

SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR BULLETIN

FOCUS ON LESOTHO

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FROM GRANARY TO LABOUR RESERVE

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EFFECTS OF MIGRANT LABOUR

JUDY GAY

WAGE EMPLOYMENT OF BASOTHO WOMEN

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'STABILIZATION' AND UNEMPLOYMENT

**GRAY, ROBERTSON
& WALTON**

LESOTHO: A STRATEGY FOR SURVIVAL

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Introduction

This issue focuses on migrant labour in Lesotho. Migrancy, to and from workplaces in the Republic, has been of critical importance to the livelihood of practically every household in Lesotho for well over half a century. Yet the importance of migrancy is often underplayed in official publications : its true proportions are concealed; the historic significance of migrant labour in shaping the economy and society in Lesotho are not fully realised; its effect on the impoverishment of the domestic economy is not adequately taken into account when proposing domestic development strategies; and the social disruption left in the wake of migrancy is rarely spelt out.

Lesotho has several advantages for the study of migrant labour: the high level of migrancy sustained over such a long period mean that the consequences of migrancy are immediately perceivable; moreover Lesotho exhibits many of the characteristics of a 'homeland' and yet access to study the phenomenon is considerably easier in Lesotho than in South Africa. As a result a good deal of research into migrant labour has been carried out in Lesotho, though much of it is not readily obtainable. During the colonial era the drift of many of these studies was openly supportive of the system. Since political independence in 1966 a great deal of research into migrancy has been done in the name of development planning. A considerable amount of numerical information has been gathered in the course of this but many of the analyses have suffered from a central problem; that of treating migrancy as a single institution without reference to the political economy in which it occurs. A characteristic of planning studies of migrant labour has been that they have had little or no effect on Government policy. The most recent study of migrant labour and its domestic effects has been a collaborative effort between the ILO and the National University of Lesotho. A well-padded budget generated a great deal of material, but little of it has been put to good effect. One of the more interesting approaches to the study of migrant labour was that adopted by the Agency for Industrial Mission, in the course of which a number of students undertook migrant contracts.

Our study begins with a historical review of migration from Lesotho, illustrating the shift from the emergent peasant economy of the 1870s to the growth of a rurally-based industrial working class. Murray's second article summarises some of the more recent village-based studies of migrant labour in Lesotho which have examined the relationship between migrancy, class formation and different stages of the cycle of household development. This work stands in marked contrast to much of the other macro-statistical analysis of the 'effects of migrant labour' presented by the international development agencies. Both Gay and Showers focus on women in the migrant labour economy: Gay examines the little researched area of women as migrants, and Showers presents an impressionistic sketch of the stresses placed upon the women who remain behind.

Perhaps the most vital issue concerning migrant labour in Lesotho in the late 1970's is the long expected reduction in the numbers of migrants from Lesotho. The focal point in the study of migrant labour in Lesotho has now shifted from

that of the effects of the high level of migrancy, to the study of the effects of the reduction of migrants in an economy in which almost every household is dependent upon migrant remittances. This is addressed in the third article by Murray who outlines the scale of the reduction and illustrates how this seems to be affecting rural dwellers. Gray, Robertson and Walton take as their starting point the decline from the high point in the numbers of migrants from Lesotho, the 'golden seventies' as they dub it, and go on to sketch out the depressing prospects that lie ahead for the citizens of Lesotho in the 1980s. They also review the Lesotho Government's policies on migrant labour. What is striking, though perhaps not so surprising, is the fact that no policy exists. There have been tentative approaches towards participating in a supply-state cartel; yet not only would this be fraught with political dangers, but it is probably now too late for any such cartel to have much effect. A more serious criticism of Lesotho and other countries from which migrant labourers are sent is that there have been no attempts on the part of these governments to press for recognition of union rights for their citizens. In this respect, the Lesotho government's stance on migrant labour is even upstaged by that adopted by the Wiehahn Commission.

Piers Cross

We would like to express our thanks to Piers Cross who collected and edited the material that appears in this special edition.

From Granary to Labour Reserve: An Economic History of Lesotho

Colin Murráy

Introduction

More than one hundred years ago, in 1863, Lesotho was described as “the granary of the Free State and parts of the (Cape) Colony”.¹ Today it is an impoverished labour reserve. Its dependence on the export of labour to South Africa is starkly illustrated by the following facts. Firstly, perhaps 200 000 migrants from Lesotho are regularly employed in South Africa, out of the country’s total population of one and a quarter million.² Nearly 130 000 men were employed in the mines alone in 1977, supplying a quarter of the industry’s complement of black labour.³ Secondly, the earnings of these migrants far exceed Lesotho’s Gross Domestic Product. Thirdly, according to a recent survey, about 70 per cent of mean rural household income is derived from migrant earnings. Only about 6 per cent is derived from domestic crop production.⁴ Contrary to the Prime Minister’s assertion in the Second Five Year Development Plan, agriculture does not “support 80 per cent of the population”.⁵ It is the “backbone of the economy”⁶ only in the residual sense that there are very few other employment prospects within the country. The population of Lesotho today is aptly described as a rural proletariat which scratches about on the land.

There is a well established tradition in South African economic historiography — that of economic dualism⁷ — which attempts to explain poverty in the rural periphery of southern Africa by invoking African failure to respond to changing conditions and, specifically, features intrinsic to African social structure which inhibit the capacity to innovate. Writers on Lesotho are well represented in this tradition. For example, Hugh Ashton, the principal ethnographer of the Basotho, ascribed low agricultural productivity in the 1930s partly to a lack of capital equipment, partly to a shortage of male labour (both very plausible reasons), and partly to a prevalent attitude of indifference on the part of the Basotho. “The Mosotho is not an agriculturalist by tradition, and tends to regard agriculture as women’s work (which is used to be), and even if he does not positively despise it, he just is not interested or enthusiastic about it”. Owing to the ready availability of employment in South Africa, the Basotho lacked any “driving incentiveto develop their lands and improve their agriculture”.⁸ In 1970 Jack Williams identified a phenomenon which he called “socio-cultural congruity”, made up of three elements: (a) the irrational and sustained belief in superstition and magic; (b) the sharing propensity supposedly inherent in extended family institutions; and (c) a collective impulse not to behave conspicuously. All these factors, he alleged, “impinge on rational decision-making at the farm level”.⁹ Sandra Wallman proposed a rather more sophisticated syndrome or complex of factors which constrain the individual

Mosotho from making any effort to improve his lot and from co-operating with development initiatives. She concluded that

“Non-development in Lesotho is a function of a complex of poverty, migration and ideology, and can only be successfully treated when attention is paid to the whole syndrome. It is easy to prescribe negatively, economic development will not be assured by an injection of cash to cure the poverty, nor by a tourniquet to stop the flow of migrants, nor by an amphetamine to lift the pessimism, nor by any one specialist effort alone. More positively – and therefore more diffidently – I would venture that the present emphasis on agricultural development for Lesotho will continue to be nugatory in so far as it exacerbates the unfavourable contrast with urban South Africa.”¹⁰

On the one hand, Wallman is right to emphasize the “unfavourable contrast” between poverty in Lesotho and wealth in the industrial heartland of South Africa. On the other hand, in so far as these arguments are based on the premise that lack of development is to be explained in terms of individuals’ perception of their predicament, they are both reductionist and ahistorical.

Ashton’s diagnosis of complacency in the 1930s and Wallman’s diagnosis of pessimism in the 1960s are both, no doubt, of incidental relevance. As explanations of poverty or “non-development” in Lesotho, however, they are unsatisfactory because they preclude analysis of the changing structural conditions by which capital accumulation has taken place in the core areas of southern Africa at the expense of the peripheral areas. The following review of the transition from granary to labour reserve makes it clear that the appropriate question is not “Why are the Basotho *still* poor?” but “How have the Basotho *become* poor?” This review also invalidates the proposition that the contemporary “facts of life” – poverty and economic dependence – may be regarded as conditions “intrinsic to Lesotho, having no necessary reference to the presence of South Africa”.¹¹ In the first place, such dualism is self-contradictory – dependence is a reciprocal relationship, albeit also an imbalanced or asymmetrical one. In the second place, such dualism cannot stand up to an examination of the country’s economic history.

The chronicle of decline is paralleled in the black ‘homelands’ or Bantustans within South Africa itself and must be analyzed within the context of the systematic elimination of competition between whites and blacks in agriculture and of the systematic exploitation of cheap black labour in the mining industry. There is now much evidence to demonstrate that there was a widespread and vigorous response by Africans to new market opportunities in the late nineteenth century; but that those opportunities were increasingly circumscribed by instruments of discrimination such as the Land Act of 1913, by constriction of access to markets and capital, and by increasing dependence on the export of labour.¹² This paper, provisional as it must be in many respects, is an attempt to fill a gap in this literature.¹³ Notwithstanding their nominal political independence, the Basotho of Lesotho have been and remain subject to the structural constraints that have deprived Africans in South Africa of the means to make a living off the land.

The Decline of Agriculture and the Exodus of Labour

The year 1870 was a historical watershed for the Basotho. Moshoeshe, the

founder of the nation, died in March of that year. His people had just emerged from a crippling war (1865–8) with the Afrikaners of the Orange Free State and had been incorporated, at Moshoeshoe's request, into the British imperial fold. The present boundaries of Lesotho were fixed in the Treaty of Aliwal North of 1869, by which the Basotho were forced to cede much of the land they had previously occupied and farmed.¹⁴

Basutoland was administered by the Government of the Cape Colony for a brief and somewhat unhappy period, 1871–1884. The first Governor's Agent, Charles Griffith, reported that as a result of the war with the Free State the Basotho had been reduced to famine and near-destitution through the loss of their livestock and inability to reap their crops. They recovered remarkably quickly, however, so that by 1873 they presented the appearance of a "thriving and well-ordered people".¹⁵ This recovery was largely due to the discovery of diamonds in 1867 in the arid wastes of the northern Cape Colony. This brought about the first of South Africa's major mineral booms and it rapidly and irreversibly incorporated the Basotho into a larger economic system. The missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Mission Society (PEMS) were well placed to record the vigorous response of the Basotho to boom conditions:

"Hitherto our Basuto have all remained quietly at home, and the movement which is taking place beyond their frontiers has produced no other effect than to increase the export of wheat and other cereals to a most remarkable degree. While the district in which the diamonds are found is of desperate aridity, the valleys of Basutoland, composed as they are of a deep layer of vegetable mould, watered by numerous streams and favoured with regular rains in the good season, require little more than a modicum of work to cover themselves with the richest crops."¹⁶

The Basotho bought ploughs, planted assiduously and sold the grain to meet the needs of the distant mining camps. They responded to the incentives of the market with such zeal and success that, on the one hand, the missionaries expressed anxiety lest their material prosperity endanger their spiritual progress;¹⁷ and, on the other hand, the *Friend of the Free State* was moved to remark, "Nowhere else in South Africa is there a more naturally industrious nation, as honest and as peaceable as the Basuto".¹⁸ In 1873 they exported 100 000 bags of grain – wheat, maize and sorghum – and 2 000 bags of wool. In the same year goods of British or foreign manufacture worth about £150 000 were imported into the country. As Griffith remarked, "the Colonial revenue must benefit very considerably by the Basuto trade".¹⁹

The boom generated an acute inflationary impetus and some Basotho started migrating to the diggings in response to the demand for labour. Migration was not new in itself: Basotho had been dispersed as a result of the ravages of the *lifaqane*; and before the war with the Free State many of Moshoeshoe's subjects had undertaken short contracts of seasonal labour on the farms of the Cape and elsewhere; many also had spent their wages on or traded grain for guns and livestock.²⁰ The discovery of diamonds, however, gave new impetus to the pattern of migration. A comment on the first population census of 1875 referred to "the multitude who have temporarily absented themselves in search of employment

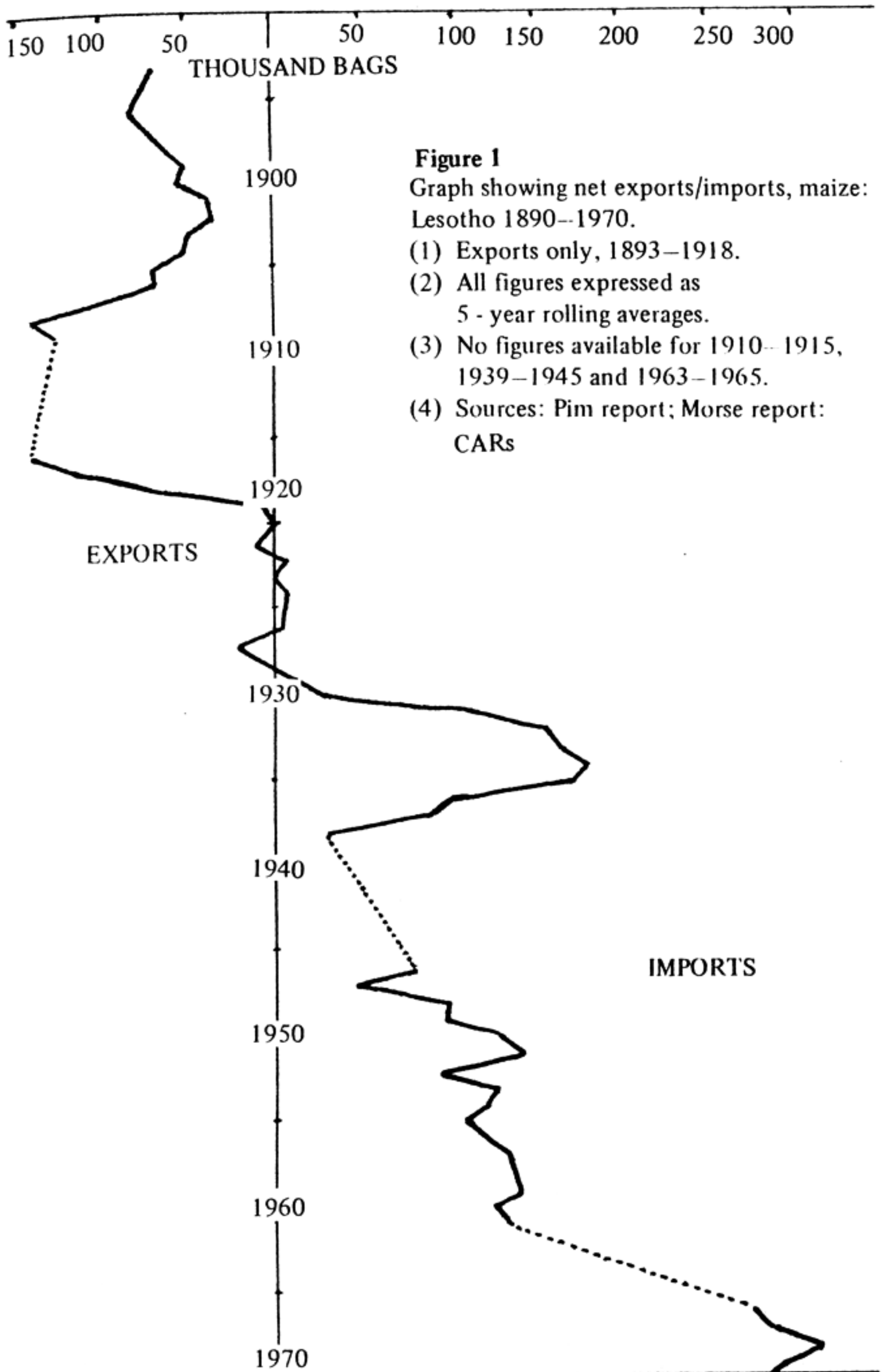
in the Cape Colony, or the diamond mines, or elsewhere".²¹ It was estimated that "by 1875, out of a total population of 127 325 . . . 15 000 men were getting passes to work outside the territory for long or short periods, and by 1884 this number had doubled itself".²² During this period it seems that migration was "discretionary" rather than "necessary",²³ although it is difficult from the reports available to distinguish between richer and poorer sections of the peasantry. Certainly the senior chiefs were much better off than most – through their control and distribution of livestock under the *mafisa* system, their right to tribute labour, and thence an ability to plough far more land. There were also other perquisites. For example Molapo, second son of Moshoeshoe and senior chief in the Leribe district, received £800 a year out of the hut-tax collected from his people, and also at least £1 from every labour migrant out of his earnings.²⁴ It appears that most migrants went in order to acquire guns, horses, livestock, ploughs and manufactured articles. Many Basotho continued, however, to make an excellent livelihood from the sale of grain. In 1880 the Acting Governor's Agent Emile Rolland gave the following estimates of the aggregate income of Basotho:²⁵

sale of grain	£400 000
export of wool and other produce	75 000
earnings of labourers and transport-riders	100 000

Such figures must be treated with caution, but they indicate that the production and export of grain was the most important source of income in the 1870s.

The period of prosperity was short-lived. Cereals and livestock products were subject to the vicissitudes of drought, epizootics and economic depression; and from the 1880s onwards market conditions were decisively affected by political and economic factors outside the control of the Basotho. Meanwhile, population expansion in the Lowlands and political pressures arising out of the Gun War in 1880–83, when the Basotho successfully resisted the Cape administration's attempt to disarm them, led to rapid settlement of the Mountains. There was a severe recession in 1882–6, and a savage drought brought widespread famine in 1884.²⁶ Gold fever hit the Witwatersrand in 1886 and precipitated another boom, but this time the export market for grain from Basutoland was adversely affected by a prohibition on imports imposed by the Transvaal²⁷ and by competition from American and Australian grain, which could be cheaply transported by the newly constructed railway from the Cape to Kimberley. A missionary noted in 1887 "The population is rapidly increasing, the fields are becoming exhausted, the pastures diminishing, stock farming yields more disappointments than profits . . . Money is scarce . . ." ²⁸

In 1893 the Orange Free State attempted to impose a tariff on grain from Basutoland in order to protect the market of the white farmers who had turned from stock rearing to growing crops. This rendered it difficult for the Basotho to sell their grain and so inhibited mercantile exchange in Basutoland; but, as the acting Resident Commissioner Godfrey Lagden remarked, the boycott also threatened the interests of the large merchants of the Free State who supplied the Basutoland traders.²⁹ The disastrous outbreak of rinderpest in 1896 wiped out up to 90 per cent of the cattle³⁰ and also caused a "remarkable falling off" in the number of Basotho who migrated in search of work, because of quarantine regulations in



the Free State.³¹ The Basotho resourcefully adapted to the loss of their livestock: they used their horses for ploughing and transport,³² and they arranged marital mortgages by counting stones as surety for future instalments of bridewealth cattle.³³ However, the following year there was a savage drought, and the wheat crop failed entirely. "Famine threatens the majority of these poor people".³⁴

The Anglo-Boer war of 1899–1902 closed the usual outlets for export of grain and it was followed by another depression and a drought. The comments of the Government Secretary in the first decade of the twentieth century best reveal the fluctuating conditions which began to undermine what had been a consistently favourable balance of trade. In 1905 the wheat crop failed and low market prices led to a general scarcity of money, while "grain and produce of all kinds have naturally gone to pieces through drought and locusts".³⁵ The year 1907 saw "a great improvement on the previous years of drought";³⁶ but in 1908–9 the wheat crop was destroyed by lice and the maize crop by drought, though exports of wool and mohair steadily increased.³⁷ The 1911 census recorded a population of 427 549 Basotho, including 24 630 absentees (Table 1). The PEMS journal *Leselinyanz* divined the writing on the wall:

"Were the population to continue to increase, the situation would become truly critical within a few years, unless other means of livelihood were provided for the Basuto. They would be forced to migrate in large numbers to offer their services to the Europeans of the neighbouring countries which are less densely populated, but where their social conditions would deteriorate and where, above all, they would lose their independence."³⁸

As we have seen, Basotho had already been migrating in considerable numbers – 20 000 labour passes were reported in 1892, for example³⁹ – in response to fluctuating economic conditions. In 1903 the Resident Commissioner commended those who had gone out to work for their industrious character in this respect. Significantly, however, he also noted that the minimum wage necessary to attract Basotho was £2.10s a month with food; and that they seemed able to find nearer and more attractive employment than on the Johannesburg gold mines,⁴⁰ where wages were £1.10s a month at that time.⁴¹ In 1907 the Government Secretary suggested, on the evidence of labour passes issued to Basotho, that

"as the population increases and the country fills up the native population is showing a tendency to divide itself into two distinct classes of labour, namely the agriculturalist and the mine labourer. It would appear that year in and year out the latter goes to his work at the mines while, on the other hand, it appears that the native farmer who, on bad years, went out to 'miscellaneous' farm and domestic labour, in a good year remains at home and tills his land."⁴²

It is probable that most mine labourers were younger men who had not yet acquired land or livestock; that migration for them was necessary rather than discretionary; and that a substantial increase in the number of labour passes issued during the first decade of the century reflected a steadily declining per capita income from agriculture, owing to population increase. However, the fact that poor harvests were consistently reflected in low imports of manufactured goods during this period suggests that the sale of grain and livestock products was still the most important means of generating a cash flow inside the country.

The First World War sustained high prices in wool and grain and the Basotho were able to take advantage of this – maize production was particularly vigorous. Wheat exports in 1919 were a record 256 000 bags,⁴³ which prompted an optimistic official disclaimer of “the theory which is sometimes propounded that the wheat lands of Basutoland are ‘worked out’ ”.⁴⁴ The volume of exports fluctuated through the 1920s but reached a peak in 1928, the last year that 100 000 bags of maize were exported from Basutoland. Wool and mohair were by far the most important exports at this time.⁴⁵ The market prices of most commodities also fluctuated but only fell markedly following the 1929 slump. The record of labour passes issued during the decade does not indicate any overall increase in the number of labour migrants.⁴⁶ The number of passes is not of course synonymous with the number of absentees at any one time. But the totals represent more than 50 per cent of the adult males, which suggests that most rural households had long since come to depend on migration as a necessary element in their strategies of survival.

The early 1930s were disastrous. The bottom fell out of wool prices as a result of the massive recession in world trade which followed the 1929 slump. The coincidence of acute economic depression with an exceptional drought in 1932–3 led to a loss of perhaps half the country’s livestock.⁴⁷ Wheat production survived and recovered, but maize did not: in 1933 more than 350 000 bags of maize had to be imported (see Figure 1). At the same time a resurgence in the price of gold stimulated the expansion of mining production,

Table 1. African population of Lesotho, 1911–1976.

Year	Males		Females		Total		
	A	B	A	B	A	B	C
1911	204,797	21,658	222,752	2,972	427,549	24,630	5.8
1921	260,675	37,827	283,472	9,314	544,147	47,141	8.7
1936	317,918	78,604	343,892	22,669	661,809	101,273	15.3
1946	342,340	95,697	347,579	32,331	689,919	128,028	18.6
1956	383,546	112,790	410,737	41,992	794,253	154,782	19.5
1966	463,437	96,350	502,476	19,550	965,913	115,900	12.00
1976	586,331	129,103	629,484	23,551	1,216,815	152,654	12.5

Key.

A. *De jure* population (residents plus absentees)

B. Absentees.

C. Absentees as percentage of *de jure* population (B/A x 100)

Sources.

A.M. Monyake, “Lesotho’s population and its structural characteristics with special reference to their implications for the economy and social services”. Bureau of Statistics, Maseru; 1976 census preliminary results, Bureau of Statistics, Maseru.

Note.

The number of absentees was not recorded in the 1946 census; the figure given is an interpolation between the figures for 1936 and 1956.

and enormously increased the demand for labour on the gold mines.⁴⁸ In the following decade a vast flow of emigration from Basutoland took place which,

offsetting natural increase, explains the virtually static population recorded between the censuses of 1936 and 1946 (Table 1). The effect of the great depression was decisively to tip the balance between successful farming and large-scale migration away from the former and towards the latter. Men from Basutoland were forced to undertake longer and more frequent periods of employment in the mines and industries and farms of South Africa.

Economic decline has continued unabated in the post-war years. Two indices of this are a steady fall during the 1950s both in the absolute output of wool and mohair and in the relative value of wool;⁴⁹ and a progressive decline in agricultural productivity, shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Agricultural production in Lesotho, selected years 1950–1977

Year	Maize		Sorghum		Wheat	
	A	B	A	B	A	B
1950*	214	11,9	49	8,7	50	10,1
1960	121	7,4	54	7,8	58	8,5
1970	67	5,2	57	6,9	58	5,4
1972	64	5,4	59	8,5	57	6,0
1976	49	5,8	25	5,6	45	8,0
1977	126	15,7	62	14,7	61	14,7

Key A. Production in thousand metric tonnes.
 B. Yield in 100 kgs. per hectare.

Sources. *Lesotho: A Development Challenge*, IBRD 1975, pp. 38, 95; Annual Statistical Bulletins 1976, Bureau of Statistics, Maseru.

Considerable variation between one season and the next means that it is dangerous to extrapolate a trend from figures ten years apart. But the figures for 1950–1970 are at least suggestive. In these twenty years increasing population pressure led the people to plough up pasture and marginal land so that the total acreage brought under cereal cultivation increased by 12 per cent. Wheat and sorghum acreages greatly increased, while production rose only marginally; maize acreage considerably decreased, and production was very much reduced. All cereals, constituting the bulk of Lesotho's arable production, showed a significant reduction in yield per unit area. The year 1976/7, by contrast, was quite exceptional to the long-term trend of decline, both in production and in productivity per unit area. Perhaps the best single index of the country's incapacity to feed its own people is the shift over the years from net export to net import of maize, the principal staple food. This shift is shown graphically in Figure 1.

The increase in Lesotho's population recorded in censuses between 1911 and 1976 is shown in Table 1. Census practice since 1911 has been to distinguish the *de facto* population – those present at the time of enumeration – from the *de jure* population – those present plus those recorded as absent members of households. The static *de facto* population between 1936 and 1946 is most simply explained by large-scale emigration from Basutoland as a result of the depression

of the 1930s, and subsequent absorption into the towns of South Africa. A smaller proportion of absentees in 1966 (12 per cent of the *de jure* population) than in 1956 (nearly 20 per cent) is attributable to the imposition in 1963 of strict border controls by the South African authorities and also to a narrower definition of "absentee" in 1966. These controls effectively circumscribed the access of women to the South African labour market, since labour contracts undertaken in Lesotho are not available to them. By contrast, the average number of men from Lesotho working on the South African mines more than doubled (Table 3)

Table 3 – Lesotho citizens employed on South African mines, 1963–1979

Year	Monthly average numbers employed	Year	Monthly average numbers employed
1963	58 678	1971	92 747
1964	62 653	1972	98 822
1965	66 527	1973	110 477
1966	80 951	1974	106 231
1967	77 414	1975	112 507
1968	80 310	1976	121 062
1969	83 053	1977	128 941
1970	87 384	1978	124 973
		1979	124 393

Source: Department of Labour, Maseru.

over the period 1963 to 1977. Most of these were recruited by Mine Labour Organizations Ltd., which has always been known in Lesotho as the Native Recruiting Corporation (NRC) and has recently changed its name to The Employment Bureau of Africa (TEBA). It recruits on behalf of the South African Chamber of Mines and represents most of the gold mines and some of the coal and platinum mines.

The Political Economy of Migrant Labour

The decline of agriculture in Lesotho has been attributed to many factors: deterioration of the land through mono-cropping, over-grazing, exhaustion and severe erosion; insecurities in the system of land tenure which inhibit farmers from taking effective steps to conserve their agricultural holdings; population pressure which created an acute shortage of land relative to "subsistence" requirements and which forced the exploitation of marginal land quite unsuitable for agriculture;⁵⁰ and climatic vicissitudes such as drought, hail and frost which render agriculture a risky enterprise in any circumstances and may inhibit farmers from making the necessary investment in intensive techniques.⁵¹

The questions of land shortage, population increase and access to capital cannot be examined without reference to a large system of production which demanded, not that Africans grow sufficient food to preserve their economic independence, but that they contribute their labour to the "white" economy. So long as the

Basotho were making a viable livelihood off the land, so long would they not make their labour available to white-owned farms and industries.

The development of white farming in South Africa is the story of perennial competition for labour against African self-sufficiency on the one hand and the demands of mining and manufacturing industries, which paid higher wages, on the other. White farmers took the view that raising wage levels would actually reduce the supply of labour available,⁵² and they preferred to use alternative, coercive, means of assuring a labour supply. In the earlier period, as we have seen, these took the form of protective grain tariffs imposed against imports from Basutoland by the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Above all, however, it was the Land Act of 1913 which deprived Africans of the capacity to compete where, initially at least, Africans were more successful than white farmers because of their lower opportunity cost of engaging in commercial agriculture. The Act stopped Africans from buying land in "white" areas; it severely limited the independent productive activities of Africans on white-owned land, either as squatters paying rent to land-owners or as entrepreneurs who owned their own oxen and ploughs and entered into share-cropping arrangements with land-owners. Under the latter system of "farming-on-the-half" the African worked the land and handed over half the crops reaped to the white landowner in return for the right to live and cultivate and graze animals on his farm. Such independent activities "made the kaffirs too rich" and simultaneously deprived the whites of their labour supply and undermined their markets in grain.⁵³

The 1913 Land Act did not directly affect Basutoland. But there were two indirect effects. Firstly, many squatters and share-croppers were forced off land in the Orange Free State and there is evidence that some of them migrated into Basutoland, exacerbating the population pressure there.⁵⁴ Secondly, since it may be regarded as "an act of collusion amongst the hirers of labour not to give remuneration above a certain level. . . the Land Act was, for farmers, what the maximum-permissible-average agreement was for the mining magnates".⁵⁵ The depression of agricultural wages affected migrants from Basutoland who worked on white farms in the Free State in the same way as it affected Africans who were dispossessed. Discriminatory legislation of this kind either directly compelled these people to take up wage employment or confined them to reserves from which, unable to eke out a subsistence livelihood, they were forced to migrate and offer their labour on white farms and in industry.

Meanwhile the Chamber of Mines had begun from 1896 to consolidate a uniform strategy of recruitment and wage determination. Though it did not alleviate absolute shortages of labour, the policy of official collusion effectively limited competition for labour between companies which would otherwise have forced a rise in wages.⁵⁶ In this way the mining industry was able to maintain black wages at a very low level and to apply a uniform wage structure. The policy has survived successive shortages of labour and also, more recently, labour unrest arising from low wages, poor industrial relations and the frustrations of compound life.⁵⁷ Francis Wilson has shown that the real earnings of black workers on the gold mines were no higher in 1969 than they had been in 1911.⁵⁸ During the 1970s mine wages have greatly increased, in response to the spectacular rise in the price of gold. The average cash

earnings of black workers on the gold mines were R21 per month in 1972 and R102 per month in 1977.⁵⁹ However, this increase is offset by the fact that the cost of living in Lesotho doubled over the same period.⁶⁰

In addition to establishing a monopsonistic policy on recruiting and wages, the mining companies were able to bring pressure to bear on the South African government to pass a series of harshly refined measures to control the flow of labour. These are the "pass" laws incorporated in the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 and subsequent amendments,⁶¹ based on the notorious principle enunciated by the Stallard Commission in 1921:

"The native should only be allowed to enter the urban areas, which are essentially the white man's creation, when he is willing to enter and to minister to the needs of the white man and should depart therefrom when he ceases so to minister."

In this way, the pattern was established by which unskilled black workers oscillated between their rural homes and their places of work. The mine compound system and the pass laws made it impossible for migrants to bring their families to settle at the place of work. Indeed, the justification from the mining industry's point of view of a policy of paying sub-subsistence wages has always rested on two pre-suppositions inherent in the system of oscillating migration: (a) that migrants also derive an income from working the land in the rural areas and that the two sources of income are complementary; and (b) that wages need not be paid at a level necessary to sustain the expensive urban infrastructure and social services which would be required by a stabilized labour force of miners with their families.⁶² There are disadvantages in oscillating migration from the employers' point of view, in that a high turnover of unskilled manpower is an inefficient and wasteful method of using human resources.⁶³ But the system has enabled employers historically to evade their responsibility to pay a living wage.

It remains briefly to outline the political background of British overrule in Basutoland. It had been a condition of incorporation in 1870 that the cost of annexing and administering the territory should be met out of a hut-tax which was imposed in that year. Colonial policy was in general restricted to the maintenance of law and order, and the dominant criterion of administrative competence was that expenditure should not exceed revenue.⁶⁴ British officials rationalized a policy of benign neglect by contradictory principles. On the one hand, they endorsed the philanthropists' view that "native cultures" should not be interfered with. On the other hand, they shared Cecil Rhodes' view that Africans should learn the dignity of labour. Thus a policy that Jack Spence has described as "a neat coincidence of interest between private altruism and public parsimony"⁶⁵ was also readily compatible with the labour requirements of South African farms and industry. The best evidence for this is the Resident Commissioner's remarks in 1899:

"Though for its size and population Basutoland produces a comparatively enormous amount of grain, it has an industry of great economic value to South Africa, viz. the output of native labour. It supplies the sinews of agriculture in the Orange Free State, to a large extent it keeps going railway works, coal mining, the diamond mines at Jagersfontein and Kimberly, the gold mines of the

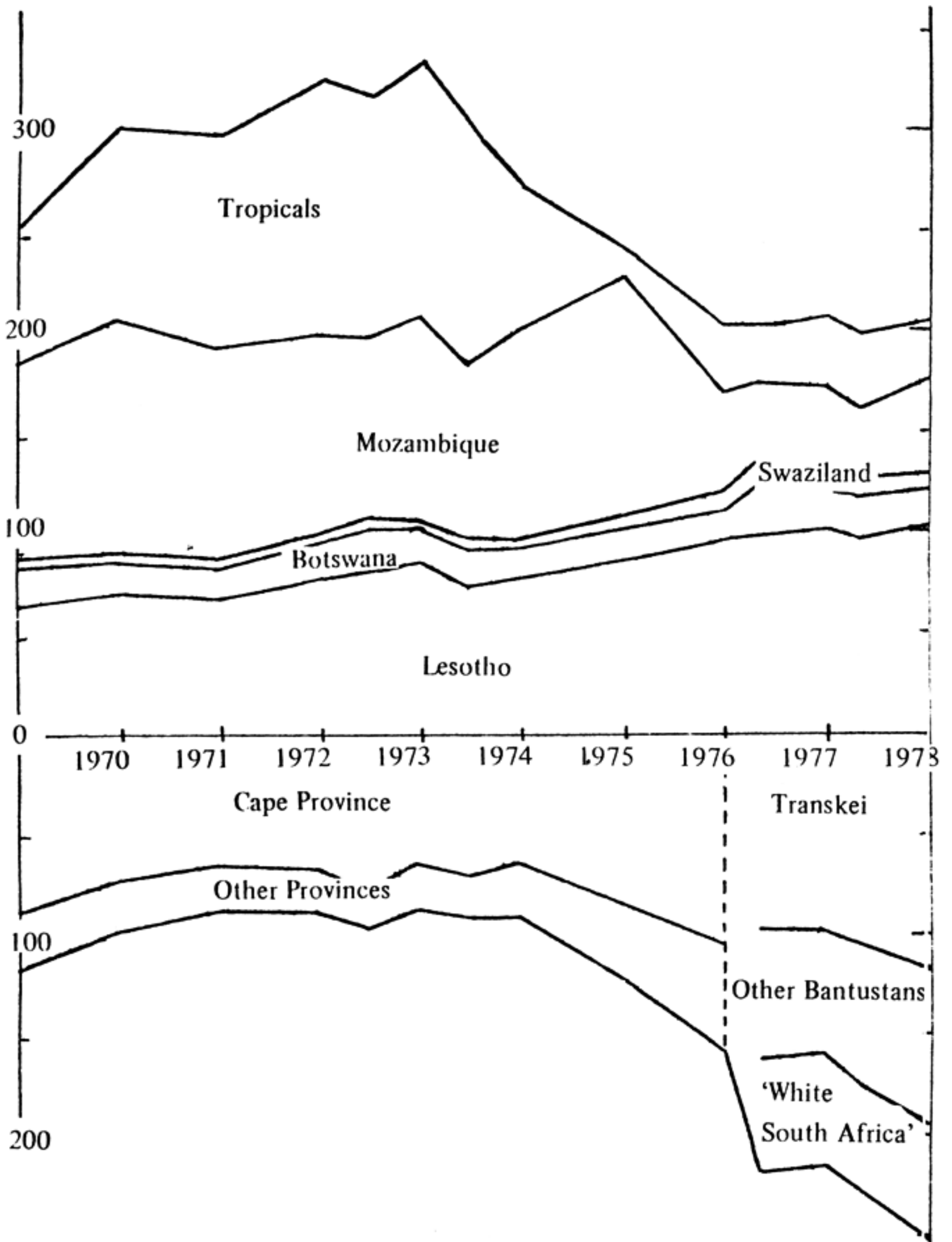


Figure 2. Sources of black labour recruited by TEBA, 1970-1978

Transvaal and furnishes, in addition, a large amount of domestic services in the surrounding territoriesTo (those) who urge higher education of the natives, it may be pointed out that to educate them above labour would be a mistake. Primarily the native labour industry supplies a dominion want and secondarily it tends to fertilise native territories with cash which is at once diffused for English Goods."⁶⁶

In this way the administration in Basutoland was consistently sensitive to the wider interests of imperialism.

Recent Developments

During the 1970s, various political and economic pressures induced the mining industry to initiate a policy of "internalizing" mine labour recruitment, in order to reduce dependence on foreign supplies and to increase dependence on South African supplies. These pressures were: the dramatic rise in the international price of gold, which allowed wages in the mining industry for the first time, to rise in such a way as to compete with wages in manufacturing industry and therefore to attract black South Africans; internal labour unrest and violence on the mining compounds, attributable to low wages and poor working and living conditions; and the political uncertainties arising out of escalating civil war in Zimbabwe, Malawi's temporary ban on recruitment of labour in April 1974, and the collapse of Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique.⁶⁷

In December 1973, foreign Africans constituted 80 per cent of the black labour force recruited for mines affiliated to the South African Chamber of Mines, and South Africans constituted the remaining 20 per cent. In December 1978, the respective proportions were 45 per cent and 55 per cent. (Table 4 and Figure 2). Thus from the mining industry's point of view, the policy has been successful. In the short term, the effect of the policy was to increase the number of recruits from Lesotho, to make up for the sudden reduction in numbers from Malawi and

Table 4 – Geographical sources of black labour distributed by TEBA, as at 31 December 1973 and 1978.

Source	Numbers	1973 Percentage	Numbers	1978 Percentage
SOUTH AFRICA	86 221	20,42	250 311	54,93
Lesotho	87 229	20,66	104 143	22,85
Botswana	16 811	3,98	18 129	3,95
Swaziland	4 526	1,07	8 352	1,83
Mozambique	99 424	23,55	45 168	9,91
Tropicals	127 970	30,32	29 618	6,50
FOREIGN	335 960	79,58	205 410	45,07
TOTAL	422 181	100,00	455 721	100,00

Source.	TEBA Annual Reports
Notte.	Until 1975 the vast majority of miners in the category Tropicals (area north of latitude 22° S.) were from Malawi. Since 1974, however, substantial numbers have been recruited from Zimbabwe. Until 1976 South African miners were classified by their province of origin; from 1977 by their origin in the "white" areas and the ten Bantustans.

Mozambique. However, these jobs are by no means secure. It was estimated in 1978 that the country would have to anticipate the loss of about 40 000 jobs.⁶⁸ There is no realistic prospect of Lesotho being able to accommodate large numbers of its own unemployed citizens, since the rate of job creation cannot even keep pace with the natural increase in the labour force. The crisis which faces the government and people of Lesotho derives from the asymmetry of its relationship of dependence on South Africa. Unemployment may be effectively distributed between the South African Bantustans and the foreign supply areas according to the political convenience of Pretoria. Despite its acute economic dependence in this respect, however, Lesotho's political independence has allowed Chief Leabua Jonathan to articulate to some extent its grievances against South Africa.⁶⁹

Differentiation, Poverty and Class Formation

Despite the orthodox view of a "remarkably equitable" distribution of income between rural households,⁷⁰ there is recent evidence of considerable inequality in Lesotho.⁷¹ Rather than review it here, I draw attention to two general points which are necessary to understand in order to evaluate this evidence and to identify the poor, as a pre-requisite for effective intervention.

The first point is that farm incomes in Lesotho are to a large extent derived from the investment of migrant earnings. Observers often assume that migrants undertake employment in South Africa in order to *supplement* their income from livestock and domestic agriculture. The myth of "subsistence" farming dies hard. It is true that the failure of agricultural production to meet subsistence needs is an index of aggregate dependence on the export of labour. On the other hand, under prevailing conditions of population pressure and farming technology, effective cultivation depends on the availability of male and female labour and on the use of intensive methods: the hire of oxen or a tractor, the purchase of seed and fertilizer.⁷² The most common difficulty rural households face in agriculture is a scarcity of labour or of capital inputs in the form of cash, equipment or animal traction. Migrants also invest their savings in livestock. Thus farming is not conducted independently of a regular cash income. The implication of this is that migrant earning capacity, rather than farm income, must be viewed as the independent variable in assessing the manner in which individual households dispose their resources.⁷³

The second point follows from this. Rural households vary in size and demographic composition. The identification and comparison of "richer" and "poorer" households must allow for the fact that these variables affect both household consumption requirements and migrant earning capacity. This means that what anthropologists call the developmental cycle of the household – the way in which its size and composition change through time – must be built into any explanation

of observed differences in income and wealth between rural households.⁷⁴ Life histories help to reveal the way in which strategies vary with phase in the developmental cycle; above all, with the presence, absence and relative size of an income from migrant labour.⁷⁵ There appears to be an approximate correlation between household size, migrant earning capacity and domestic productive capacity (crops and livestock). About one quarter of rural households have meagre domestic resources and very little access to migrant earnings. These households have two outstanding characteristics: they are small and they are female-headed.

These two points together explain why the class position of villagers in Lesotho is problematic. They occupy different class positions both simultaneously and serially.⁷⁶ They do so *simultaneously* because rural household members distribute their energies and resources between (a) employment in the formal sector, mainly outside Lesotho; (b) the informal sector at home; (c) the domestic economy based on agriculture and livestock; and (d) unemployment at home, on account of the "natural" surplus of labour and also the systematic extrusion of large numbers of "redundant" African from the South African economy in a time of severe economic recession. They occupy different class positions *serially* because constraints and opportunities vary with phase in the temporal processes of household aggregation and dissolution. It follows that differentiation in Lesotho must be analyzed with reference *both* to the developmental cycle of the rural household *and* to the contradictory forces of capitalist accumulation as they apply to the labour reserve.

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	White farmers ^a	Lesotho ^b
1950	7,4	11,9
1960	9,1	7,4
1970	11,9	5,2

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- 18 CB, p. 319
- 19 Burman, *op cit.*, p. 46
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- 29 CAR 1893/4

- 30 CB, p.475; Pim report, p.30
- 31 CAR 1896/7
- 32 *ibid*
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- 36 CAR 1906/7
- 37 CAR 1908/9
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72 The costs of fuel and fertilizer are of course directly related to the price of oil. It is the "peasants" in Lesotho and the South African Bantustans who, far from being "cushioned" against rapid inflation by a "subsistence" livelihood, suffer the full effects of the international crisis of capital.

73 The proportion of mean rural household income derived from migrants' earnings was estimated as 43 per cent in 1970, 59 per cent in 1974 and 70 per cent in 1976. These estimates are not directly comparable: for sources, see Murray, *op cit.*, p. 132.

74 Murray, *op cit.*; Spiegel, *op cit.*

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The Effects of Migrant Labour: a review of the evidence from Lesotho

Colin Murray

In recent years a number of international agencies have sponsored investigations of Lesotho's dependence on the export of labour: most importantly, perhaps, the World Bank, the International Labour Office and the United States Agency for International Development. The reports arising out of these investigations¹ are based on macro-statistical aggregates and they are concerned with policy implications and options at the national and international levels. This paper is intended to provide an alternative perspective on problems connected with out-migration on a massive scale – problems which arise at the level of the individual household and that of the village community. Much of the material on which it is based, drawn from various field studies and surveys undertaken in the 1970s, is either unpublished, in the form of academic theses or restricted official reports, or published in relatively inaccessible form.

Firstly, I present some basic demographic data, and attempt to clarify the methodological issues connected with comparison of the results from different studies. Secondly, I summarize some of the recent evidence on differentiation in rural communities, which runs counter to official orthodoxy, and draw attention to various methods of interpreting it. Thirdly, in the conviction that the particular best illustrates the general, I present case studies of three households in the community I call Ha Molapo, in the Leribe district, where I carried out fieldwork in 1972–4 and again, briefly, in September–October 1978. I would argue, in turn, that the problem of poverty in Lesotho and the incidence of ill-health connected with poverty must be understood in the light of the circumstances which I describe. But I would emphasize that my use of the sources cited is highly selective. This empirical review is therefore by no means exhaustive.

1. The Demographic Aspect

The first point is a methodological **caveat**. It is helpful to distinguish in principle two ways of assessing the demographic impact on sending communities of dependence on the export of labour. One index is the **incidence of absenteeism**, that is, the distribution of absentees in a given population at any one time, by sex and age cohorts. The other index is the **rate of labour migration**, that is, the temporal distribution of migrant labourers' departures from a given population in a specified time period. Even on the (unjustified) assumptions that all absentees are migrant labourers and that all migrant labourers are absentees, the incidence of absenteeism at a given time and the rate of migration per annum would only coincide under two conditions, neither of which holds in practice, namely that the mean period of absence is one year and that departures are evenly distributed throughout the year. The incidence of absenteeism may be readily established through census

data, subject to satisfactory criteria for identifying "absentees". But the rate of migration cannot be established unless departures are observed continuously over the time period in question. Otherwise, the only source of information, inevitably partial, is labour recruitment agencies which record the numbers of contracting labourers from specified areas during the period in question.

The histogram below (Figure 1) is a demographic profile of Lesotho's *de jure* population aged between 15 and 59 in 1966, by sex, 5-year age cohorts and residential status.² The census figures from which it is derived indicate that 49 per cent of males aged 20 to 39 were absent from Lesotho.³ The *de jure* population for the purpose of the 1966 census was more narrowly defined than in previous censuses. It included "absentees" who had been home within the previous five years. More important, however, in terms of its consequences for the proportional presence and absence of the country's citizens, was South Africa's institution of tight border controls in 1963. This significantly limited movement across the border and, in particular, it precluded the possibility of Basotho women migrating legally for employment in South Africa.⁴ These two factors together probably explain the substantially lower proportion of "absentees" recorded in 1966 than in 1956.⁵

The detailed results of the 1976 census are not yet available. But specific studies in the 1970s show a considerably higher proportion of absentees than is suggested by the 1966 census. For example, a survey of 1 286 households in the Phuthiatsnaa Irrigation Project area (Lowlands and Foothills) and the Thaba Tseka Livestock Project area (Mountains) in 1976 revealed that 62 per cent of all males aged 18 to

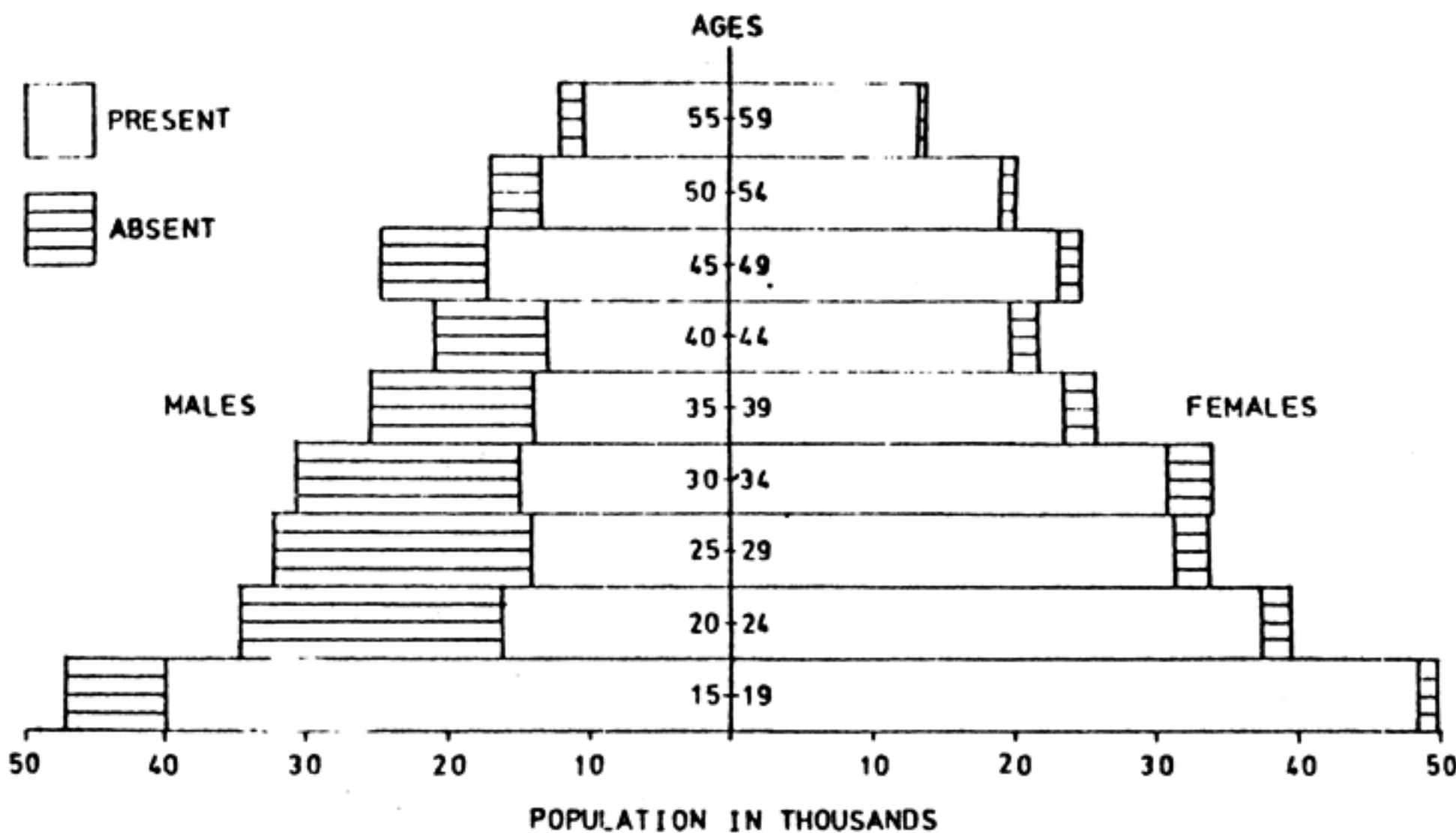


Figure 1. Distribution of Lesotho population (1966) by sex, residential status and age categories 15 - 59.

Source: Population Census 1966.

59 and 77 per cent of males aged 20 to 39 were absent migrant labourers.⁶ A survey of 442 households in the Tsa Kholo area of Mafeteng district (Lowlands) in 1976 recorded 61 per cent of all males aged 18 to 60 as wage earners.⁷

The large majority of Basotho migrants are employed as contract labourers who return home for varying periods of "rest" between contracts.⁸ The mean length of service of Basotho labourers in the gold mines over the period 1970--1976 varied between 14.4 months in 1974 and 10.6 months in 1976. During these years more than two-thirds of mine workers consistently took up a further contract within six months of returning home at the end of the previous contract. On the basis of a survey of Basotho who had completed their migratory careers, van der Wiel reached the conclusion that "The real average length of his working life that a migrant worker spends outside Lesotho is estimated to be 16 years for those coming from the lowlands and 13 years for those from the mountain zone".⁹ He found that about 20 per cent of the active migrant labour force was at home in Lesotho during the period of his surveys.

In comparing the results of different studies and in assessing the effects of out-migration on particular communities it is clearly necessary to distinguish the following categories: (a) absentees, (b) migrant labourers and (c) paid employees. In the following section I briefly elaborate the differences between them, which are schematically represented in Figure 2, together with an exemplary distribution recorded in October 1974 from the village of Ha Molapo. The category **absentees** refers to people who are classified (by criteria which are not uniform and must be made explicit in each case) as members of the *de jure* population of a particular community but who are not *de facto* residents at the time of enumeration. The reasons for absence are various: employment in South Africa is by far the most important, but there is also a variety of others such as schooling, "visiting" etc. The distinction must also be made between absence in South Africa and absence (from reference community) elsewhere in Lesotho.

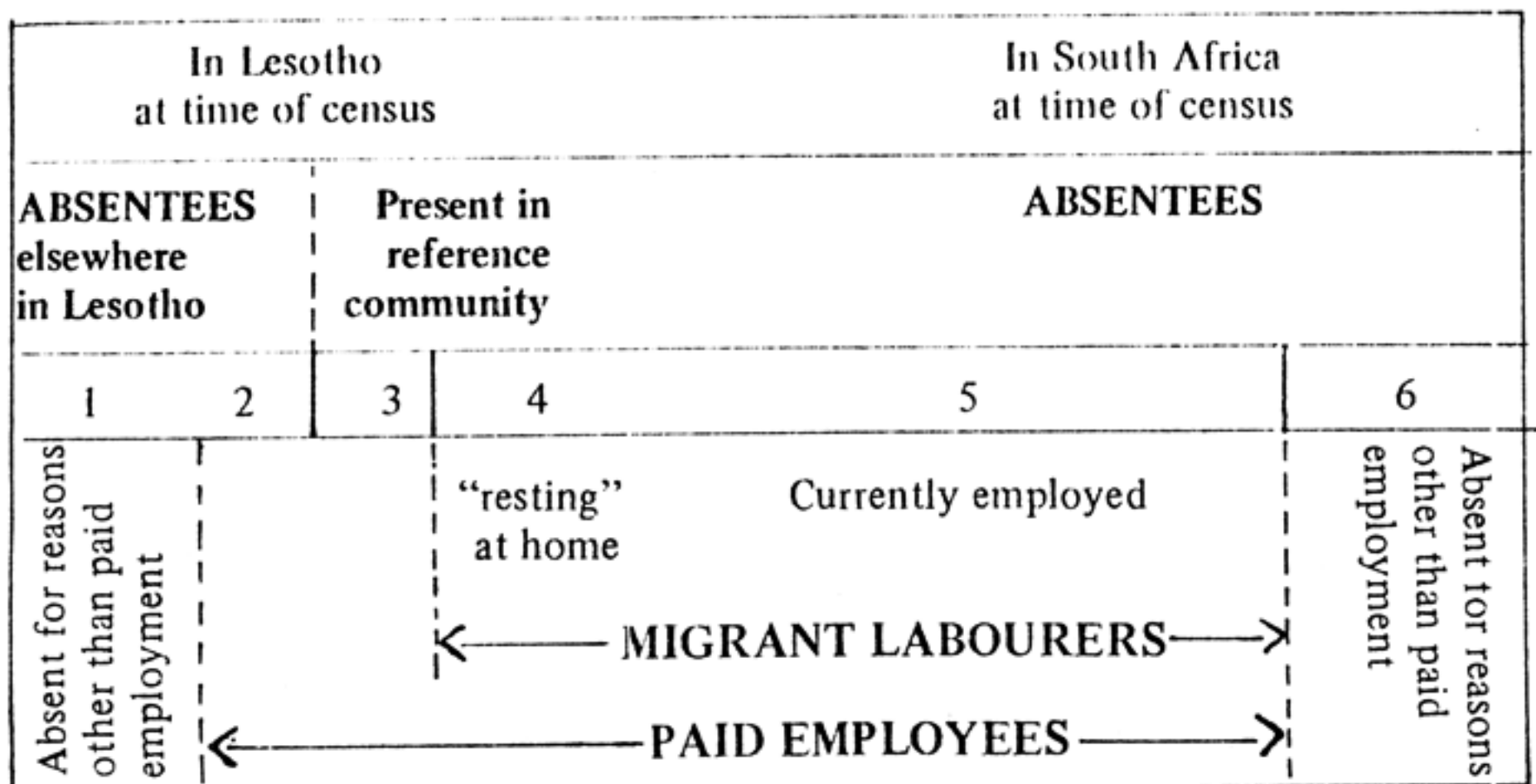
The category **migrant labourers** includes both wage labourers who are absent in South Africa at the time of enumeration and people who are "resting" at home, but are classified as still engaged in a migratory career. Criteria for identifying the latter are inevitably arbitrary and, again, must be made explicit in each case. For example, van der Wiel included in his estimate of the total migrant labour force persons who had worked in South Africa for at least one month in the twelve months prior to the date of enumeration.¹⁰ The ILO study in 1977 selected its sample of migrants from those who had worked in South Africa for at least three months within the period of three years prior to the date the survey was conducted.¹¹ I found that, having conducted three separate censuses in Ha Molapo over a fieldwork period of two years from 1972-4, it was not difficult in practice to identify those still engaged in a migratory career, by reference to their past labour history, their age, household circumstances and expressed intentions.¹²

The category **paid employees** includes both migrant labourers and people in paid employment within Lesotho. It may seem perverse to include migrant labourers who are temporarily unemployed within the category of paid employees. But it is essential to take account of the fact that more households are directly dependent on an income from migrant earnings than exhibit the absence of a migrant labourer

at any one time. It is also important to recognize that the proportion of migrant labourers who are recorded as resident in the reference community is susceptible to variation as a result of contingent alterations in the shift system on the mines and improved transport arrangements which allow rather more frequent visiting home by miners in mid-contract,¹³ and also as a result of relative distance between the reference community and the place of employment. Therefore, the number of migrant labourers (identified by specified criteria such as those above) is a better index of aggregate dependence on the export of labour than the number of migrants who are actually absent at any one time. On the other hand, changing recruitment policies in recent years have made it considerably more difficult than it used to be for Basotho to take up further mine contracts at will. Therefore criteria used in the future to identify those still engaged in a migratory career must take account of prevailing levels of structural unemployment.

We are now in a position to review the following findings: (a) 61 per cent of a sample of 1 759 households had migrant labourers employed in South Africa at the time the surveys were conducted;¹⁴ (b) 56 per cent of 125 households in the Mokhotlong district (Mountains) and 65 per cent of 442 households in the Mafeteng district (Lowlands) had members actually employed in 1976 (i.e. excluding migrants temporarily at home);¹⁵ (c) 66 per cent of 73 households in the Leribe district (Lowlands) had paid employees (in the sense defined above) in 1974.¹⁶ It may be inferred that the migrant labour force is distributed between nearly two-thirds of rural households, and that the remaining third of households are relatively disadvantaged in respect of direct access to an income from migrant labour. It should not be assumed, therefore, that the availability (in the past) of employment in South Africa to most able-bodied Basotho males implies an equitable distribution

Figure 2. Schematic representation of absentees, migrant labourers and paid employees identified as de jure members of a reference rural community in Lesotho.



Definitions	Absentees	Migrant labourers	Paid employees	Ha Molapo distribution Oct 74	
				Male	Female
1. Persons elsewhere in Lesotho for reasons other than paid employment	+			8	3
2. Persons in paid employment elsewhere in Lesotho	+		+	1	—
3. Persons in paid employment in reference community			+	2	2
4. Migrant labourers temporarily "resting" at home		+	+	7	2
5. Migrant labourers currently employed in South Africa	+	+	+	40	11
6. Persons in South Africa for reasons other than paid employment	+			1	3
Ha Molapo distribution, Oct. 1974	67	60	65	N= 73 households	

of income between rural households in Lesotho. Households vary significantly in their demographic composition, and the actual distribution of wage-labourers between households is the most important single variable which determines particular households' income and also their capacity to invest in agriculture and other economic activities.

One way of amplifying the point about demographic composition is to compare rural households with respect to two other variables: *de jure* household size, and sex of household head. Frequency distributions of *de jure* household size in Lesotho commonly exhibit two or three distinct modes — at 2, 5 or 6 and 9 persons per household.¹⁷ For example, the distributions for Ha Molapo in October 1974 and October 1978, respectively, were as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Date	Number of <i>de jure</i> members per household (N = 73 households)													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
October 1974	5	13	6	7	10	15	8	2	2	2	2	1	—	—
October 1978	5	11	13	5	12	7	6	4	2	4	2	1	—	1
	"Small"				"Large"									

On the basis of these frequency distributions I would justify a crude comparison between "small" households, containing 1-4 *de jure* members, and "large" households, containing more than 4 *de jure* members.

There is a relatively high proportion of female-headed households in rural communities in Lesotho, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Date	Number of households	Sex of household head		Ecological zone	Source (footnote)
		Male No.	Female No.		
1974	73	41 (56)	32 (44)	Lowlands	(18)
1976	273	193 (71)	80 (29)	Foothills	(19)
1976	112	82 (73)	30 (27)	Mountains	
1976	83	55 (66)	28 (34)	Senqu	(20)

Comparison of these results must be qualified by two considerations. In the first place, criteria of classification are neither uniform nor self-evident. Spiegel has explicitly acknowledged the possibility of classifying 10 of the 55 "male-headed" households in the community in Qacha's Nek district which he studied as "female-headed" instead, depending on the relative weights attached to Sesotho customary identifications, titles to arable land and prominence in household decision-making. In that case, his sample would contain 45 male-headed households (54%) and 38 female-headed households (46%).²¹ It is often difficult to decide whether a senior resident widow or her junior (unmarried) migrant son ought to be regarded, in practice, as the household head. In the second place, the importance of the distinction between household head and household manager is now generally recognized. In view of the absence of so many able-bodied men on migrant labour, many of whom are normatively identified as household heads, perhaps 70 per cent of rural households in Lesotho are effectively managed by women.²²

Classification of the Ha Molapo population of 73 households in October 1978

by *de jure* household size and sex of household head gives the distribution shown in Table 3.

Table 3

<i>De jure</i> household size	Sex of household head		All households
	Male	Female	
Small (1-4)	15	19	34
Large (4)	26	13	39
All households	41	32	73

These categories of household may be compared with respect to their **dependency ratios**. The dependency ratio is conventionally defined as the ratio of "dependants" to people who are "economically active" within a given population: for example, the sum of children (aged less than 15 years) and the elderly (aged 60 or over), expressed as a ratio of other adults (aged 15-59). I call this Dependency Ratio 1. In the case of Lesotho, as in the case of other labour reserves in the periphery of southern Africa, very many of the latter category are either unemployed or under-employed in respect of their involvement in income-generating activities. Therefore an alternative, which I call Dependency Ratio 2, could be worked out as the number of *de facto* household members (rural consumers) expressed as a ratio of paid employees who are *de jure* household members. The results of this exercise applied to the Ha Molapo population of October 1978 are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

<i>De jure</i> household size	Dependency Ratio 1 Sex of Household head			Dependency Ratio 2 Sex of household head		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
Small	0,59	1,39	0,91	3,18	6,33	4,29
Large	1,13	1,20	1,15	4,79	5,40	4,98
All	1,00	1,26	1,09	4,39	5,67	4,80
Definitions	<u>Children + Elderly</u> Adults			<u>De facto household members</u> Paid employees		

Note: Children (under 15 years); Elderly (60+ years); Adults (15-59 years).

The sample is too small for statistical generalization. But the results are suggestive of a consistent gradation along a continuum of relative advantage and disadvantage, viz:

small male-headed
 large male-headed
 large female-headed
 small female-headed

In particular, there is a striking disparity between small male-headed and small female-headed households.

This sort of exercise is necessarily crude, carried out in default of a more sophisticated approach. It is enough to establish that wage earning capacity varies significantly with the demography of household composition. Any inferences about income distribution must, however, be qualified with respect to the following points: (a) there is of course a considerable range in the earning capacity of migrants in different occupations and in different categories of underground work on the mines; (b) there is considerable variation in the regularity and reliability of remittances sent by migrants, on which it is extremely difficult to obtain accurate and reliable information;²³ and (c) a comparison of earning capacity in terms of the distribution of migrants between households alone does not take account of income transfers that may be taking place between households, either regressively, in terms of opportunities for accumulation at the expense of the poor, or progressively, in terms of networks of extra-household diffusion of cash which serve to mitigate inequalities of income distribution. This is why work on inter-household income transfers is extremely important.²⁴

2. Differentiation

For all these reasons it is necessary to examine the evidence of differentiation within rural communities and, in particular, to elaborate the relationship between migrant earning capacity and investment in livestock and arable agriculture. I here briefly summarize the findings of two such investigations: that conducted in the districts of Mokhotlong (Mountains) and Mafeteng (Lowlands) by members of a team whose terms of reference were to evaluate the benefits derived from piped water supplies, and that conducted by van der Wiel in the Phuthiatsana Project area and the Thaba Tseka Project area.²⁵

The water team found the following results: the pattern of labour migration was broadly similar in the mountains and the lowlands, both in terms of the mean number of wage earners per household and the overall percentage of absent household heads; there was a much higher level of mean stock-holdings in the mountains than in the lowlands, and half the lowland households had no stock at all; the households wealthier in livestock also produced more grain, whereas 8 per cent of households had neither grain nor stock; there was a concentration of successful agricultural activities within relatively few households, but a wide distribution of both paid employment and commercial beer brewing amongst all households; however, there was a tendency for households with particularly large stock-holdings to have more paid employees, probably because these households also tended to be larger; the presence or absence of the household head was a good general index of relative wealth; and the poorest households were small and all-female.²⁶

Van der Wiel's survey of 1 286 households revealed marked differences in rural

household income and also marked variation, between different income strata, in household size and in proportional contributions to household income, from crops, livestock and migrant labour.²⁷ He noted a "rather weak negative correlation" between household assets, defined in land and livestock, and participation in migrant labour, but went on to demonstrate a difference between the rate of migration for household heads, negatively correlated with household wealth, and the rate of migration for other household members, positively correlated with household wealth. He confirmed the importance of variables of demographic composition:

"The age and sex composition of the household is an important factor determining a household's position on the income distribution scale. The degree to which a household receives cash from off-farm earnings depends almost entirely on the presence of an able-bodied male among the household members. The majority of households in the low income group consists of widows living with little children, thereby lacking a potential wage-earner."²⁸

He also concluded that in 1976 about 75 per cent of the rural households, comprising two-thirds of the population, were poverty-stricken in the sense that their incomes fell below the basic minimum specified in the Poverty Datum Line.

Spiegel's approach to these problems was to analyse the way in which household strategies of survival, investment and accumulation reflect the opportunities and constraints which apply at different phases of a "typical" developmental cycle, and as a result of deviations therefrom. He identified the following categories in a community of 83 households near Qacha's Nek:²⁹

A. Landless Wage-Dependent Households		11
1. Building a Homestead I: Young households setting up house	6	
2. Building a Homestead II: Absconders re-establishing contact	3	
3. Insecure Homesteads: Wage-earning women without proper homesteads	2	
B. Land-holding Wage-Dependent Households		36
1. Securing the Land: Establishing a base	8	
2. Turning to the Land: Preparing to retire	7	
3. The Zenith: Using the land and relying on wages	21	
C. Land-holding Wageless Households		17
1. Continued Involvement in Agriculture:		
Retirement without regular remittances I	7	
2. Declining Ability to Use the Land:		
Retirement without regular remittances II	10	
D. Landless Wageless Households		5
Marginal, female-headed and small	5	

E. Salary-Dependent and Trading Households	14
1. Salary-Dependent	10
2. Trading	4
Total	83

Spiegel has argued convincingly that economic activities in the village provide only a small supplement to the income which accrues from migrant labour, and that they "have the primary function of providing for the diffusion of wage-earnings. Agricultural activity, originally a form of production in its own right, has taken over an essentially distributive function".³⁰ This should be understood in the light of considerable economic disincentives to engage in agriculture, which may be summarized as follows and which (except for the first point) are directly connected with large-scale out-migration.

Firstly, climatic and environmental vicissitudes such as drought, frost, hail and pests mean a high risk of crop failure. Successful farming requires investments which are expensive in terms of cash, labour time and social organization. In view of the high risk, farmers may consider it is not worthwhile to make the investment.

Secondly, the income that may be derived from migrant labour greatly exceeds the income that may be derived from working the land. (The one is, in fact, a prerequisite of the other, not an alternative.) Ashton remarked on this disincentive in the 1930s,³¹ but it is much more important today in view of the continuing decline in agricultural productivity³² and in view of an increasing absolute shortage of land for arable cultivation. Increased wage-earning capacity in South Africa in the 1970s means that the possibility of investing in agriculture has been substantially enhanced, but it also means that such an investment has become much more expensive in terms of its opportunity cost.³³

Thirdly, while there is aggregate under-employment in agriculture on a year-round basis, there is probably an **absolute shortage** of male and female labour at certain peak load times (ploughing and weeding) of the agricultural season.³⁴

Fourthly, cash inputs from migrant earnings and other inputs in the form of labour, tools and draught power (cattle) are differentially distributed between households. This necessitates a variety of arrangements of a contractual or reciprocal kind, such as share-cropping³⁵ and partnerships described as **ho kena lehafing** ("entering the armpit"),³⁶ which are seldom regarded as optimal arrangements by the households concerned.

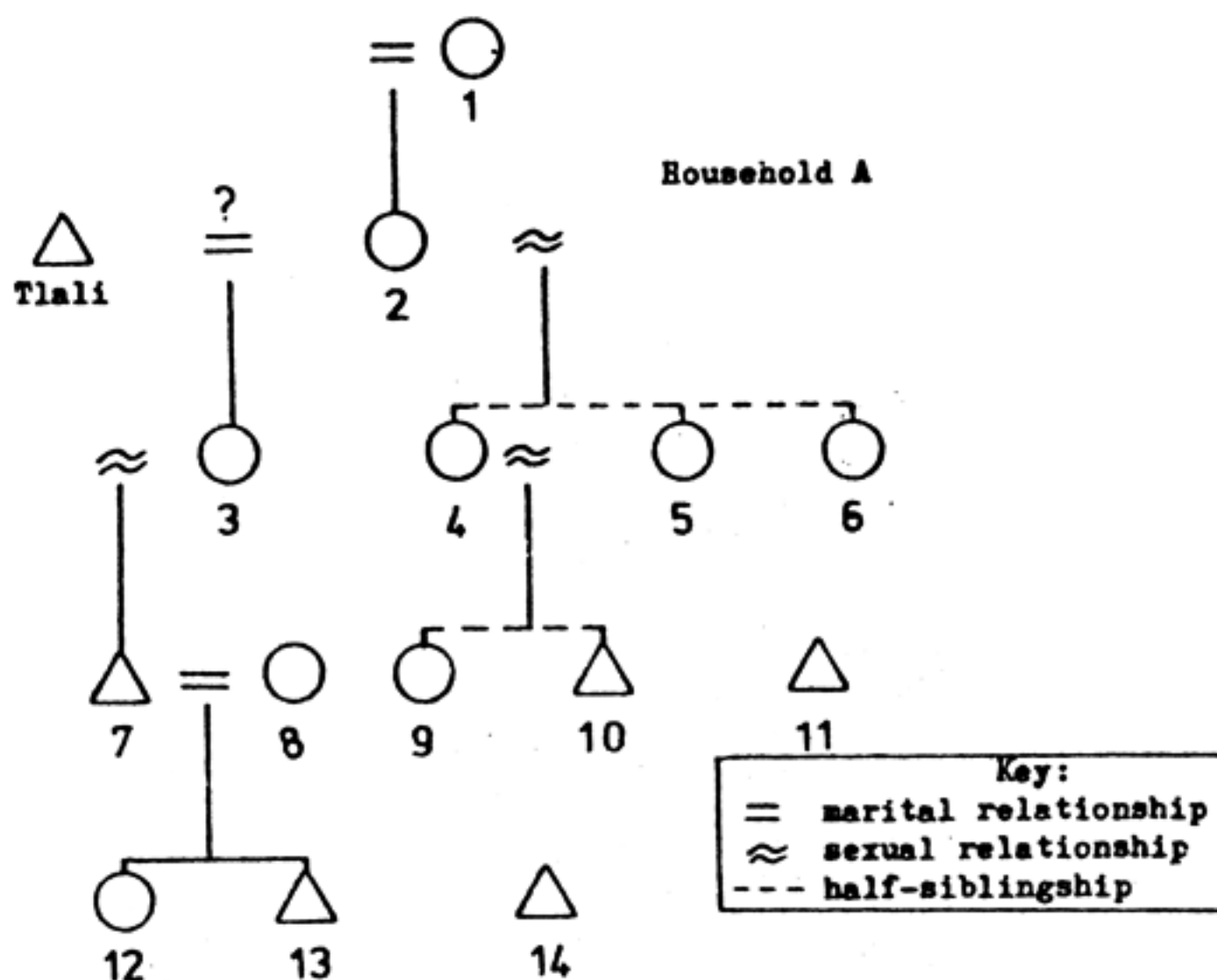
In the circumstances it is perhaps surprising that so many people do continue to engage in agriculture. Spiegel stresses the importance of a residual security function, such that households still aspire to be allocated land and contrive to invest in livestock and agriculture, even where they cannot ensure a worthwhile return in the short term, in order to demonstrate their long term commitment to the rural social system. In view of this, John Gay has asserted the need for a redistribution of the functions of management. He drew attention to "the serious and obvious flaw that no arrangements have yet been made for competent local

farmers to manage the land and livestock of those who have left the village to earn money."³⁷

3. Case Studies of Household Management

I have elsewhere reviewed the evidence for processes of "conservation" and "dissolution" in family life in Lesotho and Botswana.³⁸ On the one hand, we have evidence of a relatively stable agnatic structure which endures through several generations. On the other hand, we have evidence of high rates of individual mobility, conjugal instability, illegitimacy, desertion and the break-up of families. The significant inference to be drawn from this is that study of the structure of small communities, defined in terms of the relationship between household heads, does not of itself indicate the qualitative disruption of family life that takes place over time. The following case studies of three neighbouring households in Ha Molapo in the Leribe district are intended to illustrate aspects of this qualitative disruption of family life, under the headings of (a) turnover in household membership, (b) conjugal conflict and insecurity, and (c) "structural violence" reflected in the lives of individuals. The effects of migrant labour are perhaps best understood through detailed case studies of this kind. At any rate, they are an essential complement to material of an impressionistic kind³⁹ and to material derived from survey questionnaires which purport to measure the strain experienced by migrants' wives and the attitudes of migrants themselves.⁴⁰

(a) Turnover in household membership



Reference		1974 May	1973 Dec.	Census of:		
				1974 Oct.	1978 Oct.	1978 Oct.
'MaNtsoaki	A1	+	+	+	+	
Ntsoaki	A2	-	-	+	-	
Lydia	A3	-	-	-		+
	A4	-	-	-	-	
	A5	-	-	-	+	
Martha	A6	-	+	-	+	
Teboho	A7	-	+	-	-	
'MaMohlaoli	A8	-	+	+	-	
	A9	-	-	+	+	
	A10	-	-	+	+	
	A11	-	-	-	-	
	A12	-	+	+	-	
	A13	-	+	+	-	
	A14	-	-	+		+
		1	6	8	5	2

(*de facto* household members)

Note: + indicates presence;
- indicates absence.

A.1 An elderly widow, 'MaNtsoaki (b. 1897) holds two fields which she cultivated assiduously in the 1972/3 and 1973/4 seasons through remittances derived mainly from the earnings of Lydia (A3). 'MaNtsoaki was the sole permanently resident member of the household throughout the period 1972-8.

A.2 Ntsoaki (b. 1916) "retired" to Lesotho in early 1974 after spending most of her adult life in Middelburg (Transvaal). She had been "married" to Tlali, also a resident of Ha Molapo, and borne one child (Lydia, A3) by him. Subsequently he contracted leprosy, and Ntsoaki went to the Republic to seek work to support herself. There she bore four other daughters (including A4, A5 and A6) by various men. They grew up partly in Middelburg and partly in her mother's household in Ha Molapo. Ntsoaki's relationship with Tlali was the subject of sporadic and bitter recriminations in 1972-4. Ntsoaki and her mother vigorously rejected Tlali's claim to paternity rights over all Ntsoaki's offspring, on the grounds that Tlali had never transferred enough bridewealth cattle to justify this claim and that in any case he had forfeited any claim he might have had through having ill-treated her. In October 1978 Ntsoaki was reported to be back in South Africa, staying with another daughter at Alberton (Transvaal) in order to get medical treatment for a recurrent but unspecified illness.

- A.3 In 1973–4 Lydia was running a successful medical practice in Middelburg — she claimed apprenticeship in Lourenco Marques (as it then was) and she had a certificate of membership of the African Dingaka Association dated 1965. She made an extended visit to 'MaNtsoaki's household in July 1974, bringing back large items of furniture and a kitchen suite (accumulated on hire purchase, incongruous among Sesotho household equipment) in preparation for her own imminent "retirement" to the village. She built herself an adjoining shack with corrugated iron roof and elaborate interior furnishings, and by 1978 she was settled in the village, constituting a household (with A14) independent from that of her grandmother by the criterion of separate cooking arrangements. She apparently supported 'MaNtsoaki to a considerable extent through her earnings in the informal sector — her continuing medical practice, her regular parties at which liquor such as brandy flowed freely, and her (suspected) prostitution. Lydia has no husband and has never been married.
- A.4 Having been "married" by a Pedi man in Middelburg, Lydia's eldest half-sister sent her two young children (A9, A10, by other men) to be brought up in Lesotho. They came with Lydia in July 1974 and remained in the household after the latter's departure. They both attend one of the local primary schools. Their mother does not come to visit them.
- A.5 She had been married in a village some miles away since 1971. Throughout 1972–4 she was not therefore regarded as a member of the household, but in September 1978 she had taken refuge there after being beaten by her husband. She has no children.
- A.6 Brought up in the household, Martha had been resident with 'MaNtsoaki (A1) until December 1972 when she eloped to a village six miles away. She made an extended visit home at Christmas 1973, and she was ritually "washed" early in 1974 following symptoms of pseudocyesis. There were signs of a conjugal rift throughout the rest of that year. In September 1978 she told me that she and her "husband" had long since split up — he had never transferred any bride-wealth — and she was preparing to return to work in domestic service at Newcastle (Natal) which she found much more lively than Ha Molapo. As she put it, **bophelo ba mona bo-boring haholo** — "the life here is very boring". She had not yet conceived a child and was resigning herself to a fate of barrenness.
- A.7 Teboho's mother Lydia (A3) was "spoilt in the yard" in Middelburg and he holds a South African passport which eases harassment under the pass laws but does not qualify him to reside in a prescribed ("White") area with his family. He had (and still retains) a relatively good job in a Johannesburg construction company at about R28 a week in 1973. He was home for a few weeks at Christmas 1973, during which he caused resentment in the household by spending a considerable amount of time with his maternal grandfather Tlali, who lived alone elsewhere in the village and who wished to recognize Teboho as his effective heir. By 1978 Tlali had died, Teboho's wife 'MaMohlaoli (A8) had

disappeared with their children and Teboho had "married" another woman (from Johannesburg) and installed her in Tlali's old homestead together with one of her own two children and one of the two she subsequently bore to Teboho. The old woman 'MaNtsoaki was very bitter about these developments, remarking that in any case since Teboho had first got married she had never seen anything of his money.

A.8 Teboho had married 'MaMohlaoli in 1971. She had spent a short time with him in Johannesburg, where she bore two children by him (A12, A13) and settled in 'MaNtsoaki's household with them in the latter part of 1973. Separate bride-wealth transactions took place in 1972 and 1973 which together wholly fulfilled the Sesotho customary expectation of 20 cattle, 10 small stock and a horse.⁴ Nevertheless, in 1978 there was no sign of her or of her (by then three) children. I was told that she had gone off to Johannesburg some time previously, taking the children with her, apparently because Teboho had established another liaison in Johannesburg and was no longer adequately supporting her. 'MaNtsoaki was hinting darkly that they would take steps to recover the children, on account of all the bridewealth cattle that had been paid to her father.

A.11 He was a boy of Xhosa origin, unwanted by his mother, whom Ntsoaki (A2) had "bought" in Middelburg because she had no sons of her own. He was brought up in Lesotho but was an absent migrant throughout the period 1972-4. Nevertheless Ntsoaki insisted that he made regular remittances in support of the household. By 1978 he had married; his wife had been briefly resident in the household but had then gone to join him at work (in Swaziland). 'MaNtsoaki told me that he still sent her money occasionally - R10 or so at a time.

A.14 A boy of unknown parentage who had been "given" to Lydia (A3) by his mother who lived next door in Middelburg. He was brought to Lesotho in July 1974 to be reared in the household, and in 1978 was living with Lydia in her separate household. Having had an operation on his back, this child was described as a *shole* (cripple) by Ntsoaki (A2), who regarded him as a bad deal for this reason. He was also listless and withdrawn, probably attributable to the effects of malnutrition.

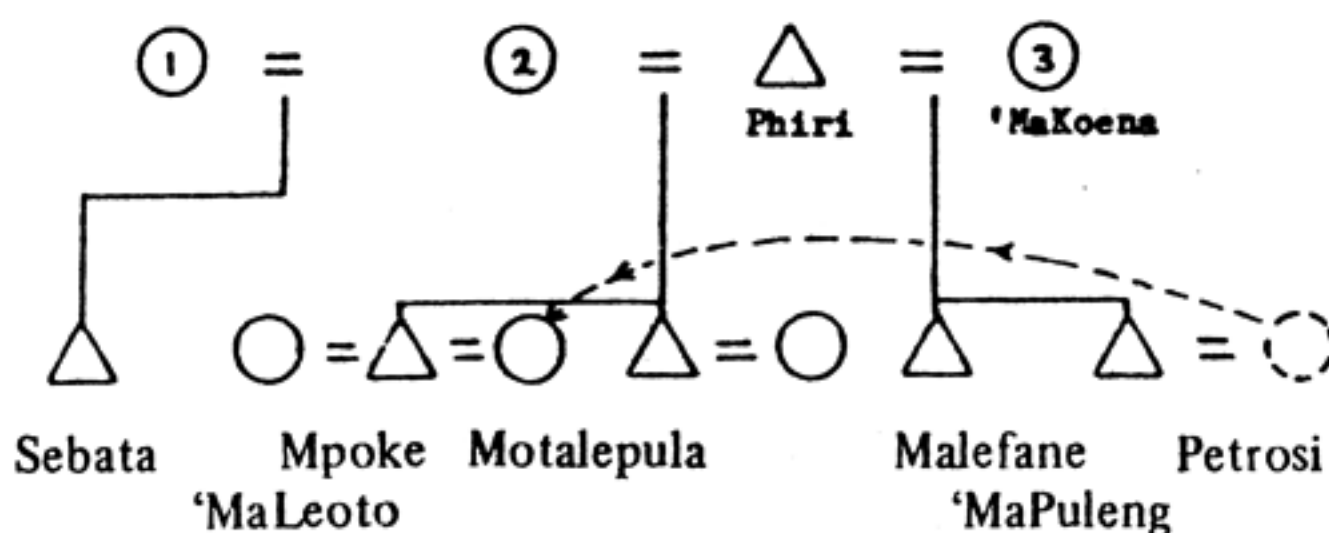
(b) Conjugal conflict and insecurity

Motlalepula was a truck operator in a coal mine at Vryheid (Natal), earning a basic wage of R0,80 per shift in 1973-4. His wife 'MaPuleng had three out of their four children resident with her in Ha Molapo, the fourth being resident in her Natal home at Witsieshoek (Basotho Qwaqwa). Motlalepula came home for one month in June 1973, bringing some roofing materials to complete a new hut which they were building in response to the needs of a growing family. He took a new coal mine contract in July 1973 but the first remittance he sent following his departure was one of R45 in November, with instructions to 'MaPuleng to buy a table and chair set. The immediate priority at that time was to buy food for

immediate consumption and to arrange for their single field to be ploughed; but she could not flout his direct instructions and she bought the cheapest table and chair set available in the wholesale store about six miles away, for R29. Having paid R5,00 to hire oxen, plough and labour, and bought seed for R1,50, and having repaid debts of R2,00 and bought half a bag of maize flour for R3,00, there was virtually nothing left of the R45 to buy paraffin, soap and other small but necessary household items. Less than two weeks after receiving the single large remittance of R45 'MaPuleng was deeply depressed about her budgeting problems. In December her husband sent her a parcel of clothes for herself and the children; and in January 1974 a sum of R15, one-third of which went to repay local debts. Her husband arrived home at the beginning of May 1974 with very little money, for he had spent his earnings on buying three horses in the Republic and on expenses involved in smuggling them into Lesotho. The horses succumbed one after another to an endemic intestinal affliction (bots). The previous year Motlalepula had given R70 to an affine of his elder brother to invest in buying a beast on his behalf, but he was only able to recover a small calf worth a good deal less than that sum. His ventures into livestock were thus a notable failure and his wife was exasperated at the conflicts of priority in expenditure when, as so often, she and the children did not know where the next meal was coming from. "A man hasn't got sense . . . he doesn't know (our problems), yet if you don't do what he wants, he beats you. . . ." They only reaped two bags of maize from cultivation in 1973/4, a return that hardly covered even the minimal cash investment they had made. Motlalepula returned to work in September 1974 and sent 'MaPuleng a remittance of R30 in November, just in time to enable her to get their field ploughed.

'MaPuleng died in December 1977 of peritonitis following a botched operation for cervical cancer earlier in the year. Motlalepula who had come home during her illness had to remain in the village after her death to look after the children, then aged 8 to 15, because there was no-one else whom he could trust to do so. Accordingly he had to forego the possibility of returning to take up a new mine contract at substantially higher wages than he could possibly earn in the informal sector (horse-trading) in Lesotho. He married again in April 1979.

(c) "Structural violence"



In 1966 Phiri's third wife 'MaKoena's youngest son Petrosi handed over an initial "beast" in cash to 'MaLeoto's family as an earnest of his engagement to her. He left her pregnant to take up another mine contract and was killed shortly afterwards in a mining accident. 'MaLeoto was officially acknowledged as his wife and she received a considerable sum in compensation. Sebata had by this time succeeded his father Phiri as head of this branch of the family. He saw an opportunity in these circumstances to resolve a conflict between the three houses (his own, Mpoke's and Malefane's) which had previously arisen as a result of Phiri's unscrupulous abuse, in the disposition of bridewealth cattle, of the principle "houses do not eat each other" (*malapa ha a jane*). Sebata "gave" 'MaLeoto to Mpoke as a substitute for the latter's wife who had either run away or been thrown out as a result of a complex series of adulterous indiscretions (involving an "exchange" of wives between Mpoke and another member of the family in Johannesburg). This was a device to repay a debt outstanding from the third house to the second house but Sebata committed a new offence against the third house by acting in this way without consulting Malefane (absent at the time) or his mother 'MaKoena who could justifiably claim the girl as her daughter-in-law.

However, 'MaLeoto settled down with Mpoke and bore him two more children in due course. He transferred two "cattle" in cash to her parents as a first instalment of bridewealth. He was an occasional migrant but continued philandering, and 'MaLeoto herself was not blameless in this respect. In 1972/3 two court cases were brought respectively by Mpoke and a village neighbour who had had affairs with each other's wives during the other's absence. In 1974 their marital difficulties came to a head. Mpoke, morose and aggressive, was just wandering around the village, drinking and fighting, not working, no longer giving 'MaLeoto any money for herself or the children. He had previously fallen into bad company on the Rand (*Marasheaneng*, among "Russians" or gangsters), and village gossip had it that he had been bewitched by a doctor there. He refused to consult a doctor in Lesotho to counteract this evil medicine. In a divorce case in July 1974 at the chief's court, 'MaLeoto sued Mpoke for the return of her belongings. The division of property turned on the question of what clothes and household items she had bought with her own compensation money (from the death of Petrosi) and what items she had bought with the money Mpoke had sent her in remittances. She also claimed the corrugated iron sheets from the roof of their hut. The resolution was that 'MaLeoto should return to her parents' home with the three young children. In view of Mpoke's derisory transfer of only two bridewealth cattle he had no paternity claim over them. Having no means of support, 'MaLeoto immediately left Lesotho to seek work in the informal sector in South Africa. She went to the shebeen run by associates of Household A in Middelburg (Transvaal). Early in 1975 news reached the village that she had been killed in a drunken brawl.

4. Conclusion

Of course these three households are not "typical". No single household would be. Nevertheless, their stories encapsulate very many of the "facts of life" that are characteristic of southern African labour reserves. In summary:

a) There is a constant traffic of individuals (including, exceptionally, the "sale" of

children) between a rural base in Lesotho and a place of work in the Republic. Family survival is contingent on family separation, and the human cost of this is very high. Conjugal relationships are destroyed or undermined; and arrangements for the rearing of children are correspondingly haphazard and unstable.

- b) A cycle of illegitimacy develops as a result of the frequency of pre-marital conception and conjugal breakdown and the consequent subsidiary migration of women to seek work in South Africa to support themselves and their children. This cycle is reflected in a three-generational form of household in which alternate generations are linked through women. There are many such households in Lesotho.
- c) Many migrants' wives must endure unremitting anxiety in circumstances where they have to meet so many immediate consumption requirements in cash but cannot rely on regular remittances with which to do so. Otherwise, those without direct access to migrants' earnings must engage in a diversity of activities in the informal sector, which include beerbrewing, petty trading and prostitution as well as a widespread form of extra-marital association known as *bonyatsi*. These activities are subsidiary channels along which migrants' earnings are disposed. They are also contexts for the proliferation of violence.
- d) Various forms of ill-health in rural communities in Lesotho reflect social conditions (poverty, lack of hygiene, over-crowding, seasonal food shortages, circumstances of family disruption) which are partly attributable to the ravages of out-migration. Gastro-enteritis, pneumonia and malnutrition are common among young children; respiratory and sexually-transmitted diseases and some forms of malnutrition such as pellagra are common among adults. There is a high incidence of cervical cancer among women, and also of anxieties such as those manifest in pseudocyesis (false pregnancy). Many returned miners suffer from pneumoconiosis or tuberculosis; others are disabled through injuries at work in respect of which the risk is high and the compensation is low.

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5. See Table 1, p. above.
6. A.C.A. van der Wiel, *Migratory Wage Labour, Its Role in the Economy of Lesotho*, Maseru, 1977, p.32.
7. R.G.A. Feachem et al., *Water, Health and Development*, Tri-Med Books, London, 1978, p.18. It should be noted that this latter figure includes persons who had paid employment within Lesotho.
8. An estimate of the occupational distribution of Basotho labour migrants in South Africa in 1976 is given in van der Wiel, *op cit.*, p.22. According to these figures, extrapolated from surveys conducted in 1974 and 1976, 4 out of 5 migrant labourers from Lesotho are employed in the South African mining industry. The occupational distribution of migrants from particular communities may be found in Murray, *Keeping House*, p.61 and in A.D. Spiegel, *Migrant Labour Remittances, The Developmental Cycle and Rural Differentiation in a Lesotho Community*, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1979, pp. 67, 75. cf. also John Gay, *Rural Sociology Technical Report*, Senqu Project, Moleleke's Hoek, April 1977, p.63.
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- 11 E.M. Sebatane, *An Empirical Study of the Attitudes and Perceptions of Migrant Workers: the Case of Lesotho*, ILO, Geneva, September 1979, p.6.
- 12 C. Murray, "Migration, Differentiation and the Developmental Cycle in Lesotho", in W.M.J. van Binsbergen and H. Meilink (eds.), *Migration and the Transformation of Modern African Society*, Afrika-studiecentrum, Leiden, 1978, p.135.
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- 16 C. Murray, "The Work of Men, Women and the Ancestors", in S. Wallman (ed.), *The Social Anthropology of Work*, Academic Press, 1979.
- 17 Murray, *Keeping House*, p.163. Compare Gay, *op cit.*, p.55; Spiegel, *op cit.*, p.53; and V.G.J. Sheddick, *The morphology of residential associations as found among the Khwakhwa of Basutoland*, University of Cape Town, Communications from the School of African Studies, New Series No. 19, 1948, p.31.
- 18 Murray, "The Work of Men, Women and the Ancestors".
19. Gay, *op cit.*, p.59.
- 20 Spiegel, *op cit.*, p.54.
- 21 *ibid.*
- 22 Murray, *Keeping House*, pp. 71–73, 309; Van der Wiel, *op cit.*, p.37; R. Wykstra, "Farm Labor in Lesotho: Scarcity or Surplus?", LASA Discussion Paper No. 5, Maseru, 1978, p.14.
- 23 Spiegel, *op cit.*, pp. 79–83, draws attention to the discrepancies between various sources of information on the same alleged remittances.
- 24 Spiegel's study, *op cit.*, is invaluable in this respect; and Judy Gay's forthcoming Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, contains detailed analyses of household income and expenditure.
- 25 Feachem et al., *op cit.*; van der Wiel, *op cit.* A great deal of relevant material, from the Thaba Bosiu Project and other sources, is not yet available in published form.
- 26 Feachem et al., *op cit.*, pp. 18–24.
- 27 These are analyzed in Murray, "Migration, Differentiation and the Developmental Cycle".
- 28 Van der Wiel, *op cit.*, pp. 84–90.
- 29 It is interesting to note evidence from the Qacha's Nek district which was submitted to Sir Alan Pim in 1934. The table below reveals a striking positive correlation between an individual's age and his holdings in land and livestock, and a striking negative correlation

between age and participation in wage labour.

	100 taxpayers of less than 5 years' standing	100 taxpayers of 5 to 9 years' standing	100 taxpayers of more than 9 years' standing
At home	32	40	70
Absent	68	60	30
No. with no stock	80	32	17
No. with no land	84	30	9
Av. no. of cattle owned	0.27	1.67	5.93
Av. no. of lands	0.22	1.25	3.12
Av. no. of dependants	0.67	2.93	5.86

Source: Sir Alan Pim, *Financial and Economic Position of Basutoland*, Cmnd. 4907, HMSO, London, 1935, p.41.

However, it is differences of this kind between households rather than between individuals which are of importance in analyzing differentiation within rural communities.

- 30 Spiegel, *op cit.*, p. 199.
- 31 E.H. Ashton, "A Sociological Sketch of Sotho Diet", *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa XXVII, Part II, 1939*, p. 155.
- 32 See "From Granary to Labour Reserve", above.
- 33 Murray, "Migration, differentiation and the Developmental Cycle", p. 129.
- 34 Wykstra, *op cit.*
- 35 Murray, *Keeping House*, pp. 108-111.
- 36 Spiegel, *op cit.*, pp. 120-122.
- 37 Gay, *op cit.*, p.27. Stephen Turner's unpublished Ph.D. thesis, *Sesotho Farming: The Condition and Prospects of Agriculture in the Lowlands and Foothills of Lesotho*, University of London, 1978, is a very detailed appraisal of Lesotho's agricultural problems. His work is an invaluable source of reference for the elaboration of all these points.
- 38 C. Murray, "Migrant Labour and Changing Family Structure in the Rural Periphery of Southern Africa", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 6, 2, 1980. cf. also D. Cooper, "Migration to Botswana Towns: Patterns of Migration of Selebi-Phikwe Mine Workers prior to and including coming to Phikwe", National Migration Study Working Paper No. 3, Central Statistics Office, Gaborone, October 1979.
- 39 *Another Blanket*, Report on an investigation into the migrant situation, Agency for Industrial Mission, Horison, Transvaal, October 1976.
- 40 E. Gordon, *The Women Left Behind: A Study of the Wives of the Migrant Workers of Lesotho*, ILO, Geneva, December 1978; Sebatane, *op cit.*
41. Full details of the dispute between Tlali and 'MaNtsoaki and of the transactions in Teboho's marriage to 'MaMohlaoli are published in C. Murray, "High bridewealth, migrant labour and the position of women in Lesotho", *Journal of African Law* 21.1.1977, pp. 92-94
42. See feachen et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 144-150: and P.N. Nkosi et al., "Child Health in Lesotho. A preliminary report", *Lesotho* 9, 1970-71 pp. 25-32.

Wage Employment of Rural Basotho Women: a case study

Judy Gay

Literature on labour in Lesotho has concentrated on the problems of male migrant workers and female dependents, saying little about women as migrant workers themselves, as wage employees within Lesotho, and as entrepreneurs in the informal sector. There are few statistics and no published studies of women in these categories, yet such women form an important part of Lesotho's work force and an as yet uncalculated portion of the unemployed and under-employed. This article does not presume to fill the gap in national statistics; it reports a case study of women from a single lowlands village who have been or presently are migrant workers in South Africa or are wage employees within Lesotho or independent entrepreneurs within the village. It is hoped that it will stimulate similar research on a national level as well as concern for wages, working conditions and employment needs of Basotho women.

**Table 1 : Basotho Migrants 1911–1979
with Female Absentees expressed as percent of Total Absentees**

Year of Census	Female Absentees	Male Absentees	Total Absentees	Females as % of Total Absentees	Total De Jure Population
1911	2 972	21 658	24 630	12,1	427 549
1921	9 314	37 827	47 141	19,8	544 147
1936	22 669	78 604	101 273	22,4	661 809
1946	32 331	95 697	128 028	25,2	689 919
1956	41 992	112 790	154 782	27,1	794 253
1966	19 550	96 350	115 900	16,9	965 913*
1976	23 551	129 103	152 654	15,4	1 216 654

Based on a summary of National Census figures and unpublished 1976 census data.

* In 1966 absentees were defined as 'persons away from Lesotho continuously for less than five years.' This strict definition is a partial explanation for the reduction of absentees in that year. However the percentage of female to male absentees indicates the differential effect of 1963 legislation on female dependents and workers.

Census figures show that 27,1 per cent of the Basotho who were absent from the country in 1956 were female, and in 1976 women still made up 15.4 per cent of absentees, despite present restrictions which prevent most Basotho women

from going legally to South Africa. (See Table 1). If women, both in the past and present, make up such a considerable proportion of Basotho's migrants, why is it that there has been so little mention of them in the literature and so little data available?

One reason is that neither the migrant labour recruiting organisations nor Lesotho's Department of Labour deal with female migrants, and it is these groups which have provided much of the data to researchers. Another reason is that present South African laws are such that most Basotho women migrants must seek work clandestinely. Further, women in wage employment away from home deviate from the normative family pattern of a wage earning husband supporting a dependent wife who is occupied with subsistence agriculture, domestic work and child care. But in fact there are many women who must themselves take the responsibility for supporting their children: unwed mothers and separated, divorced, deserted and widowed women. It is most often these women who are driven by marital problems and economic necessity to seek employment outside the rural areas. In so doing they develop considerable independence and self-reliance which appears threatening to the stable rural family structures on which the migration of men and thus the South African labour system depends.

The population Studied

This report is based on research conducted in a large village of 296 households in the lowlands of southern Lesotho, near one of the country's ten major towns. Table 2 shows the number of men and women over the age of 17 who reported some type of wage employment, whether full or part time, during 1977. The most striking feature is the contrast between the numbers of men and of women employed in South Africa. However, although female employment is limited both at home and in the Republic, almost 20 per cent of the village women engaged in some type of wage employment during the research year.

Basotho Women Workers in South Africa

The first generations of Basotho who worked for the white settlers did not go as migrants; they were engulfed, as Boer and British moved into land traditionally occupied by Sotho peoples. In her study of the economic history of Lesotho, Judith Kimble observes that "many Basotho who had been living in the disputed territory simply remained there working for the new owners of the land." She cites Arbousset's reference in 1842 to Basotho employed as domestic servants in the Cape Colony and Maeder's remark in 1856 that Basotho were "good neighbours" who provided grains and domestic servants for farm work to the Boers.¹

It is only as the boundaries of Moshoeshe's domain became restricted and as the movement of Africans came under the control of Boer and British colonial regulations that we can speak of migrant labour out of Basutoland into the Cape Colony or the Boer Republics. Genealogical records from the village studied show that many families came from what is now white South Africa and indicate splits between collateral lines, some of which moved into the mountains of Lesotho, while others remained scattered as labour tenants on white farms or moved to the growing urban centres. These family connections provided the contacts which

**Table 2 : De Jure Village Population Over Age 17
by Sex and Place of Employment in 1977**

	number	male percent	number	female percent	total
RSA	246	65,8	20	4,6	266
urban Lesotho away from home	13	3,5	15	3,5	28
Town near village	24	6,4	30	6,9	54
Village	32*	8,6	20	4,6	52
Not working	59	15,8	348	80,4	407
Total	374	100	433	100	807

* Many of these men working locally are independent builders. Herdboys have not been included in this tabulation, nor have independent women brewers not those self-employed in agriculture.

helped later generations move back down from the mountains to seek employment on the white farms and towns which came to surround Basutoland. Such family connections were not critical for men who were recruited to go to the distant mining centres, but they were of great importance for women who left parents, children and in-laws to set out on the long lonely search for work.

Of the 433 women over the age of 17 in the village, 74 reported that they had once worked in South Africa, and 20 were doing so in 1977. We shall consider first the group who had once been migrants, examining the circumstances under which they went and the work they did. The information is derived from the employment and marital histories of all village residents and detailed interviews with 21 women. Incomplete memories and a reluctance to reveal personal details limit generalization.

Reasons for going to South Africa

One group of women were born in South Africa or went as children because their mothers were employed on white farms or in the growing mining or urban areas. They began working as girls but eventually returned to reside in Lesotho.

Another group who were born in Lesotho said that after marriage they went to work (along with their husbands), on South African farms; the women working in the farmers' homes and doing occasional agricultural tasks and often brewing in their spare time. Women who went with their husbands said they had gone

together to earn livestock, or because they lacked fields in Lesotho, or because of times of drought, dust and famine such as Lesotho experienced in the 1930s. As long as both mining and agricultural sectors competed for labour, some families chose the agricultural sector where husband and wife could work together and keep their children with them. However, couples who began working together on the farms often drifted apart, the husbands moving on to the better paid mine work, the wives moving from one domestic job to another, and the children being sent back to relatives in Lesotho to attend school which was rarely available in the white farm areas.

A third group first went as married women to follow or find their migrant husbands on the Witwatersrand and in the Free State gold mining areas. Since the men generally lived in mine compounds, the women had to find housing in the urban locations, usually with relatives already there or with women who brewed and gave housing in return for help with their businesses. Some went because their husbands had failed to write or to send money home and they hoped to re-establish marital ties as well as to earn money for themselves. Some women said they had gone as wives but had separated after a few years of urban living, each partner blaming the other for destroying the marriage by taking lovers. It was clearly much more difficult to maintain a family life in the urban locations, mine compounds and domestic servants' quarters than on the farms.

The fourth and largest group of women said they had initially gone to South Africa because of desertion, separation or divorce. Most said that the husband had married another woman and ceased to give financial support, forcing the wife to leave her home in Lesotho and seek the means to support herself and her children. Others were barren and hence had been rejected by husbands and in-laws. Having neither husbands nor children upon whom they could depend in their old age, these barren women sought work for themselves; and interestingly, several of them returned after years in South Africa with children, either fathered by men other than their husbands, or adopted while there.

The last group of women were older widows who only went to work after their husbands had died, leaving them unable to support and educate their children.

The economic and marital circumstances, which led certain women to seek work in the Republic while the majority, dependent on subsistence agriculture and male migrant workers remained behind, are inseparable. Economic problems involved the failure of both subsistence agriculture and migrant remittances. In a way which is unique for women, economic distress is inseparable from marital and reproductive failures. Where the primary wage earners are men, it is the nature of the marriage bond and the husband's willingness to fulfill his marital obligations which determine whether women can survive as dependents or must attempt to earn a cash income for themselves. But for women to enter the labour market necessitates a break from traditional female roles and attendant social constraints, a shift which had already begun for some women as a result of mission education for girls and prohibitions against polygyny and the leviratic marriage of widows.² Such female independence posed a threat to the male dominated social system upon which men depended in order to counterbalance the insecurities of their own migrant lives. Thus we read in the British Colonial Report of 1908 that Basotho men complained

about "women absconding from their husbands and taking refuge in the Colony".³ But for women, the chance to work in South Africa opened up new social and economic opportunities as an alternative when dependence on migrants failed.

Type of work

The following list shows the incidence of different types of full time work reported by the 93 village women who had worked in South Africa in the past or were doing so in 1977:

Domestic work	68
Brewing	8
Factory work	8
Agriculture	3
Sales clerk	2
Weaving and sewing	3
Religious order	1

Domestic work was and continues to be the most important category. Studies of the sexual division of labour often contrast unpaid female work within the home with male wage labour in the public domain. But in South Africa it is precisely through sale of their domestic work that African women have been able to enter the public labour market. As a result they must normally delegate all other domestic tasks of their own, except that of bearing children, to others. From the earliest period of slavery there has been a constant demand for female workers in white homes and, as a small but growing black middle class has developed, they too have begun to hire domestic help. Several village women said they first worked on white farms, but found wages low and sought better paying jobs in the white suburbs of Johannesburg and Pretoria. Murray reports Basotho women to be working for Indians in Johannesburg at wages far lower than those paid to legally resident South African black women.⁴ Furthermore some of my informants indicated that their first jobs in urban areas had been child care or housework in the locations of African women who themselves held regular jobs. Thus stratification is a marked feature of the paid domestic labour market in South Africa with newcomers from rural areas taking the lowest paid jobs.

If we include part-time and supplementary work, the second most frequent way of earning money in the Republic was through illegal beer brewing. Just as women used their domestic skills as housekeepers, cooks and child minders to provide what I call the "domestic infrastructure" for white society, so they used their domestic skills as brewers and hostesses to provide the "domestic infrastructure" for the black working class which turned for its recreation to the *shebeens* and homes of women in the locations. Women not only brewed in the towns, but wherever men were recruited for work, women followed, as the following case illustrates:

Mamohau, who had been deserted by her husband told how she had been earning only R10 a month as a house maid in South Africa in 1958 so had

gone to brew in a part of the Orange Free State where new gold mines were being opened up. She said that she and other women made temporary shelters in a farmer's field, giving the farmer the strainings from their brewing to feed his pigs in return for squatting rights, firewood, and a degree of protection from the police. They bought ingredients for brewing and contraband brandy from itinerant Indian traders. They hid what they had brewed in pits in the ground and in the evenings they sold the beer to men who had come to do the initial digging for a new mine. Once the mine was opened, the land was fenced, and the company had established its own facilities, the women were forced to move on to a new frontier.'

Such women were female pioneers who participated in a unique way in the expansion of the South African mining industry. Three other village women who were middle-aged widows engaged in such brewing during the 1970s, living in rough wooded areas near very isolated construction projects. Conditions were spartan and arrests frequent, but profits of up to R40 a week were much higher than domestic salaries. Such self-employed women who brewed, sewed, traded in pottery, old clothes and even illicit diamonds said they enjoyed the independence and freedom from degrading subservience required in work for a white "madam". They had severe problems as women on their own, without husbands and lacking the labour, cash, cattle or fields to invest in agriculture. With few employment opportunities at home, they used their own resources to survive and to provide for their children's education by obtaining a share in the wages which men were earnings.

Apart from domestic work and brewing, very few alternatives were open to migrant women from rural Lesotho. Several from the village worked in factories, shops or asbestos mines, and one or two have daughters who are now permanent residents of South Africa working in such jobs or in hospitals.

Only three women mentioned regular agricultural employment, but in informal conversations older village women said how nice it had been in their youth when any woman who had needed extra money could just go for a few weeks to hoe or pick maize in the Orange Free State. Until 1963, white farmers, wanting seasonal workers could come to Lesotho and recruit women, particularly for fruit picking in the worth. Village women now lament the fact that such seasonal agricultural work is no longer available. Such women are not aware of the transformation which mechanisation has brought to South African agriculture, nor of the shift to employment of blacks from South Africa's own "homelands". But they are well aware of the limited employment opportunities in Lesotho and the "influx control" measures which prevent them from legally seeking work across the border. These legal restrictions which have almost completely closed the border to Basotho women workers distinguish the situation of female migrants of today from that of earlier generations.

Restrictions on Basotho women migrants

The complex and ever-increasing legal machinery restricting the rights of Blacks to live and work and travel in South Africa has been described by Rugege and

others.⁵ Women now fall under the same basic legal restrictions as do men, but because of the continuing demand for male labour, special exemptions from the restrictions are arranged for those who are hired on a legal contract basis. Since there is no legal recruitment of Basotho women, the full weight of "influx control" measures falls on them.

Even before the mid-nineteenth century, men from Basutoland were required to carry passes when travelling to the Cape and the Free State to seek work, but passes were not issued to women.⁶ However, it was assumed then, as it is now, that a woman must have the permission of "the man whom she is under" in order to leave home and seek work elsewhere in Lesotho or in the Republic. In 1947 officials in Basutoland itself became concerned about the movement of Basotho to South Africa, and in that year an order was issued by the Paramount Chief of Lesotho "forbidding women and children to proceed to the Union, especially to Johannesburg, in view of the shortage of accommodation there."⁷ Apparently, however, this regulation was not enforced with any rigour, and it has only been with the development of South African legislation after the National Party came into power that the movement of African women to urban areas of South Africa has been halted.

In 1952 various laws controlling movement were consolidated into one Act and women for the first time were required to obtain "reference books". This legislation touched off a series of protests by women in South Africa and many Basotho returned home at this time rather than join or defy the Pass Resistance Campaign. However, others obtained the passes knowing that from 1960 onwards their right to continue working depended on compliance. One woman told how the change had affected her, putting her under the control of both her husband and of the government:

I found life much harder then I found that if you have no rights and no permit for living there you are just like an animal. You'll live in the wilderness. At 3 a.m. you'll have to run away from the police and sleep out in the fields, hiding. This was after I had quarrelled with my husband. I had gotten a Malan Pass. But we quarrelled and he took away my pass and all my documents which showed my right to be there. Then I began to have problems and found life in South Africa hard. That is when I realised that I would just have to try to get used to my own country, Lesotho, even though there is no work here.

In 1963 additional regulations were passed and border posts were established. Workers born in Lesotho were defined as "foreign blacks" and after 1963 they could only remain as workers in the Republic with Lesotho passports and under the most restricted conditions: (1) they must have worked continuously for one employer for 10 years, or (2) they must have been in continuous residence and employment for 15 years, or (3) they must be granted a "no objection" certificate from a Bantu Labour Bureau and a stamp in their passports to be signed monthly by their employers. These certificates and stamped work permits are routinely arranged for men under legal contracts, but can only be obtained by women as well as privately employed men under special circumstances. A few Basotho women

who had documentary proof of employment prior to 1963 were able to qualify under conditions (1) and (2) but many were forced to leave after 1963 or risk fines or prisons.

Present employment of Basotho women in South Africa

The situation for Basotho women today is that with few exceptions they can only seek employment and remain working within The Republic by clandestine means. The sharp decrease in the ratio of female to male migrants shown in the 1966 census reports (Table 1) reflects these increasingly stringent restrictions. However, the 1976 census shows that women still made up 15,4 per cent of all Basotho absentees and 9,4 per cent of all Basotho in wage employment in South Africa, despite the legal restrictions. In the village women made up 7,5 per cent of all those in wage employment in South Africa in 1977, as is implicit in Table 2.

Some Basotho women experience a continuing need for wage employment which cannot be met in Lesotho and which is denied in South Africa. This limitation on female employment is felt with particular pain by younger women in the village who have grown up with the knowledge of the work-experiences of their mothers' generation, yet realise the difficulties they face if they seek employment in the Republic now.

**Table 3: Place of Employment of Women over Age 17
by Marital Status
From a Village in Lesotho – 1977**

	Working in RSA		Working in urban Lesotho		Working in nearby town		Working in the village		Not working		Total
	Number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	
Unmarried	4	20,0	8	53,3	8	26,7	3	15,0	24	6,9	47
Married	1	5,0	1	6,7	11	36,2	6	30,0	215	61,8	234
Widowed	3	15,0	1	6,7	3	10,0	7	35,0	84	24,1	98
Separated/ Divorced	12	60,0	5	33,3	8	26,7	4	20,0	25	7,2	54
TOTAL	20	100	15	100	30	100	20	100	348	100	433

One feature which is characteristic of the 20 women: working in South Africa in 1977 is the absence of a wage earning husband, as can be seen in Table 3 showing the marital status of employed women. Fifteen are separated, divorced or widowed and all but three of the group have children to support. Most of the 20 went to work because of problems in relation to men, problems which forced them to find for themselves the means to support their children whom they left behind in the village.

How do such women manage to circumvent the legal restrictions we have des-

cribed? Some take 14 day visitors' visas and, if they find work, attempt to get the proper papers from the South African Labour Bureaux through their new employers' pleadings, although a passport official in Lesotho said he had not known of a single case in his district of a Mosotho woman managing to obtain a legal "no objection certificate" during 1978. Some women establish residence with distant relatives and get new documents as citizens of Transkei or Bophuta-Tswana, and some find other means to obtain documents. But many simply run the risk of working on an isolated farm or in an urban location, afraid to enter the town centres and hidden away if a police car approaches, and not daring to come home on leave until they slip back across the border when their year or two of work is over.

Table 4 : Comparison of Home Leaves of Male and Female Migrant Workers from a Village in Lesotho 1977

	Average number of visits home per year	Average number of weeks or weekends at home per year	Average number of working months in which no leave was taken
MEN (253)	2,26	8,73	8,34
WOMEN (20)	0,5	1,75	11,35

Table 4 shows that male migrants from the village returned more frequently, spent more weeks at home and spent fewer uninterrupted months per year at work than did women migrants. Increasing pressures on the mine companies to improve the conditions of migrant workers have made it easier for men to take home leaves.

An Anglo-American spokesman in 1978 announced proudly that 56 per cent of their Basotho mine workers visited Lesotho every six weeks or less.⁸ Yet there are no such pressures to improve working conditions for women migrants. Thus Basotho women workers, most all of whom are illegal in South Africa and unrecognized in Lesotho, can barely get home for more than a week or two a year to see their own children. Even those who are working legally dare not take more time for fear of losing pay and breaking the continuous employment record on which their right to work depends. As one widow who had worked 26 years said "I was both mother and father to my children, so I never actually came for a leave. If I had come for more than a few days where would they have gotten their school fees? There was no one to help but me."

Why should anyone hire women who run such risks of detection? Often it is because the employers can demand excessive work at the lowest wages from workers who dare not protest for fear of being reported. Some black employers, who must themselves manage on substandard incomes, cannot afford to compete with the wages paid by white employers. New regulations which took effect in July

1979 raised the fine for employers of "illegal blacks" and threatened the dismissal and repatriation of thousands of employees, many of whom are Basotho women of the kind we have been considering.⁹

Employment of Village Women in Lesotho's Urban Centres

The legal restrictions on employment in South Africa have turned the attention of Basotho women to employment within Lesotho and encouraged internal rural to urban migration of women. However, employment opportunities are limited. Increased mine wages in 1975 precipitated a movement of men from civil service, clerical and teaching jobs into mine employment, opening such posts to trained Basotho women although the wages for many young women, even with twelve years of schooling, remain at an average of only R64 a month in civil service posts. The commercial sector has expanded greatly with more shops, supermarkets and wholesale houses in the larger towns and small cafes in rural areas, all offering employment for women as clerks at about R30 to R40 per month in the largest of these businesses, but as low as R10 to R15 in the small cafes. The movement of educated women into paid employment and the influx of expatriates into Lesotho has increased the employment of women as domestic workers within Lesotho, often at very low wages. Publications orienting expatriate newcomers circulated in 1975 suggested R10 to R15 per month plus food and uniform as typical wages for female house servants in Maseru.¹⁰ Wages for women at all levels in Lesotho continue to be substantially lower than wages for most men within Lesotho and in South Africa, and lower than wages for comparable female work within South Africa. But despite the disparity in wages, the number of girls and women seeking work in Lesotho's towns far exceeds the number of jobs available, as women come seeking professional careers or driven by the same type of economic and marital problems which led earlier generations of women to seek employment in South Africa.

Table 3 showed that in 1977 there were 30 women in the village studied with full or part time wage employment in the nearby town, to which they could walk daily, and 15 women who lived and worked in other parts of Lesotho. The total of women in wage employment in the Republic, the nearby town, elsewhere in Lesotho and in the village itself made up 19,6 per cent of the village women over the age of 17. Although this is probably a higher rate of female employment than is possible in the remote villages of Lesotho, it is typical of those along the main roads and near the urban centres. The high figure indicates the eagerness of village women to earn cash, despite their other duties: maintaining subsistence agriculture, managing household assets, and carrying on routine domestic work and child care.

It must be noted that going away from home to work elsewhere in Lesotho, like going to work in South Africa, necessitates a more complete break with rural family life than does working in a local town or in the home village. As a result it is not surprising that females who migrate within Lesotho tend to be young, on average only 24,3 years of age. And, as indicated in Table 3, they are generally either unmarried girls who are seeking career opportunities, or young separated or divorced women who must support children and hope for more successful relations with men in a new environment. On the other hand, those village women

who are employed in the town near home or in the village are older, averaging 34,6 years, are mostly married or widowed and have responsibilities for children, houses and fields which they cannot leave.

The majority of the village women employed in the nearby town and in other urban parts of Lesotho are engaged in domestic work just as in South Africa. A few are employed by white households but most work for Basotho families, usually in homes where the wife is working as a teacher, shop clerk or civil servant. Town women who are themselves earning perhaps R30 to R60 in the larger shops, or R60 to R100 in teaching, clerical or Government jobs, may pay a girl or woman doing their domestic work anywhere from R6 to R15 a month plus food and sometimes housing. There are even some women who find well-paying domestic jobs in the capital who themselves hire village women to work in households they have left behind. Thus within Lesotho itself there is a hierarchy of women's employment, based on education, professional status, salary, and the ongoing need to provide both financial support and routine domestic care for a woman's household. It is generally the rural areas surrounding the urban centres which provide the lowest paid workers from the large pool of women with limited education, skills and access to better paying jobs.

A few of the women from the village studied, particularly those with some secondary schooling and commercial training, are employed in the modern urban sector at salaries ranging from R25 to R60 for sales clerks, R56 to R64 for hospital and post office work, and R60 to R100 for teaching, book-keeping and civil service jobs. However only 4 of the 65 women working in Lesotho were earning more than the average minimum salary of R65 per month earned by an uneducated male mineworker in 1976.¹¹ Virtually every Mosotho man, regardless of education, is able to earn more than all but the most fortunately placed Basotho women. It is not only the limited number of job opportunities and the low pay available to women, but the comparison with male opportunities, which is a constant frustration to Basotho women.

Employment within the Village

In addition to village women working in South Africa and in Lesotho's towns, there are 20 women with wage employment within the village itself, as well as a number of others engaged in occasional "piece work" jobs and independent brewing which have not been included in the tabulations in Tables 2 or 3. Apart from the two village school teachers, two women who manage cafes and the woman who is village chief, all of the others working in the village are domestic workers or cafe clerks at salaries which are lower than those paid to women working in either South African or Lesotho's towns. Jobs in the village have lower pay and lower status than those in the towns. Nevertheless there are some women who need work and cannot find it in the towns, and others who cannot get away from children for the entire day, for whom the low paid unprestigious jobs within the village are better than nothing. Within the village, as in the towns, women are hired to do domestic work by village women who have found better paying jobs in the town and occasionally by widowed men who have not remarried. There are also village women who are paid in cash for occasional "piece-work" jobs such as grinding

grain, smearing floors and gathering firewood, and other women who occasionally assist more prosperous neighbours in domestic tasks in return for food and other assistance. The women who take such full or part time domestic jobs within the village, and those who attach themselves to village patrons, tend to be those in most desperate need of cash because they lack the support of wage earning men. They are mostly unwed mothers, widows or separated or divorced women.

Just as women are sometimes paid for doing the domestic work of others within the village, so some are paid for agricultural work. Harvesting and winnowing is generally paid for in kind, but hoeing generally in cash, normally at 50 cents per day in 1977. Households which hire others to hoe are generally those in which the wife herself has a regular paid job or those which have planted several fields but lack sufficient female labour to weed them all. Researchers concerned with agricultural development in Lesotho often point to declining yields and unhoed fields and speculate that the problem is lack of sufficient "manpower" (sic!) for agricultural work, particularly at peak seasons.¹² Yet the eagerness of young women to migrate for wage employment and of older women to take local jobs or to hoe the fields of others for cash suggests that the problem is not an absolute lack of "womanpower" but rather the inability of many to invest in cultivation, the uncertainty of returns from subsistence agriculture, and the overwhelming need for cash income.

In 1977 there was a Government scheme introduced for planting sunflowers. When harvest time came the Government sought women to process the harvested seeds, and 20 women took this brief opportunity to earn R1,50 a day, more than any of them had ever earned per day before and more than many educated women in town jobs earn. In other parts of Lesotho there are Government and agency sponsored projects such as tree planting and road building which offer women the chance to earn money or food. Where there are financial rewards women respond enthusiastically. They show less enthusiasm where the reward is only in the form of Food Aid, but there is so little local employment available and so much need for supplementary income that village women throughout Lesotho remain eager for such projects.

Apart from domestic and agricultural work, many women earn cash through trade at the village level. Some help manage or are employed in the five cafes in the village. Others sell locally prepared cooked food, beer, grain, vegetables, pigs, fowls, eggs, hand sewn or knitted clothes and woven grass articles, and a few sell clothes, utensils and pictures imported from South Africa. Where women can sell or exchange what they themselves have produced, they control the profits, just as women usually control income from their own wage labour, even though as jural minors their income technically falls under the control of husbands or fathers. Female income-generating activities provide not only money but a degree of independence for women.

Unquestionably the most important income-generating activity is the sale of home brewed beer. Through brewing Basotho women have long contributed to ancestral rituals, celebrations of lineage and village solidarity, and have been able to command labour for agricultural and building activities. It is thus not surprising that brewing remains a central activity of village women and is now a means where-

by many earn a share of the repatriated earnings of male migrants fifty-one per cent of the households reported that they brewed beer for sale at least occasionally and 21,1 per cent of all households sold beer at least once a week. A study of the income of 33 village households showed that 6,5 per cent of the average cash income was derived from brewing and 2,9 per cent from the sale of dry or sprouted sorghum for brewing, and several households with no migrant earner derive their entire cash income from beer sales.

The average net profit from two or three days of brewing and one day of selling ranges from R2 to R5. Some women work daily brewing for others in the village or town, some sell sprouted sorghum regularly, and some sell firewood gathered on the mountainsides to those who brew. And those who brew regularly use the strainings to feed pigs and fowls, which in turn supplement their income. The profits from all of these income-generating activities are small in comparison with the earnings of men employed as migrant workers. Nevertheless they are of critical importance to households at the lowest income levels, particularly to women who are unable to enter the very limited wage labour market.

Conclusions

Female labour and income-generating activities are vital to the economic survival of many Basotho households in this highly monetised, consumer oriented, migrant labour economy. Female earnings are particularly critical to those women who have no dependable male wage earner to support them. They are important not only to supplant dependence on the vicissitudes of agriculture, and the unreliability of remittances from migrant husbands; but also in that they create a sense of worth, self-respect and security among women eager to use their own training, talents and energies to contribute to the support of their families.

On the other hand, independent earning by women may pose a threat to male social control under the conditions of migrant labour where men are already torn apart from their families and prevented from establishing close cooperative conjugal relations. Thus there are some men who forbid their wives to take employment, fearing the independence that female incomes will create and the extra-domestic social contacts which working women can establish. We have seen that the majority of female wage earners are women who do not have husbands. Male anxiety over the autonomy of working women may contribute to the problem with which this paper began, the official neglect of female employment within the total economy of Lesotho.

Nevertheless, as long as wages for all black workers remain so low in relation to the total southern African economy, and as long as oscillating migration remains the norm with its attendant strains on family life, the efforts of women to contribute to the household cash income will remain a vital part of economic survival in Lesotho. And given the educational level, the abilities and determination of Basotho women, who make up the bulk of Lesotho's *de facto* population, female labour remains an important resource which must be considered in national development planning. Basotho women have had to develop strength, resourcefulness and self-reliance under the conditions of predominantly male migrant labour. These women have the potential to make a much greater and more varied con-

tribution to national development than merely by the maintenance of subsistence agriculture, routine domestic work and reproduction of and care for the labour force. It is of vital importance for the social health of the nation that this female potential be channeled into productive contributions to national development rather than being dissipated in passive dependence, consumer spending, or the sale of beer and sex which has become such a tragic feature of other societies where women are denied the rights to productive employment, equal wages, and recognition as full contributing adult members of society.

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A Note on Women, Conflict and Migrant Labour— Kate Showers

Migratory labour produces both income and conflict in rural Lesotho. Without the income the family faces abject poverty, since the land cannot support the entire population in agriculture at a reasonable standard of living. With the income there is strife in the nuclear family, the household and the village. Two major areas of conflict that may arise are in the allocation of resources and in the delegation of authority. Some of these tensions and conflicts are produced by a difference in perception of needs between the largely absent migrant and the people in his household, who live at home on a daily basis. Other conflicts arise from the creation of those better off within the household and village. Since women remain behind while the migrants leave, and since women are responsible for the provision and allocation of basic household resources, it is they who are the focus of the tensions and the hardships caused by migratory labour. And it is among the young women and girls that one can see a trend of resistance to the situation.

When a man or a boy goes off to work, everyone in the household and in the village expects material benefit from the work. However it is not necessarily true that the wage earner and the members of the household who depend upon that income share the same perceptions of household needs at all times. It is likely that a young family — a man and his wife with no more than 2 children — who live in a compound with few other people will have more common goals in terms of fixing up and furnishing their house, having good clothes and blankets. More conflict develops when there are more demands upon the money. A woman with many children and relatives may see the household priorities as food, fuel, soap, clothing, school fees, and then household furniture. She is the one who must explain to the children why there is no food and she is the one who is told by the doctor that her child's illness is due to an inadequate diet. The absent wage earner, on the other hand, daily sees the white world of material convenience and wants that for his home. He strives to buy the things he sees — beds, tables, tea sets and record players. The migrant may send instructions as to how the earnings should be spent for the house and various members of the household, but the wife would rather spend the money on her priorities, such as food. There is a conflict as to who has the authority to make the decision. The wife is only an authority figure as long as her husband is away; upon his return she is accountable to him for all of her decisions.

In some households the recipient of the money is a young wife who is living in the compound of her mother-in-law and grandmother-in-law. There may or may not be senior men present. If the daughter-in-law does not like her husband's family, or if she maintains close ties with the household into which she was born, she may refuse to spend the money on her in-laws and prefer to spend it on herself or on her own family. An extreme case is where the young wife has no children, and the household consists of her husband's many younger brothers and sisters, his mother and grandmother. If the young wife refuses to share her income, the rest of the household is reduced to total dependence upon their fields and animals. In

the event that these resources are inadequate, the household which produced the wage earner lives in poverty while the wife lives in relative affluence. The household cannot compel the wife to share, and thus has no recourse but to await the return of the migrant labourer. The tensions within such a household are tremendous.

When the wage earner returns, the wife who had been receiving the money and acting with authority must abruptly resign all claims to authority and be accountable for all of her past decisions and expenditures. The husband may or may not agree with his wife's expenditures. There may also be disagreement as to how much of her daily authority and independence a woman must give up on the return of her husband. And the man may decide that his wife's deportment has not been respectable and that she needs disciplining. These and many other sources of tension may provoke a man to hit his wife. Corporal punishment (or the threat of it) is common in Sesotho society, and it is considered normal and acceptable behaviour for a man to beat his wife when she has not behaved in a manner to his liking. The beating may range from a few slaps or a spanking to serious flogging with a heavy stick, throttling, knocking out of teeth, attacks with a knife or other heavy or sharp object. Since wife beating is an accepted behaviour, the only thing she can expect from the local court is a decision that her husband must pay for her to go to the doctor or to permit her to have some of her clothing should she move out of their house. A woman has no option but to endure the beatings until her husband leaves again or to leave with her children and go to her parents' house. Not all men beat their wives, but a great number do and extensive injuries can result.

Authority within the household may also be upset by the returning wage earner if the head of the household is an older male. The wage earner may feel that regardless of who is the traditional head of the household, he is the one who earned the money and it is therefore his to allocate. At a ceremony which involved the distribution of a dead child's personal effects, the child's uncle who had paid for most of the things, returned on leave from work to attend the ceremony and insisted that it was his decision how to dispose of the things, not that of the child's grandfather. The grandfather was the traditional head of the household. The young man argued with his father, ignoring his mother's, wife's, and sister's pleas for reason and respect, saying repeatedly that he had worked very hard for the money and those things were his. Needless to say this conflict upset the entire household long after the young man had returned to his job.

Migrant's incomes may also exaggerate the preference household members have for each other. A family member who is closer to the wage earner may have greater access to the income, and thus create or exaggerate intra-familial rivalries. These can accelerate to the point of allegiances within the household and refusal of the groups to co-operate. Wages sent to the household will then enrich one faction and leave the other in relative poverty. The group receiving the wage may no longer be as dependent upon the other faction for help, and thus there is less incentive to co-operate and share. The other faction may thus not only be left

out of the wage income but also lose the co-operation and help of the group now receiving wages.

Migrant's incomes can also create jealousy, suspicion, and rivalry among households and exaggerate differences among households. In a society where things were traditionally shared and exchanged as a means of distributing the productivity of the land there are great pressures on a household which suddenly has a source of cash income. People often think that such households ought to give more — more food, better food, more often. The raised expectations of the neighbours can be a drain on household resources. Whether the household does or does not give things to the neighbours, there is suspicion of their actions and interests. If they use their money for advanced schooling there may be suspicion about the source of the money and about the attitudes and loyalty of the household members towards the rest of the villagers. If the family is better clothed and has other signs of material wealth, there is jealousy. As women are the controllers of the household resources, and are the people who are continuously resident in the village, they are the participants in much of this inter-household conflict.

Although many of the middle aged and older women accept the hardship and conflict which exist, not all of the girls and young women do. These young people see the relationship between higher education and the ability to find a job, and understand that with economic independence they can determine their own futures. A large number of young adolescent girls have stated that they intend to go to school, beyond matric if possible to the teacher training college or the university. They would like to be shop or office workers, teachers or civil servants. However many young men and traditional families believe that a girl's education should stop when she marries so that she can attend to domestic duties full-time. The adolescent girls are thus confronted with a choice between school and marriage. Many girls are saying that they will refuse marriage, and will run away if captured for marriage. Older girls and young women, in the age group of 15–25 who have thus far rejected marriage say they will continue to do so as long as marriage means a lack of independence and the possibility of physical abuse. With their incomes they are free of the hardships of rural life and they are released from dependency upon an arbitrary and largely absent authority figure. There is also a growing number of young wives who have left their husbands. They have one or two small children and may or may not have had the opportunity of higher education and thus a job. Those without a job return to their parent's home to live, and those with jobs find that they can support their children. Invariably the reason given for leaving their husband's home is physical abuse. Some husbands tell their wives never to return, and some women simply make the decision for themselves. These women and many of the single women want to have children. They do not reject the role of motherhood. Rather, they will not tolerate being abused as their mothers and older sisters often are. They say that if they want more children they can always return to their husbands for a little while or find a friend to "help them out". The notion of single parenthood for many women is the norm.

In this way a segment of the female population is developing an alternative definition of society, one in which they can keep the authority which their mothers

had to give up. Out of this is emerging the concept of a more self-sufficient female world.

'Stabilization' and Structural Unemployment

Colin Murray

The TEBA calendar for 1980 carried the legend, "Modern Mining Means Secure Living". It advertised (a) Security of work through your TEBA Bonus Certificate, (b) Security in your old age, (c) Security for your family, and (d) Security with good pay. Similarly, under the title "More blacks make mining their career", the Chamber of Mines shareholders' magazine *Mining Survey* observed in 1980 that "Mining in South Africa is increasingly becoming an attractive career for black workers, not only because wages have increased six-fold in the last seven years, but because of improved living conditions and career opportunities. More and more of the work-force now returns to the industry for additional contracts and their level of expertise increases accordingly"¹

The "stabilization" of labour is one side of the coin. The other side of the same coin is massive redundancies in the mine labour force, effected not through sacking workers — the contract system means that individuals' employment is automatically terminated after two years — but through a squeeze on recruitment. Recent figures for Lesotho illustrate this point very clearly.

The success of the "stabilization" policy from the mining industry's point of view is reflected in two sets of figures in particular: firstly, those relating to the length of the average period of service; secondly, those relating to the proportion of skilled career workers in the black labour force. The average length of service undertaken in one contract may be inferred from a comparison of the average numbers in employment in a given year, on the one hand, and the number of workers recruited during that year, on the other hand. Table 1 shows that the average numbers in employment have been sustained at approximately the same

Table 1. Recruitment and employment of black labour from Lesotho in South African mines, 1976–9

Year	Number recruited	Average number in employment
1976	160 516	121 062
1977	143 204	128 941
1978	115 044	124 973
1979	92 823	124 393

Source. Department of Labour, Maseru.

level in recent years, while the number of recruits has drastically declined. Miners already on contract have clearly been working for longer periods. The same point

may be expressed in terms of the increasing proportion of men going forward to the mines who had completed 24 months of service in their previous contract. With respect to TEBA recruits only, this proportion was 7 per cent in 1977, 12 per cent in 1978, 19 per cent in 1979 and 32 per cent in the month of May 1980.²

Table 1 suggests that Eckert and Wykstra's assumption of a decline from 1978 of 3,1 per cent per annum in the number of migrants employed outside Lesotho³ is not yet justified from the mining statistics alone. But what is far more devastating in respect of its implications for Lesotho's immediate future is the decline in mining recruitment by 19,7 per cent in 1978 and by a further 19,3 per cent in 1979. The clear inference to be drawn from these figures is that a large proportion of men who could have relied on obtaining mine contracts in the past will be permanently precluded from employment in mining in the future.

This projection is confirmed by figures relating to the changing proportion of skilled career workers in the mine labour force as a whole (Table 2). These are available only from TEBA, representing members of the South African Chamber of Mines, which recruited 64 per cent of all mine recruits from Lesotho in 1976, 61 per cent in 1977, 73 per cent in 1978 and 81 per cent in 1979.⁴ TEBA classifies its recruits into three categories: "specials", who hold one or other of a variety of re-engagement guarantee certificates or "bonuses"; novices, who have no previous experience on the mines; and a residual category of "experienced" workers who have completed one or more previous contracts but who have no valid re-engagement certificate.

The "bonuses" which presently apply (June 1980) are of three kinds:

TEBA 460 (green). Issued to men who have worked more than 26 and less than 45 weeks, this certificate guarantees return to the same mine, at the same rate of pay, provided the worker returns within two months.

TEBA 461 (Blue). Issued to men who have worked at least 45 weeks, this certificate guarantees return to the same mine either (a) with a cash bonus of R1 for each week worked on the previous contract, provided the worker returns within three months; or (b) with no cash bonus, if the worker returns after three but within six months. In any case the validity of this certificate expires after six months.

TEBA 459 (yellow). This so-called "stabilization" certificate is issued to men with particular skills. A specific date of return is negotiated between the worker and the mine manager. Otherwise the same conditions apply as for TEBA 460 and 461, respectively.

Present conditions allow mine managers considerable discretion in the administration of these "bonuses", so that any worker whose record of employment carries any blemish whatsoever from the employers' point of view may be weeded out and effectively disqualified from future employment on the mines.

Table 2 shows the changing proportions of the three categories of recruits forwarded to the mines by TEBA. The trend is very clear. The proportion of "specials" has increased from 31 per cent of recruits in 1976 to 60 per cent in 1979 and 76 per cent in the first four months of 1980. Fewer novices have been recruited, but the steepest overall decline, both in absolute and relative terms, is found in the category of recruits who have previously worked on the mines but who do not hold valid "bonuses".

Table 2. Distribution of TEBA recruits from Lesotho, 1976-80

Year	Novices		Experienced		Specials		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1976	14 868	14,5	56 434	54,9	31 440	30,6	102 702	100,0
1977	8 614	9,8	43 122	49,1	36 003	41,0	87 739	99,9
1978	10 471	12,5	36 122	43,0	37 417	44,5	84 010	100,0
1979	83 09	11,1	21 867	29,1	44 890	59,8	75 066	100,0
1980*	845	3,6	4 902	20,6	18 018	75,8	23 765	100,0

*January to April only.

Source. TEBA office, Maseru.

The recent experience of one miner in this category illustrates the impact of the trend in the villages of Lesotho. Thabo was born in 1954 in the northern part of Leribe district. He began his migrant career in 1970, and in a period of nine years he completed nine separate mine contracts, distributed as follows:

Mine (and approx. location)	Recruiting Agency	From	To
1. Western Areas: gold (Johannesburg, Transvaal)	NRC (TEBA)	Feb 1970	Sept 70
2. Freddie's Consolidated: gold (Odendaalsrus, Orange Free State)	NRC (TEBA)	Oct 1970	Aug 71
3. Kilbarchan Colliery: coal (Newcastle, Natal)	NCOLA	Sept 1971	Sept 72
4. Springfield Colliery: coal (Vereeniging, Transvaal)	ACROL	Sept 1972	Aug 73
5. Arnot Colliery: coal (Middelburg, Transvaal)	ACROL	Jan 1974	Oct 74
6. Arnot	ACROL	Mar 1975	Dec 75
7. Arnot	ACROL	June 1976	Dec 76
8. Kriel Colliery: coal (Witbank, Transvaal)	ACROL	June 1977	Feb 78
9. Cornelia Colliery: coal (Vereeniging, Transvaal)	ACROL	Apr 1978	Nov 78

Thabo came home in November 1978 with a re-engagement certificate dated 16/11/78 to the effect that "Should he return to this colliery (Cornelia) by 9/1/79 he will be guaranteed re-employment and will on engagement receive his original rate of pay", which was R5,87 per shift at the time of discharge. "Should he overstay the condoned period of absence he will be returned to the issuing colliery only if vacancies exist. . . ." and paid at the slightly lower rate of R5,64 per shift.

Thabo reported at his district recruitment office in Lesotho on 5/1/79, but was told the mine was closed, and his re-engagement certificate was endorsed accordingly. Despite two certificates of competence which he had acquired at Kriel – as a coal cutter operator and a coal buggy driver – he was again refused employment on 26/4/79. He spent a year thereafter just “sitting” at home, picking up various odd jobs, while he and his family became increasingly desperate about the prospect of his return to the mines.

In April 1980, Thabo heard from a friend with whom he had worked at Arnot in 1975 that the manager of the mine was looking for men who had worked there previously. He set off immediately on the long journey to the Transvaal in the hope of obtaining a letter from the mine manager which would instruct the recruiting office in Lesotho to give him a new contract. He spent over a week moving from one mine to another, only to be told they were all full up. Eventually he heard of one coal mine that was still looking for labour, but he did not have time to go there to try to obtain a letter because the eleven days he had been allowed at the border post had elapsed and he risked arrest by remaining in South Africa. He came home in a state of depression, intending to set off again in a few weeks' time. He had spent R18 on the return rail fare and more than R30 on other essential expenses, to no avail. Having no money for the journey himself, he had been given R10 by his brother-in-law in Lesotho, R3 by his elder brother working at Springfield colliery, and a sum of R35 by various friends. Thabo's ambition was to acquire a heavy duty driving licence, with which he hoped to obtain employment in Lesotho. He had failed the test in 1977, and needed money before he could undertake the necessary training. Thabo had still found no employment by the end of July 1980.

In reality, it may be seen, modern mining means security only for “stabilized” professionals, a rising proportion of a labour force whose overall numbers are rapidly diminishing. By contrast, Thabo's experience of redundancy at the age of 25, after nine of his best years spent working underground, is increasingly typical. Many men and their families now face a desolate future.

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Lesotho: A Strategy for Survival after the Golden Seventies

John Gray, Neil Robertson, Michael Walton

1. Introduction

Lesotho has experienced a very rapid growth of incomes in the 1970s; and yet the country's economic prospects have never been bleaker. The 1970s mark a watershed. In the next decade growth of the labour force will be reflected in unemployment rather than migration, creating an unprecedented problem of poverty. Current government strategies for modern-technology industrialisation for export cannot possibly solve the emerging poverty and unemployment problem. This paper analyses the recent developments in Basotho labour migration and the scope for policy intervention. It argues that a serious attempt must be made to develop the local economy in Lesotho and proposes a strategy for survival based on broadly diffused agricultural development, promotion of domestic protected manufacture of basic needs products and the use of more appropriate technologies in both agriculture and industry.

2. Background

Lesotho's economy is small, poor and undeveloped, but in the 1970s has experienced a period of unprecedented growth. Statistics are poor, but Table 1 gives the best estimates for aggregate production and income.

Table 1 – Estimates of National Production in Lesotho (current prices)

	1970/71	1974/75	1977/78
Gross domestic product at factor cost (Rm)	42,5	72,3	139,8
at market prices (Rm)	49,1	82,1	176,2
Migrant Remittances	14,1	59,9	118,3
Gross national product (Rm)	63,1	142,0	294,5
Gross national product per capita (R p.c.)	64	123	238

Source: Bureau of Statistics: 1977 Annual Statistical Bulletin. Author's estimates.

In real terms gross national product increased at about 12 per cent per annum in the period, whilst GNP p.c. increased at about 9 per cent per annum, one of the highest growth rates of a developing country in the world. The extent of dependence on migrant remittances is remarkable: in the late seventies they have constituted over 40 per cent of GNP. Agriculture is the major component of gross domestic product, about 40 per cent at the beginning of the decade declining to 35 per cent in 1977/78. Manufacturing forms a tiny proportion of domestic production; about 2 per cent of the total.

A direct corollary of the lack of local production at a time of expanding incomes has been a rapid increase in imports, from R22,9 million in 1970 to R199,4m in 1977; an increase of four times in real terms. Exports have stagnated and were only R12.2m in 1977.¹ The tremendous openness of the economy is apparent: in 1977/78 total trade was over 70 per cent of GNP.

A background to these developments, and an important underlying factor for migration and employment, is the steady increase in the population, growing at a rate of 2,3 per cent per annum or almost 28 000 people per year.² The potential labour force, estimated at 90 per cent of the 15–64 age group, is increasing by about 20 000 people a year of which half are male. The basic issue that we will be addressing is the problem of providing income and employment for Lesotho's growing population.

In the past, the answer lay in labour migration. The extent to which Lesotho's rural households have participated in the system of oscillating migration is remarkable: over 80 per cent of men and a minority of women have at some time been migrant workers. In section 4 we shall show that the extent of participation in migration is now declining, sharply accentuating the scale of the income and employment problem. The problem is not just one of numbers, however. Integration within the Southern African economy has had a pervasive effect on the domestic economy bringing about a situation of extreme dependency.

3. The Effect of Migration on the Domestic Economy

The Lesotho economy presents a paradox: almost every Mosotho is a consumer of modern industrial commodities: processed (often degerminated) grain, clothes and blankets produced by sophisticated methods, paraffin, consumer durables, even radios. These can be purchased throughout Lesotho. Furthermore the vast majority of Basotho have participated directly or indirectly in industrial processes. Yet in terms of domestic economic development Lesotho is one of the poorest and least industrialised countries in the world.

The paradox is, of course, only apparent, and the explanation lies in the way in which labour migration has led Lesotho into a state of integration within the southern African economic system. Migrant labour earnings finance the purchase of imported commodities. Viewed as an integral part of the regional economic system, the Lesotho economy is highly developed. In particular, the markets that govern the labour outflow and the product inflow are sophisticated and efficient. For over a century Lesotho has been undergoing a process of underdevelopment characteristic of the creation of a labour reserve economy. The outcome is a situation of deep structural dependency on her capitalist neighbour. We describe the

relationship with South Africa in these terms because it is built into the economic structures of both economies, in the disposition of productive assets, the level and nature of production in different sectors and the formation of markets.

The process of underdevelopment and creation of dependency cannot be described in detail here³ – we merely highlight those features of Lesotho's economy that are a product of this process.

- (i) The agricultural system is stagnant and inadequate to satisfy the nation's needs. The value of the main asset, land, has been steadily declining through erosion of soil whether under arable or pastoral use. There are serious imbalances both in the level of crop production relative to suitable land, and in the livestock herd relative to the carrying capacity of the pastures. The situation is a product of long term neglect with respect to labour input, investment and innovation. Agricultural income has been supplementary to migrant income. In fact, the main functions of the sector have been to permit the mines to pay exploitative wages below subsistence and to serve as a social security system for migrant labour.
- (ii) There has been an extreme paucity of domestic investment – there may even have been net disinvestment. Capital accumulation in the regional economic system has been facilitated by the payment of low wages, and has been heavily concentrated in South Africa in mining, industry and agriculture. This regional bias has been reinforced by the well-known economies of concentrated industrial development: of developed infrastructure, industrial labour force, financial markets etc. Public investment is equally affected through the concentration of revenue in South Africa. For example, taxation of mining profits is entirely carried out by the South African government. If this revenue were divided amongst states according to relative shares in the mining labour force, the Lesotho government would be entitled to over R100m in 1979.
- (iii) Lesotho's consumption pattern has been biased away from goods that could be produced domestically, towards the products of a developed industrial economy. Such products are characteristically produced by relatively high technology, capital and skill intensive processes that can only be transferred to Lesotho through the introduction of major distortions. The Basotho blanket is a case in point. In addition, many goods are consumed that are inappropriate to a country that fails to satisfy the basic needs of a majority of its population.

The corollary of these features is that there are severe constraints to genuine domestic development. The structure of incentives for allocation of labour and other resources are biased away from domestic productive activities.

A feature of underdevelopment is the lack of opportunities for investment and innovation. In one respect, the situation has changed: in about 1978 Lesotho started to move into a situation of serious excess labour supply for migrant workers. As a consequence the labour response to domestic opportunities is likely to be much greater in the future. However, other problems remain. Incomes, from whatever source, will continue to be channelled into purchase of foreign products, produced at a great absolute cost advantage in South Africa, and distributed through-

out Lesotho by the developed marketing system. There will continue to be a dearth of domestic investment opportunities of the right kind. Most private domestic investment is currently in housing, trade and other services, which merely sustain the existing situation and help perpetuate integration within the wider economic system. Discussion of domestic policy in Lesotho must be based upon an appreciation of the structural impediments to development inherent in Lesotho's integration in the southern African economic system.

4. Developments in Migration and Employment in the Seventies

The gold mines of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal and the collieries of Natal are the major sources of work for Basotho men. Other migrant work includes modern sector activities (manufacturing and the railways), domestic employment (for women) and agricultural labouring (for men and women).⁴

Reliable data relates mostly to mine employment, and figures for other employment are based on limited survey evidence.

The annual level of employment¹ of Basotho in the mines grew steadily in the decade or so before 1977. In 1965 there was an average of 70 000 men, in 1977 130 000. The figures for mining and other employment of Basotho from 1970 to 1978 are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Average Annual Migrant Employment 1970–1978
(thousands of workers)

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Mine ¹	87	91	99	110	103	113	122	130	125
Non-mine (estimate)	48	48	45	43	40	38	35	33	30
Total	135	139	144	153	143	151	157	163	155

(1) Average month-end total employment of Basotho

Source: Mine Recruiting Agencies. Author's estimates.

The table shows clearly the rise in mining employment. The average growth rate was 6 per cent per annum for both 1965–1970 and 1970–1977 and the overall growth almost kept pace with the growth of the male labour force. (The drop in 1974 was due to disturbances on the mines.) Lesotho has maintained its high degree of specialization in mining. It is significant that this has been at the expense of other sources of mine labour. Total employment on the mines was only 5 per cent higher in 1977 than 1970, while the rate of growth of Basotho employment brought about an increase in the Basotho share from 13 per cent to 19 per cent in the same period, before declining to 17,5 per cent in 1978. This occurred at a time when the mines were successfully shifting from other traditional

external sources to internal sources. By April 1977 over 50 per cent of miners came from South Africa⁵ compared with 22 per cent in 1971 and it is thought that the mines could easily switch to more recruits from the homelands if necessary.

The overall level of migration also depends on the number of non-mining migrants. The decline given in Table 2 is based on census and very limited survey evidence. It is due to increased difficulty in crossing the border to find legal employment, and the general growth in black unemployment in South Africa. The relative shift toward mining employment can be viewed as a movement toward a more thorough form of labour control.

We can compare the level of migrant employment with the domestic labour force. In 1976 the latter stood at 590 000 people, of which 280 000 were men. An equivalent of 50 per cent of men and 5 per cent of women was engaged in migrant work. For mining employment the total recruitment level is a closer indicator of the number of men involved in a given year than the average employment level. On this basis in 1976 (the highest year) over 190 000 migrated, about two-thirds of the male labour force. The number of households participating in the system is less than this as some have more than one migrant. Survey evidence from 1973 to 1976 gives a figure of 60% of rural households with at least one migrant. This coincides with the number reported as having a woman as *de facto* household head.

In addition to rising employment between 1970 and 1976, there were dramatic rises in mine wages, a consequence of the high gold price and the mines' need to attract more domestic labour. After over half a century of static real wages, the basic shift rate increased from under R0,50 to almost R2,50 between 1972 and 1976. In this period we estimate that the average annual mine wage of Basotho (adjusted for the skill distribution of Basotho miners) increased from R220 to R930, or by a factor of two and half in real terms. From 1976 to 1978 wages have increased to about R1 100, or slightly less than the increase in prices.

The immediate effect was a substantial increase in rural incomes. In 1977/78 prices, incomes recorded in surveys increased from under R500 per annum at the end of the 1960's to R1 000 per annum in 1976 despite declining agricultural income.⁶ At the same time the proportion made up by migrant remittances rose from 38 per cent to 71 per cent showing a remarkable degree of dependency. These gains were largely confined to participating households with incomes of R1 000 to R1 500 per annum, whereas the 40 per cent with no migrant remained subject to the vagaries of the weather, with an income of less than R400 per annum on average. The lack of spread effects to such households, apart from minor activities such as beer brewing, is largely a consequence of the consumption bias discussed above. There is some evidence that the incomes of the poorest households declined in the period, with worsening terms of trade against agriculture and growing land scarcity. Overall there was a significant worsening in rural income distribution.

At the aggregate level, rising remittances largely explain the rise in national income shown in Table 1, and also the dramatic increase in imports. Apart from the direct impact on gross national product, most of the growth of domestic production is a consequence of the booming migrant sector. The growth is concentrated in construction, trade, ownership of dwellings and government expenditure,

and not in directly productive activities. The economy is largely a distributive system for external funds. The composition of imports did not change dramatically, with all items increasing in absolute terms: the share of food declined from 24 to 17 per cent between 1970 and 1977 and that of manufactured goods and machinery rose from 51 to 57 per cent. The latter increase is indicative of increased dependency, as these are commodities that are relatively difficult for Lesotho to produce. Rising imports had a further important consequence. Revenue from the Southern African Customs Union Agreement is a direct function of both the volume of imports and the rate of growth of imports, with a two year lag. The accrual has increased from R5m in 1970/71 to over R70m in 1979/80, or five times in real terms. The proportion of total domestic revenue made up by customs revenue has risen from 45 to 74 per cent in the same period. The increase coincided with a rapid expansion in the inflow of foreign aid and the net effect has been to make the second half of the seventies a time of relative revenue abundance for Lesotho. This has certainly contributed to the growth in GDP, notably in the rising government expenditure, but it has also allowed a rapid increase in recurrent expenditure, from R12,3m in 1970/71 to R52,7m in 1978/79.⁷ About two-thirds of this is spent on wages and salaries and a potentially powerful conservative interest group is being created. As with migrant remittances there is a tendency toward a high consumption pattern of growth.

It is already clear that the gains in the 70s have not been sustained. Since 1976, mine wages have stagnated in real terms. More important Lesotho appears to be at a turning point in recruitment patterns. There have been two changes. First, Table 2 shows a decline in mine employment in 1978. Unlike the drop in 1974, caused by specific disturbances, there is strong evidence that this decline in employment will continue. In the gold mines, employing about 95 000 Basotho, employment was held steady, despite an increase of 8 per cent in the total labour force between 1977 and 1978. There is unlikely to be much threat from mechanization in the near future, but the prospects for Basotho employment appear to be of no further increase. In other mines (mainly collieries) there has been a significant decline in employment, from 37 000 in 1976 to 30 000 in 1978. This is due to the combined effect of mechanization and of switching to domestic labour supplies closer to the mines in Natal. This is likely to continue. Overall employment is projected to decline at about 3 per cent per annum at the beginning of the 80s. The long run prospect does not appear to be any rosier, as South Africa might be expected gradually to give priority to the homelands in allocating job quotas, especially those with extreme land shortages.

The second change is the movement toward stabilization of the mine labour force and the preference for "career miners". The average contract length for a Mosotho miner declined from 10 months to 9 months in 1976, but has since risen to almost 13 months in 1978 and appears to be still rising. One of the mechanisms used is that of only recruiting men who hold a re-employment certificate from a recent previous term of employment. Potential new recruits, or men who have not recently had a contract, are now finding it extremely difficult to find work. (It is reported that bribery is increasing as a result.) This has already had a major impact on the number of participating households. The number of recruits

declined by 25 per cent between 1976 and 1978 and the proportion of households with a migrant probably declined from 60 to about 50 per cent. In the future migrant employment and earnings will be increasingly concentrated amongst the select group of experienced miners. We estimate that by 1985 only about 95 000 rural households will have a migrant whereas 175 000 households will be completely reliant on domestic sources of income.

There are further effects. As a result of stagnant remittances imports declined in real terms in 1977, for the first time in the decade. Because of the instability of the customs revenue formula – the fact that the rate of growth of imports is a determining factor – this is projected to cause a much bigger drop in customs revenue as from 1980/81, which could cause a revenue crisis for the Lesotho Government.

The above picture has drastic implications. For decades the availability of migrant jobs has provided the outlet for Lesotho's growing male population, if at the expense of domestic economic development. The second half of the seventies marks a watershed – migrant employment is stagnant or falling while growth of the labour force continues apace. In 1985 the number of households with an income in cash and kind less than about R400 per annum is likely to be around 175 000, or 65 per cent of the rural population, compared with 90 000 in 1976. This can be compared with a Poverty Datum line of about R1 000 per annum. R400 cannot even purchase the basic food requirements of a household. The prospect for the 1980s is of an unemployment and poverty problem of quite unprecedented proportions. Table 3 illustrates the changes between 1975 and 1985.

Table 3: Migrant Labour and Rural Income in 1975 and 1985

	1975	1985
No. of rural households	218 000	270 000
Proportion with a migrant	60%	36%
Number with a migrant	130 000	97 000
Average household income (R p.a.)	1 300	1 600
Number without a migrant	88 000	173 000
Average household income (R p.a.)	300–400	300–400
Poverty datum line (R p.a.)	1100	1100
Money needed to cover household nutritional requirements (R p.a.)	560	560

Source: Author's estimates.

Income estimates in mid 1978 prices, and are only rough estimates.

Projections assume 3 per cent p.a. decline in number of migrants and constant real wages from 1978.

P.D.L. Estimates based on Marres and Van der Wiel, "Poverty Eats my Blanket". Subsistence Consumption is included.

5. Past Government Policy Toward Migration

The Lesotho government's stated objective in this situation is to reduce dependence on migration through the generation of domestic employment opportunities and the development of the local economy. However, there exists no timetable for reducing migration and no detailed proposals for precisely how a phased reduction in migration could be achieved. There is no attempt to interfere with or restrict the flow of recruitment and the decision to seek migrant work is left wholly to the individual. Indeed, the *Second Plan (1975/76-1979/80)* sought merely to reduce the *rate of increase* of migration. In the later '70s attention has focussed on contingency planning for the event of the sudden repatriation of large numbers of miners. The *de facto* policy has thus been of *laissez-faire*. There has been an implicit acceptance of Lesotho's economic role of specializing in the export of unskilled labour and a reluctance to intervene in the terms or conditions. The sheer magnitude of the problem leads to a planning paralysis and a concentration on minor (if individually important) ameliorative issues such as the arrangements for the return of miners' corpses and the availability of transport for weekend trips home. The key variables of the demand for Basotho labour and wage rates appear to lie wholly beyond the Lesotho Government's control. The only active policy is thus a negative one of interrupting the supply of recruits. Lesotho's bargaining position is too weak for this to have obvious benefits, whereas this policy would have high short run costs for the households of prospective migrants.

The implication is that the rural households involved would need to be wholeheartedly committed to and involved in any alternative strategy. In fact, there is something of a divide between Government decision-makers and the average rural household. Indeed, the strong opposition element amongst miners makes Government chary of intervention, fearing a repetition of the disturbances which accompanied the introduction of compulsory deferred pay in 1975. The persistent failure of the Lesotho government to tax migrant labour incomes is to be seen in this context.

Further difficulties arise from the ambivalent relation with the South African Government that is implicit in labour migration. On the one hand, it is feared that active steps, for example, towards unionisation of Lesotho migrant labourers would lead to reduction in demand or reprisals. On the other hand, the Lesotho Government cannot, for political reasons, afford to be seen to be collaborating too closely with either the South African authorities or the Chamber of Mines. Thus, while bilateral consultative meetings are held with the Chamber every six months they appear to be low-key, and the Government has shunned too close an involvement in the recruitment process. (in spite of well-known problems such as corruption in the allocation of migrant contracts.)

In general, Government is tied by both external constraints on its policy, and its own interests and outlook. In the past, the formulation of a strategy to escape from a dependent form of labour migration and the labour reserve economy has passed by default.

6. Future Policy Options for Migration

Despite the decline described in section 4, migration remains the major economic activity in Lesotho. Whether or not the country works within or against the wider economic system there is an urgent need for a coherent policy for migration.

The main issues concern the level and remuneration of employment, working conditions and worker's rights and living conditions of the households left behind by migrants. The traditional, and most appropriate, approach to dealing with these issues would be through unionization of migrant labour especially to mines. There is a strong *prima facie* case for Lesotho to promote such a development. However, unilateral unionization of Basotho workers will be counterproductive without cooperation with other groups. Unionization of one group of the workforce, where the majority remains unorganized, is likely to lead to discrimination by the employers against this group. Current South African Government policy is against the unionization of migrants. In the long run, the most productive line of action of the Lesotho Government would be to work directly against this policy, through negotiation in cooperation with other supplier states, for mining unions, and not country specific unions. As this is of direct threat to the existing distribution of benefits in the southern African economic system this is likely to be a difficult task. However, through their access to the international stage (given South Africa's sensitivity to its public image) and their freedom to work openly with specific groups of migrant workers, independent states like Lesotho are in a position to lead such a strategy. However a pre-requisite of any success is cooperation with black workers within South Africa.

The promotion of unions may be a long process and the issues do not disappear in the meantime. In the medium term there is scope for the Lesotho Government to act as a union for Basotho workers. We have already stressed the weakness of Lesotho's bargaining position. It has often been suggested that Lesotho, along with the other labour supplying countries, should form a cartel to force the issue on access to migrant jobs, wage rates etc. The success of the Chamber of Mines in switching from foreign to local South African black labour has removed the possibility of effectively cartelising the foreign labour suppliers. Without cooperation from bantustan suppliers (especially Transkei) their control extends to less than 50 per cent of the black mine labour complement, a wholly inadequate base for a conventional supply-restricting cartel. In addition the high current and prospective level of black unemployment in South Africa has created a situation where the level of Basotho migration is essentially determined by demand rather than supply considerations and the mines could increase the complement of South African recruited labour relatively quickly. There appears to be no scope for negotiation over wage rates. Equally desirable is negotiation of a labour quota for Lesotho, but the buyer's market for labour again makes it a bad time for this, even though a quota would be of most value under such conditions. Significant political concessions would almost certainly be required in exchange for a guaranteed quota. There is more scope for action on ameliorative changes in areas such as working conditions, benefits, pension etc., that have an important effect on the everyday lives of migrants and their dependants, even if there is little impact on fundamental factors.

A forum for raising these issues already exists in the bilateral meetings between the Lesotho Government and the Chamber of Mines. Currently however, there appear to be no significant results. The reasons for this are not difficult to find: compared with a true union with powers to disrupt production, the Lesotho Government is in a very weak position — physical distance from the workplace combines with inadequate information and research resources to ensure that the Lesotho Government can never be a match for the mining companies. More fundamental is the inherent unsoundness of a situation where relatively well-to-do civil servants represent the interests of a work force with whom they are neither well acquainted nor especially sympathetic. However, there are two changes that would make these consultations more fruitful; firstly, the direct involvement of the South African Government in discussions would lessen the opportunities for the Chamber of Mines to pass the buck to Government *in absentia*; for example, on matters falling technically under the Labour Agreement. Secondly, increased cooperation with other supplier states (even if at a less formal level than a supplier cartel) would minimise the scope for the Chamber to play off one supplier against another with regard to working and travel arrangements, cooperation on deferments, taxation etc.

So far we have focussed on direct issues of migrant work. Also important is the utilization of migrant remittances, if the benefits of migration are to be maximized. Here there are two types of intervention. First, there is a need to improve the transmission of remittances and deferred pay funds to their wives and families in Lesotho. This requires specific appraisal of possibilities for channelling the money through local institutions and for improved communication between wives and miners. Second, there is a wider need to make migrant remittances work for the domestic economy. This touches the broad issues of domestic development discussed in section 3 and the following sections. In one area Government has immediate discretion: public investment out of deferred pay funds. The public use of this resource for activities of direct benefit to the families of migrants (and other rural households) would be a highly desirable development.

The above survey suggests the form of long run policy for migration and specific areas where a more active policy stance could achieve modest but important improvements in the migrant's situation. However the proposals do not impinge on the new employment and poverty problem identified in section 4. Even the most optimistic scenarios of cartelization or unionization would not generate scope for a continuation of the trend of steadily growing migration which occurred in the 1960's and 1970's. It is of this utmost importance to realize this as it implies that Lesotho's past specialization in labour cannot be the model for feeding (all) the population in the future. Development of the domestic economy is essential.

7. Existing Employment Policy

In principle, the Lesotho Government is fully committed to domestic development. Parallel to the influx of foreign aid and the general increase in revenue in the 1970s there has been a significant increase in the planning capability and development staff of the Government. However the analysis of Lesotho's development problem is, on the face of it, different from the view advanced above. Firstly, Lesotho is viewed as being in a state of undevelopment rather than underdevelop-

ment i.e., suffering from lack of development inputs rather than a long historical process of adverse development. Secondly, the relationship with South Africa is viewed as one of simple and not structural dependency. Reducing dependency focuses on issues of preventing a cut-off in supplies or reproducing in Lesotho the production of goods and services currently imported from South Africa. This outlook is largely shared by the Lesotho Government and the principal donors alike. It leads to a prognosis in terms of providing Lesotho with the conventional development inputs without really addressing the problem of the economic relationship with South Africa. In terms of employment policy there have been four main strategies in the late 1970s: modern sector industrialization; public works; agricultural development; and "cottage" industries.

Modern sector industrialization appears at first sight to be the obvious way of substituting for the lack of mining jobs. On close examination this can be seen to be an illusion. The main approach is through private foreign investment in cooperation with a parastatal development cooperation, the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC). This leads to inappropriate industrialization on adverse terms. Lesotho is in a very weak bargaining position because of the lack of domestic resources and investment opportunities. Companies are offered a range of incentives including tax-holidays, free profit repatriation and duty-free access to the South African and EEC markets. LNDC characteristically puts up around half the capital and risks a net capital outflow in the future. Equally important, integration in the South African and world economies is tied to the use of technologies inappropriate to Lesotho. The bias in past technological development has been heavily weighted in favour of the needs of the developed countries. The "modern" range of technologies now have a tremendous absolute advantage. However, they are characteristically far too capital-intensive for Lesotho's need, and are linked to products that do not satisfy the basic needs of the population. The fact that such products are already important in Lesotho's consumption structure is part of the problem. The effect is for the development pattern to become increasingly distorted, for scarce resources to be used wastefully and for groups to be created or strengthened that gain from the biased development and have an interest in perpetuating it. A direct corollary is the ineffectiveness in job creation. The Second Five Year Plan objective was to create 7 000 jobs by 1980 in manufacturing and construction at an implicit cost of R3 000 per job. It is unlikely that as many as 2 000 jobs will have been created in this period. The cost per job has risen to R9 000 in industry, and it is even higher in other sectors (e.g. commerce R16 000 and still higher in tourism).⁸ There is no hope of any significant impact on the employment problem. This applies as much to an export orientated as an import substituting approach.

Labour intensive public works, mainly on roads and conservation, takes two forms: the limited, cash wage and efficient activities of the Labour Intensive Construction Unit, and the extensive and inefficient food-for-work programmes. The work of LICU is highly appropriate and can make a small but significant contribution to the employment problem. Current employment of around 1 000 workers will rise to over 3 000 in the next five years. However, it is not a solution to the problem because it is expensive on recurrent finance and on scarce super-

visory manpower. As the effect on widening the tax-base is likely to be very gradual and long term, it is in no way self-financing. In a sense it is an ameliorative measure. Yet there is considerable scope for substitution of such labour intensive methods for the major capital intensive construction programme currently underway, especially in roads. The availability of South African based firms often using imported unskilled labour, makes it quicker and cheaper to adopt an approach that ensures that little of the income remains in Lesotho. Food-for-work programmes currently employ the equivalent of 9 000 man years per annum, distributed over about 50 000 households, probably including the poorest rural families. The food provided in lieu of wages has a value of around R1 per day, under half the LICU wage, but higher than peak season agricultural wages. Because of lack of supervision and supportive equipment productivity is extremely low. It is again only ameliorative, but with possible adverse effects. The issue of whether there is a disincentive effect on agricultural production remains untested for lack of data. More generally it depends entirely on the continued inflow of food aid, and the creation of dependency on such a source is risky.

Agricultural development is recognised as being central to Lesotho's development. The long term problems of the sector were outlined above and the complexity of the situation should not be underestimated. In recent years there has been a shift toward an approach more appropriate to the basic problems. In the mid-1970s the emphasis was on unsustainable, management-intensive, area-based projects largely out of touch with the needs of the people. Outside the food-for-work programme conservation, work was machine intensive and a hugely capital intensive dam and irrigation project was proposed. The drive to self-sufficiency was to be tackled by the Cooperative Crop Production Programme (CCPP) that depended on the use of modern agricultural machinery. This programme was reputed to be grossly inefficient and wasteful of development staff. However, the emphasis now appears to be increasingly on provision of basic agricultural infrastructure for smallholder farming, and participation of farmers in the development process. Although this is broadly right, there remain some unhealthy biases: towards the heavy use of fertilizer, inefficient state marketing, the provision of credit for machine intensive methods, and towards satisfying the needs of the emerging group of "progressive" farmers.

The cottage industry activities are characterised by their precariousness and export orientation. A number of modern handicrafts firms together employ a few hundred people producing luxury commodities, generally at a loss. More promising is the home-based mohair spinning project that currently provides supplementary income to over 1 000 people and is projected to reach 5 000 in the next few years. However, this project is dependent on an expensive and management-intensive buying and selling organisation. There is a tremendous gap in indigenous cottage industry, again the product of the open product market and integration in the Southern African economic system.

8. Disengagement – An Alternative Strategy?

Existing policy does not really tackle the basic problem. The constraints to any action are severe, but the question is whether there is an alternative path that

derives directly from analysis of the problem.

Since the "border closure emergency" of 1976, consequent on the granting of "independence" to Transkei by South Africa, there has been a considerable emphasis on making Lesotho more independent of South Africa. Unfortunately, there has been a tendency to focus on a type of project that will keep Lesotho going in the event of disruption by South Africa, without really altering the economic relationship. Strategic grain reserves, modern milling facilities, the referral hospital (now modified) and diesel generators are examples. This is a consequence of the "simple dependency" outlook of the Government. However, the broad objective of disengagement is worth taking seriously as a genuine alternative.

Disengagement must involve the breaking, or controlling of the factors that ensure Lesotho's continued integration within the South African economic system. The most difficult measure to take, a gradually restricted quota on migration, has now been taken for Lesotho by the South African Mines. This provides an opportunity as well as a problem. Secondly, it is necessary to intervene in the product market, to prevent the existing free flow of South African goods into Lesotho.¹⁰ These measures are preconditions if Lesotho is to develop an appropriate strategy of domestic development. The approach does not directly tackle the required structural changes that would need change throughout the regional system. It rather attempts to set the environment for gradual change within Lesotho away from her position of structural dependency. It implies the state intervening decisively in the economy, but in contrast to recent Government ventures¹¹ there would not be direct management involvement. In fact, flexibility and local involvement in rural development and small-scale industrial activities is so important that such direct interventions are likely to be counterproductive within the proposed strategy.

How do you start producing appropriate products by appropriate methods? As a starting point the basic requirements for living of the population can be taken. The main components of the poverty datum line of relevance are food, clothing, accommodation and energy. Choice of how to produce the products should then be determined by consideration of local circumstances, i.e., the resources available to households, and maximizing the income gains to poorer households. Each product category is briefly surveyed.

(i) **Food.** We have already said that the direction of agricultural strategy is broadly right. A widely dispersed incremental approach with the full participation of farmers is appropriate, and we just make a few additional points here. Firstly, aiming for self-sufficiency in food makes sense on poverty grounds. The cost of importing food is many times the cost of producing food (it is about three times the producer price alone). Substituting cash crop for food production does not make sense for a food deficit household unless the returns to the former are very high.¹² Conversely, the best way to ensure that the poor receive adequate food is to help them produce it. Secondly, and following from this, the most disturbing development in the agricultural sector is growing landlessness (up to 15–20 per cent in recent surveys) and the emergence of a group of progressive farmers. If there is tenurial reform to allow ownership of arable land¹³ there is a risk of the development of dualism within the smallholder sector. Equitable landholding or effective cooperative forms (currently being discussed) is essential if the poorest house-

holds are to receive enough food. A class of landless agricultural workers would almost certainly be poorer than the poorest section of a rural peasantry. Thirdly, appropriate technological choice must be encouraged. Improving the existing ox-drawn smallholder agriculture is needed with no subsidy of either machine or fertilizer intensive methods. This tends to reach only the richer farmers and to substitute for better farming practices.

The next area of potential lies in the forward and backward linkages to food production. On the input side, emphasis should be on local production and maintenance of the major items of equipment. Experimentation in village based production of ploughs, planters and harrows has just started. This can lead to forges and metal workshops. On the output side, the major areas of employment potential are in the livestock sector, covering treatment, spinning and weaving of wool and mohair, rural tanneries, local butcheries etc. In the crop sector local grain milling should be promoted, and also preservation of fruit and vegetables by drying and bottling.¹⁴

(ii) **Clothes.** The majority of clothes purchased are now imported. However, there already exist appropriate methods of production: crocheting, knitting (including the use of knitting machines) and dress production from imported materials. An informal training system is working in the sector. In shoe production and repair there exist a number of small and successful labour intensive operations. This is a sector where a coherent strategy of protection and support should work well. It also illustrates the need for flexibility. It will probably be preferable to continue to import cheap, synthetic raw or semi-processed materials for some time, as the final product will be much cheaper than items produced from local wool or mohair. This also helps reduce the cost of the poverty datum line. A second general point is that there may arise a need for "walking on two legs": a capital intensive operation (e.g. producing fabric or scouring wool) may be desirable when it is complementary to labour-intensive activities.

(iii) **Accommodation.** The situation is similar to clothing. Construction has been booming, especially in Maseru, in the late 1970s. Local brick production by means of slop-mound firing and concrete block production are small-scale labour intensive industries. An effective system of contracting and subcontracting exists for construction. Training is often by informal apprenticeship or on-the-job learning. However, this sector is currently neglected. Most major construction work is on the high technology model: using architects, South African based engineering firms, imported materials and often imported labour. The proposed modern brick mill is competitive with and not complementary to the existing small-scale activities. The net long-run effect will probably be to reduce employment in the sub-sector. A more appropriate strategy would be to ensure that all construction activity uses indigenous materials and firms, and to promote technological innovation within the sector (specific improvements for brick production are already known). There will again remain a need for importation of materials: coal in the case of bricks and cement in the case of concrete blocks. It may be viable to start cement production from imported lime. This would be a complementary measure if it reduced prices for local purchases.

(iv) **Energy.** As Lesotho has no known exploitable coal and oil deposits the medium term energy problem is particularly intransigent. In the long term, the development of major hydropower schemes will help substitute for imported electricity. The Government response to the oil crisis has focussed mainly on the "simple dependency" issue, with the emphasis on oil reserves. This helps in the case of a cut in supplies, and is necessary if Lesotho can obtain cheaper sources, as promised in the August 1979 OAU conference. However, we place much greater emphasis on another much smaller project: the village based renewable energy technologies. This will introduce specific simple technologies in response to identified needs. Examples are improved mud stoves, thatch insulation, solar energy for vegetable growing and drying and grain grinders. The effect will be to substitute for paraffin, to make use of existing resources, and create employment in the construction of the technologies.

The other basic needs requirements cover health, water and sanitation, and education. These are very important for the well-being of the rural population, but are less closely related to the employment and poverty problem, as the income-generating element is small. In the cases of health, water and sanitation, Lesotho is developing a highly appropriate primary health care, community participation and low-technology strategy. We pass over the problems of education.

The proposed approach has only been outlined here. Actually starting on promotion of appropriate prevention is certainly daunting when faced with strong inappropriate consumer preferences, no tradition of technological innovation and a global bias against the development of technologies appropriate to countries such as Lesotho. However, a quick survey has already shown a number of activities that in small ways directly tackle the problem and together begin to add up to an overall strategy. Specific difficulties remain. Given Lesotho's resource base, foreign exchange will certainly be necessary in the future. This could in principle be provided by a small export orientated sector currently being promoted, but such enclaves tend to be self-perpetuating and of limited benefit to other sectors. An alternative is in the traditional export of labour, at least in the long transition period. Here there is the incomes transmission problem: remittances tend to be tied closely to the import of consumption goods and not used to work for the domestic economy. In the long term these are potential gains from trade, provided this is not in the form of dependency on a developed capitalist neighbour. Here Lesotho has special problems deriving from her geographical position. The promotion of links with a country such as Mozambique (in 1978) is a step in the right direction.

In conclusion, we have the broad shape of a strategy based on filling out the concept of disengagement. Agriculture is a key sector, in fact the only sector that can have a significant impact on the employment and poverty problem. However, it can be directly complemented by appropriate basic needs orientated production in other sectors. The overall context is of limits to migration and intervention in the free flow of products. Domestic policy does not replace but works alongside the migration policy discussed in section 6. The difficulties are clear, but the costs in terms of unemployment and poverty are much more disturbing.

9. Lesotho and The South African Homelands

The problems facing Lesotho are of more than purely local interest; the same problems will progressively confront the Homeland authorities as they assume greater responsibility for their economic development. Lesotho is of interest because it is the model for the system and because it represents the most perfected case of the peripheral labour reserve economy. While no fixed pattern of Homeland development can be postulated, Lesotho can be seen to display already the fundamental characteristics of the final Homeland product: firstly, it is genuinely politically independent and is recognised as a sovereign state by the United Nations. From Lesotho's viewpoint the most important implication of this is the availability of official foreign aid flows. Equally important, however, is the corollary of acquiescence in existing international boundaries and in the exclusion of Basotho from political rights in South Africa. Secondly, Basotho labour migration is overwhelmingly of the most controlled types – compound and hostel accommodated migration based on officially recognised recruitment channels within Lesotho, with dependants permanently domiciles in Lesotho. The pursuit of Homeland development by South Africa has been accompanied by a steady hardening of the form of labour migration towards the type exemplified by Lesotho. Migration from Lesotho is wholly oscillatory with compulsory returns home at least every two years. Thirdly, the burden of social security, the provision of health and education of migrating labour falls wholly on the meagre resources of Lesotho; Lesotho displays complete fiscal integrity. There is no budgetary transfer from the core South African economy to offset these costs in spite of the fact that Basotho labour in the goldmining industry makes a massive contribution to the South African revenues. By each of these three criteria of political sovereignty, control of labour migration and fiscal integrity Lesotho emerges as the archetypal labour reserve economy forming the model for the development of the whole system.

A broadly similar pattern of problems is emerging in the Homelands (or has already emerged) not only because South Africa is creating them on the Lesotho model, but also because the policy is similar: Homeland unemployment is to be tackled (apart from by Lesotho-type migration) by industrialisation at border and Homeland growthpoints using the sticks and carrots available under the South African policy of decentralisation. While South Africa may, because of the coercive powers of the state, be more successful than Lesotho in locating South African industries within commuting distance of the Homelands, the fundamental problems of inappropriate technology and resulting inadequate employment will remain.

The critical difference between Lesotho and the Homelands is that in Lesotho's case a hundred and more years of history have fossilised Lesotho's boundaries and the constraint of separate development must be accepted (at least for the present). This is not true of the Homelands: the extent to which they are 'developed' into 'little Lesotho's' dotted over the map of Southern Africa is simply a measure of the failure to forestall the Homeland policy by appropriate political action within South Africa.

This brings us to a final comment. The strategy proposed above is essentially a second best solution in recognition of the existing structure of power in the region. Disengagement implies Lesotho forsaking her claims to South Africa's wealth. The

most obvious solution is of controlled permanent outward migration of career migrants with their families, so releasing land for non-migrating families, coupled with fiscal transfer in favour of public investment in Lesotho (or the Homeland). At present this solution is a pipedream, but if it is forgotten completely there is a real danger of the present labour reserves failing to benefit when there is genuine political change in the region.

References

- 1 Annual Statistical Bulletin 1978, Bureau of Statistics, Maseru.
- 2 This is the intercensal growth rate between 1966 and 1976.
- 3 For a description of this process see the opening article by Murray in this volume.
- 4 This article is primarily concerned with mine employment. For a discussion of migrant women workers see the article by Judy Gay in this volume.
- 5 Financial Mail, 10th June 1977, quoting the Chamber of Mines.
- 6 Based on A.M. Monyake, *Rural Household Consumption and Expenditure Survey 1967-69*, and A.C.A. van der Wiel, *Migratory Wage Labour*. Maseru, 1977.
- 7 Government of Lesotho, *Second Five Year Development Plan, 1976 and Recurrent Account 1978/79*.
- 8 Government of Lesotho *op. cit.*
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 This would probably have repercussions on membership of the South African Customs Union. The other complementary measure not covered here is the capital market; there is a parallel need to "disintegrate" here.
- 11 Examples of the Government intervening instead of private enterprise include agricultural marketing, hotels, the wheat mill and the abattoir.
- 12 Some cash crop production is, of course, very desirable: when it can genuinely reach the majority of poor rural households.
- 13 The inclusion of this type of reform in a new Land Bill was reported in the *Lesotho Weekly* in August 1979.
- 14 In this context the modern wheat mill and proposed maize mill can be seen to be inappropriate. They are highly capital intensive and appear to have little impact on either producer or consumer prices. To the extent that smallscale alternatives are squeezed out (e.g. the proposed pedal maize grinder) the net effect will be detrimental to incomes and employment.

Bookreview
by
John Bardill

**Development and Dependence in Lesotho,
 The Enclave of South Africa**

by Gabriele Winai Ström,
 The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies,
 Uppsala, 1978

Much of the published work on Lesotho attests to the dramatic problems confronted by this small enclave state: its almost total dependence on the outside world in general and on the Republic of South Africa, which surrounds it, in particular; its declining agricultural base; its inability to generate sufficient internal employment to stem the flow of migrant labour to the Republic, a process which accounts for approximately half of the male labour force at any given time and which results in many attendant and well-documented ills; its fragile political and institutional set-up; and many more. But few studies to date have succeeded in offering a systematic explanation of these phenomena, an explanation rooted in historical and interdisciplinary analysis; nor have they been able to suggest, by way of strategies for change, much more than cosmetic improvements designed to ameliorate some of the more extreme features of the situation. This, in turn, can be attributed to the rather narrow disciplinary focus of many of these studies and the somewhat conservative acceptance by their authors of the apparent inviolability of the status quo.¹

It is in the light of this that Gabriele Winai Ström's recent book appears at first sight to offer a refreshing and radical departure. In the final analysis, however, though bringing together at times some quite useful information, this monograph adds few fresh insights, either explanatory or prescriptive, to our understanding of Lesotho's precarious position. And this results from a number of shortcomings, especially theoretical ones, inherent in Ms Winai Ström's approach as a whole. These are worth considering at some length.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first sets out the purpose of the study, which is an examination of some of the principal political conditions of development and underdevelopment in Lesotho in the light of recent dependency theory. Special attention is devoted to political parties, state institutions and development policies during the period 1960 to 1975. The second chapter provides a picture of the contemporary socio-economic structure of Lesotho as a background to the study as a whole, and attempts in particular to trace the origins of Lesotho's integration into the international capitalist system as a dependent labour reserve society. Chapter 3 focusses on the internal political cleavages which have resulted from and, in turn, affected the nature of this process of integration, through an analysis of the origins, ideas and support of the ruling Basotho National Party

(BNP) and its principal opponent, the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP). Chapter 4 concentrates on the changing nature of state institutions and specifically on their increasing responsiveness, on the one hand, to foreign interests, and their decreasing responsiveness, on the other, to internal demands and dissent. In Chapter 5 a critique is offered of the development policies which have emanated from these institutions. Such policies, it is argued, are more likely to entrench Lesotho's dependent status than to alleviate it. And in Chapter 6 a number of conclusions are drawn, and the prospects for change are briefly considered and found to be somewhat less than propitious.

In the first chapter the author reveals her theoretical framework which is based on a largely uncritical acceptance of the tenets of the Latin America dependency school, popularised in the writings of Andre Gunder Frank and fellow devotees of this approach, and applied to Africa in slightly modified form by scholars such as Samir Amin.² The main features of this approach, which sees the problems of the Third World not as a function of any inherent backwardness but rather as a direct consequence of its incorporation into the expanding capitalist world economy and consequent underdevelopment by it, are too familiar to warrant elaboration here.

From this approach Ms Winai Ström selects six propositions or indicators of dependence which she believes are common to most underdeveloped countries and which she intends to test in the Lesotho case. These are: 1. decreasing diversification and increasing disintegration in production; 2. increasing inequalities in welfare, wealth and income; 3. decreasing power base of the government; 4. increasing size of state institutions and scope of state activities; 5. increasing foreign control of human and material resources; and 6. increasing government emphasis on economic growth as a goal of public policy and decreasing government capacity to attain this goal.

In her final chapter Ms Winai Ström summarises her findings: in the Lesotho context propositions 1 and 2 are not supported by the evidence, propositions 3, 5 and 6 are, and proposition 4 is supported only in part – there has been little increase in the size of state institutions in Lesotho but there has been a marked expansion in the scope of their activities. This, of course, might lead us to the conclusion that Lesotho is only a semi-dependent state, a conclusion which is belied by the facts and contrary to the thrust of the author's own argument. Why then the confusion?

One possible answer is that some of Ms Winai Ström's conclusions are mistaken. For example, if we take the question of inequalities in wealth and income, it is somewhat surprising that Ms Winai Ström, who is normally far from reluctant to take the Lesotho Government to task, seems prepared to accept, with only a few minor caveats, the official figures and official conclusion that goes with them to the effect that income distribution in Lesotho is remarkably egalitarian.³ For as Jim Cobbe has pointed out, such figures must be viewed with suspicion, relying as they do for the vast majority of the population not on income but on the non-too reliable imputation of income based on registered land holdings, crop production and livestock ownership.⁴ In addition, they fail to reflect clearly the increasing importance and distribution of non-farm incomes and the remittances of migrants, as well as the effects of growing landlessness among the rural popula-

tin. Ms Winai Ström seems to be aware admittedly of some of these reservations, but unaccountably she fails to modify her conclusions accordingly.

A more serious answer, however, can be found in the inherent weakness of the author's theoretical approach. For the propositions which she sets out to explore, with the possible exception of number 5, are essentially symptoms and not causes of the problems commonly associated with dependent and underdeveloped societies. Even proposition 5, concerning increasing foreign control, is at least partly symptomatic; a decreasing trend in formal foreign ownership and control would not automatically assure a similar decrease in dependence and underdevelopment. Nor would this be assured for that matter by a more promising record in achieving the goal of economic growth. It is not necessary to dip too deeply into the literature on underdeveloped societies to realise that they manifest a vast array of symptoms, some similar and some different. But what is needed in a case study of the type embarked upon by Ms Winai Ström is not merely an attempt to reveal the particular symptoms appropriate to the case in question, but also an adequate explanation of them.

Such an explanation in the Lesotho context would require at least three related elements, all of which are lacking in Ms Winai Ström's analysis. First, if we accept, which seems inevitable, that Lesotho's history and contemporary position cannot be explained intelligibly outside the context of its incorporation into the international capitalist system, then an analysis must be offered, however brief, of the origins, nature and changing imperatives of this system and in particular of its South African progeny. In the South African case special attention would have to be paid to the crucial role of political and ideological coercion which has been played by the state in the process of capital accumulation; a role which has had and continues to have important implications for Lesotho. And of particular importance for the contemporary period, an analysis should be provided which takes into account the changing imperatives of the South African economy towards both greater capital intensiveness and an increasing reliance on its own domestic sources of black labour; two tendencies which are likely to have serious consequences for labour supplying territories such as Lesotho, at least in the long run.⁵ Ms Winai Ström sadly fails, however, to enlighten us on virtually all of these points.

Secondly, if we are to appreciate the internal realities of Lesotho's increasingly dependent status, we would require an analysis of not only the external but also the internal dynamics of the labour reserve as one type of underdeveloped society. Such an analysis should include an examination of the forces which brought such societies into being, shaped them and maintained them, in the face of their almost inevitable collapse, to serve their essential purpose — that of providing cheap migrant labour to the capitalist centres at a cost for capital less than that of the full reproduction of its labour power. Such a cost is normally borne in full by the capitalist class in the advanced capitalist countries, but it can be significantly reduced in the labour reserve context whereby part of the costs of the reproduction of the worker and his family are met by dependants who are forced to remain in the reserves. It is this structural dependence on both wage labour and some form of non-capitalist agriculture in the reserves which lies at the heart of an explanation of labour migrancy and the underdevelopment which results from it.

Fortunately, the basis for an analysis of this kind is readily available in the works (to name but a few) of Samir Amin on Africa in general, Arrighi on Rhodesia, Wolpe and Legassick on South Africa, and Roger Leys on Lesotho itself.⁶ Unfortunately, Ms Winai Ström seems reluctant to avail herself of any insights which a reading of such works might have provided.

Thirdly, for an effective understanding not only of the specific mechanisms and effects of underdevelopment and dependence in the Lesotho social formation but also of the prospects for change, an analysis of the class structure of Lesotho society and the state would appear essential. Here again a wealth of background literature exists but Ms Winai Ström once more seems unaware of it, or at least of its relevance. And whilst we might excuse her refusal to become involved in the complexities of Poulantzas, her apparent ignorance of the vigorous debate on classes and the state in Africa, which has been carried out in the works of Saul, Leys, Shivji, Mamdani, and many others, is less forgivable and results ultimately in her inability to expose clearly the contradictions in contemporary Lesotho and to offer little but trite comment with respect to strategies for change.⁷

Some of these points might be clarified if we turn to an examination of the actual text. In Chapter 2, which deals with the socio-economic background, Ms Winai Ström does recognise two important points. The first is the labour reserve character of contemporary Lesotho, a fact which must inevitably condition and inform any attempt at social, economic or political enquiry. Here she documents a number of familiar and depressing details concerning Lesotho's continuing and increasing reliance on the export of labour power, and the decreasing capacity of agriculture to provide alternative employment. In the 1970 agricultural census 90 per cent of Lesotho's population were described as 'agricultural' and yet, as the author shows, only 3 per cent of rural households in 1973 could sustain themselves adequately from agricultural production alone.

The second point is that this alarming situation has not arisen due to Lesotho's inherent traditionalism, backwardness or failure to adapt to modern techniques -- this being the essential thesis of the dualist approach, but because of specific historical policies and events designed to create and maintain such labour reserve societies. Here Ms Winai Ström quite rightly takes issue with a number of dualist interpretations, and specifically that contained in the authoritative World Bank Report on Lesotho which states that at independence Lesotho "was virtually untouched by modern economic development. It was, and still is, basically a traditional subsistence peasant society."⁸ This quotation is worth repeating for its masterly ability to concentrate so much dubious comment into so few words. Ms Winai Ström, to her credit, attempts to reveal and correct the errors. This she does by demonstrating that Lesotho, far from being an 'untouched' and 'subsistence' economy, was experiencing, over a century ago, important technological change, for example in the increasing use of the plough and the introduction of new crops such as wheat. Moreover, at this time the country was increasingly coming to engage in widespread exchange with South Africa through the export of considerable quantities of grain and through the growing import of manufactured goods.

During the mid-nineteenth to the late-nineteenth century Lesotho was frequently

referred to as 'the granary of South Africa', and the image of a prosperous, self-sufficient and surplus exporting economy contrasts markedly with the situation today. What then has caused this change over the past hundred years? At this point Ms Winai Ström's analysis becomes less convincing. Admittedly, she does recognise a number of important factors: the impact on agriculture of the permanent loss of large tracts of fertile Basotho land to the Free State in the war of 1866–68; the consequences of the policy of colonial 'omission' after British annexation in 1868, whereby Britain was reluctant to 'develop' the country in ways which might lead to the creation of internal employment as an alternative to migrant labour; and the effects on Lesotho's grain exports to South Africa of cheaper competition from overseas after the completion of the railway linking Kimberley and the Rand to the coast.

But according to Ms Winai Ström, these factors only modified the situation; they did not fundamentally change it. By the late 1920's Lesotho, or Basutoland as it was then called, was still a thriving agricultural society. Two things changed this situation: first, the introduction by the British of restrictions on agricultural produce in Basutoland in response to complaints about Basotho competition from the South African Government; and secondly, the changes in administrative structure, and particularly the vast reduction in the number of salaried chiefs, introduced by the British as a result of the Pim Report of 1935. Apparently these administrative changes had an important impact on agricultural production which subsequently declined; though the exact nature of this impact is left unspecified by the author.

Ms Winai Ström might be criticised here for overlooking other decisive factors; for example, the effects of the Great Depression which reduced the South African market for Basotho produce, and the almost catastrophic drought in Basutoland in 1932–33. More seriously, she must be criticised for overlooking the fact that the depression and drought, as well as the two factors which she does mention, were essentially catalysts and not causes of the process which had already been in existence for a considerable time; and for falling victim therefore to the 'accident of the transition' thesis as an explanation of Lesotho's labour reserve status. For the evidence suggests that Lesotho's dependence on the export of labour power, as a 'necessary' rather than 'discretionary' fact of life (to borrow Arrighi's terminology), was well established by the first two decades of the twentieth century, if not before.⁹ And what is needed is an explanation of this, based first of all on an analysis of the creation of the South African reserve system itself and, secondly, on an examination of the specific nature of Lesotho's incorporation into this system.

The first part of the explanation would need to focus on the measures which were undertaken in South Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to induce and regulate a reliable flow of cheap black labour to satisfy the expanding requirements of capitalist mining and agriculture; measures which relied heavily on the application of political coercion by the State. The second part would have to take into account, though in a more detailed fashion, a number of the factors mentioned by Ms Winai Ström, and in particular the effects of land alienation and colonial policies, including the important effects of colonial taxation.

But it would also have to include such things as the protective tariffs adopted by the Free State against Basotho agricultural competition as early as the 1870's; the effects of South African legislation such as the 1913 Natives Land Act which led to the removal of considerable numbers of Basotho squatters and share croppers from Free State farms and to a dramatic increase in population pressure within Lesotho itself; and the consequences for Lesotho of the increasing monopsonisation in the recruitment of black labour to the South African mines.¹⁰

By locating the important starting point of her analysis in the 1930's, and by failing to make use of existing analytical literature on the origins and development of the South African labour reserve system, Ms Winai Ström effectively inhibits herself from being able to provide an explanation of this kind.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of the book, which deal respectively with Political Parties, State Institutions and Development Policies, form the core of the study and the themes which run through these chapters can be summarised as follows. Although ethnically a relatively homogeneous nation, Lesotho has witnessed a long tradition of political discussion and cleavage, a tradition which became particularly apparent in the conflicts between the principal political parties which emerged as contestants in the independence struggle in the 1950's. The first such party was the Basutoland African Congress (BAC), formed in 1952 under the leadership of Ntsu Mokhehle. This organisation, which changed its name to the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) in 1959, had its origins in an earlier organisation, the Lekhotla-la-Bafo, which was formed in 1913 to expound the interests of the common man against those of the colonialists, traders, chiefs and the churches, particularly the Catholic Church. It also drew much of its ideological inspiration from the ANC and PAC in South Africa. Although led largely by members of the educated elite the BAC/BCP attempted a policy of mass mobilisation, particularly through the village committees and by establishing affiliation with the Co-operative movement, the Basotho Federation of Labour (BFL), and with the Communist Party of Lesotho (CPL) after its formation in 1961.

The increasingly radical and apparently socialist stance of the BAC/BCP ultimately gave rise to dissent within its own ranks, and by the late 1950's a number of its leading members had left to form rival organisations. The first of these was the relatively small Marema-Tlou Party (MTP) which was formed in 1957 to support the status of the Paramount Chief and the principal chiefs in the face of growing BAC/BCP hostility towards these institutions. The second was the much more important Basotho National Party (BNP) which was formed in 1958 by a group of lower chiefs, chiefs' advisors and Catholic teachers, under the leadership of Leabua Jonathan. Though still committed to independence, this party was far more moderate in tone than the BAC/BCP and this, together with its fierce anti-communist rhetoric, endeared the party to the middle and lower chiefs, the white traders, the Catholic Church, and not surprisingly to the neighbouring South African regime. With the support and financial assistance of such groups, and with the tacit approval if not direct complicity of the British colonial authorities, the BNP was able to achieve a slender victory in the pre-independence election of 1965 and to lead the country to independence in October 1966.

On assuming power the BNP Government soon ran into difficulties, not the least

of which was the reluctance of its own civil service, dominated largely by BCP supporters, to carry out its policies. Equally important was the regime's loss of popular support, itself the result of its apparent inability if not unwillingness to devise and implement policies to raise the living standards and employment prospects of the mass of the people. The declining popularity of the Government manifested itself most clearly in the 1970 General Election which resulted in a victory for the opposition BCP, or, more accurately, would have done so had it not been for the forceful retention of power by Prime Minister Jonathan in a coup which was staged before the final election results were officially declared.

The BNP Government's response to this declining popular support, particularly since 1970, has taken essentially two forms. The first has been an attempt to centralise administrative structures more effectively in the hands of the ruling party, and to silence and undercut the opposition. Greater centralisation has been achieved in a number of ways: by reducing the power of the Paramount Chief as a possible source of alternative authority to that of the Government itself; by a similar reduction in the autonomy of local government structures and the degree of popular participation in them, particularly the village committee which were thought to be a base for BCP activities in the countryside; and by the assumption of direct control of the important Public Service Commission which has enabled the Government to oust unreliable BCP elements from the civil service and to replace them by more loyal personnel, both local and especially expatriate.

The repression and intimidation of opposition forces, which was particularly intense in the aftermath of the 1970 Coup and which has continued, though somewhat more sporadically, ever since, has been achieved through the rapid expansion of the police and paramilitary forces — undoubtedly one of the principal growth sectors in state employment. But more subtle techniques have also been employed, especially since the fragmentation of the opposition in 1974 which followed a wave of violence instituted by the regime in response to an alleged attempt by the BCP to overthrow the Government. These have included appeals for national reconciliation, the co-option of certain former opposition members into the Government, and attempts to pre-empt the BCP by adopting parts of its platform as official policy — an example of this in recent years being the more critical stance taken by the Government in its foreign policy towards South Africa.¹¹ As a result of such policies, the level of organised opposition to the ruling party has undoubtedly decreased. But whether this has been accompanied by any genuine increase in the level of popular support for the government is a much more doubtful matter.

The second technique employed to offset this decline in internal support has been the Government's increased reliance on foreign assistance. This has taken the form of measures to stimulate the inflow of foreign private capital and to promote greater and more diverse forms of foreign aid. Foreign investment, especially by South African subsidiaries of the large multinationals, has been attracted with some, though by no means unqualified, success. This has been achieved, under the auspices of the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC), through the promise of low wages, tax shelters and the easy repatriation of capital. In the case of joint ventures between foreign companies and the LNDC, however,

the Government itself has provided much of the capital, leaving the companies to supply management, know-how and wider international contacts. And the increasing ability of the Government to supply such capital has resulted, at least in part, from its growing success in the international aid market, which has seen foreign aid rise from R5 million in 1973/74 to R30 million in 1975/76. This has helped to lead to a rapid rise in Government revenue, revenue which has been augmented in addition by a significant increase in the amounts which have accrued from the Customs Union Agreement and Money Agreement with South Africa, from the taxes and deferred pay of migrant workers whose wages have risen considerably since 1973, and from Government levies on wool and mohair exports.

But the increase in foreign investment and aid, and in Government revenue in general, has not led to any fundamental structural changes in the economy as a whole. Certainly there has been some sectoral growth – in tourism, construction, manufacturing and commerce – as well as signs of greater productivity in the two principal export crops, wool and mohair. But there is little evidence that the gross domestic product has grown much in real terms over the first decade since independence, or that living conditions for the majority of the population have noticeably improved. Total agricultural production has in fact declined over the years, and the imports of staple food stuffs have increased dramatically. No serious efforts have been made to reform the land tenure system. Few additional jobs have been created by the Government's efforts to foster foreign investment. And the consequent reliance on the export of migrant labour continues to be the dominant prop of the economy as a whole. Lesotho's position as a dependent labour reserve has therefore been reinforced rather than reduced.

In support of these themes, Ms Winai Ström offers some useful and, at times, telling information. Her case study on diamond mining is particularly instructive, for example; showing as it does how a number of government agreements with the multinational mining houses, the latest and most important being that with DeBeers in 1975, have in fact led to a reduction in internal employment. For the independent diggers who previously worked the claims have increasingly been forced off them in favour of large corporations which prefer capital intensive to labour intensive techniques.

There are, however, a number of details which would seem to have merited inclusion in a study of this kind. One such area is the increasing role of the Lesotho Government in the regulation of migrant labour, through such measures as the Employment Act of 1967 and the important formal agreement on migrant labour signed with the South African Government in 1973. And although such measures have undoubtedly conferred as many if not more benefits upon South Africa as upon Lesotho, this would not seem to be a reason for their exclusion from the study, but rather the reverse.

Moreover, Ms Winai Ström's extended polemic against the BNP Government, contained in these chapters, might be criticised for placing too much emphasis on the failings of the regime, important as they are; and for placing too little emphasis on the structural constraints imposed upon it by Lesotho's historically determined position in relation to metropolitan and particularly South African capital. Such constraints would inevitably have posed formidable problems for

any Government however far-sighted it might have been.

This, in turn, points to the central weakness in the analysis contained in these chapters of the book. And this is that there is no real theoretical exploration of the nature and role of the post-colonial state, and specifically of its class determination. To the extent that Ms Winai Ström has any concept at all of the nature of the state, it seems to be that of a set of neutral institutions which can be appropriated by one group or another and turned to its own particular devices. Such a view, however, misses the essential reality of the state in class societies, which is the embodiment in specific institutional and ideological forms of the class structure and class struggle, both of which arise from the social relations of production in society as a whole. Specifically, the state emerges in class societies to protect the interests of the dominant class; or perhaps more accurately to protect and reinforce a prevailing set of relations of production under which the dominant class is able, through its control of the means of production and its use of this to extract surplus from the subordinate classes, to guarantee the conditions of its own reproduction and dominance as a class. This the state does by repressing, containing and deflecting the struggles of the dominated classes to overcome their subordinate position, and by mediating the contradictions which exist between the various sections or fractions of the dominant class itself — contradiction which if left unchecked might ultimately weaken its collective supremacy in relation to the subordinate strata.

In contemporary Lesotho it is quite clear that the dominant class is that of foreign capital, and particularly South African. No indigenous bourgeoisie, with an autonomous material base and an independent ability to reproduce the conditions of capitalist accumulation, has emerged in Lesotho to challenge the hegemony of this class. This is not to say, however, that the strata which occupy Lesotho's state apparatuses have no class interests of their own, nor that it is unimportant to investigate these in detail; but rather that these class interests can only be realised through the perpetuation of those of foreign capital and of the structures of dependence and underdevelopment which serve them.

Nor does this mean to say that the Lesotho State has no autonomy in its relations with the dominant metropolitan class. For this class is itself divided into fractions, and these might be played off against each other to promote a certain degree of manoeuvrability. And there is little doubt that the Lesotho Government has taken some advantage of the scope which this has afforded, in particular by attempts to reduce its reliance on South Africa through the extension and diversification of its links with countries further afield. But the degree of this autonomy should not, of course, be exaggerated. For as Ms Winai Ström herself demonstrates, a number of efforts by the Lesotho Government in the early 1970's to attract more diverse forms of foreign capital investment — a Japanese motor assembly plant, an Italian shoe factory, and a West German television assembly plant — were ultimately abandoned because of pressure from South Africa.

An examination of this kind of the Lesotho State, though obviously more detailed and precise than that suggested here, might have enabled Ms Winai Ström to see more clearly that Lesotho's continuing state of dependence has not been caused by the particular proclivities of the BNP Government, though these may

indeed have served to reinforce such dependence, but by the imperatives of capitalist accumulation in Southern Africa as a whole; imperatives which have conditioned and continue to condition the specific nature of Lesotho's relations of production and the class structure and particular form of state which correspond to them. It might have also enabled her to see that the accession to power of an alternative BCP Government, which she seems to think would have resulted in a more effective resolution of many of Lesotho's problems, would not by itself have led to a fundamental change in the country's dependent and underdeveloped status.

These theoretical weaknesses are equally apparent if we turn finally to Ms Winai Ström's treatment of the question of possible strategies for change, which she deals with briefly in her concluding chapter. Two such strategies are outlined by the author. The first involves the step by step withdrawal of the migrant labour force with the twin aims of putting pressure on South Africa and satisfying internal demands for alternative means of employment. The second places increased reliance on the export of labour power and the opportunities which this creates for enhancing Government revenue, through the taxation of migrant workers, deferred pay schemes, and the possibilities of bargaining for higher wages with South African employers. Lesotho and the Transkei, it is suggested, have opted for the latter strategy, whereas Malawi and Mozambique have chosen the former.

Ignoring the somewhat dubious uniformity that this implies as to the motives for withdrawal of Malawi and Mozambique, and the fact that in the Malawian case the disengagement of its migrant work force was far more rapid than the author suggests,¹² this approach still has a number of major limitations. First, it overestimates to some extent the pressure that such withdrawals of foreign labour are likely to have on South Africa, by ignoring the trends towards greater capital intensiveness in the South African economy as a whole, including mining, and towards an increasing reliance on its own domestic sources of black labour. In the long run such trends are not only likely to insulate the economy against the possibility of future withdrawals, but actually to promote them — a fact which we noted earlier is likely to have serious consequences for Lesotho.

Secondly, by suggesting that there is an effective choice between such strategies, this approach seriously underestimates the structural constraints which render such a choice, in the present Lesotho context, not only impracticable but also inoperable. Thirdly, even if a major reduction in Lesotho's migrant work force became more feasible, such an approach ignores the fact that this would not necessarily reduce the level of Lesotho's underdevelopment. For it is quite possible that the process of external migrancy might be replaced by one of internal migrancy which, according to Charles Perrings, ". . . merely repeats internally the exploitative relationship between capitalist and non-capitalist sectors that has, historically, characterised international relations in the sub-continent."¹³

Finally, Ms Winai Ström's approach to the question of strategies neglects the important fact that for Lesotho to overcome its present underdeveloped position, the basic cause of this underdevelopment, which is the structural dependence of its people on both wage labour and some form of non-capitalist agricultural production, must be effaced. And this can only be accomplished through some form

of revolutionary change in the social relations of production; either by the rapid expansion of capitalist relations through a dramatic growth in capital accumulation and the development of an autonomous national bourgeoisie, or by the establishment of socialist ones. The prospects for these forms of change, however doubtful they might be, as well as their relative desirability, can only be assessed effectively by a detailed analysis of the class structure and class contradictions inherent in the Lesotho social formation; an analysis which must be situated, of course, in the wider South African context. Such an analysis is certainly long overdue. Miss Winai Ström's book, however, makes hardly any contribution in this direction.

REFERENCE NOTES

- 1 Many of these studies have, however, provided important descriptive insights. In terms of political analysis particularly Spence J.E. *Lesotho: The Politics of Dependence*, OUP: London, 1968; Weisfelder R.F. "Defining National Purpose in Lesotho". *Ohio University Papers in International Studies, Africa Series No. 3*, Athens : Ohio, 1969; Khaketla B.M. *Lesotho 1970: An African Coup Under Microscope*, Hurst: London, 1971; Holm J.D. "Political Stability in Lesotho" *Africa Today* 19(4), 1972; and Macartney W.J.A. "Case-study: The Lesotho General Election of 1970" *Government and Opposition*, viii(4), 1973. A notable exception to the trend of these studies which paves the way for an effective analysis of Lesotho's underdevelopment in Leys R. "Lesotho: Non-development or Underdevelopment. Towards an Analysis of the Political Economy of the Labour Reserve" in Shaw T. (ed.) *Politics in Africa: Dependency and Development*, Longmans and Delhousie, 1979.
- 2 Many of the weaknesses in Ms Winai Ström's analysis can be traced to her failure to take account of the extensive debate concerning the relevance of dependency theory that has taken place since Laclau's incisive critique of Frank in 1971. See Frank A.G., *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, Monthly Review Press: New York, 1967 and Laclau E. "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America". *New Left Review*, 67, 1971. This is especially surprising in view of the fact that Laclau's article is cited in her bibliography.
- 3 See for example Kingdom of Lesotho, *Second Five Year Development Plan 1975/76-1979/80*, Vol. 1, Maseru, 1976.
- 4 Cobbe J. "Growth and Change in Lesotho" *The South African Journal of Economics*, 46(2), 1978.
- 5 For discussion of these points at greater length see Bardill J., Southall R. and Perrings C., *The State and Labour Migration in the South African Political Economy, With Particular Respect to Gold Mining*, World Employment Programme Research Working Paper, ILO: Geneva, 1977.
- 6 See Amin S. "Underdevelopment and Dependence in Black Africa: Origins and Contemporary Forms" *The Journal of Modern African Studies* X(4), 1972; Arrighi G., "Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective: A study of the Proletariatization of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia" *Journal of Development Studies*, 3, 1970; Legassick M. "South Africa: Capital Accumulation and Violence" *Economy and Society*, III(3), 1974; and Leys op. cit.
- 7 See Saul J. "The State in Post-colonial Societies: Tanzania" *The Socialist Register*, Merlin Press: London, 1974; Leys C., "The Over-developed Post-Colonial State: A re-evaluation" *Review of African Political Economy*, 5, 1976; Mamdani M., *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*, Heinemann: London, 1976; Shivji I.G. *The Silent Class Struggle* Tanzania Publishing House: Dar es Salaam, 1975; Davies R., Kaplan D., Morris M., and O'Meara D., "Class Struggle and the Periodisation of the State in South Africa"

Review of African Political Economy, 7, 1976; Innes D and Plaut M "Class Struggle and the State" Review of African Political Economy, 11, 1978; and Winter, I., *The Post-Colonial State and the Forces and Relations of Production: Swaziland* Review of African Political Economy, 9, 1978.

- 8 World Bank, *Lesotho: A Development Challenge*, IBRD, Washington D.C. 1975. For a detailed critique of this report see Cobbe *op. cit.*
- 9 Conclusive evidence of this is provided in Leys *op. cit.* pp. 110–113.
- 10 For a more detailed summary of these points see Bardill, Southall and Perrings *op. cit.* pp. 4–13.
- 11 A useful discussion of Lesotho's increasingly assertive stance towards Pretoria can be found in Hirschmann D., "Changes in Lesotho's Policy towards South Africa" *African Affairs*, 78 (311), 1979.
- 12 The Malawi Government banned recruitment in December 1974 and the number of Malawians on the mines dropped from 128 000 in December 1973 to just over 200 in June 1977. Recruitment of workers from Malawi has now resumed but it is unlikely that they will ever be attracted in the same numbers as before.
- 13 Bardill, Southall and Perrings *op. cit.* p.49