

Chieftaincy and resistance politics in Lehurutshe during the apartheid era

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Abstract

This article focuses on the politics of chieftaincy in Lehurutshe, a rural region in South Africa's North West Province, in the second half of the twentieth century. This was a period of profound social and political restructuring in the South African countryside. The imposition of Bantu Authorities, the extension of passes to African women and the deposition of *Kgosi* Abram Ramotshere Moiloa by the white authorities in 1957 sparked a popular struggle of resistance (better known as the Zeerust uprising or the Hurutshe revolt) that engulfed Lehurutshe in the late 1950s. The article analyses the establishment of a new political order in the aftermath of this period of resistance. It goes on to examine the attempted revival of the institution of chieftaincy by Lucas Mangope's Bophuthatswana bantustan in the period from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s. The paper ends with the onset of another period of intense struggle over the incorporation of the "black spot" villages of Lekubu (or Braklaagte) and Mokgola (or Leeuwfontein) into Bophuthatswana in 1989. Like the Zeerust uprising of 1957-1959, the anti-incorporation struggle of 1989-1994 points to the complex and continued intersection of local political struggles for authority with liberation politics – crucially articulated through the institution of the chieftaincy - during periods of contestation over local resources.

Keywords: Rural resistance; Chieftaincy; Anti-incorporation; Abram Moiloa; Bophuthatswana; Lehurutshe; Zeerust uprising; Lucas Mangope.

Introduction

Chieftaincy has proved to be an extremely resilient institution in South African politics, having survived through the colonial and apartheid eras into the post-apartheid present. Yet chieftaincy today is fundamentally different from its pre-colonial (and pre-capitalist) origins, having transformed over the decades to adapt to the needs of the industrial economy and those of the colonial and apartheid states. While this process of transformation was in large part imposed from above - driven by the Native Affairs Department,

the Department of Bantu Administration, and “homeland” and bantustan administrations – it was also to some extent shaped from below - by the chiefs themselves, rural elites and their constituencies. The bureaucratisation of chiefly rule begun by the settler colonial state was continued and expanded by the National Party through its social engineering programme of apartheid, which turned chiefs into salaried government officials responsible for the implementation of apartheid policies.¹ However, the cooption of chiefs by the colonial and apartheid regimes, which sometimes led to their popular rejection, did not, as William Beinart argued, necessarily “mean that the institution of chieftaincy was no longer of importance in the rural areas”.² Rather, chiefly politics and its symbols continued to be one most important structures for local political mobilisation in the creation of a rural political order.³

This article follows the trajectory of chiefly politics in a rural region called Lehurutshe during the apartheid era and at its articulation with resistance politics at particular historical conjunctures. Lehurutshe was one of South Africa’s native reserves and was formerly known as Moiloa’s Reserve. During apartheid it became part of the Bophuthatswana bantustan, and was finally incorporated into the new South Africa after 1994, forming part of the North West Province. The imposition of Bantu Authorities, the extension of passes to African women and the deposition of *Kgosi* Abram Ramotshere Moiloa by the white authorities in 1957 sparked a popular struggle of resistance (better known as the Zeerust uprising or the Hurutshe revolt) that engulfed Lehurutshe in the late 1950s. The article charts the establishment of a new political order in the aftermath of this period of resistance. It goes on to examine the attempted revival of the institution of chieftaincy by Lucas Mangope’s Bophuthatswana bantustan in the period from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s. The paper ends with the onset of another period of intense struggle over the incorporation of the “black spot” villages of Lekubu (or Braklaagte) and Mokgola (or Leeuwfontein) into Bophuthatswana in 1989. Like the Zeerust uprising of 1957-1959, the anti-incorporation struggle of 1989-1994 points to the complex and continued intersection of local struggles for authority with resistance and liberation politics – crucially articulated through the institution of the chieftaincy - during periods of contestation

1 See B Oomen, “‘We must now go back to our history’: Retraditionalisation in a Northern Province chieftaincy”, *African Studies*, 59 (1), 2000, pp. 71-95.
2 W Beinart, “Chieftaincy and the concept of articulation: South Africa, ca. 1900-1950”, *Canadian Journal of African Historical Studies*, 19 (1), 1985, p. 96.
3 W Beinart, “Chieftaincy and the concept of articulation...”.

over local resources.

“You Are Chief No Longer”: Abram Moilola and the Zeerust Uprising

On 4 April 1957, Abram Ramotshere Moilola,⁴ *kgosi* of the Bahurutshe ba ga Moilola in the village of Dinokana in Lehurutshe, convened a public meeting or *pitso* by order of the Native Commissioner in Zeerust. The Chief Regional Native Commissioner from Potchefstroom was going to address his constituency. According to Father Charles Hooper, the Anglican priest of the Zeerust diocese at the time, when the Commissioner arrived at the Dinokana *kgotla* that morning, he told *Kgosi* Moilola:⁵

Is that [...] the chair of the Chief in which you are sitting?

Abram said it was.

Then get out of that chair. Go and sit there. Behind that man. You are Chief no longer. You are deposed. In fourteen days be out of this village. Without the permission of the Native Commissioner you are not to return. Understand?

Abram Moilola had for a long time been “a thorn in the flesh”⁶ of the Native Affairs Department and his troubles with the white authorities dated as far back as his appointment in 1932.⁷ According to a long list of complaints compiled in 1956 by the Zeerust native commissioner, Carl Ritcher, Moilola had “openly endeavoured to prevent the enforcement of the Bantu Education Act” and “prevented the establishment of tribal authorities” in the area. Moreover, he had failed “to render assistance to officers of the Government”. (Of the then Minister of Native Affairs, Moilola is reported to have said: “Who the hell is Verwoerd? He is just a Minister under Ministers”).⁸

4 The name is spelt both Moilola (old orthography) and Moilwa (modern orthography). The old spelling of the name is used here in accordance with the preference expressed by the owners of the name. Interview with Goloatshwene George Moilola, Johannesburg, 8 April 2009.

5 C Hooper, *Brief authority* (London, Collins, 1960), p. 154.

6 National Archives of South Africa (hereafter NASA), NTS 326 40/55, Letter from the Chief Native Commissioner, Potchefstroom, to the Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria, 12 December 1955.

7 As early as 1939, the Native Commissioner in Zeerust recommended Moilola’s dismissal on grounds of ‘neglect or perhaps wilful refusal to carry out his administrative duties’, but no action was taken in the end. A major issue of disagreement between Moilola and the native commissioner was around the establishment of a new school in Dinokana. The *kgosi* objected to the school falling under the control of the Lutheran missionary in the area, Reverend Jensen, who already controlled the existing school in Dinokana, and wanted for the new school to be a tribal school under his authority. NASA, NTS 326 40/55, Letter from the Assistant Native Commissioner, WOH Menge, Zeerust, to the Chief Native Commissioner, Pretoria, 25 September 1939.

8 NASA, NTS 326 40/55, Letter from the Native Commissioner, Zeerust, to Chief Abram Moilola, Dinokana, 7 September 1956.

The *kgosi's* lack of cooperation on the issue of women's passes finally sealed his fate. The introduction of passes for women had been given what a tepid reception: as one woman sarcastically put it, "We get them cash with order. Their order – our cash!"⁹ On 1 April 1957 a special pass unit arrived in Dinokana with the purpose of issuing the new reference books. In front of an audience of approximately 1,000 women, the native commissioner asked Moiloa "to use his power to influence the people". But the *kgosi* simply told "the crowd that they have now heard what the Native Commissioner had to say".¹⁰ Only 70 passes were taken out; three days later, Moiloa was deposed.

Far from coercing the women of Lehurutshe into carrying passes, Moiloa's summary deposition triggered intense and protracted protests in the form of boycotts, pass-burnings and - in the face of police brutality and heavy sanctions inflicted upon the resisters - retaliatory arson. Thousands of people were displaced during this prolonged period of upheaval, which is more famously known as the Zeerust uprising or the Hurutshe revolt.¹¹ As with other instances of rural rebellion taking place in various parts of the country between 1940 and the mid-1960s,¹² the government was only able to suppress the resistance through violence. The years 1957-1959 are still remembered today as "Van Rooyen's era", named after the officer in charge of the infamous Mobile Column, a special police unit sent by Pretoria to deal specifically with rural unrest.¹³ By mid-1959, brutal police violence and persecution, supported by "collaborative" *dikgosi* and their militias, had by and large quashed the uprising.

A government-appointed commission of enquiry headed by Judge Harry Balk explained the unrest in Zeerust as a "consequence of organised and deliberate campaigns by the African National Congress" (ANC) and communist "agitators" responsible for manipulating some of the *dikgosi*.¹⁴ On 28 February

9 C Hooper, *Brief authority*, p. 152.

10 NASA, NTS 326 40/55, Letter to the Kgosi Native Commissioner, Potchefstroom, from the Senior Information Official, 3 April 1957. Translated from Afrikaans by E Coetzee.

11 For more on Abram's dismissal and the Hurutshe revolt, the unfolding of which is described in great detail in C Hooper's *Brief authority*. See also T Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1983); S Zondi, "Peasant struggles in the 1950s: GaMatlala and Zeerust", SADET (ed.), *The road to democracy in South Africa, Vol. 1, 1960-1970* (Cape Town, Zebra Press, 2004); J Fairbairn, "Zeerust: A profile of resistance", *Africa South*, 1958, pp. 30-38; A Manson, *The troubles of chief Abram Moilwa, The Hurutshe resistance of 1954-1958* (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1983).

12 The Sekhukhuneland revolt in particular bears many similarities with the Hurutshe resistance. See P Delius, *A lion amongst the cattle: Reconstruction and resistance in the Northern Transvaal* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1996).

13 Interview, Pupsey Sebogodi/Lekubu, 14 November 2008.

14 NASA, URU 3768, Prime Minister's Office, Minute No. 359, 26 February 1958; NASA, NTS 326 40/55.

1958, the ANC was outlawed in the Marico (and the Soutpansberg district in the northern Transvaal) through proclamation by Government Gazette. As well as ANC membership, now punishable with fines and/or imprisonment, the display of Congress slogans and salutes, including the thumbs-up sign, became illegal. The banning, which came two years prior to the well-known ANC (and Pan Africanist Congress) countrywide banning in the aftermath of the Sharpeville shootings of March 1960 that achieved the status of watershed moment in South African history, went largely unnoticed at the time. While it failed to send “a shudder of apprehension through the ANC in the whole country”, wrote Can Themba in an article in *Drum*, it did give “Congress a name and a local habitation”.¹⁵

Moreover, the Balk Commission recommended in its findings that the deposed *kgosi*, Abram Moiloa, be banished from Lehurutshe. Moiloa had initially been ordered to the Ventersdorp District, but after the death of his wife in late 1957 he had gone back to Dinokana. According to the Zeerust native commissioner, Moiloa’s return continued to breed an “unhealthy atmosphere”.¹⁶ Therefore the Balk Commission advised that *kgosi* Moiloa “should forthwith be moved much further away, preferably to a Nguni area [...] as a matter of policy dictated by the Native view that ‘Once a Chief, always a Chief’.” An order for Moiloa’s removal to the District of Victoria East in the Cape Province was promptly issued on 26 February 1958. Before the order could be delivered to him, however, Moiloa had gone into hiding.¹⁷ He subsequently escaped to what was then Bechuanaland (Botswana), where he was to remain in exile for more than fifteen years.

Removal orders were also issued against a number of known local ANC activists.¹⁸ Kenneth Mosenyi was banished to the Msinga District, David Moiloa to the Eshowe District and Abraham Mogale to the Ngwavuma District – all in the Natal Province.¹⁹ Abram Moiloa’s uncle, Boas, was banished to King William’s Town in the Eastern Cape after he had refused to testify against the *kgosi* and to take over the chieftaincy.²⁰ Mosenyi had become an

15 *Drum*, May 1958.

16 NASA, NTS 326 40/55, Letter to the Chief Native Commissioner, Potchefstroom, from the Native Commissioner, Zeerust, 11 December 1957.

17 NASA, URU 3768, Prime Minister’s Office, Minute No. 360, 26 February 1958.

18 See also A Manson and B Mbenga, “The ANC in the Western Transvaal/Northern Cape platteland: Patterns of diffusion and support for Congress in a rural setting, *South African Historical Journal*, 64 (3), 2001, pp. 472-493. The stories of those politically banished from Lehurutshe have also been told in S Badat’s *The forgotten people: Political banishment under apartheid* (Auckland Park, Jacana Media, 2012), pp. 72-86.

19 NASA, URU 3768, Prime Minister’s Office, Minute No. 361, 26 February 1958.

20 *Drum*, July 1957.

active ANC supporter in 1950 while he was working in Johannesburg. In the early 1950s he had been secretary of the ANC Orlando Branch took part in the 1955 Congress of the People. In 1953 he had returned to Dinokana, his birthplace, where he began to mobilise locally for the ANC. He became one of Abram Moiloa's close advisors and on several occasions he accompanied the *kgosi* to political meetings in Johannesburg. In his testimony to the Balk Commission, Mosenyi defiantly declared:²¹

I am a member of the African National Congress even now. I have no intention of ceasing to be a member... I know people say that women taking reference books will pay taxes. I say that it is fitting that they should say so. In future it will be so.

David Moiloa of Lekubu was identified by the commission as another "troublemaker". He had been an ANC member since the 1940s and was viewed as having "started" the ANC in the area. He had been listed as a communist under the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 and had been arrested in Johannesburg for taking part in the Defiance Campaign.²² The secretary of the Moiloa's Reserve Local Council, Abraham Mogale, was also singled out for his alleged hostility towards the native commissioner, his opposition to the installation of a tribal authority, and his collaboration with Shulamith Muller's firm of lawyers in Johannesburg, who had taken up the defence of the resisters. He was dismissed for misconduct and then banished.²³

While the motivation for the Zeerust uprising was a local one, the resistance was also linked to the national, urban-based political movements through migrants from the area working in the cities and their associations, like the Bahurutshe Association (a migrant workers' organisation similar to Sebatakgomo).²⁴ The intersection of African nationalist with local politics thus had the effect of further polarising the resistance. The leadership of the ANC looked with keen interest at instances of rural rebellion because of their potential in the broader fight against apartheid. Yet, the ANC was perceived at the time as having failed to provide enough assistance for the Hurutshe

21 NASA, URU 3768, Prime Minister's Office, Minute No. 361, 26 February 1958, Addendum: Kenneth Mosenyi. See also NASA, NTS 326 40/55, Memorandum: Kenneth Mosenye [n.d.].

22 NASA, URU 3768, Prime Minister's Office, Minute No. 361, 26 February 1958, Addendum: David Moiloa.

23 NASA, URU 3768, Prime Minister's Office, Minute No. 361, 26 February 1958, Addendum: Abraham Mogale.

24 P Delius, "Migrant Organization, the ANC and the Sekhukhuneland revolt", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 15 (4), 1989, pp. 581-615; "Sebatakgomo and the Zoutpansberg Balemi Association: The ANC, the Communist Party and rural organization, 1939-55", *Journal of African History*, 34 (2), 1993, pp. 293-313.

– and other – struggles to be sustained.²⁵ One ANC leader commented in retrospect: “We’ve missed the bus in Zeerust completely”.²⁶

Nevertheless, in the early 1960s Lehurutshe became a critical node in the underground machinery developed in the aftermath of the ANC and the PAC’s banning in 1960 to ferry political activists and MK recruits out of the country. Moreover, a newly initiated *mophato* or age regiment of approximately 50 boys and young men was recruited into MK in 1963-1964 on *Kgosi* Moiloa’s instructions. This group of recruits, who trained in the Soviet Union and was deployed in military camps in African countries, became part of MK’s oldest detachment: the Luthuli brigade.²⁷ While during World War I and II chiefs in South Africa, including Moiloa, used their power over local male labour to assist in the drive to recruit African soldiers for native labour contingents, in this instance the Bahurutshe chieftaincy became linked with the ANC underground network and the mobilisation process in support of MK.

In order to account for the political alignments that unfolded during the course of the 1950s and afterwards one also needs to look into the deeper history of local political identities. Abram Moiloa’s accession to the chieftaincy in 1932 had marked a return to “traditionalist” - as opposed to Christian or “modernist”, which Abram’s predecessor Alfred Moiloa embodied - politics in Dinokana, where “a large section of the villagers now looked at the young chief to restore the traditional order which had been slowly eroded under Alfred’s regency”.²⁸ These political divisions between “traditionalists” on the one hand and a reconstructed elite of “modernisers” on the other had their roots in the post-*difaqane* period and the ensuing fragmentation of the Bahurutshe polity in the second half of the 19th century, which Andy Manson analysed.²⁹ As a result, the Bahurutshe split into various politically autonomous factions.³⁰ In the early 20th century a chieftaincy dispute between “traditionalists” and

25 University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), William Cullen Library, Historical Papers, A3191, History Workshop interviews, Interview, Charles Hooper by Peter Delius, 22 June 1990.

26 C Hooper, *Brief authority*, p. 277.

27 A Lissoni, “Rethinking ‘the turn to armed struggle’: Rural resistance and the limits of South African struggle history”, Paper, Refiguring the South African Empire conference, Basel, 9-11 September 2013.

28 J Drummond, “Changing patterns of land use and agricultural production in Dinokana village, Bophuthatswana” (MA thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1992), p. 87.

29 A Manson, “The Hurutshe in the Marico District of the Transvaal, 1848-1914” (PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 1990), p. 157.

30 A first split concerned the Bahurutshe ba ga Moiloa based at Dinokana and the Bahurutshe ba ga Gopane based at Gopanestad. The political map of the Moiloa’s Reserve was further complicated by the return from Bechuanaland of another two Bahurutshe factions in the 1880s. They settled at Motswedi (falling under Gopane’s authority) and Supingstad respectively and became separately referred to as Bahurutshe boo Manyane and ba Shuping. See A Manson, “The Hurutshe in the Marico District of the Transvaal” .

“modernists” produced yet another schism which led to the establishment of Mokgola and Lekubu, where a breakaway segment was able to buy freehold land outside Moilola’s reserve before the 1913 Land Act was passed.³¹

As William Beinart and Colin Bundy have argued, chieftaincy provided “traditionalists” with a base for political mobilisation against state intervention in the early 20th century. This “did not necessarily lead to organised political action, but served as a powerful ideological force when rural resources or political structures came under threat”.³² It is against the backdrop of these latent fissures between “traditionalists” and “modernists” that the political alignments of the 1957-1959 uprising should be understood.

Scholars like Lungisile Ntsebeza have argued that Bantu Authorities “corrupted” and “disrupted” the institution of chieftaincy. The 1950s have thus been seen as a major turning point in South African rural history, with chieftaincy losing its legitimacy and becoming irreparably compromised.³³ Whereas some chiefs, for example Abram Moilola, saw Bantu Authorities as a superior power conflicting with their own rule, others used it as an opportunity to validate or strengthen claims to authority and gain favours from the white government. While the former “uncooperative” chiefs were ultimately disposed of, the latter were rewarded for their “collaboration”.

The profound transformation of native reserves produced by the imposition of Bantu Authorities in the 1950s marked the beginning of a new historical period in the South African countryside: the “homeland” or bantustan era. Yet, chieftaincy continued to be a central vehicle for the articulation of local struggles for power throughout the remainder of the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries, while periodically providing the point of entry for national liberation into local rural politics, as the rest of this article will show.

“Lead us and we shall try to crawl”

Once Abram Moilola was removed, the government was able to move forward with the implementation of Bantu Authorities and the Bahurutshe

31 The long struggle of these two “black spot” communities against their removal is told in K du Pisani, *The last frontier war: Braklaagte and the struggle for land before, during and after apartheid* (Amsterdam, Rozenberg Publishers, 2009).

32 W Beinart and C Bundy, “State intervention and rural resistance: The Transkei, 1900-1965”, MA Klein (ed.), *Peasants in Africa: Historical contemporary perspectives* (Beverly Hills, Sage, 1980).

33 L Ntsebeza, *Democracy compromised: Chiefs and the politics of land in South Africa* (Leiden, Brill, 2005).

ba ga Moiloa kwa Dinokana Tribal Authority (initially consisting of the *kgosi* and ten to sixteen councillors³⁴) was officially established in October 1958 under a new acting *kgosi*, Marks Nkadu Moiloa.³⁵ A year later, the Bahurutshe Regional Authority – the first of its kind to be set up in the Transvaal – was inaugurated by a young Lucas Mangope, the future Bophuthatswana president. It was on this occasion that Mangope allegedly told the Minister of Bantu Affairs: “Lead us and we shall try to crawl”.³⁶

At the time, Mangope had recently succeeded his father, called like him Lucas Manyane Mangope, as *kgosi* of the Bahurutshe boo Manyane in Motswedi, another village in Lehurutshe. The Mangope clan belonged to a section of the Bahurutshe who had fled to Bechuanaland during the Matebele invasion in the early nineteenth century. In the late nineteenth century they returned to the Marico District but found that the land which had belonged to them had been taken over by the Republican government and given to white farmers. They were eventually granted permission to settle at Motswedi by the *kgosi* of Gopane, under whose jurisdiction they fell. In 1907 Mangope (senior) acceded to the chieftaincy at Motswedi as regent during the minority of the rightful heir, Rrakaje. Mangope proved to be a “respectful” chief, “worthy of praise” for ensuring the payment of taxes by his people, and on whose cooperation the government felt it could rely on. This won Mangope (who had thus far been subordinate to Gopane’s authority) government recognition as an independent chief in 1941, while causing the resentment of *Kgosi* Gopane.³⁷

As the resistance against the passes spread like veld fire across Lehurutshe in 1957, Mangope went on to side with the white authorities, on whose goodwill his position rested, while the residents of Motswedi turned against him and the majority of the women burned their passes “under the auspices of armed natives from Johannesburg”.³⁸ When Mangope (senior) died in 1958, the government ethnologist PL Breutz was sent to investigate the succession to the chieftaincy at Motswedi. Breutz reported that the community was not

34 The number of councillors was increased to twenty-three in 1968.

35 Marks Moiloa soon fell ill and was replaced by his uncle Michael Moiloa, who was “truly a gentleman” in the eyes of the government. NASA, NTS 326 40/55, Letter to the Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, from the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Potchefstroom, 30 November 1958. Translated from Afrikaans by E Coetzee.

36 J Collinge, “Tampering with tradition”, *Work in Progress*, September/October 1989, p. 25.

37 NASA, BAO 4920 F54/1791/3, Letter to the Chief Native Commissioner, Pretoria, from the Assistant Native Commissioner, Zeerust, 22 October 1937.

38 NASA, NTS 326 40/55, Report to the Chief Native Commissioner, Potchefstroom, from the Native Commissioner, Zeerust, 11 December 1957. Translated from Afrikaans by E Coetzee.

in favour of the *kgosi's* son, Lucas Mangope junior, taking over and advised against the appointment of a chief “who does not carry with him the support of the community”. Breutz could not find any faults with the second candidate to the chieftaincy, Rrakaje (on whose behalf Mangope senior had been acting as regent in the first place). Rrakaje had been away to work on the mines since 1929 and for some years had been *induna* in the compounds. Although Rrakaje's behaviour was considered “average”, Breutz argued that “it must be harder to control members of different tribes in one compound than to govern one tribe”. On the other hand, the young Lucas, although educated, “had shown that he will follow the undemocratic route when necessary”. “The government”, Breutz warned, “will be playing with fire if they decide to strongly support him”.³⁹

Reporting again on Motswedi a year later in 1959, however, Breutz described a radically changed situation. Rrakaje, he argued, had been turned into a tool to fight the government by “troublemakers” from the ANC, which had found in Motswedi another “weak spot” where the organisation had rallied the support of at least half of the villagers. The government's eyes were now firmly set on Lucas Mangope as the successor to the chieftaincy, and Breutz's task became that of gathering enough evidence in support of Mangope's claim.⁴⁰ In 1959 Lucas Mangope was officially installed as chief in Motswedi, marking the beginning of his accession to power, culminating with his appointment as President of Bophuthatswana in 1977.

Mangope's claim to the chieftaincy thus lay on shaky historical ground. As Andy Manson and Bernard Mbenga have argued, “[w]hat this implied was that Mangope felt insecure in his position as traditional head of Bophuthatswana, and was determined to crush any challenge from his rural constituents”.⁴¹ This had important future consequences for the imposition of Mangope's ethno-nationalist project of a “Batswana nation”, of which he was both the President and Supreme Chief, during the ensuing Bophuthatswana era. It also helps explain Mangope's obsession with tribal affairs, which is further discussed below.

39 NASA BAO 4920 F54/1791/3, Report to the Native Commissioner, Zeerust, by PL Breutz, 25 May 1958. Translated from Afrikaans by E Coetzee.

40 NASA BAO 4920 F54/1791/3, Regarding the Chieftaincy of the Bahurutshe boo Manyane tribe in Marico, c. 1959.

41 A Manson and B Mbenga, “Bophuthatswana and the North-West Province: From Pan-Tswanaism to mineral-based ethnic assertiveness”, *South African Historical Journal*, 64 (1), 2012, p. 103.

After deposing Abram Moiloa in 1957, the National Party government was faced with the problem of finding a new *kgosi* to install in Dinokana. A suitable successor was eventually found in the person of Israel Seruthe, the headman of Mokgola, in return for having agreed to the removal of his village – a “black spot” in terms of the 1913 Land Act - to Driefontein, inside the Moiloa’s Reserve. (The majority of Mokgola’s residents, however, refused to follow him and remained in Mokgola.⁴²) Israel was officially installed as *kgosi* of Dinokana in 1960 at a ceremony presided over by Mangope.

The Tswana Territorial Authority – the embryonic Bophuthatswana bantustan, consisting of eight Regional Authorities – was inaugurated in 1961. In 1968 Mangope rose to become its Chief Councillor. When Bophuthatswana was granted self-government in June 1972 Mangope was elected Prime Minister. He then went on to become Bophuthatswana’s President at the country’s “independence” in December 1977.

Abram Moiloa’s Return

Abram Moiloa’s symbolic opposition to the apartheid government during the Zeerust uprising is now fairly documented and celebrated; today, the local municipality of Ramotshere Moiloa (incorporating Zeerust, Groot Marico and Lehurutshe) bears his name. What is less known is the story of Moiloa’s return from exile and of his reinstatement as *kgosi* under Lucas Mangope’s Bophuthatswana bantustan.

In 1970 a first application was made to bring Abram home to Dinokana as a private citizen. This, however, was initially denied by the South African authorities for fear of unrest that may have arisen out of Abram’s presence.⁴³ In 1971 the eviction order against Abram was revoked by the South African government on recommendation of the Bahurutshe ba ga Moiloa Tribal Authority,⁴⁴ but Abram chose not to return. This may have been because of Abram’s suspicions of the government’s intentions, or perhaps because Israel Moiloa, his successor, still ruled over Dinokana. For Abram to return as a

42 Abram Moiloa had been involved in raising funds in support of the legal case against the removal of Mokgola and Lekubu. See NASA, NTS 326 40/55, Letter to the Chief Native Commissioner Western Areas, Potchefstroom from the Native Commissioner, Zeerust, 27 November 1956.

43 See North-West Provincial Archives (hereafter NWPA), Bophuthatswana Papers (hereafter BP), 6/4/2(1965) , Vol. 2.

44 NASA, URU 6094, Minute No. 1736, Department of the Prime Minister, 11 November 1971. Translated from Afrikaans by E Coetzee.

private citizen would have implied an acceptance of Israel's authority.

In 1972 Israel Seruthe was forced to resign because of ill health. Boas Gareosenye Moiloa (Abram's uncle) succeeded Israel as acting *kgosi*.⁴⁵ When Boas died in 1975, calls for Abram's repatriation were renewed, this time successfully. Abram Moiloa was not only allowed to return but also was reappointed *kgosi* by the (still white) magistrate in Lehurutshe, Mr CJ van Zyl, on request of the Bophuthatswana cabinet, and with the approval of the South African government, on 27 June 1975. This was initially for a twelve-month period, which was extended for another twelve months on expiration.⁴⁶ Although Abram, now 64 years of age, still enjoyed fairly wide popular support, his return also triggered the re-emergence of divisions and rivalries within the Bahurutshe polity, which took the form of competing claims to the chieftaincy.

Moreover, by the time of his reinstatement in 1975, Abram had become old and sickly, which probably contributed to swaying the authorities to allow him to come back. But also Abram's return should be understood as part of an attempt to revamp the institution of chieftaincy by Mangope's Bophuthatswana. Batswana *dikgosi* were no longer accountable to the figure of the (white) Bantu Affairs Commissioner but to local magistrates (presiding over individual regional authorities) directly appointed by the Bophuthatswana government. Moreover those *dikgosi* who were also heads of a Regional Authority had a seat as honorary members of the Bophuthatswana parliament. As mentioned above, as well as being the State President of the Republic of Bophuthatswana, Mangope also held the position of Supreme Chief.

This restructuring of tribal authorities should be viewed as an attempt by the Bophuthatswana government to give the institution of chieftaincy a new lease of life. Moreover, Mangope's keen interest in the tribal affairs of Lehurutshe in particular can be attributed to the fact that he comes from this area. In spite of the differences standing between Abram Moiloa and Mangope – Mangope's rise largely coincided with and partly rested upon Abram's downfall – Mangope must have been acutely aware of the popular support that Abram commanded locally. If anything, Abram's seniority exacted a degree of respect

45 NASA, URU 6247 1236, Minute No. 1236, Department of the Prime Minister, 25 August 1972. Translated from Afrikaans by E Coetzee.

46 NASA, URU 6667 1121, Minute No. 1121, Department of the Prime Minister, 11 August 1975. Translated from Afrikaans by E Coetzee.

on Mangope's part. This can be gleaned from records of a series of meetings between the two. One such meeting concluded with Mangope telling Abram: "I would like you to live for us", to which Abram's response was: "My father liked Manyane [Mangope's father] and stayed at Motswedi [Mangope's home village]".⁴⁷

By September 1977 Abram had become so ill that he was allegedly no longer able to rule. A group of disgruntled *dikgoros* (or hereditary heads of lineage) used *kgosi's* failure in executing tribal affairs as a pretext to secretly visit the magistrate in Lehurutshe to demand that the *kgosi* be removed. These *dikgoros* ruled as headmen over outposts (or *merakas*, or wards) of Dinokana, which had developed as a result of the expansion of the village over the years.⁴⁸ One of the reasons why they wanted Abram removed is likely to have been their precarious status – they were not officially acknowledged and recognised as headmen by government authorities, meaning that their position depended entirely upon the will of the *kgosi*.

When Abram found out about the plot to oust him, he remonstrated to the magistrate that he had in fact asked for Gilbert Moiloa to be appointed his deputy when he realised that the workload was too great for him, but his request had gone unheard. He also pointed out that the group of *dikgoros* who had asked for his removal had no power to do so. And, finally, referring to his long period of confinement in exile, he pleaded: "I have served my punishment for many years, I should be let to remain in my chieftainship as it is my heritage".⁴⁹

A meeting to discuss the matter was held in Dinokana in January 1977 which was attended by some three hundred tribesmen, *Kgosi* Moiloa, magistrate Van Zyl and ministers of the Bophuthatswana government. The same section of the tribe that wanted Abram removed now tried to have Charles Moiloa appointed as the *kgosi's* deputy (with the support of the magistrate), but failed. (Charles Moiloa's candidature, it later transpired, had to be withdrawn because of his alcoholism). Abram was applauded as the rightful *kgosi*, while the headmen who had plotted against him were branded by one of Abram's supporters as "old crocks" who should be ones to go. Another supporter, Rre Kerumo argued: "I cannot see how one can take the chieftainship away from

47 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Minutes of the meeting with the President and Chief A Moiloa of Dinokana on the 31 October 1980 at Brig. Riekert's office at Mmabatho.

48 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Meeting at Dinokana on 4 January 1977 in connection with chieftainship.

49 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from AP Moiloa to the Magistrate, Lehurutshe, 31 October 1976.

Abram. I gave him a beast when he returned”.⁵⁰

In 1978 Abram had to be hospitalised for some time after suffering from a stroke. Taking advantage of his invalidity, the Dinokana *kgotla*, with the approval of magistrate Van Zyl, resolved to appoint Ramatu Richard Moiloa as acting *kgosi* to rule during Abram’s absence – thus ignoring the Abram’s expressed wish that Gilbert Moiloa be made his deputy. Ramatu was the son of Boas Gareosenye, who had ruled Dinokana from 1972 until his death in 1975. Abram’s return from Botswana and his re-instatement had most likely thwarted Ramatu’s hopes of succeeding his father Boas to the chieftaincy.

When he returned to Dinokana in 1980, Abram became deeply unhappy about the new set up. At a meeting with President Mangope he complained of ill treatment by the Ramatu, for refusing him use of the car belonging to the tribal authority, which Abram needed to attend hospital appointments. Another complaint was that Ramatu had “released *Bogwera* [initiation school], which should have been done by a senior”.⁵¹ In the discussion which followed, the magistrate argued that Abram was no longer fit to rule and recommended to Mangope that someone else be appointed to act in his place. However, the Bophuthatswana President was careful not to antagonise Abram, insisting that the old *kgosi* should have the final say or else “chieftainship will have no meaning”.⁵² Conflict between Abram and Ramatu Moiloa prompted the Bophuthatswana government to appoint a commission of inquiry to investigate the succession to the chieftaincy in Dinokana in the event of Abram’s death. The purpose of the commission⁵³ was to find a suitable heir, as Abram’s union with his only “official” wife Masibone Anna bore no male children who could succeed him. According to the commission’s report, the Dinokana chieftaincy had become corrupted. This had occurred first at the time of a chieftaincy dispute between Israel Keobusitse and Abram Pogiso in the early 1900s, which ended with the secession of Israel Keobusitse and his followers from Dinokana and the establishment of the villages of Mokgola

50 Given the material and symbolic value of cattle in African societies, the gift of cattle in this context should be seen as part of the sanctioning of new social bonds (in a way similar to the role performed by the exchange of cattle through *ilobolo*). NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Meeting at Dinokana on 4 January 1977 in connection with chieftainship.

51 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Minutes of the meeting with the President and Chief A Moiloa of Dinokana, 31 October 1980 at Brig. Rieker’s office at Mmabatho.

52 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Minutes of the meeting with the President and Chief RA Moiloa, 10 November 1980 at Mmabatho.

53 The commission consisted of J Sechoaro (Chairman), HA Viviers (from the South African government side) and IM Selebogo (secretary). Its investigations started on 14 July 1981 and were completed on 30 September 1981.

and Lekubu on freehold land. The dispute had disrupted the principle of genealogical seniority, with the result that junior persons succeeded and ascended to high offices and hereditary positions of authority. The chieftaincy had been disrupted a second time during the 1950s uprising, when the Lehurutshe had experienced an almost complete disintegration of political organisation.⁵⁴

Monnaamere Joseph Godfrey Moilola (a descendant of Israel Keobusitse and son of Israel Seruthe, the *kgosi* that had been installed to replace Abram in Dinokana in 1960) was identified by the commission as the rightful heir to the chieftaincy. By the time the commission went to interview Abram, he was – by the commission’s own admission – “at his last and very sick”, to the point that “he could not speak properly”. When asked if he objected to the house of Israel Keobusitse taking over the chieftaincy, the old *kgosi* could only reply by way of nodding or shaking his head – which was interpreted by the commission as consent.⁵⁵

In trying to give legitimacy to Monnaamere’s claim the commission downplayed the historical divisions between Dinokana and Mokgola/Lekubu by arguing that Israel Keobusitse’s breakaway in the early twentieth century did not necessarily imply a forfeiture of claims to the Dinokana chieftaincy. Moreover, it was argued that Mokgola had in actual fact “reconciled” with Dinokana following the death of Israel Keobusitse in 1924. The re-union was marked by the slaughtering of an ox - whereby the authority of the Dinokana *kgosi* was also accepted by Mokgola/Lekubu.⁵⁶ Finally, the commission argued that “at the time of Israel’s [Seruthe] installation [in 1960] the leopard skin was hung and he was given a spear and axe as well as a shield” which constituted “undisputable evidence” that reconciliation had taken place.⁵⁷

In accordance with the commission’s findings, Monnaamere Moilola – who was working as a policeman in Carletonville at the time - was called upon so that he could take up the chieftaincy in Dinokana.⁵⁸ Another key

54 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Commission of inquiry into the chieftainship of the Hurutshe ba ga Moilola tribe, 3 April 1981.

55 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Commission of inquiry into the chieftainship of the Hurutshe ba ga Moilola tribe, 3 April 1981.

56 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from MB Moilola to Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Zeerust, 21 July 1959. See also NASA, NTS 3423 18/308, Native Commissioner (R Culson) to the Secretary for Native Affairs, 14 August 1922.

57 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Commission of inquiry into the chieftainship of the Hurutshe ba ga Moilola tribe, 3 April 1981.

58 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Unaddressed letter by Monnaamere Godfrey Moilola, 12 March 1981.

recommendation by the commission was that the *dikgoros* - who ruled over the scattering of villages (administratively defined as wards and totalling fourteen in number) that had had developed on Dinokana's periphery as population density in the reserve increased - should officially be appointed and recognised as headmen and formally incorporated into the structures of the tribal authority.⁵⁹

Monnaamere Moiloa

Monnaamere Moiloa was appointed acting *kgosi* in 1981 and in 1983 he officially succeeded Abram as *kgosi* of the Bahurutshe ba ga Moiloa at Dinokana after the latter's death on 20 May 1982. The commission's detailed findings and recommendations (published in a twenty-two pages report on the political organisation of the Bahurutshe) and Monnaamere's appointment, however, did not resolve the problems around the chieftainship in Dinokana. Although Richard Ramatu, who had been acting *kgosi* during the time of Ramotshere's illness, was made the new *kgosi's* deputy, he continued to vie for the chieftainship. Perhaps more significantly Monnaamere soon proved to be a very unpopular *kgosi*.

Shortly after the death of Abram a dispute arose over what had been old Moiloa's lands, as Monnaamere awarded himself with everything that had belonged to his predecessor. Abram's sister, Dinah More, who had been ploughing her brother's fields and had cared for him during the last five years of his life, was evicted by Monnaamere. Moreover, Dinah More's son Molefakgotla claimed that Abram had left message that a boy whom he had fathered at "Tshukutswane's place" in Botswana should be fetched to come and stay in Dinokana and be raised to become his heir.⁶⁰

That this claim went ignored is significant for after the death of Monnaamere in 2006 a new chieftaincy dispute erupted in Dinokana. At the centre of the current disagreement is the allegation that Abram Moiloa fathered a son in Botswana, Tšbogo Charles Moiloa, whom one section of the royal family (calling itself Monneng Royal Council) would now like to see installed as *kgosi*.⁶¹ The other contender for the chieftaincy is Israel Moiloa, Monnaamere's

59 NWP, BP, 6/4/2(165), Report on the political organisation of the Bahurutshe boo Moiloa ba ga Ramotshere: Dinokana District, Lehurutshe, 8 December 1981.

60 NWP, BP, 6/4/2(165).

61 Interview, TK Mokgathe/Charles Moiloa/Robert Mafora/Jubilee Moiloa, Dinokana Tribal Office, 29 April 2009. Translated from Setswana by B Khunou.

first born son and a descendant of Israel Seruthe – the *kgosi* appointed in 1960 in place of Abram Moilola. According to Charles Moilola, a member of the Monneng Royal Council:⁶²

This thing of installing *dikgosi* who are not deserving was caused by Manyane [Lucas Mangope] and there was no-one who can question the legitimacy of the *dikgosi* because he [Mangope] was so fierce, like a lion, you wouldn't approach him and discuss the matter. He dictated to the Bahurutshe on their land, hence he brought in so-called *dikgosi*.

The continued impasse since Monnaamere's death led to the establishment of yet another commission of inquiry into the chieftaincy at Dinokana by the then Premier of the North West Province, Edna Molewa, in 2008.⁶³ However, the role of the new democratic government in arbitrating contemporary chieftaincy disputes is viewed by Charles Moilola as replete with nepotism:⁶⁴

Molewa's government does not recognise us [the Monneng Royal Council], it takes chieftainship like friendship. Because she is friends with the mother of Israel, now they want to take advantage of their friendship to the premier so that their children become *dikgosi* because of their relationship.

In July 2013 the commission investigating the claims to the chieftaincy ruled in favour of Israel Moilola, having “established that Kgosi Monnaamere Godfrey was installed by the royal house as opposed to allegations... [that he] was installed by the erstwhile Bophuthatswana regime”.⁶⁵

After assuming the chieftaincy in 1983, *Kgosi* Monnaamere fell into disrepute among his constituency because of financial problems he kept incurring - and for which the people of Dinokana had to foot the bill. In 1983 the Dinokana tribal authority granted Monnaamere a loan of R 1,500. Before this was even repaid, the *kgosi* was in financial dire straits again and applied for another R4,000 to be loaned to him.⁶⁶ When he was issued with summons by his creditors, in July 1984 he approached the magistrate in Lehurutshe for help to repay a debt of about R 4,300 to avoid the impending sequestration of his

62 Interview, Charles Moilola by Arianna Lissoni and William Tsele, Dinokana Tribal Office, 10 July 2009. Translated from Setswana by B Khunou.

63 See Media Statement by the Office of the Premier, North West Provincial Government, Mmabatho, 31 July 2008, and Proclamation No. 6664 by the Premier of the North West Province Bomo Edna Edith Molewa, 16 April 2009.

64 Interview, TK Mokgatlhe/Charles Moilola/Robert Mafora/Jubilee Moilola by Arianna Lissoni, Dinokana Tribal Office, 29 April 2009. Translated by Boitumelo Khunou.

65 Sapa, “Bahurutshe get new chief” (available at: <http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/bahurutshe-get-new-chief-1.1551542#.UndliJSSimE>), as accessed on 23 July 2013.

66 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Report on Chief MGJ Moilola 1984.

car.⁶⁷ The *kgosi* also owed the tribal authority another R 1,657, which he was accused of stealing from the tribal fund.⁶⁸ A firm of lawyers acting on behalf of a group of his creditors claimed in August 1985 that Monnaamere's debts stood at R 10,000 "at our offices only".⁶⁹ The complaints kept coming in. A shopkeeper in Dinokana revealed that Monnaamere owed him R 1,500,⁷⁰ while the name of the *kgosi's* wife now also featured as a debtor. The situation was so serious that the *kgosi's* entire salary – standing at approximately R1300 per month - had at one stage to be set aside in order to repay the money he owed.

Monnaamere's position looked bound to worsen rather than improve, yet the magistrate argued that Monnaamere should be excused from refunding the money he owed to the tribal coffer or that repayments be reduced to the minimum. This was to enable Monnaamere to "have funds for other amenities in life", given that he had been used to a "higher standard of living as a policeman" than the one he could presently afford.⁷¹ A report on Monnaamere's conduct dated 1984 also found that another reason for his unpopularity was that he was "fond of making a lot of promises to his people that he fails to discharge/implement in the end". Despite only scoring 36 out of a total of 90 points, the evaluation report astonishingly concluded that Monnaamere could "still be made a fit person to hold office".⁷²

Discontent over Monnaamere's conduct reached a climax in 1986 when a bomb was placed at his house, although no-one was injured in the attack in the end. Rumour had it that his deputy, Richard Ramatu, was behind the explosion. Rather than addressing the root cause of the discontent, however, the magistrate once again chose to protect the *kgosi* by arguing that he may be "the victim of the soft target policy of certain organisations" - an indirect reference to the banned ANC - and even recommended that Monnaamere be

67 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from the magistrate, Lehurutshe, to the Secretary of the Department of the Presidency, 2 July 1984.

68 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Report on Chief MGJ Moiloa 1984.

69 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from Coulson, Jacobsz & Van der Merwe to the Magistrate, Lehurutshe, 26 July 1985.

70 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from the magistrate, Lehurutshe, to the Secretary of the Department of the Presidency, 31 July 1985.

71 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from the magistrate, Lehurutshe, to the Secretary of the Department of the Presidency, 31 July 1985.

72 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Report on Kgosi MGJ Moiloa 1984.

granted the use of a gun for self-protection. Meanwhile, the tribal authority was faced once again with having to pay for the damages to the *kgosi's* house.⁷³

Lekubu and Mokgola

In this period the question of the chieftaincy in Dinokana came to intersect with the issue of incorporation into Bophuthatswana of two “black spot” villages nearby: Lekubu and Mokgola. The first attempt by the South African government to remove these two villages dated as far back as 1938 but was in the end abandoned with the onset of World War II. In the late 1950s – coinciding with the Zeerust uprising - renewed efforts were made to this effect, but were met with stubborn resistance by the two communities concerned. In 1965, the Lekubu community under the leadership of Lekoloane John Sebogodi took the matter to the Supreme Court, which ruled in their favour by granting an interdict restraining the Minister of Bantu Affairs and the Bantu Affairs Commissioner in Zeerust from taking any further steps towards their removal.⁷⁴

The status of Lekubu and Mokgola, which had always been precarious, became especially ambiguous after Bophuthatswana's independence in 1977. This was because the two villages lay outside the bantustan's borders - being separated from Bophuthatswana by a corridor of white farms, known as the Marico corridor - and fell under South Africa's jurisdiction. Yet Bophuthatswana had become responsible for providing certain services to the two communities. For example the administration of local schools (including the employment of teachers) in both villages was transferred from the South African Bantu Education Department to the Bophuthatswana's Department of Education in 1978.. Moreover, Mokgola and Lekubu's residents had automatically acquired Bophuthatswana citizenship when the latter became “independent” in 1977.

Lekubu and Mokgola's position was further complicated by the question of the chieftaincy in Dinokana. This was because *Kgosi* Monnaamere was a descendant of Israel Keobusitse, the leader of the group who had broken away from Dinokana to establish Mokgola and Lekubu in the first place. Moreover,

73 NWPB, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from the magistrate, Lehurutshe, to the Secretary of the Department of the Presidency, 6 March 1986.

74 NWPB, BP, 6/4/2(165), In the Supreme Court of South Africa (Transvaal Provincial Division) in the matter between Lekoloane Sebogodi and the Minister of Bantu Affairs and the Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Zeerust, 1092/1965, 2 August 1965.

although the South African government had never officially recognised Mokgola and Lekubu as independent from Dinokana and considered the two villages as ruled by “headmen” or *dikgosana* (falling within Dinokana’s political jurisdiction) rather than “chiefs” or *dikgosi*, the two communities regarded themselves as such - their secession in the early twentieth century had after all been an attempt to seek political autonomy from Dinokana. Moreover, Lekubu had come to consider itself as separate not only from Dinokana, but also from Mokgola, from which it supposedly originated. (Malebele, Lekubu’s first *kgosi*, was Israel Keobusitse’s brother.) And, to confuse matters even more, Lekubu also owned the farm Mosweu (or Welverdiend, bought in 1927) which now fell within Bophuthatswana’s borders.

After Bophuthatswana had become “independent” in 1977, Lekoloane Sebogodi and a delegation from Lekubu met with a group of Bophuthatswana officials to voice some of their grievances and with the idea of cooperating with the Bophuthatswana government. Firstly, the community suffered from a severe shortage of grazing land. In retaliation for their refusal to move, Lekubu’s grazing rights on trust farms had long been withdrawn by the South African government. The loss of grazing land was also explained in terms of Lekubu’s resistance against betterment schemes, which required that cattle be brand-marked on the necks with the letters Z and S (these marks were used to identify cattle of government trust farms). But fearing that their stock would be diminished, Lekubu had refused to brand their cattle. Non-acceptance of branding measures was used by the government to evict the community from trust farms which they had been using for grazing purposes.

Secondly, the apartheid government had suspended Sebogodi’s stipend as a consequence of Lekubu’s refusal to move – even if its residents had continued over the years to pay their taxes to the government. Moreover, the authorities also excluded Sebogodi from attending quarterly meetings of the Regional Authority, which involved all the other Bahurutshe *dikgosi* and *dikgosana*.

Finally, Lekubu wanted the Bophuthatswana government, to help with subsidies for the construction of new school buildings. Schools at the village had up until then been entirely build at the expense of the local community, who had been suspicious of applying for financial assistance to the South African government (for example through the Rand for Rand subsidy) for fear that the government would claim that they also had a share in the school

buildings - and then use this as an excuse to evict them from their land.⁷⁵

As it turned out, however, Sebogodi's request to be included in the Bahurutshe ba ga Moiloa Regional Authority could not be granted by the South African authorities on the grounds that Lekubu's territory was part of the South Africa, and not Bophuthatswana.⁷⁶ For exactly the same reason, Bophuthatswana argued that Sebogodi's salary should be paid by South Africa.⁷⁷ So in spite of this approach to the newly "independent" Bophuthatswana bantustan, the community of Lekubu was left to provide for themselves for services which neither Bophuthatswana nor South Africa seemed willing to deliver.

The appointment of *dikgosana* at Mokgola and Lekubu soon became another issue of contention which the two communities – torn between Bophuthatswana and South Africa – were to a certain extent able to turn to their own advantage. During the last years of his rule, *kgosi* Abram Moiloa had asked that David Moswana Moiloa be appointed *kgosana* at Mokgola. But because Mokgola fell under South Africa's jurisdiction, such an appointment could only be made by the Bantu Affairs Commissioner in Zeerust, who was not in favour of it because the South African police were reportedly "not happy".⁷⁸ According to a report by the Bophuthatswana intelligence services, "the attitude of headman David Moiloa has always been negative, this being attributed to his political aspirations of the African National Congress".⁷⁹ In 1958 David Moiloa had been removed from the Marico District to the Province of Natal to serve political banishment as a result of his ANC membership and opposition to the government at the time of the Zeerust uprising. David was the younger brother of Israel Seruthe (who had replaced Abram Moiloa as Dinokana's *kgosi* in 1960) and Monnaamere's uncle.

Abram's request to install David in Mokgola was in the end granted – perhaps as a last gesture to appease the old *kgosi*. But after Abram died, differences arose between his successor Monnaamere and David Moiloa which brought to the surface deep-seated animosities. David refused to undersign a

75 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Minutes of meeting with the Bahurutshe of Braklaagte under headman LM Sebogodi, 11 October 1978.

76 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from the Embassy of the Republic of South Africa to the Department of Foreign Affairs of Bophuthatswana, 27 March 1979.

77 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from the Department of Foreign Affairs of Bophuthatswana to the Embassy of the Republic of South Africa, 15 December 1978.

78 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Minutes of the meeting of the President with Kgosi RG Moiloa on 10 November 1980 at Mmabatho.

79 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from Bophuthatswana Internal Intelligence Service to the Department of the Presidency, 26 July 1984.

document which recognised Monnaamere's authority over Mokgola,⁸⁰ while Monnaamere struggled to retain control over the recalcitrant village with the help of the South African authorities. But David Moiloa remained defiant. During a meeting he distanced Mokgola from Dinokana by declaring: "I am not Moiloa's son but born to Keobusitse's elder brother. I don't know why they [Dinokana] can't fight and get punished so that they could go and tell Manyane [Mangope] that they have finished fighting". One of his councillors added: "The very President [Mangope] who encourages and initiates discontent, the very Manyane whose father was a wanderer [the Bahurutshe Boo Manyane had settled at Motswedi from Botswana], how dare he want us to reach a conclusion? Who is he after all?"⁸¹

David Moiloa's defiance probably made Monnaamere realise he needed one of his supporters in Mokgola or Lekubu in order to keep the two villages under Dinokana's (and his) authority. The right opportunity presented itself at Lekubu, where the aging Lekoloane Sebogodi (who had been ruling in Lekubu since 1949) was about to step down. Sebogodi had in fact expressed his wish to retire in favour of his eldest son Pupsey. Instead, Monnaamere, with the aid of the Bophuthatswana authorities, now mobilised to have his brother Edwin Moitaasilo Moiloa appointed in Lekoloane's place. As a first step in this direction, an attempt was made in 1985 to install Edwin as headman of the farm Mosweu through the pretext that this land fell within Bophuthatswana's borders.

The findings of a commission of inquiry (consisting of an ethnologist from the Department of the Presidency, Isaac Motile Selebogo, and a South African ethnologist, Mr FGJ Viid) that had investigated the headmanship at Mokgola and Lekubu were used in support of Edwin's appointment at Mosweu. (The commission had apparently been set up at Monnaamere's instigation after a phone call to the Department of the Presidency of Bophuthatswana). Reference was also made to the title deeds of Mosweu, according to which the farm had originally been registered in the name of Edwin's father, George Mosekaphofu (Lekubu's ruler at the time), as further evidence of Edwin's entitlement to the headmanship. The farm had however been bought by Lekubu's residents (with no help from Dinokana), who were therefore strongly opposed to Dinokana now having the final say over who should be

80 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from the magistrate, Lehurutshe, to the Department of the President, 8 May 1984.

81 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Minutes of a meeting at Mokgola [Leeuwfontein] Tribal Office, 26 November 1984.

in charge of Mosweu. Moreover, Mosweu had never had a separate *kgosana* from Lekubu. The person who looked after the farm had until then been not a headman but a *modisa* (guardian), whom Lekoloane Sebogodi appointed. (The latest *modisa*, Jonas Mafora, had recently died.⁸²)

In spite of these differences Edwin was installed at Mosweu in 1985. Shortly after, he extended his claim to the headmanship to Lekubu. This was not the first time that Edwin had challenged Lekoloane's rule. In 1965 the headmanship had been brought before a court after Lekoloane allegedly refused to retire in favour of Edwin. Edwin claimed that Lekoloane, who had been ruling since 1949, had in fact been appointed to act on his behalf as his *rangwane* (uncle) because Edwin was at the time still young and had not married yet. On the other hand, Lekoloane argued that Edwin's father, Mosekaphoku, had become headman after his own father's death (Malebelele, the first *kgosi* of Lekubu) and Mosekaphoku had been installed by the *kgotla* without official government recognition. Lekoloane's appointment in 1949, on the other hand, had been effected by the then Native Commissioner in Zeerust. Lekoloane also commanded the support and respect of the majority of the Lekubu community because of his firm stance against Lekubu's removal over the years.

On 14 April 1986 during a meeting of Lekubu's residents at which the Dinokana *kgosi* was also present, Monnaamere tried to depose Lekoloane⁸³. This was followed by another meeting between Mangope, Lekoloane Sebogodi, Edwin Moiloa and Monnaamere on 28 April 1986, when Mangope himself ruled that the headmanship at Lekubu belonged to Edwin.⁸⁴ According to tradition, Edwin's supporters argued, headmen must be appointed and not elected. In May 1986 Edwin was formally introduced to Lekubu's residents as the new *kgosana* by Monnaamere, who urged Edwin and Lekoloane to work together. A date for Edwin's official installation was set in August, and the ceremony was to be presided by President Mangope.⁸⁵ All of these actions, however, turned out to be unlawful, as the South African and not the Bophuthatswana government was responsible for the appointment of

82 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Bahurutsbe ba ga Moiloa Tribal Authority: headmanship of Mosweu, minutes of a meeting held on 3 September 1985.

83 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from Cheadle, Thompson & State Attorneys to the Office of the State Attorney, Bophuthatswana, Mafikeng 20 May 1987.

84 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Minutes of a meeting between President Mangope, MGJ Moiloa, Edwin Moiloa and LJ Sebogodi, 28 April 1986.

85 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from the Secretary of the Department of the Presidency to His Excellency [Mangope], 21 May 1986.

headmen at Lekubu. Instead of stepping down, which may have created an opportunity for Edwin to take over, Lekoloane remained in office while his son Pupsey in effect acted on his behalf. In terms of legal process, Lekoloane (who had sought the advice of a firm of lawyers in Johannesburg) could not be forced to retire without involving the State President of the Republic of South Africa, who was the only person with the legal powers to withdraw Lekoloane's appointment certificate.⁸⁶

As a result of the ongoing conflict over the headmanship, Monnaamere complained in a letter to Mangope that Lekoloane Sebogodi had "become disloyal to me and there are strong indications that he and his son [Pupsey] are instigating the tribesmen against the rightful *kgosana* of the area".⁸⁷ The complaint may have been prompted by an incident which involved Lekoloane and his loyalists marching to the house of Edwin Moiloa "chanting tribal songs, blowing a tribal horn and accusing Monnaamere of being biased" for trying to give the headmanship to his brother Edwin. When the South African police arrived on the scene, Lekoloane reportedly told them that "they were only having 'fun'".⁸⁸ Only in May 1988 was Edwin's installation confirmed by the responsible South African authorities in the Department of Constitutional Development.⁸⁹

The struggle against incorporation

Dinokana's tampering with the headmanship at Lekubu with the help of Bophuthatswana came to overlap with the decision to incorporate Lekubu and Mokgola into Bophuthatswana by the South African government. When the incorporation of the two villages, with a combined population of approximately 15,000 people, was finalised by the South African and Bophuthatswana governments in late 1986, the question of Lekubu's headmanship was temporarily set aside.

In the late 1970s, the issue of Lekubu and Mokgola's removal had begun to raise its head again when the South African government appointed a Commission on Cooperation and Development to make recommendations

86 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from the Secretary of the Department of the President to the President, Bophuthatswana, 30 October 1986.

87 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from MJG Moiloa to President Mangope, 17 November 1986.

88 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Report from Intelligence Services to the Secretary of the Department of the Presidency, Bophuthatswana, 16 September 1986.

89 NASA, BTS 1/230/9/1/1, Letter by PW van Niekerk, Head of Constitutional Development Services, Pretoria, To whom it may concern, 29 December 1989.

for land consolidation in the “homelands” and for the elimination of “black spots”. In 1980 the Borders of Particular States Extension Act was passed to allow for the consolidation of the “homelands’ ” haphazard borders with the aim of garnering some political legitimacy. This act made possible the incorporation of entire communities by what came to be aptly described as “the stroke of a pen”. Unlike the old strategy of forced removals – which were not only highly unpopular, but also attracted much unwanted publicity both in South Africa and internationally - incorporation did not require the involvement or the consent of the communities concerned, nor did it allow them to resort to their final instrument of defiance - to physically resist being moved.⁹⁰

In 1979 the Commission on Cooperation and Development indicated that communities of Lekubu and Mokgola should be removed to the farms Bergvliet 23 and Rietgat 91, which were to be incorporated into Bophuthatswana. An enquiry was then made by the Bophuthatswana Department of Urban Affairs and Land Tenure as to whether the white corridor of farms separating Lekubu and Mokgola from Bop’s borders could not be bought instead – in which case the two villages in question would not have to be removed.⁹¹ Between 1983 and 1985 the Commission met several times to discuss the future of the Marico corridor, but the Lekubu and Mokgola communities were not consulted in the process. By 1986 the resistance by white farmers in the area to sell their farms had largely waned under the onslaught of a prolonged period of drought,⁹² and the South African and Bophuthatswana governments were able to finalise an agreement according to which Lekubu and Mokgola would be incorporated into Bophuthatswana by annexing their land through newly acquired farms in the Marico corridor.

The Lekubu community first heard about these incorporation plans from the Bantu Affairs Commissioner in Zeerust in July 1986. An emergency tribal meeting was immediately called to discuss the issue. Here a unanimous resolution committing Lekubu’s residents to oppose incorporation was passed, and three thousand people signed a petition voicing their opposition. A decision was also taken that residents should renounce their Bophuthatswana

90 NASA, BTS 1/230/9/1/1, Letter from JA Sutherland, Johannesburg, to FW de Klerk, Pretoria, 20 September 1989.

91 NWPA, BP, 6/4/2(165), Letter from the Secretary for Health and Social Care to the Department of Foreign Affairs, Montshiwa, 30 July 1979.

92 *Weekly Mail*, 12-18 September 1986.

citizenship⁹³ and apply for the restoration of their South African one (this had become possible thanks to the Restoration of South African Citizenship Act of 1986). Various attempts at having the incorporation rescinded via the courts failed, the South African government carried out its intentions and Lekubu and Mokgola's incorporation was officially gazetted on 31 December 1988. Incorporation had the effect of catapulting the Lekubu community, under the leadership of Lekoloane's son Pupsey Sebogodi, into active resistance against Bophuthatswana and of turning a situation of crisis into one of war (very much as what had happened 40 years earlier). The intense period of struggle which followed is a separate story which will not be detailed here.⁹⁴ To be sure, one of the implications of Lekubu's incorporation was that the Bophuthatswana government was now free to install whoever they pleased as the village headman, and Edwin Moiloa was duly appointed to the position.

Conclusion

The imposition of Bantu Authorities in the late 1950s and Abram Moiloa's summary deposition by the apartheid state led to the creation of a new political order in Lehurutshethe, coinciding with the beginning of the "homeland" or bantustan era in South African rural history. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Bahurutshe chieftaincy went through another period of restructuring, this time executed by the "independent" Bophuthatswana government. The return of *kgosi* Abram Moiloa from exile in 1975 may be viewed as an attempt to restore a degree of popular support for the institution, which had become corrupted after the uprising of the late 1950s. This however proved to be short-lived as the Bophuthatswana government failed to break away from the apartheid practice of installing *dikgosi* whom it perceived as its allies. Even so, this did not mean that Bahurutshe *dikgosi* compliantly followed Mangope's orders, nor that chieftaincy became altogether discredited or irrelevant. On the contrary, chieftaincy continued to be the central platform around which local authority could be negotiated and exercised. Moreover, individual *dikgosi* were able to use their position in a variety of (sometimes contradictory) ways to mobilise support in their favour. Finally, the article has traced how local and liberation or resistance politics became articulated through the institution of chieftaincy at various historical moments during the apartheid period.

93 Bophuthatswana did not allow its citizens to hold double citizenship.

94 For more about the anti-incorporation resistance see various publications by the Transvaal Rural Action Committee, an NGO that assisted the Lekubu and Mokgola communities in resisting incorporation. Their records are kept at University of the Witwatersrand, William Cullen Library, Historical Papers, AG2735. See also K du Pisani, *The last frontier war...*