans in Natal, and their reversion to that denomination was not surprising. The introduction of Wesleyan teachings in the Makgabeng area led to further religious identity creation as the converts were not only Christians, but further identified as either Wesleyans or Lutherans.

Apart from their rivalry and competition for Black converts, the Wesleyans and the Lutherans had different ways of operation. The Berlin society which had been well established by the time the Wesleyans arrived in the Makgabeng area, had developed a network of mission stations. With their training institute, they were known to be relatively reluctant to employ

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid., pp. 2 – 3.

<sup>305</sup> KAZB: BMG, SA: Das Eindringen, pp. 2 – 3.

African evangelists independent of direct White supervision<sup>306</sup>. White missionaries were required to run their mission stations and the lives of their African helpers and converts under the closest surveillance – lest there should be any deviation from the strict religious dogma that was preached with meticulous regularity<sup>307</sup>. The Lutheran rules were very strict on polygamy, drunkenness and learning qualifications, and the White missionary visited all his converts regularly, sometimes weekly or monthly<sup>308</sup>.

On the other hand, the Wesleyan system was designed in order to give African evangelists more responsibility and more initiative than passively receiving converts<sup>309</sup>. This system allowed African evangelists more freedom to interpret the Scripture and more scope for tolerance and innovation. Because the White Wesleyan authorities were absent and did not observe the bending, ignoring, adapting and rethinking of Christian practice, it could not offend or bother them the way it did to Lutheran missionaries. The White Wesleyan missionaries baptised and appointed individuals who had been failed, reprimanded and excommunicated by the Lutherans, not because they necessarily disagreed with the Lutheran interpretation of the Scripture, but because they did not know the life stories

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid, pp. 2 – 3.

<sup>307</sup> D. W. van der Merwe, Die geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendiggenootskap, p. 40.

<sup>308</sup> KAZB: BMG, SA: Das Eindringen, p. 40.

<sup>309</sup> D. W. van der Merwe, Die geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendiggenootskap, p. 40.

of the people the African evangelists introduced to them on their periodic visits<sup>310</sup>. As a result, the Wesleyans and Lutherans led to the creation of religious identities separate and different from each other, even if they were both Christian.

Despite differences, rivalries and break-ups between the Wesleyans and the Lutherans, the approaching war of 1894 in the Blouberg-Makgabeng area, helped to unite the two denominations. During the hostilities between the Boers and the Bahananwa, the Black Wesleyans found themselves without a White spokesperson, which would negotiate with the attacking Boers on their behalf. The Wesleyans therefore turned to missionary Christoph Sonntag, a Lutheran, who was not only physically present in the theatre of war, but also actively involved in “mediating” between the warring parties. As a result, in the build up to the 1894 war, Maloba and Modiba, who had broken away from the Lutherans, came back to the Berlin mission’s fold, seeking protection of Sonntag against the warring parties<sup>311</sup>. War, diplomacy and politics became so salient at that time and resulted in religious identities taking a back seat as people united in the face of common threat.

When the first missionary set foot in the Makgabeng area in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the only known form of religion was African ancestral

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<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>311</sup> KAZB: BMG, SA: Das Eindringen der , pp. 2 – 3.

worshipping (and of course, the Khoisan religions). But with the arrival of the missionaries, communities in the area were introduced to a new form of religion: Christianity. Although converting communities into Christianity was not an easy task, those who were successfully converted, represented new forms of identities in the Makgabeng area. New forms of identities – Black converts – with distinct characteristics emerged for the first time. They became to be distinguished from the “others” who were not Christian converts. At some times, this new form of distinction caused hostilities between the converts and the non-converts. Today there are so many Christian denominations in the Makgabeng area which arguably owe their origin to the arrival of the first missionaries in the area.

According to the available oral evidence, the Wesleyan influence on the south-western side of the Makgabeng mountains, grew under the evangelist, Philemon Setumu, towards the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Evangelist Setumu met with the Wesleyan teaching while he was working in the gold mines as a migrant worker<sup>312</sup>. On his return to the Makgabeng area, Setumu spread the Gospel among his people around the small Setlaolwe hills on the southern foot of the Makgabeng mountains. In addition to the Gospel, Setumu also brought with him western education. Most of his converts, especially the youth, were taught reading and writing. Among the first learners under Setumu was Freda Ramoroka (Mmasimi),

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<sup>312</sup> Interview, Mmachuene Georgina Setumu, Norma A village, 2 January 2003.

Matlonkana's sister who was later married to Bethuel Ramoroka<sup>313</sup>. Among Setumu's new converts were Joshua Masekwa, Charles (called Charlos) Ramoroka, Isrom Ramoroka and Bethuel Ramoroka (the three Ramorokas were brothers – sons of Tšhabiši Ramoroka and Mokgadi Masekwa)<sup>314</sup>. As much as Lutheran identity was entrenched in the Makgabeng area, Wesleyan identity was continuing to grow in that area.

In addition to bringing people under his Wesleyan denomination and teaching them reading and writing, Phillemon Setumu also assisted people in the purchase of farms around the Makgabeng area<sup>315</sup>. Equipped with western education and Christianity, Setumu was looked upon as a leader and trusted by his people, and as result he guided negotiations and deals in the transaction of farms during those days. His own people on the southern foot of the Setlaolwe hills later purchased the farm, Norma A. Apparently they moved to the new farm after his death because his grave is still lying on their original place on the southern foot of Setlaolwe. However, his legacy of the Wesleyan Christian identity lives on to this day as the Wesleyan congregations are still found in the Makgabeng area to this day.

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<sup>313</sup> Interview, Desia Ramoroka, Leokaneng village, 28 December 2004.

<sup>314</sup> Interview, Sania Ramoroka, Norma A village, 19 May 2003.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

The Wesleyan teachings under Setumu spread through the south-western side of the Makgabeng mountains, until the arrival of yet another Christian denomination in that area: the Zion Christian Church. In addition to the two religious identity markers which were already established in the Makgabeng area – Lutheran and Wesleyan – ZCC appeared and made its mark. Evangelist Philemon Setumu's son, Ikgetheng Steven Setumu, together with Thipa (Mphaka) Setumu, Abiel Mojela and Binas Ramoroka, got baptised under the ZCC in the early 1940's by a certain Reverend Shela<sup>316</sup>. By that time, the ZCC was still one, not yet split between the one with the star sign and the other one with the dove emblem. Its badge was still only a green piece of cloth pinned on the left breast of the garment<sup>317</sup>. Another denomination to follow the Lutherans, Wesleyans, and the ZCC in the Makgabeng area was the Apostolic congregations, which appeared in the area under a certain Reverend Seletela<sup>318</sup>. Lekgalaka (Mafeta/Esrom) Setumu's family was one of the first ones to embrace Apostolic faith. His children, particularly Phuti (Rebecca), Kolobe (Jackson) and Athalia became staunch followers of the Apostolic church<sup>319</sup>. All these developments represented the constant changes in religious identities in the Makgabeng area in which new identities of Black Lutherans, Black Wesleyans, Black Zionists and Black Apostolics were formed.

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<sup>316</sup> Interview, Sania Ramoroka, Norma A village, 19 May 2003.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

The competition and constant switching between ancestral worshipping, Lutheran, Wesleyan, ZCC and Apostolic resulted in constant change, destruction and formation of religious identities in the Makgabeng area. Congregations, families and individuals constantly switched religious identities from one religion to the other. Those were the days of fragile and fluid religious identities. This is according to the theoretical proposition of non-essentialism in which identities are said to be flexible and dynamic<sup>320</sup>.

## **The missionaries' attacks on social customs**

In their quest to convert Black communities into Christianity, the missionaries in most cases, found themselves fighting very hard to destroy such ways of life as polygamy, circumcision and paying of bridal price

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<sup>320</sup> P. Gilroy, Between Camps, p. 104.

(magadi). The missionaries, armed with their Eurocentric views and White supremacy theories, firmly believed that their religion was superior and holier than the religious practices of Black communities. The missionaries had their expectations and they tirelessly worked towards eradicating some of these Blacks' ways of life to replace them with their European values which they firmly believed were pure and right. Most of the Black social customs were viewed by the missionaries as obstacles lying in their ways of achieving their goals of converting communities into Christians. Some of the members of the Black communities accepted conversion to the new religion which was brought by the missionaries. In this way, new identities in the form of converts emerged.

The missionaries' quest to convert the Blacks into Christianity was based on the premise of the negative view the missionaries had on the Blacks' ways of life. The reference of Blacks in a negative way was because the missionaries viewed them as evil creatures which needed to be saved out of their savage ways. Missionary Sack summed this up when he wrote about the Makgabeng communities in 1889: "Oh Lord, help and let your Word also become a power here, so that the poor outcasts may have peace, because they are living without peace and will die without peace!"<sup>321</sup>. Sack was referring to the death case and the burial procedures he witnessed at the kraal of Kgoši Monyebodi, on the northern foot of the Makgabeng mountain

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<sup>321</sup> Rev. Sack, Berliner Missionberichte, p. 5.

in 1889. During that funeral at the royal kraal, Sack wrote about how he went there and confronted the chief:

But I found the chief [Monyebodi] in a small hut all by himself. He sat on the ground, head in his hands. I had a very serious conversation with him and told him that the God of Heaven and Earth had spoken a word to him and the whole tribe: that he and his people should now at last accept the Word of God... Poor Monyebodi, you probably know what God's word requires of you and what the teacher amongst your people wants, but you do not want to free yourself from the chains of sin and darkness"<sup>322</sup>.

It appears that also, still on the death issue, the missionaries had a problem in which the Black communities mourned for their relatives who had past away, in addition to their frowning at their funeral proceedings. Of course loud crying was another way of how relatives and other community members mourned for their dead. On this issue of loud crying, Sack wrote this on 18 April 1889:

Last night there was much noise and scandalous drinking at the main kraal during which the men howled like dogs and the women mewed like cats. In the kraal, in the morning we were woken by sounds, like the long drawn out howling of a jackal, similar to those mourning. I do not

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<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

know who has died up there as no heathen from the kraal appeared today. But it must have been a kraal headman, as the crying and wailing even continued this evening<sup>323</sup>.

After hearing what he perceived as the most barbaric way of mourning the dead, Sack went up to the scene in order to see for himself, and he wrote:

I myself went to the main kraal which was crowded with wailing women, who crouched in all nooks and corners, hardly answering my greeting. The men sat in circle in the open spaces between the houses.

Most of them had smeared their cheeks with ash and the men and women had all more or less shorn their heads<sup>324</sup>.

Mourning the dead was not the only social custom frowned by the missionaries. According to Black culture, young boys and girls were expected to undergo initiation as their transformation into adulthood. Although there was separation between boys and girls in going through this institution, the common objective was to school these young ones with values which were acceptable to the society. However, the Eurocentric missionaries abhorred this custom. They discouraged it and they regarded it as one of those “heathen” ways of life. The missionaries also detested the

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<sup>323</sup> Rev. Sack, Berliner Missionberichte, p. 4.

<sup>324</sup> Rev. Sack, Berliner Missionberichte, p. 4.

practice as it usually took away numbers of people from their schools and churches, where the missionaries were in the process of consolidating their activities.

In 1869, when missionary Beyer was building his congregation in the Blouberg-Makgabeng area, the time for circumcision disrupted his congregation as only ten individuals were left as the rest went for circumcision schooling<sup>325</sup>. This was negatively viewed by the missionary as the reversal of his progress. During the term of Missionary Robert Franz in Leipzig, he showed his dislike of the circumcision institution by burning one circumcision kraal which he claimed was deliberately built next to the mission station<sup>326</sup>. This was an indication of missionary arrogance because it was the missionaries who built their institutions on land provided by the same Blacks who were then accused of building their institutions next to the missionaries' station.

The institution of circumcision was therefore a source of tension between missionaries and Black communities. By attacking the institution of circumcision, the missionaries were trying to destroy one of the most valued identity markers among the Black communities such as those in Makgabeng. Circumcision was used to define people's status in a society as it separated different age groups. However, because of the fact that cultural,

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<sup>325</sup> M. Jackel, Gananoa, p. 11.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

political and social contexts are decisive when it comes to identities [Castells 2000], the customs such as mountain schooling persisted in the Makgabeng area until today even if they had been under attacks by Eurocentric missionaries. It still remains one of the forms of identity markers which is proudly valued as it separates men from boys, and women from girls<sup>327</sup>.

Black communities performed certain rituals which also came to be attacked by the missionaries. For instance, Black communities believed in the abilities of some of their leaders to make rain. Blacks also tied ritual objects (*dipheku*) around their body parts such as necks and hips. The *dipheku* were believed to protect people from witchcraft and other forms of misfortunes. These beliefs were seriously scorned by the missionaries and they strongly encouraged the converts to abandon them. Some converts were able to completely abandon such customs while others occasionally reverted to their beliefs. A certain Makeere, who was a close relative to Kgoši Matsiokwane, once took off the “*dipheku*” from his neck and became a staunch churchgoer<sup>328</sup>. However, to the disappointment of missionary Beyer, Makeere was not strong enough to withstand the mockery of his fellow people and the scorn of his mother and wife and he eventually reverted to his old ways of life<sup>329</sup>. The example of Makeere is just one

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<sup>327</sup> Interview, Nkadi Ngwepe, Norma A village, 16 and 19 May 2003.

<sup>328</sup> M. Jackel, Gananoa, p. 12.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

among many cases in the Makgabeng area in which people often reverted to their old ways of life because of pressure from their own people. Others reverted because what they had expected to gain out of conversion did not materialise. Most of the converts expected material benefits out of the new religious identity they were adopting. Others were only converted out of curiosity, just to experiment with the new religion of the White man.

Marriage to more than one wives, polygamy, and the payment of bride wealth, “magadi” (“lobola” in Nguni), were important aspects of Black societies, including those in the Makgabeng area. These two aspects were not only important customs, but they also kept communities stable and they also had legal implications. Polygamy symbolised status in society for both men and women<sup>330</sup>. For a man for instance, the more women he acquired, the wealthier he appeared to have been. On the other hand, for the women, polygamy helped to give wives of the same man social standing as their seniority improved with the acquisition of more wives. Again, polygamy was important to both men and women as it ensured that household duties and farming activities were shared among larger extended families. This also favoured the women who would have otherwise bore all the functions as individuals<sup>331</sup>.

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<sup>330</sup> Interview, Nkadi Ngwepe, Norma A village, 16 and 19 May 2003.

<sup>331</sup> Interview, Headman Phukubje, Lehwaneng village, 17 September 2003.

The system of polygamy was an important identity marker of Black communities which they supported even in the face of vigorous attack by the missionaries. The missionaries with their Eurocentric worldview, were totally against polygamy as they viewed it as a form of enslaving the women. They then made it a condition to their converts to abandon their other wives before they could be fully accepted into Christianity. The converts were also not allowed to stay at the mission stations before complying with the demand of doing away with polygamy. In the Makgabeng area, under pressure of the missionaries, some members of the community listened to the missionaries' call to dismantle their polygamous marriages in order to be accepted into Christianity. Obviously, such actions destabilised communities and continued to fuel familial and tribal divisions. It was people such as Makeere who took the risk of destroying their families in favour of accepting Christianity. Under pressure from missionary Beyer, Makeere left his two wives in 1870 in order for him to be accepted at the Leipzig mission station<sup>332</sup>. In other parts of the Makgabeng, there were various reports in which men gave up their wives, became baptised, but continued to look after their children<sup>333</sup>.

Paying of the *magadi* by the groom to the bride's family was another important aspect of the Blacks' ways of life which the missionaries also wanted to eradicate. The missionaries mistakenly assumed that *magadi* was

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<sup>332</sup> M. Jackel, Gananoa, p. 12.

<sup>333</sup> Interview, Nkadi Ngwepe, Norma A village, 16 and 19 May 2003.

the purchase of a chattel. They did this by applying the categories of their European upbringing, forgetting that to the Black communities, it was an important social custom. For these communities, it tended to make marriage more stable and it also indicated the bona fides of the bridegroom and his family, and without it no marriage was possible.

Black communities also preferred marriages among relatives as that strengthened the relations and also minimised divorces as quarrels among couples were better reconciled by related families than strangers. Payment of *magadi* also compensated the bride's family for the loss of her presence in their kraal and of her value as a unit of labour. Black communities formalised this arrangement in which the bride gave up her parents' name and adopted her husband's surname. Payment of *magadi* also established resources from which the bride could be supported if the marriage failed and the husband turned her away from his kraal. In essence it facilitated legal divorce, since the return of the marriage payment to bridegroom's family effected the annulment of the marriage. The system being a kin responsibility, served to cement kinship ties through the ramification of the principle of reciprocity.

The missionaries used punitive measures such as excommunication as a deterrent in order to have their rules obeyed. The missionaries were strict in having their dogma obeyed and they excommunicated converts who deviated, for instance those who bore children outside marriage. According

to Desia Ramoroka<sup>334</sup>, her mother-in-law, Freda (Mmasimi) Ramoroka, was excommunicated several times from church because after the early death of her husband Bethuel, Mmasimi continued to bear children. However, as a rehabilitation measure, after every excommunication, one is allowed to start afresh in a “class”, after which one will be fully re-admitted. Another “offence” which was punishable by excommunication was “*go nyalwa ke lapa*”<sup>335</sup>.

According to this custom, if a family or couple do not have sons who would marry brides who would sustain the blood-line of that family, a bride would be “married” by that family. That bride would then have children with her chosen man/men and those children would belong to that family which “married” her. According to Blantina Setumu<sup>336</sup>, numerous members were excommunicated from the Wesleyan church in Norma A because of their practice of that custom.

The fact that most of these customs discussed above – if not all of them – persisted until today, indicate that it was difficult – if not impossible - for the missionaries to uproot them. These customs were regarded by Black communities as valuable without which there was no life at all. These

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<sup>334</sup> Interview, Desia Ramoroka, Leokaneng village, 28 December 2004.

<sup>335</sup> Literally means, “to be married by a family/household”.

<sup>336</sup> Interview, Blantina Setumu, Early Dawn village, 30 December 2004.

customs were actually integral part of their identity as they defined fully who they were.

## **Missionaries on economic activity, health and education**

The missionaries were initially welcomed by the Makgabeng communities for their political and diplomatic roles. However, their apparent collusion with, and their working towards the same goals as the colonial settlers, soon won them disavour of the local communities. Generally, the missionaries attacked most of the communities' social customs which they wanted them

changed as a condition of them being accepted within Christianity. Some of the converts sacrificed their ways of life under pressure from the missionaries, but that usually disrupted familial and tribal relationships. However, even though the missionaries' goals and activities appeared to have clashed with the local communities' ways of life, there were areas where the missionaries had contributed in uplifting and improving the lives of those communities.

The missionaries sometimes positively contributed to the economic activities by introducing new agricultural methods among Black communities such as those in Makgabeng. This was achieved by mainly enhancing the link between such communities and far-flung trading outposts. As a result of this improved outside linkages, implements such as iron hoes and ox-drawn ploughs saw their way into the areas such as Makgabeng in large numbers. These implements lightened the work in the fields and also greatly improved agricultural production. The missionaries also popularised the transport mechanisms such as donkey carts, wagons and horses, which greatly facilitated and enhanced mobility among people.

The earliest missionaries in the Makgabeng area mentioned the use of wagons and horses as their means of transport. The following is an example from the early missionary writings on the technological advancement of transport:

Whenever the ox whips are heard at Makchabeng[sic],

everything is in uproar as the heathen think[sic] that the Boers are coming to take their cattle. But on Saturday, the 1<sup>st</sup> June [1889], the ox wagon brought great joy. Superintendent Knothe had arrived and would carry out the ordination of Brother Sack in Blouberg<sup>337</sup>.

The appearance of these technological innovations also brought identity changes with regard to division of labour between men and women. The ploughs and wagons, for instance, were drawn by the oxen which the women were traditionally forbidden from handling. As a result, this ban of women handling oxen was lifted in the wake of the fact that women were still expected to work in the fields, and therefore were at last allowed to handle cattle which were pulling wagons and ploughs. According to Samuel Phukubje, the slow introduction of “western” agricultural implements led to the boom of the Makgabeng production as cultivation of fields became “easier and faster”<sup>338</sup>.

The missionaries also brought new, western building styles in the Makgabeng area. Up until then, the communities in that area used wooden poles – which were plastered together by soil – to build their round huts. The missionaries came to build their flat houses with stone slabs, representing the bricks as they knew them. The missionaries also needed

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<sup>337</sup> Rev. Sack, Berliner Missionberichte, p. 7.

<sup>338</sup> Interview, Samuel Phukubje, Lehwaneng village, 12 September, 2003.

planks for doors, but when Sack did not find planks for his house in 1888, he wrote, "... I used my bookcase and made a door"<sup>339</sup>. Sack also built his house into two rooms, something unheard of by local communities. He was also forced to introduce the zinc sheets – western originated commodities - because of the ants which were eating up his makeshift roofing. The introduction of such western-originated items also facilitated trade in the Makgabeng area. When he was building his house referred to above, Sack found himself trading some of his items with the locals in order to get what he needed, and on one incident he wrote:

... I wanted to make a door, but discovered that there were no planks for the door, nor skin from which to cut thongs to tie up the grass. I had no idea where to find them. Once before, I had approached the chief, but he had harshly refused to sell me a skin. I nevertheless went to him again and offered to exchange, either a pickaxe, hatchet or a blanket for such a skin...<sup>340</sup>

The missionaries also made their presence felt by the introduction of western formal education and their introduction of western medication. Regarding education and medication, the local communities appeared to have enjoyed the benefits, and the missionaries had fewer stumbling blocs

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<sup>339</sup> Rev. Sack, Berliner Missionberichte, p. 1.

<sup>340</sup> Rev. Sack, Berliner Missionberichte, p. 1.

in these areas than with aspects of social customs such as circumcision, polygamy, *magadi* and so on.

As far as the introduction of formal European-type education was concerned, the missionaries developed some Black languages (and dialects) into written languages. In the Makgabeng area, the Hananwa and Kone dialects were developed and used in writing and they later joined the other Sotho dialects in the northern Transvaal to form a standardised, written Northern Sotho language. The missionaries initially taught Black children at mission stations and in churches, but later schools were built for the local communities. The Berlin missionaries who worked in the Blouberg-Makgabeng area imparted European-type education to their converts in various mission stations which mushroomed all over the area.

It was missionary Robert Franz's legacy in European-type education which continues to be felt in the Makgabeng area up to this day. Franz built a school in Bochum where he had moved to in 1908<sup>341</sup>. Most local residents including his loyal aide, Adolf Mamabolo, received European-type education under him. Mamabolo himself became a teacher. Simon Setumu, who was Franz's staunch supporter, was also his student who later spread the Gospel all over the Makgabeng area, operating from his Bays Water village

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<sup>341</sup> M. Jackel, *Gananoa*, p. 22.

base on the south-western side of the Makgabeng mountain<sup>342</sup>. One of missionary Robert Franz's sons, Gottfried Henreich, became a prominent academic around the Makgabeng area. He was a teacher, a school inspector and even authored few books, some of them in Northern Sotho, such as *Maaberone*<sup>343</sup>. Today, a secondary school is standing at Uitkyk in the Makgabeng area, named G. H. Franz, after this academic from the Franz family.

The introduction of European-type, western education in the Makgabeng area by the missionaries undoubtedly changed identities in that area completely. Just like with Christianity, some communities and individuals embraced western education and they soon enjoyed it. New identities emerged as boys and girls, men and women became "learned". They became teachers and "mistresses", policemen and government administrative officials. Western education also facilitated and extended mobility and interaction between diverse communities. People travelled from far afield, criss-crossing vast areas in search of western education, which was by then limited to the mission stations. This movement of people resulted in movement of ideas which furthered identity changes.

It was in the field of medication that the missionary activities seemed helpful and acutely felt among the Black communities. But this does not mean that

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<sup>342</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25.

<sup>343</sup> Interview, Prof. Robert Franz, 20 July 2002, Senwabarwana (formerly Bochum).

Blacks did not excel in this field before the arrival of the missionaries. Blacks had extensive knowledge of medicines which they were using to treat different ailments long before the arrival of missionaries. The missionaries added to the Blacks' knowledge in the field of medicine as they brought new ideas in this area. Equally speaking, the missionaries' medical knowledge was expanded and enriched by the vast knowledge of Blacks in this field. Both sides enriched each other and communities benefited as a result.

Although all the missionaries who worked in the Blouberg-Makgabeng area from the second half of the nineteenth century brought cures of certain ailments among the local people, it was missionary Robert Franz and his wife, Helene, whose medical knowledge and skills left an indelible legacy in the field of medicine. The western health aspect appeared in the Makgabeng as early as the appearance of the first missionary in that area. The earliest missionaries brought with them their ways and methods in health issues as demonstrated by Sack who had, for instance, begun to dig a big well, "so that they [missionary and his family] would not be forced to use the contaminated drinking water from the fountain used by the heathen, which often caused illnesses"<sup>344</sup>. Although this appeared to be a hygienic consideration, it was actually a racist attitude of the missionaries as they did not want to share drinking sources with Black communities.

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<sup>344</sup> Rev. Sack, Berliner Missionberichte, p. 3.

The missionaries' importation of their western medical knowledge and skills were again demonstrated by missionary Christoph Sonntag, who gave General Piet Joubert, the commander of the ZAR forces against the Bahananwa, a treatment on spider bite<sup>345</sup>. It was during the height of the 1894 Bahananwa-Boer war that Sonntag mostly applied his western medical skills. He did this by treating the wounded Boer soldiers<sup>346</sup> while no mention was ever made of him treating the wounded Bahananwa warriors. When Robert Franz replaced Christoph Sonntag as missionary in Leipzig in August 1897, the mission work in the entire Blouberg-Makgabeng shifted to hospital work. His wife, Helene, who had extensive medical knowledge, had already worked with the ill in Leshoane, at Houtbosberge, where Robert worked earlier<sup>347</sup>.

After seeing the commitment of the Franz family in the medical field, particularly Helene, the Transvaal government built a hospital in Bochum where patients received proper treatment<sup>348</sup>. The hospital later expanded in different specialised sections of leprosy, TB, etc. as the number of patients grew. Helene devoted herself particularly to the treatment of various

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<sup>345</sup> C. Sonntag, My Friend Malaboch, p. 47.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid, p. 77.

<sup>347</sup> M. Jackel, Gananoa, p. 21.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid, p. 21.

diseases, including Lues which infected most of the Black communities in the former Transvaal colony since 1882<sup>349</sup>.

Helene had brought some of the Black patients from Houtbosberge and settled them behind the mission station in Bochum. In addition to Lues, Helene tackled ailments such as leprosy, fractures, malaria, blood cancer, kidney pains, epilepsy, pneumonia, tuberculosis, periostitis and many other diseases which were prevalent in that area<sup>350</sup>. She performed her duties with diligence and courage and her contribution soon came to touch and cover the entire Blouberg-Makgabeng communities. The government also assisted the hospital, which was later named after Helene Franz, by periodically sending doctors from Pretoria and Pietersburg<sup>351</sup>.

The missionary activities of providing medication, particularly by the Franz family, impacted on the medical practice around the Blouberg-Makgabeng area. Until then, communities received medical help from the local herbalists, bone diviners and traditional medicine men and women. New medical identities emerged with new medical treatment by missionaries. Just like with the Gospel and western education, scores of people flocked to Bochum hospital for treatment of their ailments. Old identities of herbalists, bone diviners and traditional medicine men and women were then infiltrated

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<sup>349</sup> M. Jackel, Gananoa, p. 36.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, 36 – 40.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

by the new ones of the western doctors and nurses. However, even if these new medical identities emerged, the traditional ways of cure continued to be practised among the Makgabeng communities up until today.

## **CHAPTER                    6**

### **LAND AND THE FORMATION OF COMMUNAL IDENTITIES**

In Chapter 3, occupation of land in the Makgabeng area by different groups of the San, the Khoikhoi and the Bantu-speaking communities was discussed up to about the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. This chapter picks up the land

issue from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and examines land occupation and ownership until the arrival of Europeans in the Makgabeng area. Land has been a very important factor in shaping identities in the Makgabeng area. Firstly, as an environmental factor, the inhabitants of Makgabeng – since the earliest ones – had depended on land and all natural features on it for survival. The role of the environment – land in particular - in shaping identities is espoused by Asante-Darko, who identifies various connotations that the evocation of flora, fauna and the landscape, have in the determination of social, racial and socio-cultural identities.<sup>352</sup>

Secondly, in accordance with Castells' notion of the importance of "shared experience"<sup>353</sup> in identity creation, land played an important role in communal identity formation in the Makgabeng area as far back as the earliest occupants of that area. This happened when different communities settled on the same area and began to define themselves as belonging there. From the earliest occupants of the Makgabeng area, the San, the Khoikhoi, the Bantu speakers, the missionaries and the European colonial settlers, people defined themselves as part and parcel of the land they occupied. Their occupation of land also affected their social, cultural and political aspects which are said to be decisive in creation of identities<sup>354</sup>. In this chapter, changes which took place regarding land issues will be traced

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<sup>352</sup> K. Asante-Darko, "Ecocriticism and the poetics of multiple identities".

<sup>353</sup> M. Castells, "Globalisation, Identity...", p. 7.

<sup>354</sup> M. Castells, "Globalisation, Identity...", p. 5.

as far back as the earliest occupants of Makgabeng up until the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Land in Makgabeng before European arrivals**

Before the arrival of the Europeans in the Makgabeng area, land was successively occupied by the San, the Khoikhoi and the Bantu speaking communities. The San used land mainly as hunting grounds and gathering of wild foods, as well as for temporary settlement. The Khoikhoi, as herders, used land for grazing as well. The occupation of land by these two groups was not as extensive and permanent as that of the Bantu speakers who were in large numbers and kept large numbers of livestock. As a result, much focus will be on the Bantu-speaking communities than the San and the Khoikhoi when discussing land issues before the arrival of Europeans in the Makgabeng area.

As already shown in Chapter 3, the San mainly used land as hunting grounds for game as well as gathering veld foods. They had no fixed places of living as their occupation of land depended on the availability of their survival resources. Because of their nomadic and loose social structures, they were mostly vulnerable and were easily pushed out of their settlements by stronger groups such as the Bantu-speaking communities. Just like the San, the Khoikhoi moved from one place to the other, but the latter also moved in search of grazing for their livestock. Extensive San and Khoikhoi rock art paintings and archaeological materials throughout the Makgabeng area indicate the nomadic ways in which the San and the Khoikhoi occupied the land in that area<sup>355</sup>.

Because of their large numbers in a group and their organised socio-political structures, the Bantu-speaking communities in the Makgabeng area were able to occupy land on a more permanent basis than the San and the Khoikhoi. Although in some cases the Bantu-speakers interacted and co-existed with the San and the Khoikhoi, they sometimes pushed these nomadic groups into the periphery. Although it could be said that the Bantu-speaking communities settled permanently on land, there are however, interesting observations about their occupation and ownership of land. There were no fixed boundaries between various groups, even

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<sup>355</sup> E. B. Eastwood and J. van Schalkwyk, *The rock art of the Makgabeng Plateau*, p. 10.

between clearly distinguishable polities of Matlala and Malebogo<sup>356</sup>. There was absolutely no mark – natural or artificial – which indicated the end or the beginning of lands of various groups. Land was still so open and in abundance that there was little pressure on it, but instead, people and their allegiance to a particular polity was more important<sup>357</sup>.

With these unfixed frontiers between communities and polities, land was regarded as a shared resource in which people and livestock moved and used it freely. This freedom of movement could also be attributed to plenty of land space and availability of resources such as grazing and water, while people were still very few. This situation prevented competition for resources and as a result, conflicts among groups over land were very minimal if that ever happened at all<sup>358</sup>.

These conditions led to peaceful co-existence among local groups, and most importantly, led to the attraction and accommodation of groups from further afield. For instance, when the Bahananwa moved into the Blouberg-Makgabeng area from Botswana in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they found other Bantu-speaking groups with whom they came to live side by side.

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<sup>356</sup> Interview, John Tlameng Matlala, Ga Matlala, 23 December 2002.

<sup>357</sup> Interview, John Tlameng Matlala, Ga Matlala, 23 December 2002.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

These groups of the Batau of Madibana, the Taueatswala people, the Monyebodi people, as well as other smaller groups in the Makgabeng area, were so accommodative of the numerous and more powerful Bahananwa that they even voluntarily acknowledged them as their leaders<sup>359</sup>. They effectively became part of the Bahananwa empire, with their leaders as Kgoši Malebogo's headmen or indunas. Monyebodi, Taueatswala, Mapene, Manaka, Kobe and Madibana, were some of well-known headmen under the Bahananwa dynasty<sup>360</sup>. The free accommodation of the Bahananwa on land and the acknowledgement of their authority by the communities they found at around the Blouberg-Makgabeng area, meant that those communities accepted a new political identity, i.e., that of the Bahananwa authority. The new kind of political identity emerged as the smaller communities united under one roof of the Bahananwa polity. Those communities came to define themselves as the subjects of the Malebogo royal house. The old political identities of loose, small clans were now replaced by a more centralised authority led by the Bahananwa dynasty.

These traditional societies in Makgabeng put much focus on people and their relation and reaction to authority rather than fixing physical boundaries on land occupied by each group. Whereas every group could

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<sup>359</sup> Interview, Robert Manaka, Inveraan village, 29 December 2004.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

move freely everywhere in the entire Makgabeng area, and also graze and water livestock as far as possible, that was not an issue as compared to the political allegiance of those groups<sup>361</sup>. The importance of people more than anything else is summed up by a Northern Sotho proverb: "*Feta kgomo o sware motho*", which means that you can leave out resources such as cattle in pursuit of people.

Before the arrival of outside forces such European travellers and colonial settlers in the Makgabeng area, competition for resources such as land was not intense. This was because people were still very few, in which small clans lived in patches all over the Makgabeng area. Each group knew that it was ruled by either Kgoši Matlala or Kgoši Malebogo. However, the fluid, flexible, unfixed frontiers between polities enabled groups to switch political allegiances without tensions and hostilities. For instance, the Monyebodi people on the northern foot of the Makgabeng mountains are purely the Bakone, who should have been under Kgoši Matlala - as Matlala was the original royal house of the Bakone. However, the Monyebodi people (who actually broke away from Ga-Matlala under Kgoši Radira Monyebodi) voluntarily accepted the Bahananwa authority and they became important components of governance under Kgoši Malebogo<sup>362</sup>. This voluntary acceptance of the Bahananwa authority is according to the theoretical proposition which

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<sup>361</sup> Interview, Robert Manaka, Inveraan village, 29 December 2004.

<sup>362</sup> Interview, Sorrich Rakumako, Milbank village, 22 September 2003.

Castells refers to as organically grown (Castells 2000), as opposed to imposed identity creation.

Because these traditional societies put more emphasis on people than on land and its resources, land became only important as a form of exchange for political allegiance. In other words, land was used only as a means of attracting the valuable assets: people. Because the chief held land in trust for all the groups which owed allegiance to him, he could allocate land for settlement for a particular group in exchange of acknowledgement of his authority. The chief also had the prerogative to allocate land to be used for cultivation. The question of allegiance far outweighed the other uses of land which that particular group could derive. The authorities became more interested in land only after its occupation by a particular group of people, as that affected the question of power and allegiance. When communities of a particular polity expanded and moved further afield, the land which they had covered was automatically regarded as belonging to the chief which those communities fall under<sup>363</sup>.

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<sup>363</sup> Interview, Sorrich Rakumako, Milbank village, 22 September 2003.

The expansion and settlement of communities on land was done with the blessing of the chief concerned (not grazing, watering and movement). Settlement and building of homesteads, as well as cultivation on a particular area should be permitted by the chief, otherwise that was regarded as the breach of political allegiance. Invasion of land for settlement and secession from another chief were viewed in a serious light and represented defiance of chiefly authority. Those were usually punishable offences. For instance, towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Rakodi, one of Kgoši Matlala's sons went to settle on the south-eastern foot of the Makgabeng mountains, his father attacked him and killed him and most of his followers<sup>364</sup>. It is interesting to note that Kgoši Matlala only became interested in the whole matter only when his son went to occupy land somewhere on the foot of the Makgabeng mountains. That piece of land to him was less significant until his son settled there, an issue which affected his son's allegiance to his authority. To the communities of the Makgabeng area who were still few, land therefore symbolised political identity than it being an economic resource. It was only later with the population explosion and the arrival of other groups – particularly the Europeans - that land became increasingly scarce and competition for it heightened, hence conflicts erupted.

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<sup>364</sup> Transvaal Department of Native Affairs, Short History of the Transvaal, p. 41.

Although land was used for political patronage, its general use as a natural resource was open for all, and it was this accommodative nature and the unfixed frontiers on land which were later exploited by the Europeans who came to claim land as their private possession. It was the Europeans who introduced private landownership, whereby tracts of land were surveyed, fenced and then put on sale – something which was new to areas such as Makgabeng. The Makgabeng communities occupied land in clusters of clans which were called “*dikgoro*”. Each clustered clan settlement was made of closely related families<sup>365</sup>. All these clans<sup>366</sup> communally shared land which was held by the chief in their trust, and they had a headman who was their political link to the chief.

The fact that the communities in Makgabeng did not have fixed pieces of land which they owned, and the fact that local inhabitants were accommodative to incoming groups, led to the early Europeans to take advantage of the situation and took land which they later claimed as theirs. This was later consolidated by the dispossession of land by the more systematic European colonial expansion. Later tensions and conflicts between the Makgabeng communities and the intruding settlers, the Boers in particular, were mainly around land occupation and

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<sup>365</sup> Interview, Headman Phukubje, Lehwaneng village, 17 September 2003.

<sup>366</sup> In the Makgabeng area there were the Ngwepe clan, Mojela clan, Setumu clan, Monyebodi clan, Ramoroka clan, Seanego clan and Phukubje clan.

ownership, and land's related resources such as grazing and water. These tensions and conflicts culminated into a full scale war in 1894. After this war, the ZAR Boers claimed the whole land in the Transvaal – including the Makgabeng area – by virtue of conquest. The ZAR government pushed Black communities out of their original residential areas – especially from mountain strongholds and fertile grounds – and cramped them on designated locations which were usually less fertile<sup>367</sup>. As a result, the people lost their identity of associating with their occupied area such as the mountains which were their valuable strategic assets. They were now given new locations in which they were fenced in like animals.

## **The first European appearances on the Makgabeng land**

The first Europeans to move into the Makgabeng area were travellers, hunters, explorers and traders who were not interested in permanently occupying land in that area. They only travelled, hunted, explored, traded and passed. However, their observations of the local conditions and resources (land in particular) should have influenced later interest in the area by their fellows who favoured permanent settlement. The

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<sup>367</sup> C. Sonntag, My friend Maleboch, p. 127.

subsequent groups which became interested and involved in land occupation matters were the missionaries. The missionaries needed land to settle, where they could build their homes, churches, cultivate, keep and graze the livestock which they acquired in some means from local communities. This was because of the nature of their job dictated that they settle next to the communities they worked for longer periods than the earlier travellers, hunters, explorers and traders.

Usually, the chief would voluntarily allocate a piece of land for the missionary to settle, and the missionary would normally reciprocate that generosity with gifts to the chief. In some instances, the missionaries, with their Eurocentric worldview, would later claim that piece of land as his privately owned property or that of his missionary society, while on the other hand, the chief knew nothing of land being owned privately. As a result of that misunderstanding, conflicts often erupted between chiefs and the missionaries as will be illustrated below.

When missionaries Beyer and Trumplemann established the Leipzig (1868) and Makgabeng (1870) stations respectively, they requested permission from the respective rulers, Matsiokwane and Monyebodi to do so. No land transactions whatsoever, at least from the perspective of the

Black communities, were entered into<sup>368</sup>. The only issues which were involved were gifts from the missionaries in accordance with the Bagananwa custom of “*go lotšha kgoši*” (the greeting or the paying of respect)<sup>369</sup>. Matsiokwane and Monyebodi reciprocated such gestures (gifts) of acceptance of authority by allowing missionaries to use, not to own, a pieces of land. Apparently, the missionaries translated that hospitality into the granting of landownership and mineral rights, according to their Eurocentric worldview.

When Rev. Stech took over from Rev. Beyer in Leipzig station 1874, he insisted on the Berlin Missionary Society’s landownership and mineral rights on the piece of land he had been allocated. He even granted concessions to land prospectors to survey Leipzig area for minerals in 1890<sup>370</sup>. This brought him into disrepute after the matter became known to Kgoši Ratšhatšha (Kgaluši/Seketa), who then expelled him from Blouberg in 1892<sup>371</sup>. After expelling missionary Stech, Kgoši Ratšhatšha’s attitude towards missionaries changed from compromising to cautions and often negative one. As a result, when Rev. Herbst came

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<sup>368</sup> T. J. Makhura, *Bagananwa Polity...*, p. 144.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid*, p. 144.

<sup>370</sup> T. J. Makhura, *Bagananwa Polity...*, p. 145.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid*, p. 145.

to Leipzig to replace Stech, he was immediately forced to leave the area<sup>372</sup>.

When Rev. Sonntag took over Leipzig in 1892, Kgoši Ratšhatšha refused the missionary's gifts, saying "if I should accept this gift, it will be said: 'now the new teacher has bought the land' "<sup>373</sup>. Sonntag was very careful not to alienate the chief by insisting on landownership and admitted that "[w]hilst the land on which the station stood did legally belong to the Mission Society, it would be unwise to mention this fact. To insist on our right of ownership would lead us nowhere..."<sup>374</sup>. The identification with land by the European missionaries and the Black communities of Makgabeng differed sharply and that inevitably led to conflicts. With the coming together of these two different methods/tenure of landownership, new identities, were created in that new ideas on land occupation, use and ownership were formulated. The Europeans' private occupation of land created new identities in which people could privately own land. This newly created identity of individual landowners was until then unheard of in the Makgabeng area. Land was communally shared by the people, while it was also held in trust by either Kgoši Malebogo or Kgoši Matlala. Although the missionaries brought new ideas of landownership, in which

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid, p. 145.

<sup>373</sup> C. Sonntag, My friend Maleboch, p. 38.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid, p. 42.

they knew of land being privately owned, it was the Boer and the British settlers who later came to forcibly impose such foreign ideas. For the local inhabitants, it was strange for people to demarcate land into pieces which they claimed and owned individually.

When the Voortrekkers moved away from the Cape in the 1830s, one of their main objectives was to find their own land independent from the British authority. Their dream came true in the mid-1800s when their independence was recognised by the British in the Sand River and Bloemfontein Conventions. The former convention of 1852 established the Transvaal (South African Republic or ZAR). The Voortrekkers used various methods to acquire land from Black communities. Such methods ranged between negotiations and annexation. But after defeating the Matebele, they saw themselves as having acquired by conquest the succession to Mzilikazi's entire whole empire which they construed in the largest terms as embracing everything between the Vaal and Limpopo rivers, and between the Kalahari desert and the Drakensberg escarpment<sup>375</sup>. They claimed to have liberated all the Black communities from the Matebele oppression and to be justified in treating them as vassals. However, the Black communities saw things differently as some of them had never been effectively ruled by Mzilikazi. As a result, by the Sand River Convention and the formal establishment of the ZAR Boer

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<sup>375</sup> D. Phillip, A History of South Africa to 1870, p. 438.

state, the entire land referred to above was under the ZAR government, even if most polities were still independent while some of them were not even aware of the claims of the new Boer state. It was just a matter of time before these independent Black polities could feel the impact of the ZAR state when it gradually tried to consolidate its authority, especially by land acquisition.

Until the latter half of the 1860s, the authority and control of the ZAR over the Black population of the Transvaal was extremely devolved. The forms of exaction and administration were shaped as much and probably more by local exigencies and possibilities as they were by state policy, and local officials and notables retained considerable autonomy of central direction. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, however, while the authority and unity of the ZAR remained far from secure, some attempts were made to enforce a more centralised control over the state's domain. After weathering initial crises of secession and civil war, the ZAR state was better placed to deal with Black issues such as raising revenue among them, labour supply and land occupation.

One of the ZAR state's problems which impacted on land was the shortage of revenue. The fledgling state, unable to finance military expeditions or the barest essentials of civil administration, used land as

the basis of a number of financial manipulations. From as early as 1857, *mandaaten* (treasury or exchequer bills) were issued for services to the state, while no legal tenders were secured by government farms<sup>376</sup>. From 1865 onwards, partly in order to recall these *mandaaten*, a number of issues of paper currency were made, secured each time by government land, and each time inadequate to meet the state's need for revenue or to redeem the *mandaaten*<sup>377</sup>. These notes circulated at well below the face value, and many traders refused to accept them at all<sup>378</sup>. In consequence, bartering remained the dominant form of exchange in the ZAR.

In 1867 the Boer state was confronted by a major financial crisis, partly as a result of the upheavals and campaigns against the powerful Venda of Khosi Makhado in the Zoutpansberg district. The financial crisis was further worsened by the defeat of the Boers by the Venda of Makhado and their retreat from Zoutpanberg. Yet more notes were issued during this financial crisis. In 1868, the finance commission recommended that an issue of £45,000 should be made, secured against 1 000 farms or approximately 3 million morgen of land<sup>379</sup>. The total farm pledge against

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<sup>376</sup> P. Delius, The Land Belongs To Us, p. 148.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid, p. 148.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid, p. 149.

<sup>379</sup> P. Delius, The Land Belongs To Us, p. 148.

paper money reached 1 431 and these farms were to be sold periodically at an “upset” price of £100<sup>380</sup>. These measures increased the pressure to secure title to land in the ZAR and played part in the large landholdings amassed by individuals and companies in the early 1870s.

With such financial and administrative difficulties facing the ZAR, the state found itself granting more and more land to White individuals and companies. In the Makgabeng area, most of the farms were granted from the early 1870s. The demarcation of land during this granting process was not done with standardised measuring procedures. It is alleged that a trip on a horseback was made in all directions from one centre, and an hour marked the end of one farm where pegs would be placed as a boundary with the next farms<sup>381</sup>. The farms in Makgabeng were later properly and officially surveyed after the South African War. As far as granting of land was concerned, the following were Makgabeng farms (in alphabetic order) which were originally granted (in this list the name of the farm is followed by the date on which they were granted, as well as the deed of grant numbers):<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid, p. 148.

<sup>381</sup> Interview, Mr. Neville Field, Deeds Office, Pretoria, 18 May 2003.

<sup>382</sup> Form A: Diagram Forms for an Original Farm Survey, Surveyor General Office.

1. Baranen was originally granted to J.H. Smit on 27 February 1871, Deed of Grant no. 7109.
2. Bayswater was originally granted to G.P.Pretorius on 27 March 1871, Deed of Grant no. 7583.
3. Bonna Esperance was originally granted to L.C.J. Van Vuuren on 17 April 1871, Deed of Grant no. 7699.
4. Cracow was originally granted to A.W. Pretorius on 16 January 1871, Deed of Grant no. 6769.
5. De la Roche was originally granted to R.P. Van Wyk on 17 April 1871, Deed of Grant no. 7688.
6. Disseldorp was originally granted to J.L.C. Erasmus on 16 January 1871, Deed of Grant no. 6767.
7. Early Dawn was originally granted to S.J. Bronkorhorst on 27 March 1871, Deed of Grant no. 7577.
8. Gemarke was originally granted to J.J. Viljoen on 19 April 1871, Deed of Grant no. 7465.
9. Goedetrouw was originally granted to C.J.P. Roetz on 27 March 1871, Deed of Grant no 7581.
10. Groenepunt was originally granted to C.F.J. Strydom on 27 March 1871, Deed of Grant no. 7579.
11. Harrietswish was originally granted to G.P. Pretorius on 27 March 1871, Deed of Grant no. 7587.
12. Ketting was originally granted to G.P. Opperman on 16 January 1871, Deed of Grant no. 6771.
13. Langbryde was originally granted to P.A.H. Strydom on 12 August 1872, Deed of Grant on.1579.

14. Lomonside was originally granted to Oceana Land Co.Ltd. in June 1892, Deed of grant no .1583.
15. Millbank was originally granted to Oceana Land Co. Ltd. On June 1892, Deed of Grant no. 1584.
16. Millstream was originally granted to H.J. Botha On 27 March 1871, Deed of Grant no. 7576.
17. Normandy was originally granted to D.J. Erusmus on 17 April 1871, Deed of Grant no. 7695.
18. Old Lansyne was originally granted to M.J. Berkker on 27 March 1871, Deed of Grant no. 7575.
19. Rosamond was originally granted to W.J. Campher on 27 March 1871, Deed of Grant no. 7579.
20. Schoongezicht was originally granted to The Government, no date, no Deed of Grant Number.
21. Too Late was originally granted to J.A. Smith on 27 March 1871, Deed of Grant no. 7580.
22. Uitkyk was originally granted to J. Hamilton on 30 January 1871, Deed of Grant no. 6806.

All these farms around the Makgabeng area were granted to the Europeans and their companies, with the apparent exclusion of the Blacks. This was because the ZAR government was formed by the Boers, who were mostly of Dutch origin, and Blacks, who were residing on those farms, were merely regarded as subjects. The ZAR government

therefore granted these farms to these European owners with all the Black communities on them regarded as part of land - like trees and animals found on that land. These new European landowners as a result, inherited these farms together with these communities as their properties.

Blacks were barred by the ZAR policy from holding title to the land in their own right<sup>383</sup> while individual tenure was also denied by law to them. It can also be noted that fewer companies were granted these farms as compared to many individuals who received the grants. The impact and presence of the new owners who were granted the farms was not immediately felt by the local inhabitants as most of the owners lived far from their newly acquired farms. The local Makgabeng inhabitants still identified with their traditional rulers, although the gradual encroachment of the White colonialists was gaining momentum.

The new land policies of the ZAR government represented the notion of imposed identity creation in the Makgabeng area. The imposed identity creation is the opposite of spontaneous identity (which Castells [2000] refers to as having grown organically). Usually, identities are imposed by dominant social actors, such as national states, which often use their

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<sup>383</sup> P. Delius, The Land Belongs To Us, p. 152.

power and influence to impose new identities<sup>384</sup>. The values of society are going to be the values that the state decides. In this case, the ZAR state used its power to impose its values of annexing land from its previous owners and granted it to the new European owners.

The granting of these farms, mostly from the 1870s, did not involve properly measuring methods. These farms in the Makgabeng area were only properly surveyed after the South African War, almost all of them in the year 1906<sup>385</sup>. During that war most of the Blacks had fought on the side of the British in the expectation that a British victory would bring political and economic advancement for them<sup>386</sup>. Most of them even re-occupied the lands which the Boers had taken from them. However, their hopes were dashed after the war when the British moved closer to the Boers, excluding them from the new White-only political dispensation. The war had caused too much disruption and as a result, the former Boer republics and the British colonies still had to be reconstructed. The British and the Boers who were in a process of uniting, regarded the “native question” as a common problem which required immediate attention<sup>387</sup>.

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<sup>384</sup> J. Muller et al, Challenges of Globalisation, p. 116.

<sup>385</sup> Form A: Diagram Forms for an Original Farm Survey, Surveyor General Office.

<sup>386</sup> Report by the South African Native Affairs Commission, p.1.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

The fate of Blacks, which was a common challenge for both White groups, thus united those European-originated groups.

The Blacks were still scattered by the war and one of the pressing problems about them was around land occupation and ownership. It was during this period that it can be deduced that Blacks suffered identity crisis because they were confused because of land dispossession. The White authorities were in a process of formulating land policies which would eventually leave small patches of land – known as reserves – for Blacks.

## **Land in Makgabeng after 1900**

The replacement of the Boer republican government by the British in the Transvaal after the South African War, implied both a change in policies as well as structures of the administrative systems. The question of the administration of Blacks had from the outset been problematic to the ZAR government as it had never been easy for it to establish its authority over most of the independent polities. It often took serious armed confrontations to subdue polities but even after they were defeated, some of these communities continued to resist and defy Boer authorities. Therefore, the new British colonial government which was established after the Treaty of Vereeniging in 1902, inherited a system in which the

Boers had never been able to administer the Blacks in an effective way, something that was compounded by the scattering of Blacks by the war itself<sup>388</sup>.

To show that the new British colonial government viewed the Blacks as a challenge, a specific institution was put in place in 1902 which was to deal specifically with Black issues, the Native Affairs Department. The first Commissioner for Native Affairs in the Transvaal was Sir Godfrey Lagden<sup>389</sup>. For the purpose of effective administration of Blacks, the Native Affairs Department deployed district commissioners, commissioners and sub-commissioners in the five districts (divisions) of the Transvaal, viz., Eastern, Northern (Zoutpansberg), North Western and Central. The occupation and ownership of land by Blacks were some of the major challenges which faced the new British colonial administration in the whole of the Transvaal, including the Makgabeng area. This was because the Blacks who supported the British war effort, expected to be rewarded by at least being given back land which they had lost. However, this was not going to be as the British began to move closer to the Boers in a political process which resulted in the establishment of the White-only government, the Union of South Africa in 1910.

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<sup>388</sup> Report by the South African Native Affairs Commission, p.1.

<sup>389</sup> Report by the South African Native Affairs Commission, p. 1.

As a result of Black issues such as land, which faced the authorities as challenges, in September 1903, Lord Alfred Milner, the British High Commissioner in South Africa, appointed the inter-colonial commission – the South African Native Affairs Commission (SANAC) - in order to look into all matters concerning Blacks<sup>390</sup>. The SANAC was headed by Sir Godfrey Lagden, hence it is sometimes referred to as the Lagden Commission<sup>391</sup>. Land tenure by Blacks was one of the major terms of reference of this commission. In their submissions, the commissioners suggested that individual land tenure system be introduced for Blacks, while Blacks still practised their communal system in which everybody in the community shared grazing, water and cultivation of land. The commissioners further recommended that Blacks holding land individually should be assured permanent occupation subject to forfeiture for rebellion, treason and other offences, or failure to pay rent; squatting by Blacks should be restricted; certain restriction be made on purchase of land by Blacks; and that land belonging to Blacks should be vested in respective government trust<sup>392</sup>.

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<sup>390</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>391</sup> Report by the South African Native Affairs Commission, p. 1.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

The land reform process subsequent to the South African War as represented by the establishment of the SANAC, was the main instrument which destroyed the Black land occupation and ownership systems, replacing them with those of the White groups which were in power. This was the beginning of the end of the way the Blacks had communally occupied land, in which families formed clans which formed communal units, which in turn formed polities. These communal identities were to be radically changed, or actually dismantled, and replaced by those which were imposed by the new rulers, the British and the Boers, who moved closer to each other even though they had fought bitterly during the South African War.

Although there were scarce records on the occupation of land by Blacks, in exercising their mandate, the SANAC dug deep in order to find information with regard to the location of various polities and to the lands in their occupation. The commission even went as far back as 1836 in its attempt to find information on land tenure of Blacks. In its investigations, the commission found different forms of tenure by Blacks, viz., farm tenancy in which Blacks were tenants on farms occupied by Europeans as arranged with the owner; Crown Lands in which the Government, as land lord, was paid annual rent of one pound; Government Locations in which the location lands were held by Government in trust; land owned by Blacks in which the title of such property was vested in the

Commissioner for Native Affairs in trust for owners; private land which was mostly owned by large companies; and land which was owned by Blacks but held in trust by missionaries<sup>393</sup>.

When the South African Native Affairs Commission reported in 1905, it came out firmly in support of the principle of racial segregation, especially with regard to land occupation and ownership<sup>394</sup>. As already alluded to, the end of the South African War saw the expectations and aspirations of Blacks on land matters completely dashed. The war had made land more accessible to most Blacks, but in the following years this accessibility rapidly diminished as the White state intervened mostly to assist in the commercialisation of White farming. After the war, the Boers in former republics were given legal rights to lands and military assistance to reoccupy their farms.

White landowners then realised that the best return could be obtained by renting land to Black tenants. Alternatively, sharecropping became a common practice in which White farmers welcomed Black families with stock and equipment that could plough and share his crop with the farmer. Black tenants and sharecroppers were soon under pressure as

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<sup>393</sup> Report by the South African Native Affairs Commission, p. 15.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

the state intervened in the interests of White commercial farmers. In the Transvaal the 1908 Natives Tax Act imposed a £2 levy on rent-paying tenants; and in the northern Transvaal some of these tenants were removed from White farms by direct government action<sup>395</sup>. The White state was manifestly beginning to act against the independent Black peasantry in the interests of both White commercial farmer and the mining industry.

Another important intended goal of the SANAC was to find uniform approach to land matters in the former British colonies and the former Boer republics, in which those territories were able to deal among other things, with land issues. As already pointed out earlier, the demarcation and granting of land in areas such as Makgabeng, was not properly done. It was only after the SANAC report in 1905 that the farms were properly surveyed, in which accurate measurements and beacons were put in place.

The records from the Surveyor General Office indicate measurements of each farm in the Makgabeng area after they were surveyed, mostly in 1906 (after the SANAC report). These records show angles, co-ordinates

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<sup>395</sup> P. Maylam, A History of the African people of South Africa: From early iron age to the 1970s, p. 139.

as well as sizes of farms in morgens and square roods. There is also information about the district and the ward in which all the farms were situated. On the information of district and ward, all the Makgabeng farms were similar as they were respectively all under Zoutpansberg District and Mara Ward. Each farm was registered under a certain number either under LR, LS or any other division. These are the sizes of the Makgabeng farms and their registered numbers and divisions.<sup>396</sup>

1. Barenen No. 152 LS; Morgen: 2314; Square Roods: 327.
2. Bayswater No.370 LR; Morgen: 3070; Square Roods: 383.
3. Bonna Esperance No. 356 LR; Morgen: 2334; Square Roods 61.
4. Cracow No. 391 LR; Morgen: 2716; Square Roods: 353.
5. De La Roche No. 353 LR; Morgen: 2321; Square Roods: 122.
6. Disseldorp No. 369 LR; Morgen: 3308; Square Roods: 116.
7. Early Dawn No. 361 LR; Morgen: 3522; Square Roods: 413.
8. Gemarke No. 149 LR; Morgen:1762 ; Square Roods: 26.
9. Goedetrouw No. 366 LS; Morgen: 1876; Square Roods: 551.
10. Groenepunt No. 354 LR; Morgen: 1514; Square Roods: 62.
11. Harrietswish No. 393 LR; Morgen: 2740; Square Roods: 165.
12. Ketting No. 368 LR; Morgen: 2196; Square Roods: 424.
13. Langbryde No. 324 LR; Morgen: 1815; Square Roods: 65.
14. Lomonside No. 323 LR; Morgen: 2364; Square Roods: 188.
15. Millbank No. 325 LR; Morgen: 2680; Square Roods: 238.
16. Millstream No. 358 LR; Morgen: 2738; Square Roods: 184.
17. Normandy No.312 LR; Morgen: 3421; Square Roods: 439.

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<sup>396</sup> Form A: Diagram Forms for an Original Farm Survey, Surveyor General Office.

18. Old Langsyne No. 360 LR; Morgen: 3016; Square Roods: 339.
19. Rosamond No. 357 LR; Morgen: 3054; Square Roods: 532.
20. Schoongezicht No. 362 LR; Morgen: 1251; Square Roods: 579.
21. Too Late No. 359 LR; Morgen: 2906; Square Roods: 521.
22. Uitkyk No. 394 LR; Morgen: 3803; Square Roods 590.

The survey, measuring and fencing of land in the Makgabeng area into the above-mentioned farms, represented the destruction of one of the most important identity of the people in that area, viz., communal identity. Clans had settled communally in their own patterns of families in which those groups of clans constituted the subjects of either Kgoši Matlala or Kgoši Malebogo. The ZAR imposed new political identities in which the Makgabeng people found themselves within a “district” (Zoutpansberg) and a “ward” (Mara). The old political identities of belonging to Matlala or Malebogo were to be coercively replaced by the new ZAR values and concepts.

The process of surveying the farms was done by the Government Land Surveyors. On their records, the surveyors indicated that they surveyed every farm after giving due notice to all adjoining landowners and that the beacons were properly erected according to the law. Apparently, almost all the farms in Makgabeng, by the time they were surveyed in 1906, they

were no longer belonging to their original owners. For instance, on the column which indicates, “surveyed on behalf of...,” the incumbent owner was different from the one to whom the farm was originally granted in the 1870s. Below are the farms in the Makgabeng area with names of their surveyors, the owners on whose behalf the surveys were made, and the dates of the surveys:<sup>397</sup>

1. Barenen was surveyed by R.E. Antrobus on behalf of Balkis Land Maatschappy Bpk in April 1906.
2. Bayswater was surveyed by R.E. Antrobus on behalf of Transvaal Consolidated Land & Exploration Co. Ltd in April 1906.
3. Bonna Esperance was surveyed by H.J. Grobler on behalf of Transvaal. Estates & Development Co. Ltd in February 1906.
4. Cracow was surveyed by R.E. Antrobus on behalf of D.C.de Waal in April 1906
5. De la Roche was surveyed by H.J. Grobler and P. Fletcher on behalf of Transvaal Estates & Development Co. Ltd in February 1906
6. Disseldorp was surveyed by R.E. Antrobus on behalf of D.C.de Waal in April 1906.
7. Early Dawn was surveyed by R.E. Antrobus and J.T. Milligan on behalf of E.F. Bourke in April 1906.
8. Gemarke was surveyed by R.E. Antrobus on behalf of Transvaal Consolidated Land & Exploration Co. Ltd in March 1908.

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<sup>397</sup> Form A: Diagram Forms for an Original Farm Survey, Surveyor General Office.

9. Goedetrouw was surveyed by R.E. Antrobus on behalf of Transvaal. Consolidated Land & Exploration Co. Ltd in April 1906.
10. Groenepunt was surveyed by H.J. Grobler on behalf of Transvaal Consolidated Land & Exploration Co. Ltd in February 1906.
11. Harrietswish was surveyed by R.E. Antrobus on behalf of E.F.Bourke in April 1906.
12. Ketting was surveyed by R.E.Antrobus on behalf of D.C.de Waal in April 1906.
13. Langbryde was surveyed by R.E. Antrobus on behalf of Transvaal. Consolidated Land & Exploration Co. Ltd in April 1906.
14. Lomonside was surveyed by "De Inspecteuren" on behalf of Oceana Consolidated Co. Ltd in June 1892.
15. Millbank was surveyed by "De Inspecteuren" on behalf of Oceana Consolidated. Co. Ltd in June 1892.
16. Millstream was surveyed by B.E. Antrobus on behalf of E.F. Bourke in April 1906.
17. Normandy was surveyed by H.J. Grobler and P. Fletcher on behalf of Transvaal Estates & Development Co. Ltd in January 1906.
18. Old Lansyne was surveyed by R.E. Antrobus and J.T. Milligan on behalf of E.F. Bourke in April 1906.

19. Rosamond was surveyed by R.E. Antrobus on behalf of Transvaal Consolidated Land & Exploration Co. Ltd in April 1906.
20. Schoongezicht was surveyed by R.E. Antrobus on behalf of The Government in April 1906.
21. Too Late was surveyed by R.E. Antrobus on behalf of the Transvaal Consolidated Land & Exploration Co. Ltd in April 1906.
22. Uitkyk was surveyed by R.E. Antrobus on behalf of E. Oates in April 1906.

The significance of all these developments was that in addition to imposing their values by displacing the original Makgabeng communities from land, that area was gradually adopting a European identity. The land was surveyed and demarcated into sold units according to European standards, and those units – the farms – had been granted to European owners. This European identity was further entrenched by the names given to those units. Traditional names took a back seat as European names came to be used to identify those farms. Indigenous place names in Makgabeng such as Ga Ngwepe, Ga Sankobela and Ga Monyebodi were then marginalised and were overshadowed by new European ones such as Early Dawn, Baranen, Kirtenspruit and Goedetrouw.

After the survey of all the Makgabeng farms mostly in 1906, the diagrams of those farms were taken to the Examiner of Diagrams in the Surveyor General office in Pretoria. The diagram of each farm was given a number and after examining each diagram and ensuring that everything was right, the Examiner of Diagrams would put a date and signature with these words: “The numerical data of this Diagram are sufficiently consistent”<sup>398</sup>. Almost all the Makgabeng farms were signed by the Examiner of Diagrams in 1907 as they were surveyed in 1906<sup>399</sup>. After passing from the hands of the Examiner of Diagrams, information on those farms was then published in the Government Gazette to confirm the legality of all the processes followed on those pieces of land. The Surveyor General concluded all the formalities by signing each diagram. Most of the Makgabeng farms were signed by the Surveyor General in 1908<sup>400</sup>.

An interesting observation next to the signature of the Surveyor General is the line: “No protest confirmed”<sup>401</sup>. In other words, there were no protests during the survey of those farms. This is hard to believe given the number of Black communities which were negatively affected by the

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<sup>398</sup> Form A: Diagram Forms for an Original Farm Survey, Surveyor General Office.

<sup>399</sup> Form A: Diagram Forms for an Original Farm Survey, Surveyor General Office.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

new developments on their land. Apparently, this confirmation only referred to the absence of the protest by White owners who were originally granted those farms. Apparently, the White authorities only expected protest from the White owners, not the Black communities who were totally ignored when surveying, granting and implementing whatever they planned on the Makgabeng lands. After all, protest by Blacks was ruthlessly repressed.

To legislate the findings of the SANAC on Black land issues, the Natives Land Act of 1913 (Act no. 27) was passed. It was meant “to make further provision as to the purchase and leasing of land by Natives and other persons in the several parts of the Union and for the other purposes in connection with the ownership and occupation of land by Natives and other persons”<sup>402</sup>. One of the major provisions of this Act was the transfer of large tracts of land into the White owners’ hands. All the farms in the Makgabeng area were transferred into the Pietersburg District. And again, all those farms were given new numbers<sup>403</sup> under which they were transferred<sup>404</sup>.

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<sup>402</sup> The Natives Land Act of 1913 (Act no. 27), Section 1.

<sup>403</sup> Barenen	1013.
Bayswater	1091.
Bonna Esperance	1088.
Cracow	993.

The passing of the 1913 Natives Land Act marked the forceful state intervention in occupation and ownership of land in South Africa. By this Act, the White-only Union government intervened to severely limit the access of Blacks to land. The Act laid down the Black reserves while prohibiting Blacks from buying or leasing land outside these reserves. The Act also sought to eliminate sharecropping in favour of labour tenancy. If African peasantry was not destroyed by the Act, it was certainly stifled by it. Land would now be more inaccessible by Blacks.

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De La Roche	1087.
Disseldorp	1090.
Early Dawn	996.
Germarke	1012.
Goedetrouw	990.
Groenepunt	1092.
Harrietswish	991.
Ketting	994.
Langbryde	1064.
Lomanside	1063.
Millbank	1066.
Millstream	995.
Normandy	1081.
Old Langsyne	1014.
Rosamond	1089.
Schoongezicht	997.
Too Late	1015.
Uitkyk	988.

<sup>404</sup> Form A: Diagram Forms for an Original Farm Survey, Surveyor General Office.

Opportunities for purchasing land were seriously curtailed. Furthermore, a large number of Black tenants were evicted from the now White- owned farms.

Following the passing of the 1913 Natives Land Act, most Black people were actually removed from the original areas of residence in the Makgabeng area. This was because of the fact that much of the land was in the hands of White private owners, White farmers and large White companies. All these new owners used land for business purpose as they bought and sold it. The companies also prospected mineral resources on those farms. These new owners followed the provisions of the new laws by simply evicting the original Black inhabitants from their newly-acquired farms. Around the Makgabeng area, many cases of the removal of Blacks from their land began to emerge mostly around 1919.

The procedure was that the new White owner who was granted a farm, would apply to the Native Affairs Department at the sub-region – in this case of Makgabeng the sub-region was Blaauwberg (Blouberg) - in which that sub-regional office would correspond with the regional office in Pietersburg about the new owner's request for the proposed removal of the said Blacks. The Sub-Native Commissioner in Pietersburg would then reply, usually granting permission for those "natives" to be removed.

Here are few examples of the correspondences between the clerks of the Blaauwberg Native Affairs Department on behalf of the new owners to the Sub-Native Commissioner in Pietersburg regarding eviction of Blacks from land:<sup>405</sup>

1. “ May the consent of His Excellency the Governor General be obtained please for the removal of the native B: 54/68 Tugeshi Philemon from the farm Early Dawn 996 the property of the Bourke Trust...”
2. “ May the consent of His Excellency the Governor General be obtained for the removal of the native B: 50/64 Sekati Molokomme, B: 54/86 Tapedi Malhabe, B: 54/16 Kapedi Pulutje and Matume Pelayne from the farm Goedetrouw 996 the property of the Tvl . Con. Lands...”
3. “ May the consent of His Excellency the Governor General be obtained please for the removal of the native B: 54/71 Moloeshi Situma and B: 54/70 Khantshi Ngoepe from the farm Early Dawn 996 the property of the Bourke Trust...”
4. “May the consent of His Excellency the Governor General be obtained please for the removal of the native

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<sup>405</sup> Volume 512 NAC6/ 04, Part 7, Secretary of Native Affairs. Correspondence with Sub- Native Commissioner’s office with that of Resident Magistrate.

B: 54/98 Taletje Ngoepe from the farm Millstream 995 the property of the Bourke Trust...”

5. “ May the consent of His Excellency the Governor General be obtained please for the removal of the native B: 66/30 Kgrepe Ngoepe from the farm Welgelegen 978 the property of the Tvl. Con. Lands...”

All these applications for the removal of Blacks from now White-owned land were made on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 1919 to the Sub-Native Commissioner in Pietersburg by the Clerk in Blaauwberg on behalf of the new owners. The Pietersburg Sub-Native Commissioner then wrote to the Native Affairs Department in Pretoria, addressing it to: “The Secretary For Native Affairs, Union Buildings”. In that correspondence, the Sub-Native Commissioner attached applications from the Blaauwberg clerk. At the end, the Pietersburg Sub-Native Commissioner recommended<sup>406</sup> the removal of those “natives”<sup>407</sup>.

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<sup>406</sup> “The attached application for the removal of Natives B: 66/30 Kgeredi Ngoepe B: 27/16 Mathopa B: 54/68 Tugeshe Philimon B: 16/72 Kiunana Raseratana B: 54/98 Taletje Ngoepe B: 26/2 Peaha Madiboho B: 54/71 Motoeshi Situme B: 54/70 Khanedi Ngoepe B: 54/96 Tapedi Malhabi B: 50/64 Sekati Molokome B: 54/16 Kapedi Pulushi, Matume Pelayne B: 12/41 Modesha Lapela B:12/90 Motato Lapela B: 12/33 Rasefitela Molapo B: 23/101 Moloko Masilo B: 13/26 Mapepa Kwenabaholo, received from the Detached Clerk i/e Native Affairs Department Blaauwberg is forwarded and recommended...”

<sup>407</sup> Volume 512 NAC6/ 04, Part 7, Secretary of Native Affairs. Correspondence with Sub- Native Commissioner’s office with that of Resident Magistrate.

The removals of Blacks from land all over the country following the 1913 Natives Land Act, brought hardships, poverty and destitute among the affected communities. With the law on their side, the new White landowners evicted Black communities who effectively became landless. There were various excuses forwarded for the eviction of these Blacks from their lands and most of them were merely fabricated pretexts. At the end of each application for eviction was provision for: "Reasons for removal" and reasons given for the above-mentioned evictions included "going to live nearer his church"; and "joining relatives"; and "farms adjoining and same owners"<sup>408</sup>.

The provision of the White-only Union government policies - including eviction of Blacks from land - changed socio-political identities in the Makgabeng area. Communities which were stable under their traditional, tribal rulers who held land in trust for every member, were disrupted by the new arrangements. Land which was traditionally free for everyone to use, was then taken over by White individual owners, farmers and big companies. Most of the Makgabeng communities found themselves landless overnight and this loss of their resources, led to most of them to face poverty, destitution and servitude. Individual and private ownership of land further changed identities in Makgabeng as it destroyed the

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<sup>408</sup> Volume 512 NAC6/ 04, Part 7, Secretary of Native Affairs. Correspondence with Sub- Native Commissioner's office with that of Resident Magistrate.

traditional communal tenure in which communities used to share land equally. Communal identity was dealt a severe blow in the Makgabeng area. The communal settlement patterns of families and clans were disrupted and were replaced by fenced farms which each of them became an entity.

However, that was not the final end of communal identity which proved to be resilient. The resilience of this kind of identity was because it was part of the Blacks' traditional way of life. Blacks were not used to living individually on separate pieces of land. As a result, later the farms in the Makgabeng area were transferred to other owners who sold them towards the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This they did by regrouping and collecting funds among themselves from the 1930s and 1940s. They then revived their traditional communal ownership of land, although that followed a new pattern which would be discussed later.

In addition to causing the loss of land by most Blacks in the Makgabeng area, the new laws on land by White rulers also provided for the application of grazing and residential rights by those people who completely lost their land. Because their land was dispossessed, Blacks found themselves having to apply to reside and graze their remaining livestock. The following correspondence is an example of an "Application

for Residential and Grazing Rights on the farm 'Old Langsine' No. 1014:  
District of PIETERSBURG<sup>409</sup>:

On behalf of Makoena Seanego and Koena Peaha the Native Affairs division in Bochum (Blaauwberg) applied to move from the farms Devilliersdale and De la Roche, the properties of the Transvaal Estate Company Limited, to the farm Old Langsyne, the property of Bourke Trust & Estate Company Limited. This was granted at the rate of £2 and additional grazing fees of 3/- per year per head of large stock and 6d per head of small sock<sup>410</sup>.

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<sup>409</sup> "Applications on behalf of Natives Makoena Seanego and Koena Peaha to move from the farms 'De Villiersdale' and 'De la Roche', the properties of the Transvaal Estates & Development Company Limited, in the Pietersburg District, to the farm 'Old Lansyne' No. 1014, the property of the Bourke Trust & Estate Company Limited, in the District of Pietersberg, are forwarded for the favour of approval on the following terms:

1. Agent's consent attached.
2. On rent paying terms at the rate of £2 sterling per annum including one wife, £1 sterling per annum for additional wife or window and grazing fees per annum of 3/- per head of large and 6d per head of small stock.
3. Commencement of Lease to take effect from 20<sup>th</sup> September 1928 and the tenancy to terminate on the 30<sup>th</sup> June of each year.
4. The farm 'Old Langsyne' is situated within the proposed area as recommended by the Beaumont Commission and the Local Committee.
5. The Applications are recommended".

<sup>410</sup> Volume 512 NAC6/ 04, Part 7, Secretary of Native Affairs. Correspondence with Sub- Native Commissioner's office with that of Resident Magistrate.

The sub-Native Commissioner in Pietersburg later wrote to the Secretary for Native Affairs in Pretoria on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 1928, attaching the above-mentioned applications and also recommending for their permission. The Sub-Native Commissioner's letter reads as follows:<sup>411</sup>

I have the honour to forward and recommend the attached application on behalf of Natives Makoena Seanego and Koena Peaha for permission to reside on and graze their stock on the farm 'Old Langsyne' No. 1014 in the district of Pietersburg, on rent paying terms.

Whereas the new land policies, particularly the 1913 Natives Land Act, resulted in the severe deprivation of Blacks of their land and their eviction from that land, the Whites were also not allowed to acquire land on designated Black land. As a result, the White groups which were compelled to settle among the Black communities because of the nature of their work, the missionaries in particular, were forced to seek approved permission before settling on the land designated for Blacks. Such permission was usually granted under strict conditions. This new arrangement affected the identities in areas such as Makgabeng because

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<sup>411</sup> Volume 512 NAC6/ 04, Part 7, Secretary of Native Affairs. Correspondence with Sub- Native Commissioner's office with that of Resident Magistrate.

the White religious groups were expected to be allocated pieces of land after official procedure, and their settlements were soon crowded by Black converts. Most of these newly converted Christians were attracted to the mission stations as they were landless and destitute, after they were evicted through the new policies and laws. Christian conversion, a new kind of identity among Blacks, came to be a convenient licence to find sanctuary on missionary land. The Black Christian converts, who mostly lived on or around the piece of land allocated to the missionaries, became a distinguished entity on its own. They were a new identity clearly separate from the rest of the community. In the local language they were clearly defined as “Majakane”, and their place of residence was referred to as “Setaseng”<sup>412</sup>.

Permission<sup>413</sup> to occupy “native” land by “religious Societies or Organizations” were accompanied by strict conditions which included:<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> Interview, Sania Ramoroka, Norma A village, 19 May 2003.

<sup>413</sup> The following is an example of a schedule drawn as permission granted to White missionaries to occupy piece of land in areas designated for Blacks:

“MINISTERS have the honour to recommend that HIS Excellency the Governor General may be pleased, in terms of clause (h) of sub-section (1) of section eight of the Natives Land Act, 1913, to approve of the Societies or Religious Organizations mentioned in the accompanying schedule carrying on educational or missionary work on the properties specified in accordance with the Rules and Regulations framed by such societies or Organizations, and which have been, or may be, approved by the Government, such approval to be of force and effect until Parliament action on any report of the Natives Land Commission or of such other Commission as may be appointed shall have made other provision...”

that occupation shall convey no ownership; that the occupier shall not sell or lease that land or portion thereof without sanction of the Governor General; that the permission to occupy may be withdrawn by the Government if within a period of six months the site is not used for the purpose for which the occupation was authorised; that if the land be required for public purposes by Government the occupier shall be entitled to such reasonable compensation for improvements; that the government shall have the right at any time to make or permit to be made any road over land for the public good; and that such occupation of the land shall be subject to all such duties or regulations as many from time to time be laid down<sup>415</sup>.

Among the “Societies and Religions Organizations” which applied for permission to acquire pieces of land in the Makgabeng area was the Berlin Missionary Society which opened stations in most Black settlements. The Wesleyans also made inroads by acquiring pieces of land in Makgabeng amidst those strict conditions. Granting of land

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<sup>414</sup> Volume 1375, Part 1, Issue of informal permission to occupy to the Berlin Missionary Society and other missionary bodies mentioned on attached schedule in respect of occupation by them for church and school purposes of sites in native locations in Zoutpansberg district in farm and subject to certain conditions, 1933—1933.

<sup>415</sup> Volume 1375, Part 1, Issue of informal permission to occupy to the Berlin Missionary Society and other missionary bodies mentioned on attached schedule in respect of occupation by them for church and school purposes of sites in native locations in Zoutpansberg district in farm and subject to certain conditions, 1933—1933.

permits to the church by the Government was preceded by exchange of substantial amount of correspondence. In addition to granting of pieces of land to White religious group, White traders also got permits to establish their trading stores on lands which were put aside for “natives”. As a result, the acquisition of land on Black areas by these various White groups, not only changed the identities around land in areas such as Makgabeng, it also brought other population groups in traditionally Black rural areas. The presence of White missionaries and traders on the land previously set aside and occupied by Blacks, brought changes in all spheres of economics, politics and social customs. There were now new identities of shopkeepers, their helpers, merchants, traders, converts, ministers and farmers.

The communal identity of Black communities around land in the Makgabeng had been disrupted by the arrival of early European travellers, traders, explorers, and later by the missionaries, Boer settler farmers and British colonialists. Although the early European travellers showed no signs of permanent settlement on land occupied by other groups, it was the latter groups of colonialists which showed interest in permanently occupying land, especially after the establishment of the Transvaal republic in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Up until then, the Makgabeng communities lived communally on land which they knew was held for them in trust by their respective chiefs, Malebogo and Matlala. This

communal arrangement came under siege when the ZAR authorities began the willy-nilly surveying, carving and granting of pieces of land in that area to different White individuals, farmers and companies. However, these original processes did not immediately affect the communal identity and the clustered clan settlement pattern of the Makgabeng communities as most of the new owners who were granted land, did not physically occupy them from the outset. During the South African War, the Black communities, including those in Makgabeng, took advantage of the confused situation by consolidating their possession of their land by even repossessing some of the land which the Boer authorities had annexed from them.

By the 1920s, identities in the Makgabeng area were totally changed from those before the arrival of Europeans, especially with regard to changes which were effected on land. The communal nature of the Makgabeng communities was totally disrupted by the surveys, granting and transfers of land by the White authorities. With the new policies and laws the Makgabeng Black communities of the Bahananwa, Bakone, Batau, Batšhadibe, Babirwa and other small clans, found themselves fenced into the new farms which were granted to White farmers, White individuals and White companies. Because of the eviction of most of the people from their original areas of settlement, families, clans and relatives became scattered, thereby disrupting the original communal

nature in the area. The original communal identity in Makgabeng was replaced by new fenced farms with the new White landlords, while the local communities became tenants, sharecroppers and mere labourers on the land which they had known as theirs.

Communal tenure also gave way to an individual form of landownership by Whites, the system which was hitherto unheard of in the Makgabeng area. For the first in the Makgabeng area, there emerged new identities of White landowners, Black tenants, sharecroppers, labourers, White missionaries, Black converts and such related new identities which were mushrooming all over the place.

The negative effects of the 1913 Natives Land Act and its provisions proved to be unbearable for Black communities throughout the country. The small amount of land surface allocated to Blacks, who were in the biggest majority, created congestion which soon became unbearable. The White authorities even tried to alleviate that situation by adding more land for Black settlement by the Native Land and Trust Act of 1936, which was in actual fact, an amendment of the 1913 Act. However, those measures did not alleviate the shortage of land for Black communities whose lives and welfare were negatively affected. In the Makgabeng area, the land reserves which were a result of the 1913 Act were added

by the 1936 Act in which trust farms such as Bays Water and Windhoek were added to people to alleviate congestion.

One of the results of the White governments' land policies was the overcrowding of people and livestock on land reserved for Blacks. The "native locations" could no longer provide for agricultural needs anymore, because there wasn't enough pasturage and water. As already alluded to earlier, most Black communities lived on farms owned by White individuals, farmers and companies. On these farms, Blacks were subjected to forced and unpaid labour while on other farms, particularly those owned by companies, they were forced to pay rents and taxes. All these further worsened the situation of Blacks who were reeling from their loss of land and livestock.

Another factor which added to dissatisfaction among Black communities on farms on which they were tenants, was the change of farm ownership. In some instances, when a farm owner sold his farm, the next owner might bring his new ways of running that farm, which in most cases were not palatable to the original tenants. Religion also fuelled discontent on Black reserves. Christians were in constant friction with Christians of other denominations, as well as with those who were not Christians. The

arrival of Europeans in the Makgabeng area multiplied identities which inevitably began to compete and eventually clashed.

### **The purchase of land (farms) in the Makgabeng. area**

After the White authorities had confiscated land from Blacks, and after surveying and demarcating that land into farm units, those units were then granted to White individuals, farmers and companies who then

began to sell some of those farms for various reasons. The Whites found themselves owning massive tracts of land – thanks to the dispossession of that land from Blacks – and selling some of the land by the new White landowners became a new phenomenon. Black communities who were now landless, were forced to be the buyers of land from the new White owners who were freely granted the land which was confiscated from the same Blacks. As already pointed out, this confiscation and dispossession of land from Black were emphasised and legalised by the passing of legislation such as the 1913 Natives Land Act and the 1936 Native trust and land act by the White-only governments.

As a result of this situation, numerous Blacks got together to form corporatives which they used as vehicles to purchase land. In the Makgabeng area, the White landowners who had acquired land gratis made available large tracts of land for the purchase by Blacks. According to one informant in the Makgabeng area, Mofotoloko Mashilo, other farms which were put on sale belonged to the government (confiscated from Blacks earlier) and they were made available for purchase by Blacks because of the government expenses incurred as a result of the 1939 – 1945<sup>416</sup>. The government sold land which it owned in order to fund its

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<sup>416</sup> Interview, Mofotoloko Mashilo, Ga Monyebodi village, 4 May 2004.

involvement in that war<sup>417</sup>. Most all the purchases of farms in the Makgabeng area were made during the 1940s, i.e. around the time of the Second World War.

Another interesting point to note is that the majority of Blacks purchasing farms was from the east to the west, into the Makgabeng area. The availability of land which was on sale in the Makgabeng area led to the influx of buyers from the eastern areas, particularly from Botlokwa, Moletji, Ga-Mamabolo and Ga-Dikgale. The archival documents on the purchase of farms show that most of the purchasers came from these areas east of Makgabeng, and there is an indication that these areas were the hardest hit by landlessness, overcrowding and overgrazing in their reserves, caused by the White government's policies on land. Another important factor which explained the exodus of these eastern communities was that they were relatively literate and had been exposed to Christianity. They were therefore well aware of the new developments and opportunities, including the purchase of farms in areas such as Makgabeng.

The earliest communities which set the wheels of migration from the east towards the west into the Blouberg–Makgabeng area included the people

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<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

of deputy-chief Kgare of Moletji who bought land in the middle of the bushveld and cultivated it in a short time<sup>418</sup>. They were followed by the people of headman Manthata from Botlokwa who settled in the farm Bouwlast, east of the Makgabeng mountain<sup>419</sup>. These earlier groups appeared to have succeeded in good harvest hence they were followed by more movements of people into the area. In most cases, it was the Christians who led these land purchasers because not only were they looking for grass and water for their cattle, and a square morgen for their corn, but they were also seeking religious freedom on their own properties. They intended to express their religion on the property which they acquired themselves, unlike those which were owned by White farmers and companies.

By the time the trend of purchasing farms by Blacks was gaining momentum in the Makgabeng area in the 1940s, large tracts of land were in the hands of the European companies, and few farms belonged to individual Whites. Blacks who were residing on those farms were tenants who paid rent and different kinds of taxes to those landowners. With the wave of the buying and selling of farms in full swing, landowners clubbed together in order to co-operate for their common interests. The Transvaal Landowners' Association was established for this goal and its

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<sup>418</sup> The Berlin Missionary Society activities in the Blouberg-Bochum-Makgabeng area, Unpublished, translated (from German to English) document by Rev. Martin Jackël, p. 43.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid, p. 43.

“Blaauwberg agency” covered the farms in the Makgabeng area. While the White landowners united for the sale of their lands, Blacks who became either tenants or landless, were forced to come together and buy those farms on sale<sup>420</sup>.

By the 1940s, the foundation of the control of Blacks on land had been solidly laid by the 1913 Natives Land Act, the 1927 Native Administration Act and the 1936 Natives Land and Trust Act. All the purchases of farms were strictly done according to the provisions of these Acts, together with other laws and regulations which governed the lives of Blacks. While the 1913 Act made provision for the purchase, leasing, occupation and ownership of land by Blacks and “other persons”<sup>421</sup>, the 1927 Act provided for “the better control and management of Black affairs”<sup>422</sup> whereas the 1936 Act provided for the establishment of the South African

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<sup>420</sup> The following were the White companies and individuals who owned farms in the Makgabeng area from whom the purchases were made by Blacks who were landless as well as those who could no longer bear the hardships of being tenants:

1. Transvaal Consolidated Land and Exploration Co. Ltd (Bayswater, Gemarke, Groenepunt, Langbryde, Rosamond and Too Late).
2. Transvaal Estates and Development Co. Ltd (Bonna Esperance, De La Roche and Normandy).
3. Oceana Consolidated Co. Ltd (Lomonside and Millbank).
4. Bourke Trust and Co. Ltd (Early Dawn, Harrietswish, Millstream and Old Langsyne).
5. D.C de Waal (Cracow, Disseldorp and Ketting).
6. Balkis Land Maatschappij Bpk (Barenen).
7. E. Oates (Uitkyk).
8. The Government (Schoongezicht).

<sup>421</sup> The Natives Land Act of 1913, Section 1.

<sup>422</sup> The Native Administration Act of 1927, Section 1.

Native Trust and to make further provision as to the acquisition and occupation of land by Blacks and “other persons”<sup>423</sup>.

There was mixed reaction to the new trend of the purchase of farms among Black communities. There were those who were in favour of the purchases and they strongly supported it and led the syndicates which bought farms. These were Blacks who were pushed out of their settlements by unbearable conditions such as overcrowding, overgrazing, as well as expensive and uncertain lives on land owned by White companies and individuals. Most of these Blacks were literate and were Christians and they wanted to buy land where hoped that they would be “free”.

However, the pieces of legislation mentioned above, did not allow individual landownership by Blacks, and as a result, Blacks were forced to club together and form themselves into “tribes” or “tribal entities” before purchasing land. Most of the Blacks who were pressured to purchase land, were not only literate and Christian – factors which to a certain extent widened their knowledge and worldview – but they were also favoured by the White authorities and the White landowners. The

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<sup>423</sup> The Natives Land and Trust Act of 1936, Section 1.

White authorities favoured them as they obeyed and followed the rules of acquiring land “legally” while the White landowners made huge profits from land which to them was granted gratis<sup>424</sup>. The White landowners reaped huge profits because most of the farms were sold for staggering figures of over thousands of pounds, the prices which were very high by the monetary standards of the 1940s.

Besides these Blacks who actively advocated and led the movement of the purchase of farms, there were those who followed and joined the pioneering leaders of this phenomenon. This section of followers was convinced by the persuasive views of those who led the purchases, and they succumbed and joined in. The majority of these people were not literate and they looked upon the pioneers of the purchasing movement with confidence, and were convinced that the purchase of farms was the correct route to take. These people were also mostly non-Christians, but nevertheless, they still believed that their literate Christian fellows were leading them into the right direction<sup>425</sup>.

The third group of Blacks were those who were totally unaware of the new developments which were directly affecting them with regard to land

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<sup>424</sup> Interview, Piet Ramoroka, Early Dawn village, 30 November 2002.

<sup>425</sup> Interview, Piet Ramoroka, Early Dawn village, 30 November 2002.

occupation and ownership. This group of people was made up of people who were not literate and they did not understand how the White man's laws affected their lives. Their ignorance usually led them to have so many myths about the Whites and they often accepted the White man's superiority, hence they became helpless when numerous changes were implemented on the land they occupied. Another reason which made this group of Blacks ignorant of the new developments brought by laws on land was that most of the White landowners were very far from those farms. Their ownership of those farms was not felt by most of the Blacks, especially those who were ignorant. As a result, most of such Blacks knew that the land where they lived was their birth place, but they did nothing to prevent the White authorities' demands such as the payment of rent and taxes to the White landowners<sup>426</sup>.

The final group of Blacks were those who became acutely aware of the danger posed by the White man's policies and activities on their ancestral land, including confiscation, surveying, demarcation, selling and purchase of farms. They knew the land where they were born as theirs and did not understand why the Whites did all that and even expected them to buy the land which belonged to them. These people were unfortunately on the wrong side of White man's law as they helplessly

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<sup>426</sup> Interview, Piet Ramoroka, Early Dawn village, 30 November 2002.

hoped to swim against the strong tide of land purchases and other White man's policies which were in full swing. This group tried to resist, avoid and evade the idea of the purchase of land, but the White authorities which formulated laws and policies, were too strong for them. The White landowners who only wanted money could also not tolerate Blacks who stood in the way of their business. The resisting Blacks also found themselves clashing with their fellows who were in favour of buying land. It soon became very clear to this group that they would not win the situation as most of them faced threats of being thrown off land or conviction. Indeed most of the residents who were reluctant to buy farms, were later forcefully ejected from the Makgabeng farms such as Ketting and Disseldorp<sup>427</sup>.

With the Blacks who advocated for the purchase of land gaining the upper hand over those who resisted, the stage was then set for the process of purchasing to roll on. Those who led this process contacted the landowners and negotiations commenced and deals were struck. In the Makgabeng area, Blacks who were in favour of the purchase of land formed themselves into syndicates such as the Matlonkana Ramoroka Company and the Talana Matlou Company<sup>428</sup>. On the part of the

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<sup>427</sup> Interview, Phineas Sepuru, Kgatu village, 5 May 2004.

<sup>428</sup> Volume 7130, Part 1, Pietersburg Natives on Old Langsyne 1014.

landowners, the farms in the Makgabeng were under the Blaauwberg Agency of the Transvaal Landowners' Association, which was in the early 1940s represented by Roland Harrison,<sup>429</sup> who was known to the local Blacks as Ramakokoko. As the White landowners knew and understood the laws and procedures of land acquisition, they followed the established channels, especially through the offices of the Native Commissioners from local to national levels. In the Makgabeng area, Harrison, worked through the Bochum Native Commissioner's office when conducting sales of land to Black purchasers. Applications for such transactions would go via the Pietersburg Native Commissioner's office through to Native Affairs headquarters in Pretoria<sup>430</sup>.

According to the previously mentioned laws regulating land occupation and ownership by Blacks, particularly the 1927 Native Administration Act, the Minister of Native Affairs in the White-only government would look into the applications for the purchase of farms by Blacks. The minister would check whether applications comply with the provisions of the existing laws. If the minister was satisfied that the purchasers and the sellers fulfilled the requirements of the law, he would approve the transaction to go ahead. Usually the certificate declared that the Minister

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<sup>429</sup> Volume 2/2/42, Part 1, Purchase of Farms Early Dawn 995 and Millstream no. 996. Bakone Tribe under Chief Sekgoare Matlala.

<sup>430</sup> Volume I/1/350, Part 1, Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria.

of Native Affairs approved the application by the said purchaser and seller, also indicating the total price of the farm, as well as its size (in morgens and square roods) and the registered number of that farm. The approval would also state that the said farm would be transferred into the name of the Minister of Native Affairs in trust of the purchasers who should form themselves into a “tribe” belonging to a chief recognised or appointed by the Governor General. New identities of “tribes” were created out of the purchasers of farms from different backgrounds. This was an example of an imposed kind of identity creation by the state<sup>431</sup> because purchasers were forced by law to form themselves into “tribes” – a prerequisite for the approval of their farm purchase application.

According to Section 1 of the 1927 Native Administration Act, the Governor General was the “Supreme Chief of all natives in the Union”<sup>432</sup>. Section 7 of the Act declared that the Governor General “may recognise or appoint any person a chief of a native tribe and may make regulations prescribing the duties, powers, privileges and conditions of service of chiefs so recognised or appointed, and of headmen, acting chiefs and acting headmen appointed under subsection (8). The Governor General may depose any chief so recognised or appointed”<sup>433</sup>. According to

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<sup>431</sup> J. Muller et al, *Challenges of Globalisation*, p. 116.

<sup>432</sup> The Native Administration Act of 1927, Section 1.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid*, Section 7.

Section 5(a) Black polities could be constituted, adjusted or removed by the Governor General<sup>434</sup>. These provisions resulted in another major requirement before the purchase of a farm is approved by the minister: that Blacks should be constituted into “tribes” or “tribal entities” under recognised chiefs before their applications for the purchase of farms could be approved. This is a further manifestation of an imposed form of identity creation in which the state uses its power to impose its values<sup>435</sup> upon communities.

The constitution of farm purchasers into “tribes” and “tribal entities” resulted in the creation of new identities. In the Makgabeng areas, people who came from different polities in areas such as Ga-Mamabolo, Ga-Dikgale, Botlokwa and Moletji, found those who were born in the Makgabeng area, came together in order to buy various farms. Almost each and every farm in the Makgabeng area was purchased by people of different origins as they were required by law to form themselves into “tribes” or “tribal entities.” For instance, of the 93 Blacks who came together to purchase the two farms, Early Dawn and Millstream, 71 were the Bakone, 6 were Bahananwa, 9 were the Bakwena, 4 were “Molima”,

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<sup>434</sup> Ibid., Section 5.

<sup>435</sup> J. Muller et al, Challenges of Globalisation, p. 116.

1 each from Botlokwa, Senthumule and Ga Mphahlele<sup>436</sup>. In another example, of the 47 Blacks who purchased the farm Non Parella in 1946, 43 were the Bakone, 2 were the Bakwena, 1 was a Motlokwa and another 1 a Letebele<sup>437</sup>.

Although those purchasers in each of the Makgabeng farms were from different backgrounds, the laws required them to register under one tribal name and a recognised chief. The result was that the original identities of most purchasers had to take a back seat as the identities of the majority buyers became salient. At the same time they had to recognise the authority of the new chief under whose jurisdiction the farms were bought. The latter requirement later brought divisions within bought farms which were struggling to establish their new identities as homogenous communal villages. The joint purchase of farms by different people also resulted in the spontaneous re-creation of communal identities which had been earlier disrupted by the annexation of Black lands by the Whites through different laws, such as the 1913 Natives Land Act. As a result of the theoretical notion of “shared experience”<sup>438</sup>, those purchasers from different backgrounds found themselves faced with common

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<sup>436</sup> Volume 2/2/42, Part 1, Purchase of Farms Early Dawn 995 and Millstream no. 996. Bakone Tribe under Chief Sekgoare Matlala.

<sup>437</sup> Volume 2/2/53, Part 1, Non Parella. Purchase of Bakoni tribe under Chief Matlala.

<sup>438</sup> M. Castells, “Globalisation, Identity....”, p. 7.

experiences, and this further shaped their common identity. This kind of communal identity was further entrenched as they stayed together over a longer period, a notion espoused by Castells<sup>439</sup>.

The following are few examples in which co-purchasers from different backgrounds formed themselves into “tribes” and “tribal entities” under recognised chiefs or headmen in order to buy farms in Makgabeng:<sup>440</sup>

1. Early Dawn purchasers formed themselves into the Bakone “tribe” under Kgoši Matlala.
2. Kirstenspruit purchasers formed themselves into the Bakone “tribe” under Kgoši Matlala.
3. Non Parella purchasers formed into the Bakone “tribe” under Kgoši Matlala.
4. Norma B purchasers formed themselves into the Batlokwa “tribe” under Kgoši Machaka.
5. Old Langsyne purchasers formed themselves into the Bahananwa “tribe” under Kgoši Malebogo.
6. Rietterhouse purchasers formed themselves into the Mothiba “tribe” under Kgoši Mothiba.

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<sup>439</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>440</sup> Volume I/1/350, Part 1, Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria.

In addition to the formation of the land purchasing Blacks into “tribes” and “tribal entities”, the other two conditions regarding the lands they were purchasing were that they should renounce claims over mineral rights, and that they should undertake not to evict the non-buyers. In the certificate of approving the purchase of farms, the Minister of Native Affairs would clearly state that the mineral rights on each farm would be reserved for the previous White owners. This meant that the Blacks only purchased the topsoil while the Whites retained the rights to claim the minerals that might be discovered in those farms. The White authorities were cautious and did not want the purchasers to push the non-buyers out immediately. This attitude of the White authorities later caused confusions and divisions among communities as the purchasers felt that the non-buyers unfairly used land which they did not pay for, while the White authorities did not openly support their desire to eject the non-purchasers.

The Minister of Native Affairs’ certificate of approval for the purchase – with conditions and requirements clearly spelt out – would be dispatched from Pretoria via regional offices down to the applicants – the “tribe”. The “tribe” would then hold meetings – usually in the presence of the local White Native Commissioners or their representatives – in order to come up with tribal resolutions regarding their purchase. By means of tribal resolutions, the purchasers – now formed into “tribes” – would be

agreeing to the contents of the minister's certificate of approval, including the price of the farms, as well as all the conditions contained in the document. After the "tribe" had agreed with the contents of the certificate, the deal would then be signed. The signing was normally done by the recognised chief on behalf of "his/her tribe". All these procedures strengthened the feeling of belonging together among the farm purchasers who had different backgrounds. This enhanced interaction and as such, further shaped their communal identity because according to one theoretical notion on identity creation, interaction with others plays a significant role in identity formation<sup>441</sup>.

These were the few examples of signature for farms in the Makgabeng area:<sup>442</sup>

Kgoši Sekgwari Matlala signed for the purchase of the farms Early Dawn No. 996 and Millstream No. 995 from the Bourke Trust and Estate Company Limited on 8 August 1945; the farm Non Parella No. 1086 was signed for by Kgoši Joel Mutshedi Matlala on 4 December 1945 on behalf of the Bakone "tribe" who were buying it from the sellers J.T. Boshoff, J.H.

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<sup>441</sup> R. Jenkins, *Social Identity*, p. 22.

<sup>442</sup> Volume I/1/350, Part 1, Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria.

Boshoff, T. Boshoff, P.M. Boshoff and J.P.Strydom.; again Kgoši Joel Mutshedi Matlala signed for the purchase of Kirkstenspruit No. 1093 by the Bakone “tribe” from the Transvaal Consolidated and Exploration Company Limited on 4 December 1945; and Rietterhouse No. 1016 was signed for by Kgoši Pokgati Mothiba on behalf of the Mothiba “tribe” purchasing it from Balkis Limited on 20 August 1943.

The 1913 Natives Land Act had created serious land shortage for Blacks. By the 1936 Natives Land and Trust Act, the government of Prime Minister J.B.M. Hertzog was trying to address that shortage, but in a minimal manner. The 1936 Act “released more” land for Black occupation. According to this Act, a South African Native Trust was established for “the settlement, support benefit and moral welfare of the natives of the Union”<sup>443</sup>. The Trust would also be utilised “to advance the interests of natives in scheduled native areas, released areas, or on land held by or from the Trust in the agricultural and pastoral and other industries”<sup>444</sup>. According to this Act in which the state purchased land for Black occupation, Makgabeng was also affected by this.

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<sup>443</sup> The Natives Land and Trust Act, Section 6.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid, Section 6.

In the Makgabeng area, the examples of farms which were bought by the Trust and made available for Blacks were Rosamond, Groenepunt, Bayswater (1945), Bonne Esperance, De La Roche, Mont Blanc, Sweethome (1946) and De Villiersdale (1954)<sup>445</sup>. The farms Rosamond, Groenepunt and Bayswater were purchased jointly by the Trust from the Northern Properties Limited and the Transvaal Consolidated Land and Exploration Company Limited<sup>446</sup>. According to the local Native Commissioner, those farms, situated on the “released area in the Pietersburg District” were essential for the Trust to acquire so that “many displaced and landless natives in that district may be accommodated”<sup>447</sup>. Among these three farms, only Bayswater was suitable for human settlement, while Rosamond and Groenepunt were only purchased for grazing, as they were mountainous and were not suitable for settlement. Bonna Esperance, De La Roche, Mont Blanc and Sweethome<sup>448</sup> were bought for the “Malaboch tribes” (Kgoši Malebogo’s communities) from the African and European Investment Company Limited<sup>449</sup> for the settlement of those communities.

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<sup>445</sup> Volume 3234, Sale by South African Native Trust to the Minister of Native Affairs.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

<sup>449</sup> Volume 3234, Sale by South African Native Trust to the Minister of Native Affairs.

According to the 1936 Act, the purchase of farms by the Trust involved the services of the Central Land Board which should assess the value of those farms. The Board had to evaluate the improvements which were made on the farms prior to the purchase such as fencing, boreholes, dipping tanks, etc. Immediately after the purchase and the transfer of the farms to the Trust, an Agricultural Officer was sent to take possession of each farm on behalf of the Trust. The Officer would then, among other duties, establish the number of Blacks residing on the farms; the condition under which they were residing; and the date up to which they had made obligations to the previous owner. The Officer would also advise those Blacks that they would only be allowed to occupy the area subject to payment of rental and fees<sup>450</sup>.

In March 1947, the Agricultural Officer, J.M. Potgieter, made the following reports on Rosamond, Bayswater and Groenepunt:

On Rosamond, he reported that there were no improvements on the farm; no squatters in the area; and that the farm was mountainous and that it was only to be used for grazing. On Groenepunt, Potgieter found the

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<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

situation exactly the same as in Rosamond. On Bayswater, the Officer reported that there were no improvements on the farm, and that there were 43 families residing there. He also found that all residents were rent payers and he recommended that no more Blacks be allowed to settle on that farm because of the sandy and mountainous conditions<sup>451</sup>.

The Black communal identities created on the Trust farms and the other farms were different. On Trust farms, communities were not required to form “tribes” under chiefs as a condition. This was because the state purchased Trust farms for communities while the other farms were bought out of the communities’ money. The communities in Trust farms were expected to pay levy for the services such as dipping tanks and grazing camps<sup>452</sup>.

Besides the buying of farms by co-purchasers of different origins and the buying of farms by the South African Native Trust, Blacks in the Makgabeng area acquired land by other means. According to Mashilo,

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<sup>451</sup> Volume 3234, Sale by South African Native Trust to the Minister of Native Affairs.

<sup>452</sup> Interview, John Tlameng Matlala, Ga Matlala, 23 December 2002.

the farms such as Milbank and Lomonside were “gifts” from the government of Prime Minister C.J. Smuts to Kgoši Malebogo for his support during World War II<sup>453</sup>. Kgoši Malebogo, who had made most of his men available for the war effort, according to Mashilo, was rewarded by some farms on which he allowed his subjects to settle freely<sup>454</sup>. Milbank was occupied by different clans who came under the people of Kgoši Monyebodi, who were themselves the Bakone, who originated from Ga-Matlala<sup>455</sup>. Headman Lekgwara, who came from Madombidza in the Tzaneen area, was appointed to head the community on the farm Lomonside (Ga-Lekgwara)<sup>456</sup>. Some of Monyebodi’s and Lekgwara’s men actively participated in the war, hence their efforts were rewarded by pieces of land, according to Mashilo<sup>457</sup>.

One farm in the Makgabeng area which archival records indicate that it was “donated” to Blacks, was Harrietswish. Although the reason for the donation was not mentioned in the archival documentation, the farm was donated in March 1954 to the 52 occupants by the then Minister of Native

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<sup>453</sup> Interview, Mofotoloko Mashilo, Ga Monyebodi village, 4 May 2004.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

<sup>457</sup> Interview, Mofotoloko Mashilo, Ga Monyebodi village, 4 May 2004.

Affairs, Hendrik Verwoerd<sup>458</sup>. The 52 members had formed themselves into the Bapedi “tribe” under Kgoši Athlone Mankoeng Mamabolo as required by law. The donees had signed for the donation in Pietersburg on 30 March 1950<sup>459</sup>. Later the 52 donees agreed to subdivide the farm among themselves into equal “erfs”. Each member retained his portion which he used for settlement and cultivation with his family, separate from other members’ portions.

The purchase of farms in the Makgabeng area brought new forms of communal identities. This trend of the purchase of farms was part of broad land reforms which were carried out by the White authorities at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in South Africa. It was also a result of laws such as the Natives Land Act (1913), Natives Administration Act (1927), and the Native Trust and Land Act (1936) which were passed, among other things, to implement European-orientated land policies. These land policies radically altered the ways of life of Black communities as much of their land was dispossessed. The communal nature of their settlement was disrupted, especially by the demarcation of land into farms which were sold and fenced off. However, a new form of communal identity resurfaced when groups of divergent Blacks came together and purchased those farms. According to the theoretical notion that identities

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<sup>458</sup> Volume2/2/45, Native Owned and Tribal Land. Harriets Wish No. 991

<sup>459</sup> Ibid.

become experiences if only enforced enough over time<sup>460</sup>, the farm purchasers, in the long run, found themselves having to define themselves as belonging together in communal villages after buying the same farms. The fenced farms which they found themselves living in, became the bases of their new form of communal identity. However, there were tensions which occasionally arose among those farm purchasers who had different origins.

## **Tensions brought by the purchase of farms**

One of the most important outstanding issues which resulted from the purchase of farms by Black communities was the question of those who failed to be part of the groups which contributed funds to buy. The issue on non-buyers proved to be tricky because by the mid-1950s, even the White authorities did not have a clear policy as to what needed to be done about those who failed to follow the trend of purchasing farms. Even on the part of the non-buyers, there was no uniform explanation as to why they did not bother to collect funds for farm purchases. In the Makgabeng area for instance, some of the inhabitants were ignorant of the fact that the land on which they lived belonged to the Whites who

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<sup>460</sup> M. Castells, "Globalisation, Identity..." p. 7.

were now selling it<sup>461</sup>. On the other hand, there were those who were aware of that development, but opposed it on the grounds that they would not buy their ancestral land<sup>462</sup>. They just continued to stay on the land on which they were born and did not make any contribution when others were collecting funds to purchase farms.

The White authorities, with the absence of a clear policy on what was to be done about the non-buyers, were very cautious on this matter. Apparently, they were not prepared, at least for the time being, to apply force on the non-purchasers. One of the main conditions in certificate of the approval of the purchase by the Minister of Native Affairs, was the undertaking by the purchasers not to eject the non-buyers from their bought lands. The following is one example (among many cases in the Makgabeng area) of a tribal resolution by the purchasers of the farms Early Dawn and Millstream adopted on 14 April 1945:

We, the proposed purchasers of the farms Early Dawn No. 996 and Millstream No. 995 in the district of Pietersburg undertake not to eject any of the present tenants of the farms without the consent of the Assistant Native Commissioner, at Bochem (sic), it

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<sup>461</sup> Interview, Mofotoloko Mashilo, Ga Monyebodi village, 4 May 2004.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

being understood that after transfer of the farm to us we shall be entitled to collect their rents at the same rates as those paid by the present owners<sup>463</sup>.

According to the records kept by the office of the Native Commissioner on Bochum, there were 52 families of non-buyers on the farms Early Dawn and Millstream, in which 34 were the Bakone of Kgoši Matlala, 10 were the Bakwena of Kgoši Moloto, while 8 were the Batlokwa<sup>464</sup>. Although the authorities warned the buyers not to eject the non-buyers, it appeared that the buyers were anxious to have the non-buyers expelled from their bought farms, but were restricted by the authorities not to do so. In the above example of Early Dawn and Millstream, the buyers apparently frequented the office of the Native Commissioner and pressed for the expulsion of the non-buyers. In one of the letters to the Commissioner's office in Pietersburg, the Bochum Assistant Native Affairs Commissioner indicated the pressure he was under and that the anxious buyers of Early Dawn and Millstream had agreed to allow the 52 families of non-buyers to stay only for one year<sup>465</sup>. This letter dated 17 January 1945, continued as follows, "Headman Ngoepe and his followers

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<sup>463</sup> Volume 2/2/42, Part 1, Purchase of Farms Early Dawn 995 and Millstream no. 996. Bakone Tribe under Chief Sekgoare Matlala.

<sup>464</sup> Volume 2/2/42, Part 1, Purchase of Farms Early Dawn 995 and Millstream no. 996. Bakone Tribe under Chief Sekgoare Matlala.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid.

were in this office and they agree[d] to allow the 52 families to remain on the farms for one year after Transfer is past [sic]<sup>466</sup>.

As time went on, the question of non-buyers became a thorny issue because while the buyers grew impatient with the non-buyers, the White authorities failed to come up with a decisive solution to the problem. Instead, the White authorities shifted responsibility to the chiefs who by then had no powers of land allocation. To expect chiefs who were rendered toothless by successive “native” laws was an indication that the White authorities did not grasp the graveness of the situation on the ground. Or else, the authorities deliberately did not want to prevent the brewing Black on Black violence. Still on the example of the farms Early Dawn and Millstream, on 27 February 1945 the Pietersburg Native Commissioner wrote:

... it is observed that the majority of the Natives who are to be displaced are members of Matlala’s tribe, the tribe under the aegis of which the transaction is to be undertaken. It is assumed that Chief Matlala will arrange for the accommodation of his followers<sup>467</sup>.

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<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> Volume 2/2/42, Part 1, Purchase of Farms Early Dawn 995 and Millstream no. 996. Bakone Tribe under Chief Sekgoare Matlala.

The failure of the White authorities to address the issue of the non-buyers decisively, and their shirking of responsibility by referring the matter to the chiefs whose powers they had usurped, led to the brewing of troubles within the bought farms. While the buyers were losing their patience, the non-buyers still maintained that they would not buy their ancestral lands. The non-buyers apparently took advantage of the indecision of the White authorities and they dug in their heels. This situation led to serious tensions between the buyers and the non-buyers. In some farms such as Disseldorp and Ketting, serious clashes erupted in which open fighting led to the houses of most of the non-buyers to be burnt down<sup>468</sup>.

The purge of the non-buyers soon engulfed the entire Makgabeng area, and it even manifested itself in the royal capitals. At the Bakone capital of Kgoši Matlala, there was also a sharp division regarding the purchase and the non-purchase of farms<sup>469</sup>. That division was further complicated by the South African national politics in which the African National Congress (ANC) supporters advocated for the non-purchase of farms<sup>470</sup>. The Matlala royal household was split into two fiercely opposing camps,

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<sup>468</sup> Interview, Headman Phukubje, Lehwaneng village, 17 September 2003.

<sup>469</sup> Interview, John Tlameng Matlala, Ga Matlala, 23 December 2002.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

resulting in the assassination in 1950 of Kgoši Joel Morwatsebe Matlala by Ma-Congress/the Congress men (ANC members), as they accused him, among other things of pursuing unpopular land reforms in line with the White man's laws<sup>471</sup>.

In some farms, non-buyers succumbed and left because they were not prepared to challenge the White man's authority which they viewed as ruthless<sup>472</sup>. From Norma, Early Dawn and Millstream, most families and clans of Setumu, Ramoroka, Ngwepe and Mojela, left and went to settle in Ga Seleka on the trust lands, for instance<sup>473</sup>. From Disseldorp and Ketting, most non-buyers of the families and clans of Phukubje, Ngwepe and Moremi, moved and settled on the nearby Harrietswish farm<sup>474</sup>. However, some of the non-buyers in those mentioned farms, did not move, especially those who were strong enough to resist, particularly those who were feared by communities, such as magicians, traditional healers and sangomas. Some did not move as they were so destitute that they did not have any means to start a new life somewhere<sup>475</sup>.

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<sup>471</sup> Interview, John Tlameng Matlala, Ga Matlala, 23 December 2002.

<sup>472</sup> Interview, Sebasa Ngwepe, Lehwaneng village, 27 February 2003.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> Interview, Sebasa Ngwepe, Lehwaneng village, 27 February 2003.

The question of non-buyers was not the only thorny matter which resulted from the purchase of land in the Makgabeng area. While the issue of non-buyers resulted in the clash between those who bought farms and those who did not, there were also tensions among the buyers. The buyers were required by law to form themselves into a “tribe” or “tribal entity” before their application to purchase a farm could be approved by the Minister of Native Affairs. The buyers from different traditional backgrounds were then lumped together in order to satisfy that requirement. As heterogeneous buyers came together, their differences and conflicting interests soon surfaced.

One of the sticky matters which soon exposed the divisions among the buyers, was the question of political allegiance to various chiefs. The buyers from different polities often collected money and bought one farm and obviously, the need to acquire land had united them, but soon after the dust had settled, their divergent interests and allegiance surfaced. The Makgabeng area, prior to the purchase of farms, was basically the sphere of two polities, the Bahananwa of Kgoši Malebogo and the Bakone of Kgoši Matlala. The purchasers who mostly came from the east of Makgabeng, were mainly the subjects of chiefs Mamabolo, Machaka, Dikgale and Moloto. Because of literacy and Christianity, these subjects were instrumental and influential in leading the purchase of land in the Makgabeng area. With the support of the White authorities and White

landowners, these pioneers of the purchase of land succeeded to win the hearts of some of the Makgabeng inhabitants – although in some cases coercion was used – to follow them in the purchase of farms.

There were few or no tensions where the majority or all the buyers of the same farm were the subjects of the same chief such as Mamabolo, Machaka, Dikgale or Moloto<sup>476</sup>. Tensions were rife where buyers from different backgrounds bought the same farm, or even when their farms were next to each other. The best example of the problems which arose between the buyers whose farms lied next to each other was that between Norma A and Goedetrouw. The buyers of Goedetrouw were the clans and families of Choshi, Manamela, Ramotsepane, Mahwai, Sepuru, Cholo and Makgoka, and they were mostly the subjects of Kgoši Moloto of Moletji<sup>477</sup>. On the other hand, the buyers of Norma A were mostly the

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<sup>476</sup> These were the few examples of the farms in the Makgabeng area which were bought by almost politically homogenous groups:

1. Goedetrouw was bought by mostly the Bakwena of Chief Moloto from Moletji.
2. Uitkyk No.1 was bought by mostly the Bakone of Chief Dikgale from Ga Dikgale.
3. Uitkyk No. 3 was bought by mostly the Batlokwa of Chief Machaka from Botlokwa.
4. Norma B was bought by mostly the Batlokwa of Chief Machaka from Botlokwa.
5. Ritterhouse was bought by mostly the Bapedi of Chief Mothiba from Ga Mothiba.
6. Harrietswish was donated to mostly the Bapedi of Chief Mankoeng Ga Mamabolo from Ga Mamabolo.
7. Gemarke was bought by mostly the Babirwa of Headman Taueatswala from Bobirwa.

<sup>477</sup> Volume 1882, Transaction in terms of Section 1 of the Natives of 1913 (Passing of a mortgage bond over certain Parts of Farm, Goedetrou no 990, Pietersburg).

original Makgabeng inhabitants, the Bakone of Kgoši Matlala<sup>478</sup>. These Norma A purchasers were of the clans of Setumu, Mojela, Ramoroka, Ngwepe and Masekwa.

The buyers of Goedtrouw who were mostly literate and Christians, convinced the Norma A people to join them in rebuilding and extending the water fountain called Nonono. They also asked the Norma A people to join them in the building of lower and higher primary schools – Noko-Tlou and Mogohlong. The clashes between the two communities surfaced when the Goedetrouw people later refused the cattle of the Norma A people to drink from Nonono, which they dug together<sup>479</sup>. Their joint effort to build schools also ran into trouble as the Goedetrouw people insisted and forced that the schools be built next to their own homesteads<sup>480</sup>. The schools were actually built next to Goedetrouw settlement wherein their children were so close to the school that they went to eat at home during breaks, while the Norma A kids were unable to do the same. The Norma A people lost out in both cases, and obviously that did not go well as it soured relations between the two communities<sup>481</sup>.

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<sup>478</sup> Interview, Nkadi Ngwepe, Norma A village, 19 May 2003.

<sup>479</sup> Interview, Nkadi Ngwepe, Norma A village, 19 May 2003.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

The tensions which emanated from the buyers of the same farm were persistent and far-reaching than those which were between the neighbouring villages. Such tensions usually disrupted the smooth running, development and progress in the affected farm. Non-co-operation between the purchasers of different backgrounds was also related to the fact that the original inhabitants of Makgabeng were relatively not literate and non-Christian as compared to those who came from Moletji, Botlokwa, Ga-Dikgale and Ga-Mamabolo.

The newcomers usually took advantage of their literacy and Christianity to outmanoeuvre their illiterate, non-Christian co-purchasers. For instance, in the jointly bought farms of Early Dawn and Millstream, the Moletji, Botlokwa and Ga-Mphahlele buyers always ensured that the decisions they took at tribal meetings, always favoured them. These newcomers had settled together on the north-eastern part of the two farms, and with their Christian and literate backgrounds, they ensured that the schools and water pumps were constructed and erected next to their households, i.e., on the north-eastern end of the village where they had settled. That was done at the expense of their illiterate, non-Christian clans of the Ngwepe, Ramoroka, Mojela and Setumu, who settled on the south-western end of the village.

The literate, Christian new-comers also looked down upon the communities they found in the Makgabeng area. They felt that those communities at Makgabeng were backward and primitive due to their lack of education and Christianity, as well as other western influences<sup>482</sup>. The phrase “*masele a Makgabeng*” was commonly used by the new coming farm purchasers to refer how “barbaric” they regarded the Makgabeng inhabitants<sup>483</sup>. Those new-comers defined themselves differently from the communities which they found in the Makgabeng area even if they co-purchased farms with them. This is an example of multiple identity formation in which the new-comers sometimes assumed a distinct identity from the original Makgabeng inhabitants, while sometimes they associated with them in matters related to the farms which they co-purchased.

The multiple identity formation in the Makgabeng area also manifested itself in that the new coming buyers did not relinquish the allegiance to their old chiefs in order to acknowledge the new chiefs on whose sphere of influence they had bought farms. For instance, the buyers at Goedetrouw still regarded themselves as the subjects of Kgoši Moloto of

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<sup>482</sup> Interview, Samson Phukubje, Lehwaneng village, 17 September 2003.

<sup>483</sup> Interview, Samson Phukubje, Lehwaneng village, 17 September 2003.

Moletji<sup>484</sup>, even though their farm was in Kgoši Matlala's sphere of influence. So did the people of Uitkyk No.1 (still regarded themselves as the subjects of Kgoši Dikgale), Uitkyk No.3 and Norma B (still regarded themselves as subjects of chiefs, Machaka and Ramokgopha)<sup>485</sup>. This situation manifested itself differently in the jointly bought farms of Early Dawn and Millstream in which the 93 purchasers from different polities had to choose the chief who should lead them. It should be remembered that the co-purchasers, while still begging for a purchasing deal, formed themselves into "a Bakone tribe", in which Kgoši Sekgwari Matlala even signed the land deal on their behalf on 16 April 1945<sup>486</sup>. After the transfer of the farm into their hands, the new coming purchasers' temporary loyalty to Matlala faded away as they began to show their original chiefs<sup>487</sup>.

The issue of allegiance tore the 93 villagers of the two jointly purchased farms of Early Dawn and Millstream apart. When the two farms were bought in 1945, all the purchasers recognised Headman Samuel Kitiki

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<sup>484</sup> Interview, Israel Ramoroka, Lehwaneng village, 16 September 2003.

<sup>485</sup> Interview, Samson Phukubje, Lehwaneng village, 17 September 2003.

<sup>486</sup> Volume 2/2/42, Part 1, Purchase of Farms Early Dawn 995 and Millstream no. 996. Bakone Tribe under Chief Sekgoare Matlala.

<sup>487</sup> Interview, Samson Phukubje, Lehwaneng village, 17 September 2003.

Ngwepe as their link to Kgoši Matlala<sup>488</sup>. After the purchase went through, things changed rapidly, especially with the death of Headman Kitiki Ngwepe in 1949<sup>489</sup>. At the time of his death, his only son and heir, John Phuti Ngwepe, was still a minor and could not ascend the headmanship<sup>490</sup>. Matlonkana Ramoroka, a wealthy original Makgabeng inhabitant who actively led the movement of purchasing farms, lent his hand in supporting the Ngwepe family as he was related to them<sup>491</sup>. Matlonkana effectively became regent and he helped to lead his people in good faith as the young John, the heir to headmanship, was still growing up.

After the death of Matlonkana in the early 1950s, his son Calvin, was apparently determined to wrest the headmanship permanently from the Ngwepe family<sup>492</sup> to his Ramoroka household. Calvin's power hunger and ambition split the whole village into two opposing camps. Apparently, Calvin used the enormous wealth of livestock which he inherited from his father, Matlonkana, to build power around him. With the power of wealth,

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<sup>488</sup> Interview, Samuel Tlhaahlaa Ngewpe, Early Dawn village, 13 May 2003.

<sup>489</sup> Volume 2/2/42, Part 1, Purchase of Farms Early Dawn 995 and Millstream no. 996. Bakone Tribe under Chief Sekgoare Matlala.

<sup>490</sup> Interview, Samuel Tlhaahlaa Ngewpe, Early Dawn village, 13 May 2003.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid

<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

Calvin was not only able to establish patronage among villagers, he also succeeded to attract the support of Kgoši Alfred Marufa Matlala, who had succeeded the assassinated Joel Morwatshebe Matlala<sup>493</sup>. Kgoši Matlala became a constant visitor of the wealthy host, Calvin, thereby elevating his status at the expense of the legitimate – but poor – heir, John Ngwepe.

The leadership problems of the co-purchasers in Early Dawn and Millstream were even known to the White authorities, in which the Additional Native Commissioner wrote the following to the Native Commissioner in Pietersburg on 24 February 1954:

It now appears that the co-purchasers are divided into two sections. The one section under Calvin Ramoroka, who is the recognised Induna of Chief Alfred Matlala on the farm, and the section who challenges the Chief's authority to appoint an Induna and who demand that they be allowed to elect their own Committee Chairman, and administer their own farms affairs without interference from the Chief<sup>494</sup>.

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<sup>493</sup> Interview, Frans Rammutla, Early Dawn village, 5 May 2004.

<sup>494</sup> Volume 2/2/42, Part 1, Purchase of Farms Early Dawn 995 and Millstream no. 996. Bakone Tribe under Chief Sekgoare Matlala.

Just like with the previous matter of dealing with the non-buyers, even with this one the White authorities did not have a clear-cut policy as to what needed to be done about the co-purchasers who were torn apart by the question of their allegiance. This matter was later addressed by consensus in which the co-purchasers agreed “to do away” with headmanship in which they agreed to appoint Committees and Chairmen to lead the Early Dawn-Millstream village<sup>495</sup>. The new coming purchasers were instrumental in coming up with this settlement as they were obviously not in favour of the headmanship which was a link to the Matlala polity. They wanted to avoid the Matlala link so that they could still retain allegiance to their original chiefs, or at least if they lost allegiance of their original chiefs, it was also fine for the other co-purchasers to lose their allegiance to Kgoši Matlala<sup>496</sup>. In the farm Harrietswish, to alleviate tensions among themselves, the owners divided it among themselves in which each of them privately owned his “erf”<sup>497</sup>.

However, even if there were tensions which were brought by the purchase of farms in the Makgabeng area, the co-purchasers were forced by circumstances to live together. There were common issues of building and developing their communal villages which necessitated their

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<sup>495</sup> Interview, Piet Ramoroka, Early Dawn village, 30 November 2002.

<sup>496</sup> Interview, Samuel Tlhaahlaa Ngewpe, Early Dawn village, 13 May 2003.

<sup>497</sup> Volume2/2/45, Native Owned and tribal land. Harriets Wish No. 991.

co-operation. For instance, they had to constantly meet and take resolutions. Therefore, even if the buyers of a particular farm had differences, they still defined themselves as belonging to the same village. The new communal identity of belonging to the same village superseded other matters which divided them. People began to regard themselves as for instance, belonging to Early Dawn, Norma A, Uitkyk No. 3 or Milbank. Communal identity had resurfaced, but this time around, it was made of divergent communities which had been brought together by the purchase of farms.

## **Makgabeng within the homeland system**

Prior to the 1948 coming to power of the National Party in South Africa, racial and segregationist land problems and grievances were addressed

in a less confrontational manner. However, the new NP government went further than previous segregation policies with declared “apartheid” doctrine and abandoned all pretences and applied rigid racial separation, even on land matters. By 1948, the Black population living in reserves had dropped from 50 per cent in 1916 to 40 per cent because many Blacks were becoming permanent inhabitants next to towns as reserve lands were deteriorating<sup>498</sup>. One of the remarkable innovations of the apartheid government was the homeland system in which Black communities were artificially divided into “political units”. Each tribal unit of the Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Tswana, Swazi, Tsonga, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu (and later Ndebele) was given its homeland. The boundaries of these “national units”, not surprisingly, coincided with the reserve boundaries defined by the 1913 and 1936 land acts. The initial homeland legislation, the Native Authorities Act of 1959, therefore perpetuated the policies of the previous land acts.

The ultimate size of the land allocated to homelands according to the 1954 Commission for the Socio-Economic Development of Bantu Areas, known as the Tomlinson Commission, was about 17 million hectares<sup>499</sup>. The Commission was concerned that the quality of the land in the

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<sup>498</sup> J. van Zyl et al(ed), Agricultural Land Reform in South Africa: Policies, Markets and Mechanisms, p.51.

<sup>499</sup> J. van Zyl et al (ed), Agricultural Land Reform, p. 53.

reserves could not support the 500 000 African families living in those areas<sup>500</sup>. The Commission proposed a drastic cut in the homelands and a series of “betterment” or “Closer Settlement Schemes” to stop soil degradation through land use planning, relocation of people and livestock, stock-culling, fencing, contour ploughing, water conservation and erosion control<sup>501</sup>. The Commission also urged the Native Land Trust to hasten the process of buying the outstanding quota land for the Blacks who were in a dire shortage of land. By March 1967, the Trust had only managed to buy 5 million hectares of quota land, 1,3 million hectares were still outstanding<sup>502</sup>.

The development of homeland policy went a step further by the passing of the 1970 Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act, which made every Black in the Republic, a citizen of some homeland<sup>503</sup>. The Bantu Affairs Administration Act of 1971 transferred control over Blacks, regardless of where they lived, from White local authorities to Bantu Affairs Administration Boards<sup>504</sup>. The Bantu Laws (Amendment) Act of 1972 justified forced resettlements of African people and stated that “a Bantu

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<sup>500</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

<sup>503</sup> J. van Zyl et al (ed), Agricultural Land Reform, p. 52

<sup>504</sup> Ibid, p. 52

tribe, community, or individual could be removed from where they lived without any recourse to parliament even if there was some objection to the removal”<sup>505</sup>. These acts gave the government the right to banish to a homeland any Blacks considered “redundant” in urban or to White areas, and then abrogated their constitutional right to belong to the Republic of South Africa.

All these developments around land in homelands also affected the people in the Makgabeng area. According to the homeland system arrangements, the Makgabeng area came to fall under the jurisdiction of the Northern Sotho “nation” of Lebowa. After the establishment of the homelands, the allocation and acquisition of land were handed to the Department of Bantu Affairs which was to develop homeland and industrial development policies. According to the new arrangement, resettlement of Blacks in homelands, and further allocation of land were only carried out to homelands which opted for independence. Much of the land released for the homelands, often pieces of non-continuous scrubland, certainly did not meet only land quality standard<sup>506</sup>. In the Makgabeng area, there were eleven farms which had their title deeds

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<sup>505</sup> Ibid, p. 52.

<sup>506</sup> J. van Zyl et al (ed), Agricultural Land Reform, p. 53.

held by the Lebowa homeland government, and each had a title deed number<sup>507</sup>.

In the homelands, communal tenure was officially defined by Proclamation R188 of 1969 as “unsurveyed land” or “permission” to occupy<sup>508</sup>. Under the Proclamation, a male person held rights to various land allotments for residential use, arable farming and grazing<sup>509</sup>. People did not legally own their residential and arable allotments. Rather they were allowed the right of occupation and cultivation subject to conditions stipulated by the homeland authorities. This was also applicable to the Makgabeng farms.

Other plans which the homeland authorities brought to the rural lands such as those in Makgabeng, included the so-called “betterment”, which

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|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. Barenen        | T 21448/1944. |
| 2. Bayswater      | T 2209/1947.  |
| 3. Carlsruhe      | T 4928/1929.  |
| 4. Groenepunt     | T 2209/1947.  |
| 5. Harrietswish   | T 7562/1958.  |
| 6. Langbryde      | T 11275/1948. |
| 7. Lomonside      | T 8148/1921.  |
| 8. Millbank       | T 8148/1921.  |
| 9. Old Langsyne   | T 33786/1947. |
| 10. Rosamond      | T 2209/1947.  |
| 11. Schoengezicht | T 14139/1947. |

<sup>508</sup> J. van Zyl et al (ed), Agricultural Land Reform, p. 58.

<sup>509</sup> J. van Zyl et al (ed), Agricultural Land Reform, p. 58.

involved planned village land use. Before “betterment”, people in the Makgabeng area, lived in clustered homesteads, along the hills or ridges, with their fields near rivers and streams. They grazed cattle on hills and in forests, or further from home. With “betterment”, they were forcefully allocated new fields and new residential areas. The new land use system was inflexible in which people found themselves with smaller fields and gardens than before, and had to walk greater distances to fetch wood, water and thatching grass. That was accompanied by very unpopular stock-culling measures which triggered peasant resistance to “betterment” throughout the homelands. The land use system in the homelands was frozen by the abolition of those homelands when the new democratic order was ushered in the early 1990s. Land reform policies were put in place from 1994 by the new democratically elected government in an attempt to redress the previous imbalances, and the Makgabeng area was also affected by those changes.

The homeland identity has never become a salient feature on most Black communities even if it was so vigorously imposed and promoted. It has never become more salient than the communal identity of villages. Communities in the Makgabeng area, for instance, still defined themselves according to their respective villages in which they lived. The homeland identity was even less salient than that of chieftaincy in which communities still defined themselves as the Matlala or Malebogo people,

rather than the citizens of Lebowa. This was partly because the level of the people's awareness allowed them to suspect the NP homeland policies. This kind of imposed identity (Lebowa), which R. Jenkins refers to as "labelling"<sup>510</sup>, in this case generated resistance, hence the people such as those in Makgabeng regarded themselves less as Lebowans than the people of Matlala or Malebogo.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **MIGRANT LABOUR, TRADE AND TECHNOLOGY IN MAKGABENG**

#### **The origins of labour migrancy in Makgabeng**

In the previous chapter we saw how land, and all its implications, under various circumstances, led to the creation, shaping and even destruction of various forms of identities in the Makgabeng area. Another important aspect which also impacted on identities in that area was the migrant labour system. In this chapter, this phenomenon will be discussed in conjunction with its closely related aspects of trade and technology and how they

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<sup>510</sup> R. Jenkins, Social Identity, p. 22.

affected the Makgabeng communities. Migrant labour system has always been mainly related to the European (capitalist) expansion and the mineral revolution in South Africa, especially the discovery of diamonds and gold, which accelerated that phenomenon.

One of the theoretical propositions on identity creation is that interaction with others plays a significant role in identity formation<sup>511</sup>. Interaction of the Makgabeng migrant labourers with other labourers from other areas created new identities which were eventually exported back to Makgabeng. No wonder the migrant labour system came to impact on remote and rural areas such as Makgabeng. Again, the gathering of migrant labourers from different parts of South Africa – and other workers from other parts of the world – in working areas such as the mines, represented the movement of people and ideas all over the world, a phenomenon which was later known as globalisation. This phenomenon is closely related to identity creation and on this point Castells's declared that “[o]ur world is, and our lives, are being shaped by the conflicting trends of globalization [sic] and identity”<sup>512</sup>. This is because the structuring of capitalism, like the South African mineral revolution referred to earlier, according to Castells, has induced a new form of society, the network society<sup>513</sup>. According to M. Burawoy (2000), as capitalism spread across the world, the truth of the local moved outside

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<sup>511</sup> R. Jenkins, Social Identity, p. 22.

<sup>512</sup> M. Castells, Information Age, p. 1.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

itself in which people and ideas flow across the borders<sup>514</sup>. The new world order has emerged devoid of visible structures and of an obvious logic. With their movements to look for employment outside the borders of the area which they regarded as their home, the Makgabeng migrant labourers became part of the emerging network society, and their return to Makgabeng further brought their area into the global fold.

In the Makgabeng area, although the people had been selling their labour for a very long time, it was with the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886 that the migrancy of labourers intensified. The movement of labourers between their homes and their working areas, facilitated and enhanced trade and technological developments which were soon visible even in the most remote and rural villages. With new commodities and ideas from their various working areas, the migrant labourers' influence in remote areas such as Makgabeng, became evident. In this process, new identities were formed, others were shaped, while others were destroyed along the way. The ways of life of many rural communities came to be influenced to a very large extent by the hundreds of labourers who periodically left for employment in other parts of the country, and later returned. In the following discussion, it will be shown how migrant labour brought about changes in conjunction with trade and technological advancement in the Makgabeng area.

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<sup>514</sup> M. Burawoy, Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World, p. 1.

As early as the 1840s, some Black societies became involved in migrant labour in which young men went to work for some months on farms in the Cape Colony and Natal<sup>515</sup>. Their main purpose was to earn money in order to buy guns for both hunting and military purposes. They also bought and took home cattle, sheep and consumer goods. During these earliest times, men from the Makgabeng vicinity had begun to move away to seek work in other quarters. This was based on their knowledge and use of previous trading routes and patterns. There were different factors which led to mostly able-bodied men to migrate from their homes in search of employment somewhere. One of factors was that the small pieces of land reserved for Blacks could not sustain their economic needs, and as a result people had to look for employment somewhere in order to supplement the little that was produced from their land reserves. Again, the White authorities and the mine owners designed strategies such as taxation in order to compel Blacks to sell them cheap labour which was in high demand in the mines. As a result, some of the young men in the Makgabeng area found themselves joining their counterparts in other areas in search of employment away from their homes.

As early as 1857, missionary Robert Moffat gave an account of men from the Makgabeng-Hananwa vicinity whom he met in “Chief Sechele’s” territory

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<sup>515</sup> J. Pampallis, Foundations of the new South Africa, p. 5.

(present-day Botswana) on their way to “pereko” (work) at Kuruman<sup>516</sup>. This was not an isolated case and the pace of labour migrancy accelerated in the late 1860s when European activities in the Makgabeng-Hananwa area increased. Among the central factors which contributed to the intensification of migrancy in that vicinity were the sacking of Schoemansdal in 1867 and the arrival of the missionaries. These European groups – the Boer farmers in Schoemansdal and the missionaries – employed Black labourers as gardeners, herders and domestic servants. These cases were a form of migrant labour as most of those workers had to leave their homes.

The missionaries in particular, played a key role in stimulating the exportation of wage labour from the area as they emphasised the “dignity” of wage labour. Using their own dictum, they encouraged the local people to “pray and work: according to the Word”<sup>517</sup>. In keeping with these objectives, they wrote out passes for the local men to go out and work for a wage. The process benefited not only the mission establishments and Boer farmers, but also later, the British mine owners. The missionary activities prepared groundings for a reservoir of cheap labour force which was later tapped for capitalist expansion in the Transvaal. These activities of the missionaries confirm the assertions made earlier in this study that the missionaries often performed other activities – including political and diplomatic – in addition to their core business of spreading the Gospel.

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<sup>516</sup> T. J. Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity ...*, p. 119.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

Some of the earliest migrant labourers which had missionary influence in the Makgabeng-Hananwa vicinity were Solomon Maloba and Samuel Modiba. In 1868, when Missionary E.B. Beyer of the Berlin Missionary society built a mission station on the foot on Blouberg mountain with the permission of Kgoši Matsiokwane, Maloba and Modiba had just returned from the British colony of Natal where they had been on a stint of migrant labour<sup>518</sup>. While they were in Natal, Maloba and Modiba had been converted to Christianity under the influence of Wesleyan Methodist, Missionary J. Allison<sup>519</sup>. Thus Maloba and Modiba were converted to Christianity while they were migrant labourers in Natal, and they went back to their homes where they preached their new religion. There was therefore a link between migrancy and conversion because in addition to the missionaries' encouragement of people "to pray and work", most labourers met new forms of religion where they went out to work.

In the Makgabeng-Hananwa vicinity, the missionaries, in addition to spreading the Gospel, encouraged people to be wage labourers and to this effect Christoph Sonntag, the Lutheran missionary in that area once wrote:

I once more called together the Christians and catechists

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<sup>518</sup> Anon, "Negotiating identity in contested space: African encounters with Germans, Boers and Britons in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Transvaal", Unpublished, p. 8.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid, p.8.

whom since the beginning of the year I had repeatedly reminded to earn the money necessary to pay their taxes. I wanted to make sure that each one was in a position to meet his obligations<sup>520</sup>.

In addition to encouraging Blacks into the migrant labour system, missionaries also helped governments in writing out permits for young men to go out and look for work. Missionaries were also important contacts for labour recruiting agents. Those agents usually lived with missionaries during their recruitment drives. On 3 May 1894 Sonntag wrote:

A certain Mr Norson from Johannesburg, engaged in recruiting labour for a gold-company, arrived here with his family. They appeared to be decent people<sup>521</sup>.

Apart from the encouragement of the Makgabeng communities by missionaries to be involved in migrant labour, other “push” factors which led to labour migration were connected to ecological vicissitudes. These included the grinding drought of 1872 which led to famine and reduction of livestock and the stress on game resources following the impact of the local

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<sup>520</sup> C. Sonntag, My friend Maleboch, pp. 157 - 8.

<sup>521</sup> C. Sonntag, My friend Maleboch, p. 27.

Blacks and the Boers in the area<sup>522</sup>. The cumulative effect of these economic reverses undermined rural production and thereby generated a flow of migrants whose aim was to search for opportunities to recoup their losses.

The migration of labourers from the Makgabeng area – just like elsewhere in the country - intensified with the mineral revolution. In the following few paragraphs, a brief discussion on these discoveries will be necessary to put the migrant labour in the Makgabeng area into a proper perspective. These discoveries were not first as minerals have been of great significance in Africa for a very long time. It was partly the gold of the region that became known later as the Gold Coast in West Africa and Monomotapa in south-east Africa that drew the Arabs and Portuguese along the coast and into the interior of Africa<sup>523</sup>. The Blacks knew how to work iron, copper, gold and tin long prior to the arrival of Europeans and the so-called mineral revolution.

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<sup>522</sup> T. J. Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity ...*, p. 120.

<sup>523</sup> N. C. Pollock and S. Agnew, *An Historical geography of South Africa*, p. 169.

## **The impact of South Africa's mineral revolution on Makgabeng**

In 1867 diamonds were discovered near the place where the Vaal and Orange rivers meet, and immediately after the discovery, the Transvaal (ZAR), the Orange Free State and the Griquas laid claims of that area. Claims to the northern portion of the area were laid by the chiefs of the Barolong, Batlhaping and the Kora. In 1871 the British arbitration by R.W. Keate, awarded the whole area containing diamond to the Griqua chief, Nicolas Waterboer. Later in the same year the British annexed the area as the colony of Griqualand West, supposedly to protect the rights of the Griquas. The area on which diamond was discovered was named Kimberley, after Lord Kimberley, the British Colonial Secretary. On the other hand, gold was discovered in 1886 on the farm Langlaagte, now part of

Johannesburg. This was not the first time gold was discovered in pre-colonial times because in the eastern Transvaal, colonialists had been mining this mineral. The Witwatersrand gold deposits were the largest ever discovered anywhere in the world and represented a much greater store of wealth than even the diamond fields<sup>524</sup>.

In the case of diamond, in the first few years, the mining was done by thousands of “diggers”. Each digger owned a small claim and either worked by himself or employed one or more labourers. The process of competition and the periodical slumps in the price of diamonds soon led to some claimholders having to sell their claims to more successful diggers. As the digging went deeper and deeper, so diamond mining became more difficult and dangerous, requiring expensive machinery. As a result, many diggers had to sell their claims while others amalgamated their holdings to form companies with large claims. Eventually, one large company emerged with a monopoly: De Beers Consolidated Mines, whose chairman was C.J. Rhodes. With regard to gold, because most of it lay deep below the surface, it required sophisticated and expensive methods of extraction from the start. Thus unlike the diamond-mining industry, gold mining was controlled from the start by companies with large amounts of capital at their disposal. Much of the capital necessary to develop the first gold mines was invested by people like Rhodes, Barney Barnato, Alfred Beit, J.B. Robinson and others

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<sup>524</sup> J. Pampallis, Foundations of the new South Africa, p. 22.

who became wealthy in the diamond fields, while large amounts of capital came from Britain, Germany, France and the USA<sup>525</sup>.

The mining companies co-operated with one another to promote common interests and as a result they later formed the Chamber of Mines in 1887. This association of mine owners did not own or operate any mines, but looked after matters of concern to all the companies. Besides controlling great deal of wealth, the mine owners also exercised political power. For instance, in the Transvaal, the government was dependent on the gold mines for much of its revenue. Because the profitability of the mines was important to the government, legislation, policy and general administration were in favour of the mine owners, and in most cases unfavourable to the mine workers, particularly Blacks.

After the South African War, with the defeat of the Boers and the coming of direct British colonial rule, the political position of the mine owners was further strengthened. However, one of the major problems facing the mine owners immediately after the war was the shortage of cheap labour. This was mainly because most Blacks had withdrawn their labour because during the war most of them were reoccupying the farms which had been annexed by the Boers. The Blacks also withdrew their labour in protest as the British, with whom they had identified and supported during the war, now were moving closer to the Boers after the war. As a result, one of the

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<sup>525</sup> J. Pampallis, Foundations of the new South Africa, p. 22.

pressing questions of the Milner administration was to look for cheap labour in which he even looked to central Africa. After failing in central Africa, he looked to Asia in which in 1905, 50 000 Chinese labourers were imported<sup>526</sup>. That did not solve the problem because by 1910 the Chinese labourers had been repatriated, mainly for fear of complicating future race relations.

The mine owners soon realised that the migrant labour system held major advantages for them. Thus the mine owners, supported by the Milner administration, did much to stimulate the migrancy of labourers in their search for cheap labour for the mines. With the migrant labour system, labourers worked on the mines for a contract period of three to twelve months and then returned home to their families in rural areas. While the men were away, the families continued to work on land, growing crops and raising livestock. If the worker had lived permanently in town with his family, his wages would have had to cover the total living expenses of the whole family. The migrant labour system thus allowed the mine owners to pay lower wages while evading all the responsibility for housing, health care, education and welfare of the workers' families. In this way production in the most backward, poverty-stricken sector of the economy was subsidising the profits of the mining industry, the most modern sector. For these reasons, the mine owners wanted to preserve the migrant labour system at all costs. They realised, however, that workers would stay away from the mines and

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<sup>526</sup> N. C. Pollock and S. Agnew, An Historical geography of South Africa, p. 200.

concentrate on subsistence in the rural areas if wages were too low for their liking, or go home before completing their contracts if they were dissatisfied with their working or living conditions.

The mining companies together with the successive White governments, therefore looked for ways of forcing rural Blacks into migrant labour and ensuring that they completed their contracts. They therefore developed various methods in order to achieve these aims. One of the methods to force rural Blacks into migrant labour was to deprive them of land. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, much of Blacks' land was taken up by the Whites in which most Blacks lived on those White-owned farms where they rented or as share croppers. Many of these people were very productive and they enjoyed a much higher standard of living. In 1913 the South African government passed the Natives Land Act which made sharecropping illegal and prohibited Blacks from renting land on White-owned farms. As a result, thousands of Black tenants and sharecroppers were forced to become wage labourers. Thousands of Blacks moved to reserves where they could not get sufficient good land to survive from farming, and as a result became migrant labourers in mines and elsewhere.

In addition to land deprivation, another way in which Blacks were forced into the migrant labour system was through taxation. Because most Blacks were subsistence farmers and did not participate in the money economy, taxation was introduced and imposed on them as a means of forcing them to

become wage labourers. Since the wages had to be paid in cash, most people had to work on farms, mines, railways, factories and private homes to have cash to pay tax. The taxes offered the governments the added advantage of raising money to cover the costs of administering their colonies. In this way Blacks were also forced to pay the costs of maintaining the bureaucracy and the police force which oppressed them. As early as 1870, the British colonial authorities imposed a hut tax of 10 shilling on each hut every year in order to pressurise men to go and work in the diamond fields<sup>527</sup>. In those days, a man had to work for about three months, to get enough money to pay the hut tax for himself, his family and his parents<sup>528</sup>. After the South African War, Milner's British administration in the Transvaal imposed a poll tax of £2 on each adult Black male and another tax of £2 for the second and each additional wife of a polygamist<sup>529</sup>.

As much as the mine owners and various White governments coerced Blacks into the migrant labour system, the chiefs also played their roles in getting men into the system. In addition to the missionaries – whom we have seen earlier on encouraging people to work and pray - local chiefs also actively supported migrant labour system. Kgoši Matsiokwane and later his son and successor, Ratšhatšha, dispatched young men for work,

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<sup>527</sup> J. Pampallis, Foundations of the new South Africa, p. 24.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

especially after initiation<sup>530</sup>. These leaders not only ensured control over the initiates by sending them to far away work places, they also hoped to make maximum profit out of the new labour process. They mainly hoped to acquire guns for hunting and defence<sup>531</sup>. Other European commodities were also going to be acquired through the young men's involvement in the migrant labour.

These leaders in the Makgabeng-Hanawa vicinity attached too much value to the acquisition of firearms and they tried all methods possible to get them. This was because competition for resources such as land was intensifying, especially as a result of the appearance of Europeans in that area. Security and defence were of higher priority at that time, hence those leaders were determined to arm their polities. They even dispatched young men as far as the Cape Colony in order to bring back those much sought after commodities. In this way migrancy of workers from the northern end of the Transvaal spread as far as the southern tip of the Cape. This was noted by Sonntag when he met Kgoši Ratšhatšha on Tuesday 21 March 1893. Sonntag then wrote in his diary:

When the railways were discussed, the chief was reminded of the time when his people had to travel on foot far into the Cape Colony and work for three months and longer to

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<sup>530</sup> T. J. Makhura, *The Bagananwa Polity ...*, p. 121.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

earn enough money to buy a gun. He interjected the very innocent sounding question how and where he might be able to purchase a gun....How crafty! He did not dare to say directly: "Mynheer procure guns for me"<sup>532</sup>.

This particular engagement between Sonntag and Kgoši Ratšhatšha indicates that in addition to the coercion of the Makgabeng-Hananwa communities into the migrant labour, they themselves got into the system in order to arm themselves. During those days guns were very important for two specific reasons: hunting and defence. Hunting formed an important way of life for communities such as those in the Makgabeng area. Besides being a form of leisure and sport for young men, hunting was another form of food supplement. It was done by different age groups and they used clubs, stones and dogs in order to kill different kinds of game. The appearance of the firearm in the area revolutionised hunting because the gun was far more effective in hunting than the previously used methods. No wonder men could travel as far as the Cape Colony to work for months for the guns.

Security of the polities was another important consideration in the acquisition of firearms. Having gone through the Mfecane/ Difaqane which helped to centralise polities in the Makgabeng area, defence of those polities was of prime importance. Even though the two polities in the

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<sup>532</sup> C. Sonntag, My friend Maleboch, p. 9.

Makgabeng area - the Matlala and Malebogo – used strategic mountain strongholds of the Matlala mountains, Makgabeng mountains and the Blouberg mountains, they still needed firearms to defend themselves. Tension between the Boers and the Malebogo polity towards the end of the nineteenth century further strengthened the necessity to acquire more firearms. That is why Kgoši Ratšhatšha - and his predecessor - Kgoši Matsiokwane, were inclined to push Bahananwa subjects into the migrant labour system, acquiring a large number of guns. This armament race was proven by the massive amount of guns used by the Bahananwa during their war with the Boers in 1894<sup>533</sup>.

Another way of getting Blacks to become migrant labourers was through an established system of recruitment. This systematic kind of recruiting Blacks into cheap labour system was mostly evident within the mining sector which was mostly affected by the need of cheap labour. In this sector, the Chamber of Mines formed the Rand Native Labour Association in 1896, to recruit Black mine workers and to establish centralised control over labour recruitment<sup>534</sup>. In 1901 this was replaced by the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA) which recruited workers as far north as Malawi (then Nyasaland) and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia)<sup>535</sup>. In 1912, the Native Recruiting Corporation (NRC) was formed to take over the recruitment of

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<sup>533</sup> C. Sonntag, My friend Maleboch, p. 9.

<sup>534</sup> J. Pampallis, Foundations of the new South Africa, p. 25.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid, p. 25.

workers<sup>536</sup>. With recruiting centralised, it was possible for individual mining companies to avoid competing with one another for workers and so pushing up wages.

The recruiting organisations sent their agents into the remotest villages to recruit workers. They would sometimes offer to pay people's taxes and also give them some cash in advance. This money would then be deducted from the workers' wages. Often African chiefs would be given money so that they would send men to sign up for work on the mines. Dishonest recruiting practices were common in which men would often be recruited with false promises of high wages and good conditions<sup>537</sup>. The WNLA would sometimes dress their recruiting agents in uniforms similar to those of the local police to deceive people into thinking that they were compelled by law to be recruited. In many rural areas, including Makgabeng as it will be demonstrated in the following paragraphs, trading store keepers also worked as recruiters. They offered credit to people to buy various imported goods such as hoes, ploughs, blankets, cooking utensils, clothing, etc. In this way, trade and technology expanded in rural areas as a result of migrant labour system.

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<sup>536</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>537</sup> J. Pampallis, Foundations of the new South Africa, p. 25.

In the Makgabeng area, the recruitment centre for potential migrant labourers was situated at Senwabarwana<sup>538</sup> on the eastern end of the Makgabeng mountains. Senwabarwana<sup>539</sup>, became a recruitment centre mainly because of the White character it had acquired over time. The name Bochum is German, and the settlement got this name from the Berlin missionaries who established and expanded their religious, medical and educational activities from that base. The Franz family were the ones who were mostly responsible for the expansion of those activities in that area. As a result, Senwabarwana became a small settlement with a European face with modern buildings of a hospital, a church, trading stores, residential houses and so on. This European outlook greatly shaped identities around the Makgabeng-Hananwa vicinity. Interaction – which has been discussed and shown that it is important in identity creation – manifested itself between the local Black communities European inhabitants at Senwabarwana.

With this emerging European-like infrastructure, Senwabarwana attracted various White governments which turned it into their administrative centre. The offices of the Commissioners, the magistrates, the police and such related government functionaries were then housed in Senwabarwana. No wonder Senwabarwana also came to be a labour recruiting centre. Various sectors, particularly the mines, used Senwabarwana base to acquire cheap labourers in Makgabeng and the surrounding areas. In addition to travelling

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<sup>538</sup> Literally meaning “where the San people drink water”.

<sup>539</sup> Was formerly known as Bochum.

to the communities and chiefs' kraals, the recruiting agents even used the services of local Blacks who helped them to recruit their fellows. Makwena Johannes Setumu was once employed to help in recruiting labourers in Senwabarwana<sup>540</sup>. According to Setumu, he started helping the recruiting agents while he was still working in a German store as a shopkeeper in the 1950s<sup>541</sup>. Most agents would approach him whereupon he would go out to villages to spread the word and convince people to join the migrant labour system.

Besides being recruited by agents and their helpers, young men used to walk to Setumu to check job offers and opportunities. Job seekers became used to migrant labour system and regarded it as their way of life. It became an acceptable, normal phenomenon. Jim Mpoeleng Ramoroka said that they used to walk from Early Dawn village to Senwabarwana in their quest to go to find work in urban areas<sup>542</sup>. Ramoroka landed himself a job in a construction company in contrast to many of the Makgabeng young men who were mostly employed in the mines<sup>543</sup>. The number of the migrant workers from the Makgabeng area was increasing towards the end of the 1950s, and this meant that their influence – particularly in shaping identities - on their people would be extensive when they returned home.

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<sup>540</sup> Interview, Makwena Johannes Setumu, Schoogezicht village, 17 June 2004.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid.

<sup>542</sup> Interview, Jim Mpoeleng Ramoroka, Early Dawn village, 15 June 2004.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

In the earliest days of migrancy, workers from the Makgabeng area, with the absence of technologically advanced transport system, young men would walk on foot to their different areas. Later, as technology advanced, migrant workers would ride on wagons to their various destinations. Those who worked on White farms were sometimes escorted by horses from their villages. The development of the mining industry brought with it technological advancement which included fuel-driven transport devices such as trains, buses and motor cars. According to Setumu, he would gather his recruits at Senwabarwana, from where they would be bussed to Polokwane. From Polokwane they would take a train to their various employment destinations, particularly to the Witwatersrand mines. Transport technology, an important aspect of globalisation, greatly enhanced people's interaction, and in that way further contributed to identity creation.

The departure of able-bodied men into the urban areas to work for specific periods changed identities, outlook and social lives in rural areas such as Makgabeng. Women, children and the elderly were left to look after families in the absence of men. The situation among communities changed as boys who had just graduated from the mountain schools, immediately geared themselves to travel to the mines and other working areas for periodic employment. This became an acceptable and fashionable way of life, and it was part of manhood to be involved in migrant labour at some point in one's

life. According to Moses Ngwepe<sup>544</sup>, going to work for wages enhanced a young man's status the same way as going for circumcision<sup>545</sup>. Young men who have never gone to work were referred to as *bomahlalela* or *malofa*<sup>546</sup>, in a derogatory manner like those who did not go to the mountain school, who were called *mašoboro*<sup>547</sup>. Therefore, to have been involved in migrant labour, young men not only got money and other material possession, they also boosted their social status. These young men who participated in the migrant labour system acquired a distinct identity of higher social class which distinguished them from the rest.

As much as the White authorities and the mine owners needed cheap migrant labour, they were also faced with a challenge of controlling it. One of the ways by which the authorities regulated the migrant labour system was through the pass laws. The control of movement and activities of Blacks through pass laws has a long history in South Africa. However, it was only after the large mineral discoveries that they were strictly enforced and their scope extended. For instance, after the discovery of diamonds in Kimberly, the Transvaal government forced Blacks who left the Transvaal to have a pass<sup>548</sup>. After the discovery of gold, the Transvaal governments

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<sup>544</sup> Interview, Moses Ngwepe, Early Dawn village, 18 May 2003.

<sup>545</sup> Interview, Moses Ngwepe, Early Dawn village, 18 May 2003.

<sup>546</sup> "Loafers".

<sup>547</sup> Boys who did not go through circumcision school.

<sup>548</sup> J. Pampallis, Foundations of the new South Africa, p 28.

(both Boer and British), introduced laws requiring Black men to carry passes<sup>549</sup>. These laws were meant to control workers' movements for various purposes: to prevent workers deserting before their contracts expired and to channel them to areas with labour shortages. A pass was a document giving the bearer permission to be in a certain area or to move from one place to another. It contained such information as bearer's name, home address, his father's name, his national group, the name and address of his employers and how long he had worked for them, what he had done, his wages, a character reference from each employer<sup>550</sup>.

According to Tlhaahlaa Samuel Ngwepe, applying for a pass in the Makgabeng area was done at Senwabarwana by young men<sup>551</sup>. Obtaining a pass, according to Ngwepe, was a first step of a young man's dream of going to work in the urban areas. In addition to keeping information at administrative centres such as Senwabarwana, all the information on the pass was also registered at the Pass Office in Pretoria, in order to help the authorities to keep track of all workers. In order to be able to differentiate between labourers, non-labourers and deserters, various types of passes were required. The six-days pass was required by a person who wanted to look for a job in a particular district. If he didn't have a job within six days, he

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<sup>549</sup> J. Pampallis, Foundations of the new South Africa, p 29.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>551</sup> Interview, Tlhaahlaa Samuel Ngwepe, Early Dawn village, 13 May 2003.

had to leave the district. This put pressure on people to take a job as soon as they were offered, irrespective of wages and working conditions.

A special pass was required by a worker to show that he was employed and had to be carried whenever he left his employer's premises. According to Albert Mokobane, these documents which they called *sepentšhele* - a Northern Sotho corruption of the word "special" - were collected at Senwabarwana as proof of their employment<sup>552</sup>. Those who did not receive the *sepentšhele* meant that they were not employed. Young men would often travel to Senwabarwana to look out for *sepentšhele*. After the expiry of the employment period of the special pass, the bearer of the pass would be required and "*lokiša dipampiri*", literally meaning to "put papers in order". Workers who did not "put their papers in order", or those who left work before the expiry of their contracts, were reported to the Pass Office so that they could be easily tracked. Another type of regulatory document was a travelling pass. It was required by a person who left his home to go elsewhere. Another one was a night pass which had to be carried by Blacks who were outdoors in a town after 9 p.m.<sup>553</sup>.

Having recruited and transported their cheap labour to where they wanted to work, the employers were now faced with a task of accommodating them. Just like how the various White governments assisted the job owners with

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<sup>552</sup> Interview, Albert Mokobane, Early Dawn village, 30 November 2004.

<sup>553</sup> J. Pampallis, Foundations of the new South Africa, p 29.

recruitment and regulation of the labourers' movements, employers also received assistance in as far as accommodation of labourers was concerned. In order to establish tighter control over the labourers and decrease labour costs, the compound system was set up in the 1880's. Under this system, the labourers were confined to closed compound for the entire period of contract. One study has described compound life as follows:

The compound system was mainly applicable to the mines although it was later used as an accommodation device for other sectors. The compound was an enclosure mostly surrounded by a high corrugated iron fence and covered by wire netting. The men usually lived in groups of up to twenty in a room, in huts or iron cabins built against the fence. They went to work along a tunnel, bought food and clothing from the company stores and received "free" medical treatment but no wages during sickness, all within the compound. Men due for discharge were confined to detention rooms for several days, during which they only wore blankets and fingerless gloves padlocked to their wrists, swallowed purgatives and were examined for stones concealed in cuts, wounds, swelling and orifices. - J. and R Simons (1983).

According to Mpoeleng Ramoroka, accommodation was a big challenge for those newly-recruited migrant labourers<sup>554</sup>. After him and his companions, Job Ramoroka and Nkgamatha Ngwepe were recruited by the agent, Makwena Setumu, they found themselves in Kempton Park after a long train journey. They were accommodated in a compound – which they corrupted by calling it *komponeng*, known by the name, Tintela. Other known compounds around the Kempton Park and Pretoria areas which were not specifically for mines were Nthafeni, Phelindaba and Mamelodi<sup>555</sup>.

The significance of all these compounds mentioned thus far was that within them, communal identities were created as men from the same areas moved closer to one another. According to Ramoroka, men from the Makgabeng and the surrounding areas identified with one another as they shared the common hardships of compound life<sup>556</sup>. Some of them were lucky to share the same rooms while most of them constantly visited one another. When they were off duty, gatherings took forms of drinking together, reviving their traditional games such as *mmele* and *moruba*<sup>557</sup>. Drinking beer became the most important pass time as there were very little

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<sup>554</sup> Interview, Jim Mpoeleng Ramoroka, Early Dawn village, June 2004.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

<sup>557</sup> Traditional games played with small stones on boards or on little holes dug on the ground.

facilities for lonely men in those single-sex compounds to keep themselves busy<sup>558</sup>.

The compound system had many advantages for the job owners, at the same time severely exploiting the migrant workers. With all the workers living together and their movements restricted, it was easier to control the labour force, ensure punctuality and maintain strict discipline. It also helped to minimise desertion by labourers. The employers' labour costs were cut since compounds provided a cheap way of housing and feeding labourers. In the mines, tight control over compound workers helped the companies in their efforts to prevent mineral theft. The system also entrenched racial and ethnic divisions among the workers. Although Black labourers of the same ethnic group were inclined to spend time together, this was also encouraged and formalised by the authorities in order to prevent solidarity among the labourers.

For the Black labourers, the compound system was just suffering. Food supplies were insufficient so that the men had to spend their meagre wages to buy extra food. In general, compound life was unpleasant and unhygienic and placed great psychological stress on the workers who had no privacy as they found it very difficult to adjust to the abnormal life they led away from their families and friends.

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<sup>558</sup> Interview, Jim Mpoeleng Ramoroka, Early Dawn village, June 2004.

In accordance with the notion that the salience of identities is dependent on the nature of the context<sup>559</sup>, the Makgabeng migrant labourers regarded themselves as compound dwellers and mine workers, together with labourers from other areas. Their identities as Makgabeng residents were temporarily overshadowed by the salient ones based on the context of the environment they found themselves in. Again, their interaction with others resulted in identity formation which was either accommodative or frictional. The friendships which they formed with labourers from other groups influenced their identities, and the basis of such friendships served to distinguish one friendship group from another.

This is further explained by Castells's notion of identity as a "shared experience"<sup>560</sup>. In this case, Castells maintains that sharing the same experiences, interests, habits and tastes allows people to relate to, and identify with one another on some level. This fosters shared meaning of situations, which makes it possible to have shared identities. These shared identities can transcend obvious identity markers such as race, gender, age and class. In this case, the Makgabeng labourers in compounds and the other labourers from other different tribal origins found themselves sharing the same experiences. In this way, their identities were influenced and shaped by this sharing. Their form of dress, talking and life styles were

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<sup>559</sup> A. Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, p. 104.

<sup>560</sup> M. Castells, "Globalisation, Identity...", p. 7.

shaped by this sharing and interaction with others, and eventually all those traits were exported back to Makgabeng when the labourers returned home.

Regardless of the hardships of compound life endured by the labourers, they still found ways of trying to alleviate such stressful lives. After all, they had been coerced into the system, and therefore, as human beings, tried to cope with their difficult conditions. The communal identities which the migrant labourers were born into in rural village such as Makgabeng, soon became evident even in the compounds. After knocking off from work, especially during weekends, men from Makgabeng would come together and share so many things, especially in beer halls which were built near or inside the compounds. In addition to reminding one another of their lives back in rural villages, they also began to be involved in entertainment activities together.

One of the most powerful entertainments to emerge from compounds around Soweto, Tembisa, Mamelodi and Saulsville was the powerful drums and flute dance, known as *dinaka*. According Matome Johannes Seanego, the Makgabeng inmates of compounds in those mentioned townships formed themselves into *dinaka* groups<sup>561</sup>. During weekends and holidays each group would rehearse by itself while on special occasions they would invite one another at one venue for festivals. During such occasions, the

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<sup>561</sup> Interview, Matome Johannes Seanego, New Jerusalem village, 19 September 2003.

Makgabeng *dinaka* groups would assemble either in Leralla, Nthafeni or Sethokgwa in Tembisa, or in any compound around Pretoria or Johannesburg<sup>562</sup>. With such festivities, the Makgabeng migrant labourers retained their identity in the compounds.

In addition to *dinaka*, other games were also played such as *moruba* and *mmele*. Later the new generation of migrant labourers introduced modern games such as cards and football. Football became very popular as it brought inmates from various compounds into cheerful afternoons. It also encouraged labourers to socialise with other groups as the game adopted a universal character<sup>563</sup>.

The migrant labourers in the compounds did not only strengthen their identities through drinking sorghum beer, *dinaka* dance and other traditional games. They also established burial societies together. It must be borne in mind that the migrant labourers only went out to work for a particular period, after which they had to return to their permanent homes in rural reserves. As a result, those workers were still residents of rural villages where they were going to be buried. According to Samson Phukubje, the Makgabeng migrant labourers realised the enormous costs of transporting and making funeral arrangements for their colleagues who died in the compounds<sup>564</sup>.

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<sup>562</sup> Ibid.

<sup>563</sup> Interview, Matome Johannes Seanego, New Jerusalem village, 19 September 2003.

<sup>564</sup> Interview, Samson Phukubje, Lehwaneng village, 17 September 2003.

The costs of transporting the corpse to rural villages was beyond the meagre wages they received, and there was nowhere a migrant labourer could be buried, except in their original rural homes. As a result, they came together and established burial societies in which they accumulated funds in preparation for any death case. On particular Sundays, burial society members would come together from various compounds, collect money, discuss issues, and even enjoy drinking together. Such gatherings sustained people's identities as residents of Makgabeng even if they were hundreds of miles away from home.

Jonathan Laka revealed that besides such gatherings by Makgabeng labourers from different compounds, they also helped one another as messengers and postmen to deliver messages, parcels, money and letters back home to their wives and children<sup>565</sup>. Some contracts were as long as six months while others even stretched for a full year. However, some were as short as one month. As a result, those who had long contracts depended on those with shorter ones to send greetings, letters and money, back home.

Some of the Makgabeng labourers who accumulated enough money, especially those who had better jobs because of their little education, were able to buy houses in townships. By that time the authorities had clearly and

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<sup>565</sup> Interview, Jonathan Laka, Kgatu village, 6 November 2003.

decisively separated residential areas on racial lines, especially by legislation such as the Group Areas Act of 1950. Apparently, these individuals who afforded township houses – albeit with difficulty – earned better wages and they were also tired of the hardships they endured in compounds. They also wanted to stay with their wives (mostly not children) in those four roomed “matchbox” houses. According to Tlhaahlaa Ngwepe, some of the first Makgabeng workers to own location houses around Pretoria, Kempton Park and Johannesburg townships were himself, Mpompala Ngwepe, Phihledi Ramoroka, Agym Ramotsepane, Milford Ramotsepane, Samson Ramoroka, and a few others<sup>566</sup>. Those who afforded these township houses apparently had better, skilled jobs<sup>567</sup>.

In addition to high prices involved in the purchase of such houses, the terms and conditions of acquiring such houses were also difficult, hence so few people afforded such housing. However, some men objected the idea of owning a “second home” as that would destroy their families back home. Israel Ramoroka pointed out that most of the men, who bought houses in townships, faced a serious dilemma<sup>568</sup>. The wives at home should either come down to the township to the new house, or the men should find another wife to live with in the new house. This was a two–edged sword because, should the original wife abandon the house in Makgabeng and

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<sup>566</sup> Interview, Tlhaahlaa Samuel Ngwepe, Early Dawn village, 13 May 2003.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> Interview, Israel Ramoroka, Lehwaneng village, 16 September 2003.

come to the township, the rural family would suffer and ultimately fall into pieces. Again should the wife at home stay there, chances were that the man would get another wife to occupy the township house, in which the man might turn his back on the rural family, thereby marking its demise. Therefore, the migrant labour system had its concomitant effect of the destruction of the family, an important unit and identity marker.

## **The consequences of labour migrancy in Makgabeng**

The periodic migration of labourers from the Makgabeng area and then back again to that area, did not only affect the individual migrants themselves, but also had wide ranging socio-economic impact in various communities. One of the major consequences of the migrant labour system was the acceleration and entrenchment of the money economy which was fast replacing the old ways of exchange, such as bartering. One of the main aims of the creators and perpetrators of the migrant labour system was to force individuals to sell their cheap labour and earn money. As a result, the periodic migration of workers greatly increased the flow of money into the rural villages. According to Nkadi Ngwepe, items such as sorghum, grains, maize, chickens and goats, were gradually replaced by money as exchange media in the Makgabeng area, and in other rural areas probably<sup>569</sup>. Ngwepe said that for instance, instead of offering sorghum in exchange for home brewed beer, drinkers began to use money<sup>570</sup>.

Besides small items, money was also used to purchase bigger assets. As already shown in the purchase of land in the Makgabeng area, the farm buyers collected pounds and shillings to have those farms bought. People who had access to money, especially those who got it as migrant labourers, accumulated livestock for themselves as they bought cattle, goats and

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<sup>569</sup> Interview, Nkadi Ngwepe, Norma A village, 16 and 19 May 2003.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid.

sheep. This accumulation of livestock, which then multiplied by natural reproduction, enhanced the social status of owners who became wealthy. Therefore, the participation in migrant labour system became a way of climbing the social ladder as it enriched individuals. The accumulation of livestock through money also meant that young men were able to pay *magadi* (bride price) for their marriages. This again enhanced the status of young men as they graduated from bachelorhood to manhood.

Men who went away for certain periods came back with the ability to pay taxes, something that was deliberately created by the White authorities in order to force the Blacks to sell their labour. Jonathan Laka remembered how the police from Senwabarwana station would raid the Makgabeng communities, searching for those who did not pay taxes<sup>571</sup>. Constable Maboko was one of the dreaded Black police officer who used to harass and arrest people who failed to pay their taxes<sup>572</sup>. These raids were intended to further intimidate those young men who were unwilling to take part in the migrant labour system. As a result, many young men were either coerced into the system, or attracted to it as it was a social status enhancing mechanism.

One other consequence of the money economy which began to flourish due to the flow of money into rural areas was the mushrooming of trading stores

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<sup>571</sup> Interview, Jonathan Laka, Kgatu village, 6 November 2003.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

in the Makgabeng villages. Originally, the trading stores owners were of European origin, mostly the Germans and the Jews. However, later in the 1940s and 1950s the Blacks became trading stores owners<sup>573</sup>. Because of the fact that the farms were bought, it was required of the trading store owners to apply for permission to do business in those farms. Although this appeared to be the deal between the co-purchasers and the prospective store owners, the White governments, through their local representatives – commissioners - were heavily involved in the processes of the store owners acquiring permission to do business within the bought farms<sup>574</sup>.

In addition to the involvement of the local commissioners in the establishment of trading stores, the Makgabeng chiefs, on whose jurisdiction the farms situated, were also involved in the process. The agreement of building a trading store was therefore a cumbersome exercise which required a complicated process. This is an example of a tribal resolution taken by the co-purchasers of the farm, Norma A on the establishment of a trading store:

At a public meeting of the Bakoni (sic) tribe of Natives under Acting Chieftaines Makwena Matlala, represented by Ben Matlalala, held at Matlalala's location, District Pietersburg, on 3/11/1948, there being present Mr. Cowan,

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<sup>573</sup> Interview, Jonathan Laka, Kgatu village, 6 November 2003.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid.

Native Commissioner, Pietersburg, Ben Matlala, Headmen, Councillors and followers, it was resolved:

1. That the Matlala tribe agrees to the request of the co-purchasers of the Southern Portion of the farm Norma No. 989, District Pietersburg, in regard to the lease of a trading site on this farm to JOSEPH MAKHURU MAPHETO<sup>575</sup>.

The tribal resolution also detailed other agreements regarding the size of the site, the period of the lease, rental and such related conditions<sup>576</sup>. The agreement was sealed by signatures by the chieftain's representative, farm representatives, while the Native Commissioner wrote out a certificate of the agreement<sup>577</sup>.

The mushrooming of trading stores, with Blacks increasingly becoming owners, had been taking place since the early 1940's in the Makgabeng area. For instance, plans to establish a trading store in Mokumunu were underway as early as 1944<sup>578</sup>. Cyprian Kgomo was the prospective store owner who applied to establish his business on that farm<sup>579</sup>. In 1952 the prospective store owner, Elias Maila, was conducting negotiations to erect

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<sup>575</sup> File No. 2/10/6/21. Native Commissioner, Bochem.

<sup>576</sup> Ibid.

<sup>577</sup> File No. 2/10/6/21. Native Commissioner, Bochem.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid.

his store on the farm, Early Dawn<sup>580</sup>. In Old Langsyne, in 1955, Abel Rangata was applying to start his business there, while Margaret Sehlako intended to establish hers in the farm, Baranen<sup>581</sup>.

The establishment of trading stores changed the identities and many ways of life in the Makgabeng area. In addition to the stimulation of the circulation of money, which most of it flowed from the migrant labourers, the stores changed the socio-economic fabric of villages. There emerged new occupations of shop owners, shop keepers, shop cleaners and shop gardeners. The new class of residents who came to rely mostly on money in their economic activities, represented the emergence of a new class identity within the entire communal structure. This emerging class intensified the circulation of money in rural villages and this in turn increased the trade in and circulation of modern commodities, a development which further changed the outlook of rural villages like Makgabeng.

For instance, the rural Makgabeng villagers came to know and taste various trade goods and commodities. According to Sania Ramoroka, the local trading stores brought them foodstuffs, clothes, household equipment and farming implements which they did not know before<sup>582</sup>. Sweets, bread, sugar, tea, cloth, hoes, ploughs, soap, paraffin, candles, matches and

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<sup>580</sup> Ibid.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid.

<sup>582</sup> Interview, Sania Ramoroka, Norma A village, 19 May 2003.

cooking oil, were some of the commodities which rapidly found their ways into Makgabeng through the mushroomed trading stores<sup>583</sup>. The area's identities were no longer to be the same again. The emergence of Black store owners in the Makgabeng area also meant that they were able to accumulate wealth in monetary terms. Their wealth was no longer only measured in livestock or agricultural products. Another significant development was that within that new class which owned money, there were women, like Margaret Sehlako who established her trading store in Baranen. This was an extraordinary development by the standards of those times when women were still heavily dependent on men. Thus cultural identities of women who were defined only as housewives, children bearers and land tillers were changed by these new developments.

While the migrant labourers generated money from their work places which helped to change the complexion of rural areas such as Makgabeng, sometimes those workers physically brought some other items and commodities from their work places. Phineas Sepuru noted that some valuable items such as radio were rarely found in local stores and they were then bought from where they were working, especially in bigger towns<sup>584</sup>. Earliest record players, known as "gramophones" were also some of the valuable commodities mainly bought from towns to rural villages. These sophisticated items such as radio and record players not only further

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<sup>583</sup> Ibid.

<sup>584</sup> Interview, Phineas Sepuru, Kgatu village, 5 May 2004.

changed the outlook of rural Makgabeng villages, they also marked the technological advancement of the area. While the iron ploughs and hoes technologically improved the subsistence agriculture in Makgabeng, it was devices such as radios which enhanced the global character of the area.

The flow of people, goods and ideas, a phenomenon which was later known as globalisation, was gradually emerging in the Makgabeng area through the introduction of these capitalist tendencies in that area. This process inevitably led to creation of new identities, a point which was emphasised by Castells who declared that “[o]ur world is, and our lives, are being shaped by the conflicting trends of globalization [sic] and identity”<sup>585</sup>. This is because the information technology revolution, and the structuring of capitalism, according to Castells, has induced a new form of society, the network society<sup>586</sup>. The Makgabeng communities were slowly but surely being incorporated within the “network society”.

These capitalist developments coincided with the establishment of schools in the Makgabeng area. More and more schools emerged, although in some cases classes were conducted under trees as well as inside enclosures of tree branches, or at least inside makeshift houses of mud. Most of the earliest schools in the Makgabeng area were built between two or more farms. This was intended to cater for the children of more than one farm.

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<sup>585</sup> M. Castells, Information Age, p. 1.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

For instance, the school, Makgabeng primary, was built in 1952 between the farms Early Dawn and Old Langsyne. This development of building schools between farms greatly shaped identities in the Makgabeng area as communities came to share experiences of education in those schools. Interaction of communities of one farm with others played a significant role in identity formation<sup>587</sup>. That kind of interaction with others which resulted in identity formation could either have been accommodative or frictional. This was because clubbing together to build schools sometimes brought disagreements while at times communities agreed. However, that interaction - be it friendly or hostile – impacted on identity formation. Communities who shared the same school, regarded themselves as belonging together as they discussed, planned and worked for the same goals around the education of their children.

The co-operation of different Makgabeng farms (villages) around schools is explained by Castells's notion of identity as a "shared experience"<sup>588</sup>. In this case, Castells maintains that sharing the same experiences, interests, habits and tastes allow people to relate to, identify with, one another on some level. This fosters shared meaning of situations, which makes it possible to have shared identities. These shared identities can transcend obvious identity markers such as race, gender, age and class. In this case, people of different farms (villages) – who in turn had different origins and

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<sup>587</sup> R. Jenkins, *Social Identity*, p. 22.

<sup>588</sup> M. Castells, "Globalisation, Identity and the State". *Social Dynamics*, p. 7.

backgrounds - found themselves sharing the same experiences of establishing schools in their area, to such an extent that they identified with one another as a result of that shared experience.

This idea is also emphasised by G. de Vos and L. Romanucci-Ross (1975) who point out that a sense of common origin, common beliefs and values, a common sense of survival – in brief, a common cause – has been of great importance in uniting men into self-defining groups<sup>589</sup>. They further argue that growing up together in a social unit, sharing common verbal and gestural language allows men to develop mutually understood accommodations, which radically diminish situations of possible confrontation and conflict. The Makgabeng communities which embarked on common causes such as building schools together, found themselves defining themselves as a “social unit”. In addition to communities becoming clear “self-defining groups”, among them emerged new identities of school children, school committees, school teachers, school principals and school inspectors. These became clearly distinguished groups of people who emerged in the Makgabeng area as a result of educational advancement in that area.

The economic, educational and technological advancement which was closely related to the migrancy of labourers in the Makgabeng area, brought

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<sup>589</sup> G. de Vos and L. Romanucci-Ross, Ethnic Identity: Cultural Communities and Change, p. 5.

changes which some of them were temporary while some were permanent. As a result, there were other experiences and developments which shaped identities more than others, depending on the extent and impact of such experiences and developments. According to Castells, identities can only become an experience if only enforced enough over time<sup>590</sup>. Castells argues that shared experiences can be contrived, but that the resultant identities will be superficial until they are forced enough over time<sup>591</sup>. Identity can be built artificially, but it only becomes a material force and a material source of meaning when it has been enforced enough over time and in depths of people's bodies and souls<sup>592</sup>. However, short-lived experiences also play a role in fostering identities. Some identities are transient in nature, while others may last longer, even after the actual interaction of groups has ceased to exist<sup>593</sup>.

For instance, the migrant labourers returned to Makgabeng with some influences they adopted from where they had been working. According to Frans Rammutla, tasting work in towns meant a change in the form of dress, hairstyles, the way of walking and even the language<sup>594</sup>. Young men who returned from work brought those changes which some of them

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<sup>590</sup> M. Castells, Globalisation, Identity ..., p. 7.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>592</sup> J. Muller et al, Challenges of Globalisation..., p. 115.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid, p. 115.

<sup>594</sup> Interview, Frans Rammutla, Early Dawn village, 5 May 2004.

became identities after they were enforced over time. For instance, these workers started phasing out the round shaped huts by replacing them with rectangular flat houses which they saw during their migrancy period. This example became a permanent feature in the Makgabeng architectural style as people began to move away from round thatched huts to modern rectangular brick houses. However, some of the “short-lived experiences” which the migrant labourers brought to Makgabeng area, like the foreign languages they adopted from their places of work, did not have any meaningful impact in that area. In general, the migrant labour system brought new identities in Makgabeng in which transient ones faded quickly, while others lasted for longer periods.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **MAKGABENG IDENTITIES TODAY**

In this chapter, the present identities are discussed as they are expressed, observed, conceptualised and manifested in the Makgabeng area. In

addition to the communal identity creation – which has been the major focus of this study – conclusion on the following identity markers will also be arrived at: political, racial, religious, social, economic, educational, health, age, gender, habitual, lingual and behavioural. In the whole text of this study, these identity markers have been shown how they interplayed themselves within the micro-context through to the macro-context levels, and in this concluding chapter, their present situation will be observed and assessed against all these contexts. In the whole study, identity creation in the Makgabeng area has been traced as far back as the earliest occupation of that area by the San in about the 16<sup>th</sup> century up to today (2007).

The creation of communal identities in Makgabeng was a process which took place over time. Today, the people in Makgabeng live in small communal units which are conveniently referred to as villages. The villages in that area are more than thirty in number (see map on VILLAGES/COMMUNITIES AND FARMS), and new settlements continue to mushroom as populations explode. As already explained in this study, the communal nature of the communities in Makgabeng evolved, changed and took different forms under various circumstances and contexts. The present villages of Makgabeng reflect the demarcations of the farms which were surveyed, fenced off, and sold towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the successive White governments of South Africa. The arrival of the Whites in the Makgabeng area completely changed and disrupted the communal way in which polities, clans and families

occupied land. Their policies on land, administration, politics and all other aspects of life, totally changed the communal setups of communities.

Today the communal entities created by the surveying, fencing off and purchase of farms are still villages which are distinct from one another. Each and every communal entity – a village – bears its own distinct name, and in most cases such names are still European, indicating that they were named under former European authorities who were in control at that time. Such European names of villages in Makgabeng include Early Dawn, Old Langsyne, Norma, Harrietswish, Gemarke, Schoongezicht and Milbank, to name just few examples. However, the current democratisation of South Africa brought with it the need for transformation, and the change of names is one of the priorities in the new dispensation. As a result, the process of changing names of communal entities in areas such as those in Makgabeng is underway, even though this may not necessarily change the communal character of those villages.

The current process of changing names of farms and villages in the Makgabeng area – and in the whole South Africa – is provided for by the South African Geographical Names Council Act (Act No. 118 of 1998). This Act provides for the establishment of the South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC), which is a body responsible in standardising

names in South Africa<sup>595</sup>. There are various reasons forwarded for the justification of this process of changing names, but that is outside the scope of this study. It is only sufficient to say that the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994 necessitated some measures to correct the past injustices, stereotypes and distortions. And in that transformation, changing of names was one of the priorities. Not all the names are to be changed though, and the process is mainly driven by communities. In the Makgabeng, these are some of the names that had been changed by November 2004:<sup>596</sup>

Normandy (into Madibeng).

Schoongezicht B (into Mochadibe).

Gallashiles (into Ga-Hlako).

Milbank (into Ga-Monyebodi).

Ritterhouse (into Mokumuru).

Lomonside (into Ga-Lekgwara).

In some villages, the community-driven process of changing names was not without disagreements and quarrels. In most cases, disagreements on changing names stem from the days of the purchase of farms. The problems and divisions which resulted from the purchase of farms in the Makgabeng area (fully discussed in Chapter 6), manifested in the current process of changing names of farms/villages. For instance, in Early Dawn,

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<sup>595</sup> SAGNC, Department of Arts, Culture and Technology, A Handbook on Geographical Names, p. 1.

<sup>596</sup> Blouberg Municipality Circular on Name Changes, 2003.

the original settlement which appears on the earliest map before the survey and demarcation of farms is Ga-Ngwepe (literally, Ngwepe's place). This area was named after the hereditary headmanship of the Ngwepe family and their people. Ga-Ngwepe was later surveyed and demarcated into the farms, Early Dawn and Millstream. The farms were purchased jointly by people who came from Moletji, Botlokwa, and some remote areas, as well as those who were born and bred in the Makgabeng area.

Later the two farms merged and the name Early Dawn dominated as it was the one frequently used. Apparently the purchasers who came from remote areas occupied the farm Early Dawn, while the ones who originated there at Makgabeng, occupied Millstream and the former group insisted on the use of the name Early Dawn<sup>597</sup>. With the advantage of literacy, the former group as a dominant social actor, succeeded to officialise that name and it came to be used in official correspondence and records of the whole village<sup>598</sup>. As a result, in this context, the name Early Dawn became a salient identity for all community members above all other references to the village. This is according to the identity creation theory that the salience of identities is dependent on the nature of the context<sup>599</sup>.

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<sup>597</sup> Interview, Moses Ngwepe, Early Dawn village, 18 May 2003.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid.

<sup>599</sup> A. Gramsci, Selections From the Prison Notebooks, p. 104.

As already pointed out in Chapter 6 on land, the farm purchasers who came from remote areas did not relinquish allegiance to their original chiefs. In the case of Early Dawn, this resulted in the purchasers - influenced by the literate, Christian buyers from further afield – turning their backs on the Matlala royal house and its local link, the Ngwepe headmanship. Now, during the current process of changing names, squabbles erupted in Early Dawn when there was a suggestion of reverting to the original name, Ga-Ngwepe. This issue divided the community into old lines of the origins and allegiance of the original farm purchasers. However, the local Blouberg municipality intervened to resolve the matter and the name Early Dawn was retained.

The present government's policy to change names indicates its interest in shaping people's identities, in which it hopes to correct the past wrongs. The feeling is that the previous White minority governments had imposed their identity markers – the farm names – on most of the people of South Africa. For its part, the current government chose not to impose names, but gave communities opportunity to choose names which they want to be defined with. Even if that process had complications in some instances, it was generally a chance of people such as in the Makgabeng to express their own identities by defining who they are with the names of their own places of birth.

The original names of these communities – which are reverted to in some cases – are mostly expressions of identities of those communities. Most of the names bear the possessive suffix, Ga-, which indicate the ownership of that place by the one whose name succeeds the suffix. For instance, the name, Ga-Ngwepe, indicates that the place belongs to the people of Ngwepe. In this case, Ngwepe was a headman of the community in that area and most families were the Ngwepes. Other examples of such names with the significance of belonging and ownership in the Makgabeng area are Ga-Hlako, Ga-Lekgwara, Ga-Monyebodi, to name just a few.

The nucleus of the communal entities in the Makgabeng area has always been a family. Even before the disruption of the communal arrangement of the Black societies by European intrusion and invasion, a family unit was the core of society. Before the arrival of the Europeans and their imposition of their political and administrative policies, the Black families, which were mostly extended, settled in clans. In the Makgabeng area for instance, the Ngwepe families would live more or less next to one another and form their own clan. This was the same with the other clans of Setumu, Mojela, Seanego, Phukubje, Ramoroka Mokobane and Mpebe.

After the arrival of the White colonialists and their imposed policies of demarcating and fencing of farms which they sold, the original set up of communal settlement was disrupted. People as far as Moletji, Botlokwa, Ga-Mamabolo, Ga-Dikgale, and other far away areas, flocked to Makgabeng to

purchase farms. People of different origins and backgrounds found themselves cramped in the same fenced entities. The fencing of the Makgabeng land into bought farms not only brought people from further afield, it also separated relatives and family members. Before the advent of these European arrangements, Black communities lived loosely and occupied land without fixed boundaries. As a result, they could move and interact freely and make relatives (by marriage, for instance) even to the most remote areas. With the fencing of farms, friendships and relationships were cut off by fences. This led to relatives living in separate farms, while strangers found themselves living within the same fenced entities. This resulted in destruction of some identities (of those separated friends and relatives) and the construction of new ones (of those strangers who found themselves in the same bought farms). This is another form of imposed (coerced) identity creation<sup>600</sup>.

The separation of relatives by fences and the cramping of strangers into the same farms had some problems here and there, of which most of them were discussed in Chapter 6 on land. The separation of relatives by the fencing of farms in the Makgabeng area can be illustrated by the fact that in the farms Norma A, Early Dawn, Ketting, Sadu and Non Parella, there are families of Ngwepe, Setumu, Ramoroka, Mojela and Seanego, in almost all of them. These examples indicate that these clans which had loosely

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<sup>600</sup> J. Muller et al, Challenges of Globalisation, p. 116.

occupied the Makgabeng area, were suddenly and forcefully disrupted by the White colonialists' policies of surveying and carving of their land which they sold, in which they found themselves separated from one another.

The separation of clans, relatives and family members meant that they now lived in separate villages. Their village identity became more salient than the fact that they once belonged to the same clans or families, as they now regard themselves as residents of those villages. For instance, a Setumu in Norma A regarded himself more as belonging together with a Ngwepe in the same village, than belonging together with another Setumu in Early Dawn. The communal (village) identity of a Setumu and Ngwepe in Norma A village became more salient in that context, while the blood identity between the Setumu in Norma A and another Setumu in Early Dawn took a backseat. However, regardless of those communal identity changes, people did not stop from visiting, socialising and continuing their contacts with their relatives over the fences. People crossed those artificial barriers in order to see their relatives and they even created new relations by for instance, marrying across the fences, in other villages.

While the fencing of farms in the Makgabeng area separated clans, families and friends, it also lumped strangers into the same villages. The problems which were created by the cramping of people from different origins and backgrounds were discussed in Chapter 6 on land, particularly problems regarding political and chiefly allegiances of those people who purchased

the same farm. However, regardless of such differences, the people from the diverse origins who purchased the same farm, found themselves bound by the common shared experiences and interests. This resulted in the creation of a new common communal identity according to the theoretical proposition that identities are formed out of “shared experiences” [Castells 2000]. The co-purchasers of each farm in Makgabeng found themselves faced with the need to co-operate in pursuing common interests such as grazing, water supply, plot allocations and school buildings. Each communal entity (village) members were forced to meet regularly in addressing their day-to-day activities and the running of these communal entities. In this way, other identities of the co-purchasers, such as those which characterised different origins, took a backseat while their common communal identity became salient.

The resilience of the communal identities was also evident when the clans began to resurface even within the purchased farms. Each original purchaser cleared a yard where he built his homestead. As time went on, his family extended as his children grew. When the children reached a stage of having their own families, the sons usually built their homes just next to their father's. As a result, it was very common to see more than a dozen of related families occupying the same area, reviving the old clan system in which the Setumus, Mojelas, Ramorokas and Ngwepes, lived in separate groups.

As for the daughters of the farm purchasers, there were different approaches in every village. Daughters were normally expected to be married. Unmarried daughters with children, which were derogatorily referred to as *matlita*, were normally not allowed to own a piece of land where they could settle, just like the sons. In Early Dawn village, this anormally was changed by the protest made by Lekgalaka Setumu, who argued that the unmarried daughters were also their children, and instead of being abandoned, should be given plots to build their own homes<sup>601</sup>.

Another important defining feature related to the above points is that it was a rule that the youngest son was not supposed to move out of his parents' home<sup>602</sup>. He should stay with his parents, take care of them and inherit everything they have. However, today because many educated youth can no longer stick to the rural villages, even the last-born sons break this rule by leaving their parents behind to look for greener pastures, especially in towns.

But even today, the communal nature of identities in Makgabeng is still strongly manifested. People are still identified by those communal entities, villages, which were created through the carving, fencing and purchase of farms. With the "fostering of relations over time" [Castells 2000] communal identities lasted in the Makgabeng villages up to this day. Although at first

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<sup>601</sup> Interview, Isaac Nong, Early Dawn village, 22 December 2002.

<sup>602</sup> Interview, Isaac Nong, Early Dawn village, 22 December 2002.

co-purchasers from various origins and backgrounds viewed themselves as different, today members of each village regard themselves as belonging together within those communal entities. People express themselves, for instance, as belonging to the village of Early Dawn, Kgatu, Cracow or Mokumuru. They perceive themselves as part and parcel of those villages. With the disappearance of the generations of the original farm purchasers, the new generations of today find very few aspects to differ on. This is because, unlike the generation of the purchasers who were in many instances had different origins, the current generations were born in those Makgabeng villages, and that is why they perceive themselves as part of those villages. By expressing themselves in this way, they also strengthen the communal nature of their identities.

At micro-context level, communal identities in the Makgabeng area manifest themselves where individuals, families and clans in the same village cooperate and express the same identity of that same village. At meso-context level, even if clans and relatives were separated by fences which became farm boundaries, there is still a strong sense of bond and relationship all over the Makgabeng. For instance, the Setumus, Ngwepes, or Ramorokas, who were separated by fences, still regard themselves as belonging together, because they still continue to interact and visit one another. Uncles, grandparents and in-laws who live in separate villages still maintain their relations by occasionally crossing those fences in order to visit one another. At macro-level, the trend of the purchase of farms in South Africa

became an official directive as part of the colonial policy of successive White authorities. The triumphant White colonial policies filtered through to even the remotest communities such as those in Makgabeng. Those trends from the macro-level, interplayed themselves and resulted in the creation of communal entities, which became villages with which people strongly expressed their identities.

Closely related to communal identity creation, is politics as identity marker in the Makgabeng area. The state as the dominant social actor lay down rules in which the values of the state become the values of the society. Today, the Makgabeng area is traversed by political boundaries which demarcate its communities and villages into wards of local authorities which were created following the 1994 democratic dispensation in South Africa. Therefore, at a meso- and micro- context levels, the Makgabeng area had to adopt the values of the state at macro-context level in accordance with the political processes which unfolded throughout the country. According to the new constitutional arrangements after 1994, South Africa is divided into nine provinces, in which the Makgabeng area is part of Limpopo Province, which was called Northern Province immediately after 1994.

Limpopo Province is currently further subdivided into six districts, namely, Vhembe, Capricorn, Bohlabela, Mopani, Waterberg and Greater Sekhukhune (This number was later reduced to five as the sixth district was dismantled, its remnants attached to the provinces of Limpopo and

Mpumalanga). Makgabeng is in the Capricorn district, which is further subdivided into the following local municipalities: Lepelle-Nkumpi, Blouberg, Molemole, Polokwane and Aganang. The Makgabeng area is squarely within the Blouberg municipal area. Therefore, at meso-level the people of Makgabeng identify themselves more as residence of the political municipality of Blouberg. According to the interviews conducted around the Makgabeng area, the political identity of the people as belonging to the Blouberg municipality is more salient than other identity markers mainly because of the benefits which the communities expect from the local municipalities<sup>603</sup>. Communities expect municipalities to deliver services such as housing, electricity, sanitation and job creation, and that is why communities – including such as those in Makgabeng – are readily inclined to express their political identity as belonging to the Blouberg municipality, at least at meso-level.

Before the advent of democracy in South Africa, the country was divided into four provinces of Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal and the Transvaal, while Blacks were cramped into ethnically divided homelands. The Makgabeng communities were part of a Northern Sotho homeland of Lebowa. The conceptualisation of identity such as Lebowa, is what is referred to as imposed, or coerced identity creation, a notion which R. Jenkins refers to as “a model of internalisation which may occur if one is

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<sup>603</sup> Document of Sample Random Survey conducted by the Blouberg Municipality.

authoritatively labelled within an institutional setting”<sup>604</sup>. However, according to Jenkins, this model is not sufficient. Significant in the process whereby people acquire the identities with which they are labelled, is the capacity of authoritatively applied identities effectively to constitute or impinge upon individual experience<sup>605</sup>. The powers that be imposed an identity by labelling communities as Lebowans.

Imposed (coerced) identity creation is in contrast with what Castells [2000] regards as organically grown identities. The homeland concept was imposed on communities, and Lebowa was an example in which people were expected to have the same identity as Lebowans, or at least, become Northern Sothos. The Lebowa homeland was made of people of heterogeneous ethnic and tribal identities such as the Bapedi, Babirwa, Balobedu, Baroka, Batšhadibe, Bakone, Bahananwa and Batlokwa. With the approach of imposed identity creation, the apartheid authorities hoped to create a uniform identity of Lebowans, or Northern Sothos, above all the other identities.

However imposed identity creation such as labelling may also, of course, evoke resistance (which, no less than internalisation, is an ‘identity effect’

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<sup>604</sup> R. Jenkins, *Social Identity*, p. 22.

<sup>605</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22 - 23.

produced by labelling)<sup>606</sup>. For instance, social actors with power like the state, may use labelling as a form of imposing identities, and this may result in resistance of such labels like when most people in South Africa rejected labels such as “kaffirs”, “natives” and “non-Whites”. In the complicated nature of South Africa’s racial politics, there were communities which indeed denied the Lebowa identity which was an imposed label. The extent of the denial of the homeland identity in the remote rural Makgabeng area was not as intense as in the congested urban areas. This was because the rural areas such as Makgabeng were not as politically conscious, organised and active as in the urban centres.

In the Makgabeng area, the communities apparently expressed their tribal, ethnic and clan identities more than their homeland political identity as Lebowans<sup>607</sup>. For instance, people expressed and perceived themselves more as Bahananwa, Babirwa, Batlokwa or Bakone, more than identifying themselves as Lebowans. In the Makgabeng area, where the majority of the people are the Bahananwa of Malebogo and the Bakone of Matlala, people’s tribal, ethnic and clan identities are mostly expressed in their praise poems, totems as well as in their oral traditions. They express themselves more according to their tribal traditions than through the coerced identity creations such as those of the homeland politics. On the other hand, the White government authorities who were determined to see the homeland

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<sup>606</sup> R. Jenkins, Social Identity, pp. 22 - 23.

<sup>607</sup> Interview, Piet Ramoroka, Early Dawn village, 23 December 2002.

system work, used various methods such as school programmes, the media, and other forms, to aggressively promote, entrench and impose the homeland identities. Incentives were created during the Lebowa era in which traditional dance groups and choral music groups were lured into composing songs which promoted the homeland identities. The fact that even today there are still observable identities of people who still regard themselves as the Bakone, the Bahananwa or the Batšhadibe, in the Makgabeng area, illustrates that these forms of identities lasted more than the coerced ones of homeland politics.

The tribal nature of political identities in the Makgabeng area lasted for centuries until today, mainly because of the importance with which the people attach to their tribal ways of life, including chieftaincy. This is according to the theoretical argument that cultural, social and political contexts are decisive when it comes to identity<sup>608</sup>. Even if the Makgabeng communities had various forms of political leaderships at different periods – some of them imposed – such as White authorities and homeland governments, they still held their traditional chiefs with high esteem. Even if the apartheid authorities extensively undermined the traditional chieftaincy, people still express their great reverence to their chiefs even today. The chiefs in the Makgabeng area who are mostly revered are those who were involved in resistance against colonial invasions and such related struggles.

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<sup>608</sup> M. Castells, “Globalisation, Identity...”, p. 5.

For instance, Kgoši Ratšhatšha Lebogo – only known as Malebogo – of the Bahananwa, is still mostly revered for his brave fight against the Transvaal Republic Boers in 1894<sup>609</sup>. Other chiefs such as Matsiokwane, also of the Bahananwa, and the Matlala chiefs of the Bakone, such as Selaki, are still respected today<sup>610</sup>. Again people still talk about Ga-Matlala (Matlala's location) and Ga-Malebogo (Malebogo's location) to define their residence and this indicates the strength of these forms of identities.

Respect of the tribal institution of chieftaincy is also expressed in traditional war songs, oral tradition, praise poems and other cultural forms which distinguish each ethnic and tribal entity from the others. In their emphasis on culture, De Vos and Romanucci-Ross identify “another form of group separation”, which is “ethnic identity”, which they say can be a source of conflict, since ethnic groups in many instances do not remain in a fixed position within a stratified system<sup>611</sup>. On the issue of culture, Zimitri Erasmus highlights the importance of culture in this case by asserting that, “since cultural formations involve borrowing from cultural forms,... thus all identities could be seen/read as cultural hybrid...”<sup>612</sup>. However, the form of ethnic and tribal identity displayed in the Makgabeng area is not the negative one of exclusivity and chauvinism. It is also not the kind of ethic

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<sup>609</sup> Interview, Mofotoloko Mashilo, Ga Monyebodi village, 4 May 2004.

<sup>610</sup> Ibid.

<sup>611</sup> M. Castells, “Globalisation, Identity...”, p. 6.

<sup>612</sup> Z. Erasmus, Coloured by History. Shaped by Place. New Perspective of Coloured Identities in Cape Town, p. 16.

division which was encouraged and imposed by apartheid authorities for their political aims. It is rather a kind of identity in which different people express and assert themselves culturally in a more positive and constructive way, rather than undermining and competing with others.

Race is another identity marker which is sometimes closely related to politics. D. Posel singles out race as a significant identity marker with a model referred to as “race as a common sense”<sup>613</sup>. At the macro level, South Africa had always had problems related to race, and it is not within the scope of this study to go into details of South Africa’s race problems over the years. It will only suffice to say that even before the arrival of European colonialists in South Africa, different people perceived themselves as different from others with regard to their origins, languages and phenotypical features.

The tendency to distinguish between “us” and “them”, which is a very important part of the process of identity formation, has long been there among Black communities even before the arrival of Europeans. People are constantly faced with the necessity of locating themselves in relation to others. This process of location in the role system may be described as the formulation of answers to the recurrent question, “who am I?” The answers to this question mean nothing without explicit or implicit answers to the

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<sup>613</sup> D. Posel, “Race as a Common Sense: Racial Classification in the Twentieth Century South Africa”. *African Studies Review*, 44 (2), p. 50.

reciprocal questions, “who are you?” or “who is he?” Mulford and Salisbury (1964) provide an empirical illustration of the way self-conceptions emerge in response to this question, and it was found that one’s social identity is defined as a multiple product of attempts to locate oneself in the role system – symbolically represented by asking and answering the question, “who I am?”

In the Makgabeng area, during the earliest forms of meeting of population groups for instance, the Khoikhoi must have regarded the San or the Bantu speakers as “them”, distinguishing them from themselves. Again, even among the dominant Bantu-speaking communities, the Bahananwa must have regarded the Bakone for instance, as “them”, contrasting them from themselves, the “us”. Therefore, the arrival of European travellers, hunters, traders, missionaries and later colonial settlers in the Makgabeng area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, only extended and complicated the concept of “otherness”, as many different groups found themselves in the same area due to various circumstances.

Whereas the lines of ethnic divide seemed not to strictly separate the Black communities in the Makgabeng area, the differentiation of Whites versus Blacks was more profound from the earliest contacts. In other words, the difference on the one hand between the Bakone and the Bahananwa for instance, was not as deeply felt like the difference between the Bahananwa and the Boers, on the other hand. Different Black ethnic groups could marry

among one another, visit one another, while the same could not be said between the White groups and Black ones. The early European travellers, traders, and hunters maintained their distinct identities. Later the missionaries, whose nature of their job dictated that they work among Blacks, ironically also maintained their distinct European identities. The missionaries continued to live European lifestyles as they put on western clothes, and even lived in separate plots from the rest of the Black communities among whom they worked. The successive missionaries in the Makgabeng vicinity such as Beyer, Stech, Franz and Jackel, lived on separate mission plots, away from Black settlements.

Therefore, racial identities were observable among earliest communities which came into contact with one another in the Makgabeng area. The conceptualisation and institutionalisation of racial identities in the form of apartheid in South Africa did not invent new ways of people's perceptions as racially different. The institutionalisation of apartheid policies was an attempt to create identities which were imposed on people for political expediency. But people felt, expressed and perceived themselves as different racial groups long before apartheid became an imposed identity creation concept in South Africa.

Today in the Makgabeng area, with the advent of democratic dispensation at macro level, racial perceptions and expressions are not salient. Just like in the whole country, emphasis on race is perceived as a negative aspect

which had to be fought against as it was even defeated by toppling apartheid. Racism is officially outlawed and South Africans are discouraged to put emphasis on people's racial outlooks. Today the Makgabeng area has very few instances of racial contacts because the area is mostly occupied by the Black communities. It is only in centres such as the fast-growing small town of Senwabarwana (formerly Bochum) where people of different racial identities assemble. The scramble for business opportunities in that small town even attracted foreign nationals from China, Pakistan, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and India.

The present conditions in South Africa are of encouraging harmonious communal, racial and political identities, rather than those which were characterised by animosity and hostilities. Although at this "Official Discourse" level, in which people are striving for the achievement of a common South African identity in which they would want to belong to one country (nation), within the same provinces and municipalities as determined by the "democratic will of the people", different groups are still proud about what distinguish them from others. Regardless of this national need to belong together, for instance, various South African groups still express their different traditional cultural identities. This concept is embodied in South Africa's Coat of Arms which taken at face value, sounds like contradictory: "United in Diversity". People with diverse origins and different cultures could still unite into one nation like one rainbow of different colours. At the "Formal Discourse" (meso-) level, although the communities

of Makgabeng know that they belong to the Blouberg municipality, each group of the Bahananwa, Bakone or Batšhadibe, for instance still retains its own traditional cultural traits such as traditional dance forms, circumcision rituals and totemism.

Although most of the social customs of Black communities had been discouraged and undermined by the missionaries through their Christian teachings, most of such customs stood the test of time. And today, under the Black-led government and the currency of the African Renaissance concept, Blacks are eager to revive and strengthen their customs which they feel had been suppressed for an extensive period of time by missionaries and successive White governments. This is in contrast to the notion that identities can only become an experience if only enforced enough over time as advocated by Castells<sup>614</sup>. Castells argues that shared experiences can be contrived, but that the resultant identities will be superficial until they are forced enough over time<sup>615</sup>. In the Makgabeng area, the social customs of the indigenous communities have withstood centuries of European experiences which have been enforced over time.

In the Makgabeng area, the two dominant groups, the Bahananwa and the Bakone, are each still keen to revive and revert to their own kind of traditional dance forms, for instance. The Bahananwa are well known for

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<sup>614</sup> M. Castells, Globalisation, Identity ..., p. 7.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

their distinctive *dinaka* dance form, in which a group of men stamp their feet heavily on the ground when dancing to the heavy sound of the beating of the drums and the flutes blown by each dancer. The Bahananwa men are even known in big cities for this kind of dance form. On the other hand, the Bakone women are known for their beautiful traditional dancing and singing form, which is known among local people as *mmapadi* or *koša ya dikhuru*. Because of the eagerness of Blacks to revert to their African past, today all these traditional dance forms are even performed by school learners and small kids. This was unheard of during the height of the western cultural supremacy in South Africa. People who danced to *dinaka* and *mmapadi* during the domination of imposed western influences, were perceived as heathens who were backward<sup>616</sup>. Only Christians and “educated” individuals were regarded as enlightened.

Another social custom with which the Makgabeng communities still identifies with is the circumcision school. The rock shelters in the Makgabeng and Blouberg mountains yielded information which indicates that circumcision schooling was long practiced in that area. This practice is directed by the chiefs and their trusted traditional doctors and healers. Around the Makgabeng area, reputable clans of circumcision principals included Mautla, Ngwepe, Phukubje, and Madibana<sup>617</sup>. Traditional doctors and

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<sup>616</sup> Interview, Mmachuene Georgina Setumu, Norma A village, 2 January 2003.

<sup>617</sup> Interview, Elias Monyebodi, Acting Headman of Ga-Monyebodi village, Ga Monyebodi village, 22 December 2002.

healers, who are entrusted with conducting circumcision schools, are close confidants of the chiefs and they are usually personal doctors and healers of the royal family.

The circumcision schools produce graduates with distinct social identities. In Makgabeng, each age group which goes together to a mountain school, has its distinct name and they are observed by the community as belonging together. There are the Madingwana, Matlakana, Mabjana and other circumcision age groups<sup>618</sup>. The significance of this distinctive identification is that graduates of the same age group are expected to uniformly comply and execute their social obligations. For instance, communal duties such as fixing fences, tribal meetings and hunting parties, age grouping is necessary in performing such duties in a more organised and systematic way<sup>619</sup>. For instance, a particular age group may be individually called upon to perform a certain communal duty. It is easier and convenient for instance, to call the Matlakana for a hunting expedition, than to call all men of the village. Young men who return from the mountain school have a special place in society as they have graduated to manhood. In the Makgabeng area they would be expected to attend community meetings in which their ideas would be listened to and taken seriously<sup>620</sup>. They would also be expected to start their

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<sup>618</sup> Interview, Elias Monyebodi, Acting Headman of Ga-Monyebodi village, Ga Monyebodi village, 22 December 2002.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid.

<sup>620</sup> Interview, Nkadi Ngwepe, Norma A village, 16 and 19 May 2003.

own families because with their newly acquired manhood, they were entitled to marry.

Another traditional identity marker which is still prevalent in the Makgabeng area is totemism, in which people use animals for their identity creation. Totemism is a unique feature among Blacks in which clans and families pick up animals to become their own symbols. Apparently, the peculiar features of such animals appeal to those who identify with such animals. For instance, people who choose a lion as their totem, aspire to the bravery of that animal, and in their recitals, family songs and praise poems, they would express and portray themselves as brave as lions. In the Makgabeng area, the two principal polities, the Bahananwa and the Bakone, have a baboon and a scaly-feathered finch as their totems respectively. According to available oral evidence, the Bahananwa chose baboon as their totem after breaking away from the Bahurutse in the present day Botswana mainly because of their desire to live in mountain strongholds, like the baboons – hence they occupied the Blouberg mountains<sup>621</sup>. On the other hand, the Bakone chose a scaly-feathered finch as their totem, because of their humble and down-to-earth nature, like that meek small bird<sup>622</sup>.

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<sup>621</sup> Interview, Headman Phukubje, Lehwaneng village, 17 September 2003.

<sup>622</sup> Interview, Nkadi Ngwepe, Norma A village, 19 May 2003.

In addition to the main groups of the Bakone and Bahananwa in the Makgabeng area, there are smaller groups such those of Madibana who have lion as their totem<sup>623</sup>. As already explained, the reverence of the lion's bravery was the main motive for choosing it as a totem by the Madibana people. The families of Setumu, Hlako and Nailana, who are all referred to as Batšhadibe – because of their origin from Tšhadibeng in present day Botswana – all have porcupine as their totem. These families are very proud to identify themselves with that animal with such dangerous spikes. In a quarrel the Batšhadibe even scare their opponents that they would sting them with their porcupine quills<sup>624</sup>.

Closely related to the identity formation of totemism, the Makgabeng communities use animal names for persons. This phenomenon is also applicable to other Sotho groups throughout Southern Africa, viz., the Southern Sotho and the Western Sotho (Batswana). Unlike totemism, in which one animal represents a fairly large group of people, animal naming is individual. For instance, an individual may be named Tlou, which means elephant, Kwena (crocodile), Phuti (springbuck), Tšhwene (written Chuene: baboon), Kolobe (pig) and Kgabo (monkey). An interesting element in giving of animals names to people is the differentiation of pronouncing animal names from those of people. Even if animals and people names mean the same thing, and are spelled in the same way, they are pronounced with

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<sup>623</sup> Interview, Robert Manaka, Inveraan village, 29 December 2004.

<sup>624</sup> Interview, Athalia Hlako, Early Dawn village, 17 June 2003.

different tones. The main difference is that the syllables of all animal names are pronounced in low tones, while those of people are pronounced in high tones. For instance, the name Tlou (for the person) is pronounced in high tone syllables (Tlóú), while the name of the animal (elephant) is pronounced with low syllable tones (tlòù). The same applies to all the following examples:-

Kwéná (person) – kwènà (animal).

Phútí (person) – phùtì (animal).

Tšwéné (person) - tšwènè (animal).

Kólóbé (person) – kòlòbè (animal).

Kgábó (person) – kgàbò (animal).

Totemism and animals name usage are still important forms of identities in the Makgabeng area. With the trend of reviving and reverting to traditional African ways of life, just like throughout the whole country, Black people in the Makgabeng area are beginning to take pride in expressing their identities with their totems. People are also proud of being referred to by their African names such as Tlou, Kolobe, Kwena, Phuti and Kgabo<sup>625</sup>. Gone are the days when parents were proud to name their children as Tom, Dick or Harry. The trend of giving children “Christian names” or “school names” such as Johannes, Daniel, Joseph or Erick is fading away.

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<sup>625</sup> Interview, Desia Ramoroka, Leokaneng village, 28 December 2004.

Another important aspect of people's name still prevalent in the Makgabeng area is on naming children after their older relatives. When a child is born, he/she receives the name of one of his/her older relatives which might still be alive or has already passed away<sup>626</sup>. In a normal family of a married couple, the first child is named after the father of the husband while the second child is named after the father of the wife<sup>627</sup>. The third child will then be named after the husband's mother while the fourth one will bear the name of the wife's mother<sup>628</sup>. The subsequent children will continue to alternate in taking names of the relatives of both husband and wife<sup>629</sup>. In this process, children take names of these older relatives irrespective of their sex. For instance, if a husband's father was Kgabo, his first child would still be Kgabo, irrespective of the fact that Kgabo the baby girl, is taking the name from the male older relative. As a result, most of the names in the Makgabeng area are found in both sexes. The names Tlou, Kgabo, Phuti and Kwena, to name just a few, can be taken by both male and female.

There are other names found in the Makgabeng area which have particular significance. The name Mašilo, for instance, is given to a boy who was born

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<sup>626</sup> Interview, Binas Ramoroka, Early Dawn village, 10 March 2003.

<sup>627</sup> Interview, Moses Ngwepe, Early Dawn village, 18 May 2003.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

<sup>629</sup> Interview, Moses Ngwepe, Early Dawn village, 18 May 2003.

after a number of girls<sup>630</sup>. For instance, if a woman bears three girls in succession and the fourth child becomes a boy, the boy is named Mašilo. If the situation is vice versa – should a number of boys be succeeded by a baby girl – the child (girl) is named Morongwa<sup>631</sup>. Other names derive their significance contextually. Children are named according to the context of their birth. This is in line with the theoretical notion that the salience of identities is dependent on the nature of the context<sup>632</sup>. The name, Mmatlala – which literally means “mother of hunger” – is given to a female child born during periods of famine<sup>633</sup>. The name, Mmapula – literally meaning “mother of rain” – is given to a female child born during the rain<sup>634</sup>. The same goes to Medupi – the name of the gentle rain with no rough storms – is given to a child born during such kind of rain<sup>635</sup>. The names Sello – literally meaning “crying” – and Mahlodi – literally meaning “tears” – are given to children who were born during times of grief such as mourning<sup>636</sup>.

Related to totemism and people’s names are praise poems which are also still a powerful identity marker in the Makgabeng area. Each and every

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<sup>630</sup> Interview, Blantina Setumu, Early Dawn village, 30 December 2004.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid.

<sup>632</sup> A. Gramsci, Selections From the Prison Notebooks, p. 104.

<sup>633</sup> Interview, Blantina Setumu, Early Dawn village, 30 December 2004.

<sup>634</sup> Ibid.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid.

individual has his praise poem, especially distinguished individuals within societies such as chiefs, the brave and artists. While praise poems are mainly observable on prominent members of society, each clan has its particular praise poem. In the Makgabeng area, clans have long praise poems sang during important ceremonies and occasions. The Setumus praise themselves as “*Ba maja-a-beela baeng ...*”<sup>637</sup>; the Ngwepes are praised as “*Ba ga Mašokwe-a-Tlabo...*”<sup>638</sup>; the Masekwas are praised as “*Ba ga Mmantšana a Botlokwa...*”<sup>639</sup>; the Mojelas’ praise poem goes like, “*Motlaeka-a-Kwena...*”<sup>640</sup>; while the Ramorokas are referred to as “*Ba ga Mohlala-a-Mahlodi*”<sup>641</sup>. These praise poems are clear identities with which the Makgabeng clans express themselves with.

In the previous few paragraphs the creation of identities in the Makgabeng through naming was looked into. This process of naming included naming of villages (farms), totemism, personal names and praise poems. The issue of identity formation (creation) – through naming in this case - is much about the question as to “how do we know who we are? And how do others identify us?” This process of location in the role system may also include the formulation of answers to the recurrent questions, “who am I? Or who are

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<sup>637</sup> “Those who spare food for the visitors...”

<sup>638</sup> “Those of Mašokwe of Tlabo...”

<sup>639</sup> “Those of Mantšana from Botlokwa...”

<sup>640</sup> “Those of Motlaeka of the crocodile...”

<sup>641</sup> “Those of the Mohlala of Mahlodi...”

we?” The answers to these questions mean nothing without explicit or implicit answers to the reciprocal questions, “who are you?” or “who is he?” Through the names of their villages, totems, personal names and praise poems (mentioned above) the Makgabeng communities are addressing all these questions in order to express who they really are – their identities.

This is because in everyday situations, people’s identities are called into question and established (or not). People are constantly faced with the necessity of locating themselves in relation to others. Mulford and Salisbury (1964) provide an empirical illustration of the way self-conceptions emerge in response to these questions, and it was found that one’s social identity is defined as a multiple product of attempts to locate oneself in the role system – symbolically represented by asking and answering the question, “who I am?”. When we discover ourselves, we may, as Paul Ricoeur once noted, realise the possibility that there are just “others”, that we ourselves are an “other” among “others” (Ricoeur 1965). While the Makgabeng communities express their identities through the names of their villages, totems, personal names and praise poems, these identities need to be observed and be validated by others. And what others express does not always mean that others observe it in that way. Rehana Ebr.-Vally argues that “identities formation is a two way dynamic process in which the presence of the other is an essential component”<sup>642</sup>.

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<sup>642</sup> R. Ebr.-Vally , Kala Pani. Caste and Colour in South Africa, p. 28.

In addition to identity creation through names in the Makgabeng area language is an identity marker which should be contextualised according to the general categorisation of languages at an “Official Discourse” level. Today in South Africa, it is declared that there are eleven official languages which are, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Tswana, Zulu, Xhosa, Venda, Tsonga, Ndebele, Afrikaans, Swazi and English. The language identities are officially conceptualised and regarded as accepted at macro-level. At meso-level, the Makgabeng communities constitute part of what is officially regarded as Northern Sotho language group. The concept of Northern Sotho is not a homogenous identity because it comprises heterogeneous components. This concept was conceived and designed at an “Official Discourse” level for political convenience, in which those who were in authority were grouping South Africans into racial and ethnic groups. It was in accordance with imposed identity creation notion.

What is referred to as Northern Sotho comprises various and different communities of the Bapedi, Balobedu, Bakone, Bahananwa, Batšhadibe, Baroka, Batau, Babirwa, Matebele, Batlokwa, Bakwena and other smaller groups. All these groups have their distinct linguistic features which indicate their different origins and backgrounds. Although they all form the Sotho group (what is called Northern Sotho to be specific), actually they speak different dialects. This difference is explained in linguistic terms and relegated to what is known as “dialects”. It is not within the scope of this

study to argue about the lines between what constitutes a dialect and a language. The current “official” definitions of “dialect” and “language” will be adhered to here. It is only sufficient here to point out that the different ways in which various Sotho groups speak in the Makgabeng area, constitute their different identities.

The main “dialects” spoken in the Makgabeng area are Hananwa, Kone, Kwena, Tlokwa, and Birwa. The Pedi and dialects of the Kolobe polities are also sporadically found in the Makgabeng area as the members of those groups came to the Makgabeng area particularly during the purchase of farms. All these “dialects” constitute clear spoken identities among the communities in Makgabeng area. The Hananwa dialect is spoken by the Bahananwa of the Malebogo chieftaincy. Their way of speaking is deeply rooted into the Tswana language because they originated from the present day Botswana. Most of their words and pronunciations are similar to the Tswana ones. The Kone dialect is also distinct from the Hananwa, for instance. This is of course due to different origins of these two groups. But their living closer to each other for an extensive period of time, led to their ways of speaking influencing each other. The Kone dialect is much closer to the Kwena one spoken by the Bakwena of Moletji, than the Bahananwa. This is because the Bakwena lived next to the Bakone in what came to be called the Transvaal for a longer period, before the arrival of the

Bahananwa from the present day Botswana<sup>643</sup>. While the Hananwa “dialect” is spoken on the north-eastern vicinity of the Makgabeng mountain, the Kone dialect is spoken by the Bakone communities mostly occupying the southern and the western parts of the Makgabeng mountains.

The Kwena “dialect” was brought to the Makgabeng area by the Bakwena of Moletji of the Moloto royal house during the era of the purchase of farms. This “dialect” is different from the Hananwa (which is closer to the Tswana) and is instead closer to the Southern Sotho of King Moshoeshoe’s people. According to historical evidence, there is a link between the Bakwena and the Southern Sothos<sup>644</sup>. The Tlokwa “dialect” was also exported to the Makgabeng area during that scramble of farm purchases.

The Batlokwa who bought the farms of Uitkyk No. 3 and Norma B in the Makgabeng area, came from Botlokwa in the Dwars River area. They migrated to Makgabeng after breaking away from the Botlokwa polities of Ramokgopha and Machaka. The Birwa “dialect” is closely related to the Hananwa, and this indicates that the two groups once lived together, or at least closer to each other. In the Makgabeng area, the Birwa “dialect” is mostly spoken in the small village of Gemarke. In the village called Mokumuru (Ritterhouse) the people who settled there during the farms

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<sup>643</sup> Interview, Robert Manaka, Inveraan village, 29 December 2004.

<sup>644</sup> Krige, J.D., “Traditional Origins and Tribal Relations of the Sotho of the Northern Transvaal”. Bantu Studies, Vol. IV, 11, 1937, pp.321 –357.

purchases were the Bapedi. This is how the Pedi “dialects” saw their way into the Makgabeng area. The Kolobe “dialects” of Dikgale and Mamabolo also found their way into the Makgabeng area during the farm purchases. The Kolobe communities came from the Mankweng vicinity (in the present day area around the University of Limpopo). The Dikgale people bought the farm, Uitkyk No. 1, while the Mamabolo people mostly bought Harrietswish farm.

These different “dialects” in the Makgabeng area, constitute clearly observable identities. Although speakers of these “dialects” can understand and fluently communicate with one another, there is a clear audible distinction between these “dialects”. The conceptualised official identity of Northern Sotho was only created by the homeland system architects for political purposes. This is in accordance with the notion of imposed identity creation. This raised an interesting question which was posed earlier of the drawing of lines between a “language” and a “dialect”. Should these dialects above be regarded as languages in their own right? Or should they be lumped together in order to constitute a language, Northern Sotho, in this case? The exhaustive explanations of this question do not constitute part of this study.

Another important identity marker to be looked into in the Makgabeng area is religion. This is a rather complicated subject as it does not only involve observation, but also expression of various religious practices, rituals and

forms by different groups. As much as man is naturally religious, there are religious affiliations he subscribes to, while others are being exposed and imposed to him. Today in the Makgabeng area, people are affiliated to different religions. Because of the freedom of religion which is enshrined in the new South Africa's constitution, people freely express their religious identities. Those who believe in African ancestral worship are beginning to gain confidence which had been suppressed for an extensive period of time by western influences. The revival of Black values under the Black-led government at macro-level resulted in Blacks regaining confidence in their ways of lives, including the expression of their religious beliefs.

The advent of missionary teachings of the Gospel had disrupted much of the African religious beliefs. The imposition of Christian teachings in Black schools also created the impression that Christianity was the only religion on earth. In the Makgabeng area, just like in the whole of South Africa, people are today free and proud to express their African ancestral religious identity. Holding traditional religious ceremonies publicly is no longer frowned at and it has become a common sight in the Makgabeng area. People can proudly express themselves as ancestral worshippers without fear of public scorn.

In addition to African ancestral worshipping, Christianity is another dominant religious identity in the Makgabeng area. Christianity has its roots in the arrival of missionaries, not only in Makgabeng, but also in the whole of

Africa. In the Makgabeng area, as already shown in the previous chapters, the missionaries arrived in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The mission of the missionaries in Africa was to spread the Gospel and “deliver” Blacks from what was perceived as their heathen, barbaric and backward ways. To a certain extent, the missionaries succeeded as some sections of Black communities embraced Christianity. These converts constituted a new kind of identity, not only in Makgabeng, but all over South Africa.

Today in the Makgabeng area, the main Christian denominations include Zion Christian Church (ZCC), which has two branches of the dove and star emblems, the Wesleyan (Methodist), Lutheran, International Pentecostal Church, Apostolic and Bazalwana churches. The ZCC with its two sections, was introduced in the Makgabeng area in the 1940's<sup>645</sup>. The early converts to ZCC in the Makgabeng area included Binas Ramoroka, Mphaka Setumu, Abiel Mojela and Ikgetheng Steven Setumu<sup>646</sup>. The Lutheran denomination had its roots with the arrival of the Berlin Society missionaries in the late 1860's in the Makgabeng area. As already indicated in the previous chapters, early Lutheran missionaries in Makgabeng area included Beyer, Herbst, Stech, Sonntag, Franz and Jackel. Lutheran missionaries built dominant congregations in the Makgabeng area with people such as Simon Setumu as original Black converts. Philemon Setumu and Bethuel

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<sup>645</sup> Interview, Binas Ramoroka, Early Dawn village, 10 March 2003.

<sup>646</sup> Ibid.

Ramoroka were some of the pioneering Blacks of the Wesleyan denomination<sup>647</sup>.

Later the Apostolic churches mushroomed in the Makgabeng area as Christianity fused with Black cultures. The International Pentecostal Church and the Bazalwana churches are the latest to appear in Makgabeng. Today in the Makgabeng area, these religious identities are clearly visible as different people subscribe to their chosen religions. The advent of democracy at an "Official Discourse" level, and the guarantee of freedom of religion, enshrined in the Bill of Rights, encouraged people to freely follow their respective religions. Even religions which were looked down and scorned at, such as the traditional ancestral worship, are today freely practiced without fear and shame.

Gender is another identity marker which is also significant in the Makgabeng area. The clear distinction of roles according to gender has been a marked characteristic of Black communities, and Makgabeng is no exception. Even before the arrival of western influences in that area, a typical traditional society was characterised by clear separation of roles between males and females. According to the general oral accounts about Makgabeng, older men used to do their separate duties of ploughing the fields, tanning the skins, building the houses and fencing their yards<sup>648</sup>. Younger men looked

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<sup>647</sup> Interview, Sania Ramoroka, Norma A village, 19 May 2003.

<sup>648</sup> Interview, Moses Ngwepe, Early Dawn village, 18 May 2003.

after the livestock while they also did the hunting. On the other hand, women mostly looked after the crops in the fields and gardens with the help of their daughters. These female members of the society also ensured the preparation of food in their households. This element of separation of functions according to gender takes another dimension of age as functions become separated according to who is older than who. In other words, there were functions for small boys such as looking after the calves, while young girls swept the floors.

With the arrival of European influences in the Makgabeng area, roles according to age and gender in the communities changed dramatically. As already indicated in the chapter on migrant labour, traditional roles of young able-bodied men who migrated to the mines, were taken over by other members of the communities such as women. According to Sania Ramoroka, women were compelled to milk the cows in the absence of their husbands<sup>649</sup>. They were also compelled to look after livestock, as well as using them for ploughing in the absence of younger boys who went to school. These changed circumstances also buried some long held myths in communities. For instance, among some of the Makgabeng communities, a woman was not allowed to enter the cattle kraal<sup>650</sup>. However, with the

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<sup>649</sup> Interview, Sania Ramoroka, Norma A village, 19 May 2003.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid.

absence of the men and young boys, this myth was done away with as women took over the roles of milking cattle and looking after livestock.

Today at the macro-level, there is too much talk of gender equality. Throughout the country there are feminist groups which advocate for equality between men and women. However, this trend is not popular in rural communities like Makgabeng. It is mostly an urban and semi-urban phenomenon which is espoused by Western-influenced women. In the rural Makgabeng villages, observation is that, women are mostly not swayed by gender equality slogans. According to Athalia Hlako, such calls of gender equality are only intended to disrupt stable family lives<sup>651</sup>. Most of the rural women are still content in respectfully abiding and bowing under their husbands as compared to the affluent women in townships and towns. However, because of the fast integration between rural and urban ways of life because of globalisation and technology among other things, the social groups which call for social changes, like gender equality, might win and become dominant even in rural villages such as those in Makgabeng.

With regard to the identity marker of age in the Makgabeng area today, activities such as sport, music and dance, seem to distinguish different age groups. Related to this issue is theoretical aspect of identity formation which Dolby [1999] and Swain [2002] refer to the role of popular culture, especially

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<sup>651</sup> Interview, Athalia Hlako, Early Dawn village, 17 June 2003.

regarding the youth. Dolby argues that among the youth, music tend to take on racial characteristics<sup>652</sup>. As far as sport is concerned, soccer appears to be very popular among the youth. Today, it is no longer the boys who play this game, also the girls play it in the Makgabeng area, and this is obviously an influence derived from national level where there is the South African women soccer team, Banyana Banyana, which is a counterpart to the male national team, Bafana Bafana. In all the Makgabeng villages, there is a dusty soccer field in which the youth run after the soccer ball almost every day.

Soccer was long introduced in the Makgabeng area, and according to Agym Ramotsepane, it was already played in that area in the early 1950s<sup>653</sup>. Apparently, it was exported to the Makgabeng area by those farm purchasers from the east – discussed in the chapter on land - as well as the migrant labourers from the cities. Today, soccer teams visit and play against one another throughout the Makgabeng villages, and beyond. It is a common sight on Sundays to see tractor and truck loads of boys and girls who flock to different dusty fields to compete. In the absence of other recreation facilities in rural villages of Makgabeng, soccer has been a distinct and popular aspect of the youth in the Makgabeng area. There are very few other sporting codes, and the girls in some villages tried netball,

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<sup>652</sup> N. Dolby, *Youth and the Global Popular: The Politics of Practices and Race in South Africa*. European Journal of Cultural Studies, 2(3), p. 11.

<sup>653</sup> Interview, Agym Ramotsepane, Kgatu village, 10 June 2002.

but it was not sustainable, probably because of lack of facilities. Probably, soccer is sustained because of the simple facilities required, as you only need an open field and poles. Other few sporting codes such as athletics, volley ball and base ball, are played in very few schools which have such facilities and equipments.

The observable absence of recreational facilities in the Makgabeng area is usually regarded as the cause of some of the young people to alcohol consumption. This results in serious social problems in which the youth become involved in socially unacceptable behaviours because of alcohol problems. According to the Inspector Seshego Ramoroka of the Senwabarwana Police Station, most of the crimes committed by the youth in that area such as rape, theft and assault, are committed mainly as a result of alcohol abuse<sup>654</sup>. Alcohol consumption also leads to the blurring of boundaries between the youth and the adults. It is not uncommon to find young people sitting under one shade with the adults, drinking traditional beer. This results in other identity markers such as age and gender to take a back seat as the identities of behaviour and habit (drinking) become salient. This is according to the notion that the salience of identities is dependent on the nature of the context<sup>655</sup>. The form of identity creation around the behaviour and habit of drinking is very rife in the Makgabeng area as people

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<sup>654</sup> Interview, Inspector Seshego Ramoroka, at Senwabarwana, 15 March 2004.

<sup>655</sup> A. Gramsci, Selections From the Prison Notebooks, p. 104.

not only drink traditional sorghum beer, they also consume South African Brewery brands which are available in almost all shops and spazas<sup>656</sup>.

Another identity marker found in the Makgabeng area is about class and the economic conditions of the communities there. Makgabeng comprises mostly rural villages of bought farms. The small sizes of farms could not sustain the growing population of people and livestock. As a result, in almost all the villages, the subsistence economies were destroyed by overcrowding and overgrazing which all resulted in serious problems such as soil erosion. With the elimination of subsistence farming in which the rural communities such as those in Makgabeng were forced to survive on, many people became poor. As a result, most people resorted to migrant labour – as already indicated – in order to supplement their incomes for their livelihoods. Few people received good education which gave them better jobs such as teaching, nursing and police service.

However, the new democratic government brought relief to the poor people in the Makgabeng area to a certain extent. Most young men and women found employment in the newly expanded civil service. Some of them are municipal councillors and government officials from municipal, district, up to provincial levels. The new government also expanded the pension grants to most of the elderly, and this meagre money is a lifeline of most families in the Makgabeng area as it is the only source of income in most of the

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<sup>656</sup> Spaza is a small business normally run from a home.

households. The government also introduced the child support grants which also augment income in some needy families. All these forms of family incomes are mostly spent in the fast growing town of Senwabarwana. The small businesses and hawkers compete in the dusty streets of this small town together with the foreign nationals.

Health and education are other identity markers which are significant with regard to the Makgabeng area. These two aspects, as already indicated in the previous chapters, were revolutionised in the Makgabeng area with arrival of European travellers, traders, hunters, and most importantly, the missionaries and colonial settlers. Today in the Makgabeng area, just like from the macro-level, there are concerted efforts to improve the quality of education. In almost all the Makgabeng villages, there is a primary and a secondary school. At Senwabarwana there are two schools for the disabled while there is also a college of education which was transformed into a community college. As far as health is concerned, people of Makgabeng still consult their traditional doctors, healers and sangomas. The new Black government also recognises the significant role played by these traditional health practitioners. Helene Franz hospital is the oldest western health institution in the Makgabeng vicinity and had been a symbol of health service since its inception in 1914. In addition to this hospital, there are clinics in most Makgabeng villages such as in Schoongezicht, Kgatu and Sadu.

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63. Volume 3787, Pieterburg Farm “Goedetrouw”, 1940—1940.
64. Volume 715, Application for a church and school site, Goedetrouw No.990, 1941—1957.
65. Volume 2/2/60, Proposed purchase of the farm Ritterhouse 1016. Chief Mathiba and, 1942—1946.
66. Volume 3756, Pietersburg Farm “Ritterhouse” 1016, 1942—1954.
67. Volume 3803, “Farm Langbryde” no.1064, Pietersburg, 1944—1948.
68. Volume 2/2/48, Farm Langbryde no. 1064, Proposed purchase. Headman Monyebodi and, 1944—1946.

69. Volume 1233, Pietersburg trading site "Ritterhouse" no 2016, 1944—1958.
70. Volume 2181, Passing of a first mortgage bond over farm "Retterhouse" no 1016, 1944—1944
71. Volume 2/2/42, Part 1, Purchase of Farms Early Dawn 995 and Millstream no. 996. Bakone Tribe under Chief Sekgoare Matlala, 1944—1946.
72. Volume 2/2/27, Proposed purchase of farm De Villiersdale no. 1084, 1944—1945.
73. Volume 1231, Pietersburg Trading site "Goedetrouw" No 990, Mr.P.A.Schutte, 1945—1951
74. Volume 3813, Farms Bonne Esperance no 1088, Dela Roche no 1087, Les Fountaines, 1945—1946
75. Volume 3803, De Villiersdale 1084. Pietersburg 1945—1954.
76. Volume 2/2/43, Native owned and tribal land, Langbryde 1064. Bahanana tribe, 1946—1948.
77. Volume 2453, Approval of lease for a period of 9 years and 11 months. 1947—1947.
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79. Volume 2173, Ketting nommer 994 en Disseldorp nommer 1090. Pietersburg. 1947—1948
80. Volume 1/1/84, Tribal levies and trust account no. 221. A.D.Chosi, 1951—1951.
81. Volume 736, Church site tribally owned farm "Gemarkte" no. 1012, Bochem, 1951-1952.
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83. Volume 3314, Sale of the farm De Villersdale no. 1 084. Pietersburg, By the South, 1954—1954
84. Volume 3803, De Villiersdale 1084. Pietersburg 1954—1962.

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87. Volume 1330, Application for a general dealer tribal owned Barenen no.1013, 1957—1957.
88. Volume 3865, Goedetrouw 860, Groblersdal, 1958—1961.
89. Volume 1/1113, Trading site. N. Mabela. Bochum. Ritterhouse, 1958—1966.
90. Volume 3914, Transaction in terms of Sub-Section (2) of Section Eleven of Act No, 1959—1959.
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92. Volume 10793, Boorgate/Boreholes.Bochum. Disseldorp, 1962—1962.
93. Volume 1/1108, Trading site se Raphadu. Bochum. Barenen, 1971—1972.
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- Anon. “Nachrichten von unserer jungsten Station Makchabeng (Transvaalrepublik)” Berliner Missionsberichte (1872:13/14) p. 251—253. (1872:15/16) p. 269—287 , (1872:17/18) p. 301—308.
- Anon. “ Nachrichten über unsere Station Blauberg (Transvaalrepublik) Anon. Nachrichten von unserer Station Ga Matlale (Transvaalrepublik) Berliner Missionsberichte (1876:19/20) p.333—336.
- Anon. Nachrichten von unserer Station Ga Matlale (Transvaalrepublik) Berliner Missionsberichte (1876:21/22) p.354—372.
- Anon. Nachrichten von unserer Station Ga Matlale (Transvaalrepublik) Berliner Missionsberichte (1877:21/22) p.428—435.
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- Anon. “Euphorie Noord –Transvaal” Berliner Missionsberichte (1892:11/12) p.264, 266—273.
- Anon. “Makchabeng and Blauberg” Berliner Missionsberichte (1893:19/20) p.476—481. (1893:21/22)p. 490—491.
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- Anon. Nachrichten von unserer Station Makchabeng (Transvalien) Berliner Missionsberichte (1878:19/20) p.444—451.
- Anon. Nachrichten von unserer Station Blauberg (Transvalien) Berliner Missionsberichte (1878:19/20) p.454—462.
- Anon. Nachrichten von unserer Station Moletse 2 8 (Transvalien) Berliner Missionsberichte (1878:21/22) p.474—480.
- [Baumbach]. Nachrichten von unserer Station Makchabeng (Noord-Transvaal) Berliner Missionsberichte (1879:21/22)p.388—392.
- Anon. Nachrichten von unserer Station Moletse Berliner Missionsberichte (1889:17/18) p.456—459. (1889:19/20) p. 470—471.
- Anon. “Nachrichten von unserer Station Makchabeng” Makchabeng (ill) Berliner Missionsberichte (1889:19/20) p.471—479.

- Anon. Nachrichten von unserer Station Ga Matlale Berliner Missionsberichte (1889:19/20) p.479—486.
- Anon. “Blauberg” 12 Berliner Missionberichte (1880:11/12) p. 208
- Anon. Nachrichten von unserer Station Ga Matlale (SynodalkreisTransvaaal-Noord) Berliner Missionsberichte (1880:15/16) p.307—310.
- Anon. Nachrichten von unserer Station Ga Matlale (SynodalkreisTransvaaal-Noord) Berliner Missionsberichte (1880:19/20) p.354—357.
- Anon. Nachrichten von unserer Station Ga Matlale (SynodalkreisTransvaaal-Noord) Berliner Missionsberichte (1880:15/16) p.357—375.
- Baumbach :Heidnische Gerichtspflege” 3 Berliner Missionsberichte (1875:17/18) p. 353.
- Berliner Missionsberichte (1872:19/20) p.350—354 [Baumbach]. Nachrichten von unserer Station Makchabeng Berliner Missionsberichte (1882:21/22)p.416—420.
- Beyer “Aus dem Tagebuch der Station Blauberg” Berliner Missionsbericht (1870:10) p.149-157.
- Beyer “Aus dem Tagebuch der Station Blauberg” Berliner Missionsberichte (1870:11) p.163—167.
- Beyer , “B. I. Halbjahrsbericht (1869) der Station 2 Blauberg” Berliner Missionsberichte (1870:10) p. 147-148.
- Beyer “Zweiter Halbjahrsbericht (1868) der Station 1 Blauberg”, Berliner Missionsberichte (1870) p. 136, 138.
- Beyer , “B. I. Halbjahrsbericht (1869) der Station 2 Blauberg” Berliner Missionsberichte (1870:10) p. 147-148.
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- Beyer “Zweiter Halbjahrsbericht (1868) der Station 1 Blauberg”, Berliner Missionsberichte (1870) p. 136, 138.
- Beyer, B. “Halbjahres-Bericht (1869) der Station.

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### **INTERVIEWEES.**

1. Jonathan Laka.
2. Headman of Lehwaneng, Samson Phukubje.
3. Matome Johannes Seanego.
4. Israel Ramoroka.
5. Samuel Tlhaahlaa Ngwepe.
6. Moses Ngwepe.

7. Sania Ramoroka.
8. Nkadi Ngwepe.
9. Phineas Komape.
10. Sam Moifatswana.
11. Acting Headman of Ga Monyebodi, Elias Monyebodi.
12. Headman Mojela of Non Parella.
13. Phineas Sepuru.
14. Chuene Thomas Morwane.
15. Mofotoloko Mashilo.
16. John Tlameng Matlala.
17. Frans Rammutla.
18. Singred Mamabolo.
19. Mokgadi Caroline Moremi Ramoroka.
20. Elina Morongwa Ramoroka.
21. Piet Ramoroka.
22. Binas Ramoroka.
23. Albert Mokobane.
24. Jim Ramoroka.
25. MmaChuene Georgina Setumu.
26. MmaNkoloto Elisa Setumu.
27. Makwena Johannes Setumu.
28. John Machaba.
29. Robert Manaka.
30. Desia Ramoroka.

31. Sorrich Rakumako.
32. Mosima Ramoroka.
33. Sebaso Ngwepe.

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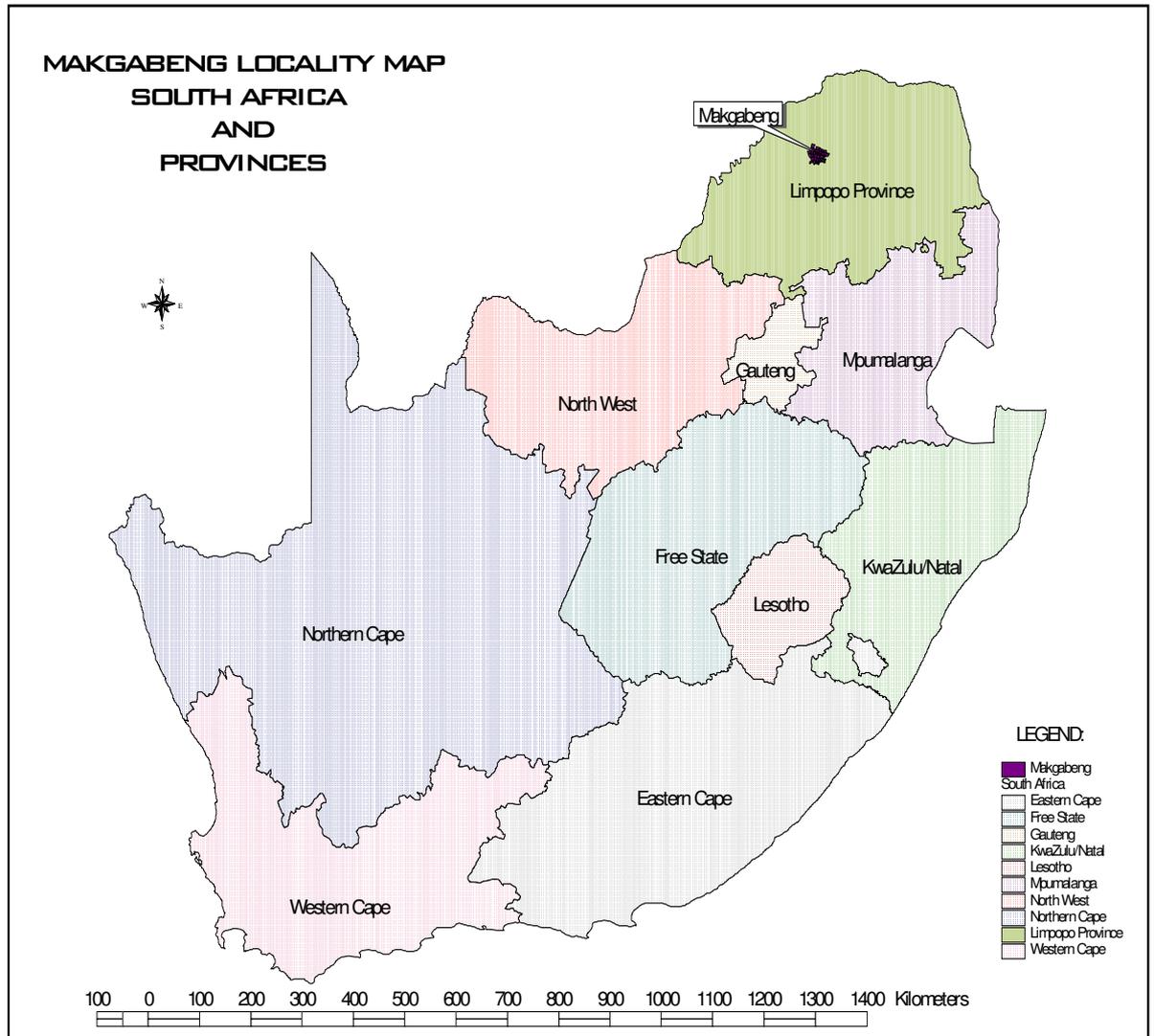
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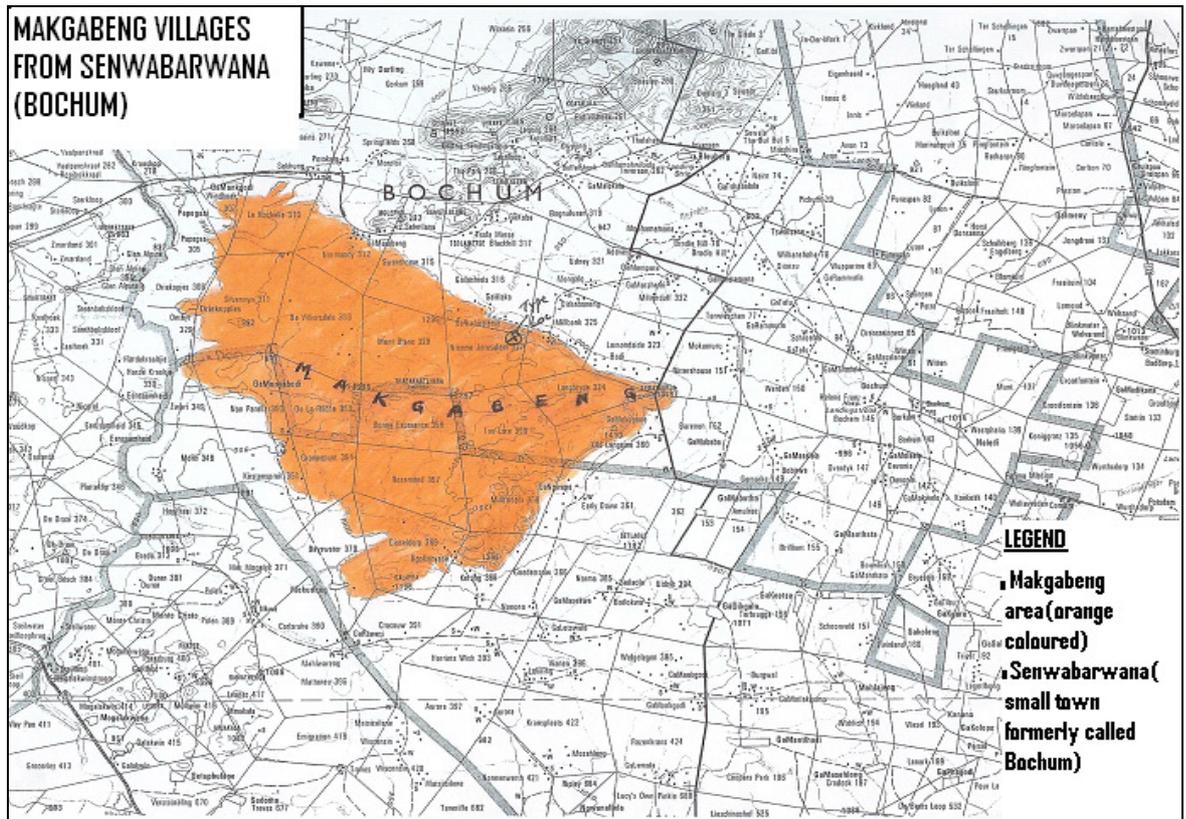
## ANNEXURES

# ANNEXURE 1

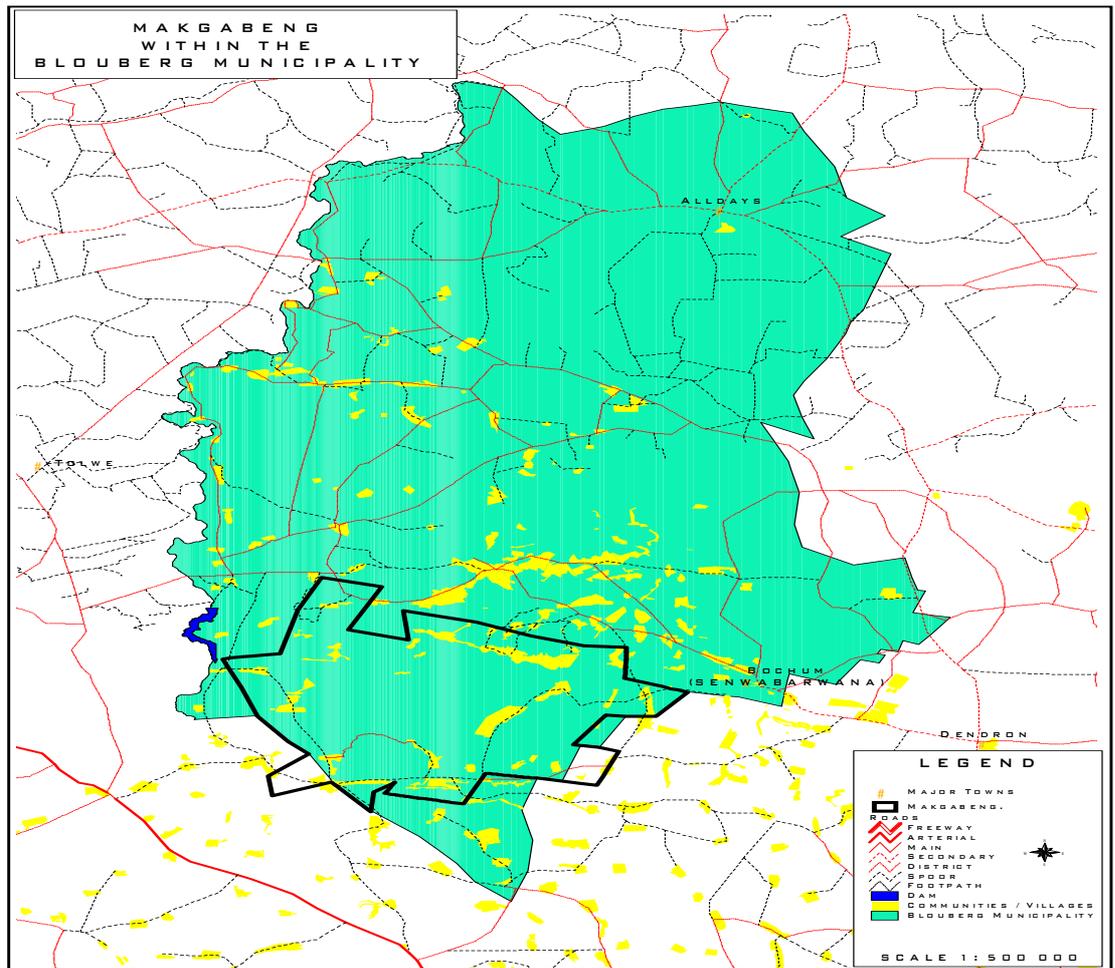


Makgabeng locality map and South African provinces.

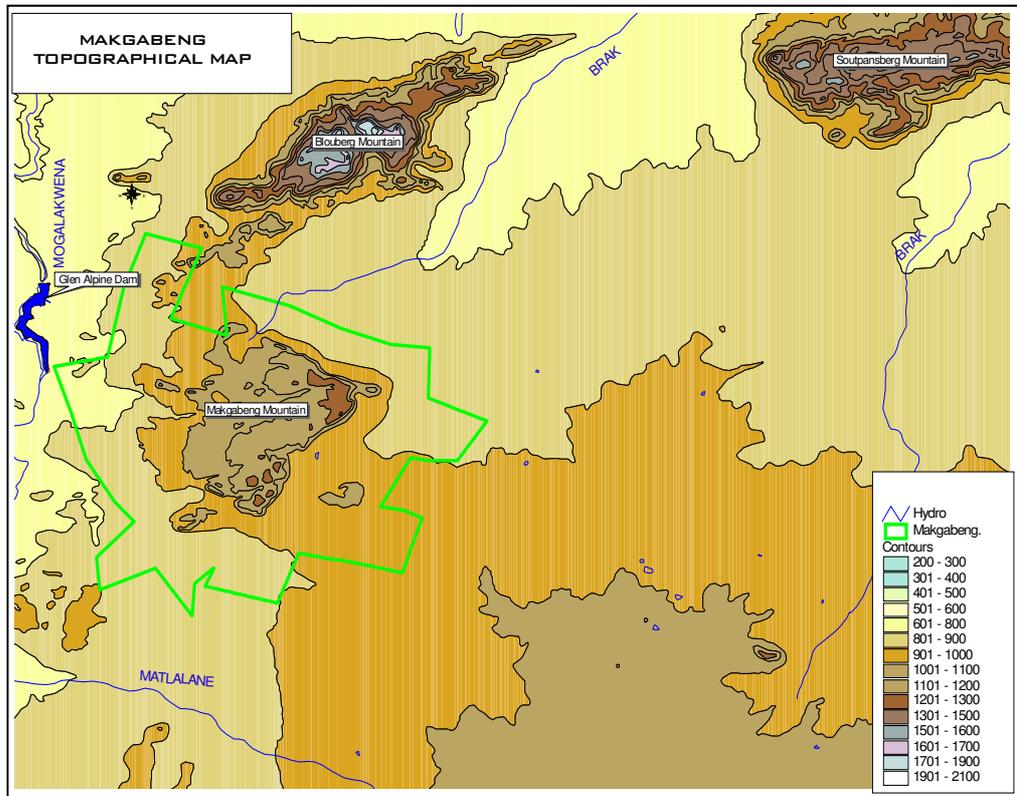
# ANNEXURE 2



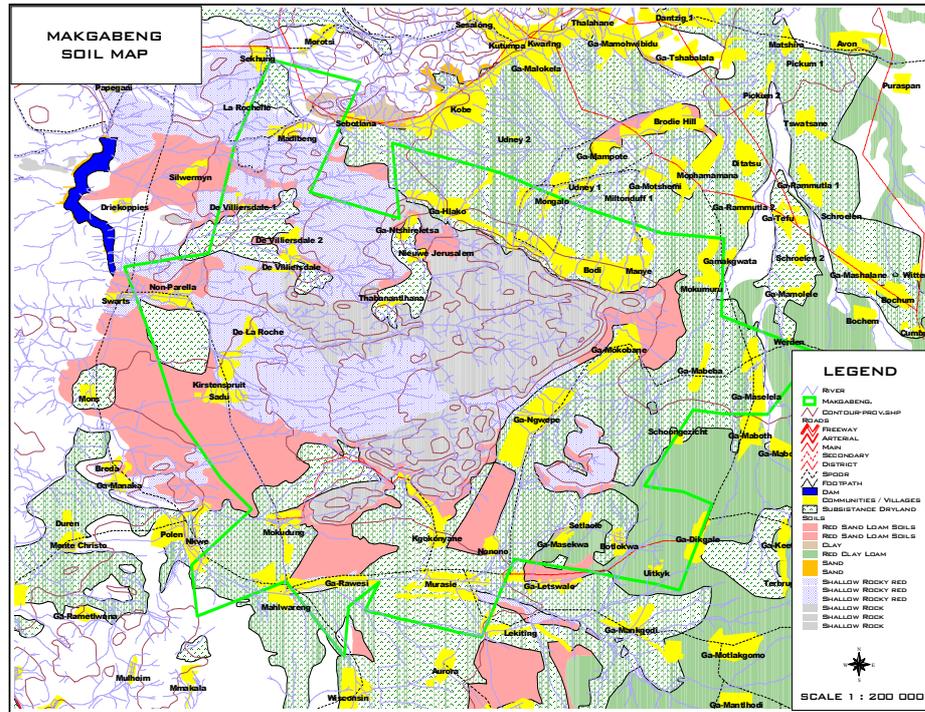
Makgabeng situated next to the small town of Senwabarwana (Bochum).



The Makgabeng area within the Blouberg Municipality.



The topographical map of Makgabeng



The soil map of Makgabeng.



