

The Zionist village of Lentswe-le-Moriti (1999)

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The Zion Christian Church was introduced in the Kgatleng as part of a political struggle, but quickly became a genuine religious body. Expelled from the Kgatleng in 1947, the Zionists sought a place of their own and in 1953 founded their own village at Lentswe-le-Moriti. Despite initially difficult relations with neighbouring settler farmers, the village has established itself while preserving a strong religious identity. Relations with neighbouring BaBirwa have been cemented by the establishment of a state school in the village serving both communities. The village has resisted attempts to assimilate it to more normal Botswana administration (for instance by introducing a headman).

Introduction

Presently there is available to the reader a number of books and articles on African Independent Churches (AICs) in Southern Africa. Bengt Sundkler's pioneering *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (1948) laid the foundation on which almost all subsequent studies have been built.¹ Sundkler distinguished between Zionist and Ethiopian types of Independent churches. Ethiopian churches only stressed the Africanisation of the leadership of the church and not the Africanisation of its ritual and theology. On the other hand the Zionist churches stressed the work of the Holy Spirit (in healing, prophecy, dreams and visions) which accommodated traditional African culture and religion. Sundkler's approach inspired scholars to debate the aspect of the causes of the proliferation of AICs. He himself asserted that 'independency' especially Zionism has to be seen as an organised Black reaction to White political dominance.² This assertion can no longer explain the growth of the contemporary religious movements in Southern Africa. Recent studies have shown that radical changes have occurred in the cultural environment within which the independent church movement used to be situated.³ This explains why some scholars view Zionism as a collective response to urban poverty. And not only has colonialism disappeared, but also we have seen in South Africa itself the official demise of the apartheid system which used to be seen as a major causal factor for the rise of break-away churches.⁴

Much has also been written about the persecution of AICs including their leaders. These people and their followers had to migrate from place to place and were often arrested by colonial rulers.⁵ Consequently, some churches have founded their own new villages as Isiah Shembe's Ekuphukamene and Engenas Lekganyane's Zion City Morija in South Africa.⁶ This also happened in Zambia where the Jehovah's Witnesses religious movement persuaded people to set up independent settlements at farms.⁷ The people decided to live without recognised headmen. The establishment of African religious villages may, in this respect, be interpreted as one of the aims of forming AICs. This means that the formation of these churches is also based on cultural factors rather than simply on racial conflict. Hence James Amanze says that Africans need to experience Christianity in the context of African culture.⁸ Amanze follows the view that AICs also exist in their own right as Christian missions that have responded to the call of God. He argues that in Botswana, their formation and spread is attributed to spiritual hunger and social factors which include faith healing, prophecy, worshipping God in African ways and preserving certain aspects of Tswana culture.

Another theme, which has widely captured the attention of many writers, is the increasing importance of women's public role in religious activities. Jules-Rosette's book contains comprehensive articles on this subject,⁹ noting that women and their ministry have always been in the forefront in the AICs. But there is little analysis provided to explain why women are often excluded from senior positions of leadership. Fortunately, R.J.Cazziol has recently attempted to fill this research gap.¹⁰ His paper inquires into the reasons why women are often excluded from senior positions whereas the strength of most AICs comes from their membership. Cazziol argues that in Swaziland, for instance, opposition to the ordination of women is not exclusively male. Many women oppose it as well.

No doubt these approaches are crucial in our current understanding and interpretation of AICs. But it is also crucial that anthropologists, sociologists, and historians particularly should conduct studies of AIC villages. To date, something has been done on Tswana Christian villages. Paul Landau's book, which deals with the main northern Tswana polity of Ngwato, is an outstanding addition to literature on Christianity among the Tswana.¹¹ It gives us one of the best case studies of a Christian village. The focus is on Lerala village in the Tswapong hills. Lerala's Christianity has succumbed to the growth of break-away churches since the latter 1940s. Landau agrees that it would be wrong to depict this late twentieth-century proliferation of AICs only as a process in which Africans rid themselves from white Missionary control. He affirms that Spiritual communities of AICs offer a place of "belonging," and help to define their members' sense of identity. Landau also gives close attention to the distinctive role of women in these churches.

However, it must come as a surprise to readers that there are very few published or unpublished studies on villages specifically founded and controlled by religious communities. Research work that gave birth to this study has discovered only one study of an AIC village in Zimbabwe. This is the Vapostori village whose historical origin and development is somewhat similar to the village the present study discusses.¹² The study of the Metlobo settlement in the Ngwaketse District of Botswana does not provide a sufficient case study of an AIC village, though it is a useful pioneering study.¹³

The present study is a detailed history of the Zionist village of Lentswe-le-Moriti in Eastern Botswana. Lentswe-le-Moriti, which is also a farm, is situated in the northern corner of the Tuli Block farms which until independence were largely white owned. This farm is one of the earliest farms to be bought in the Tuli Block by Africans during the colonial period. It is adjacent to where the Limpopo/Motloutsi River divides the Transvaal in South Africa and Botswana. Mashathu Game Reserve, Talana farms and the Tuli Lodge are situated next to the village. This village remains a neglected area of study despite its uniqueness which serves as a 'living testimony' of a history of a bitter relation between religion and the state in the then Bechuanaland Protectorate. Today this relationship has improved, but it is still crucial to the future of this village in more ways than one.

Scanty but useful material on Lentswe-le-Moriti is found in the Botswana National Archives in the form of colonial correspondence and reports. Unfortunately it depicts the Zionist settlement in a somewhat obscure and sketchy manner. It incorrectly assumes that 'Zionists at Lentswe-le-Moriti are exclusively Bakgatla who moved from Mochudi.'¹⁴ Many scholars who in their studies mention Lentswe-le-Moriti in passing also hold this mistaken view. Yet there are other families in the village which are not Kgatla by origin. The archival material is useful though it leaves much to be desired in

the history of Lentswe-le-Moriti especially the events between 1966 and 1980. It must be noted that in writing this paper some important archival information may have been missed. Authentic sources state that there are some missing files on the subject, which have been pulled out by government since independence. The possible reason is that they may be carrying delicate information since Zionism was considered a subversive movement in the colonial period.

Literature provided by scholarship on the history of Eastern Botswana and the Tuli Block in particular, only focuses on other subjects thereby making the history of the Zionists a neglected area of scholarly investigation.¹⁵ The scholars generally discuss the proximity of the Bobirwa region to the Tuli Block farms as indispensable in the economic enterprise of eastern Botswana. As such, they emphasise issues of labour recruitment/ provision, labour conditions and reasons explaining why people bought farms in the Tuli Block. The general agreement is that freehold farms were bought for crop production, cattle industry and game hunting. Those who have studied the history of Babirwa, Sekgwama in particular, focus on the socio-economic and political impact of the Ngwato rule on Babirwa after they were effectively incorporated into the Ngwato State in 1920.¹⁶ Sekgwama notes some of the activities of missionary Christianity among the Babirwa which followed this conquest (female initiation, male circumcision and some aspects of the Birwa traditional religion were abolished). Landau also adds to this point by arguing that in Bobonong, laws such as the prohibition of Tswana beer, marriage rules, and hut taxes were taken seriously and were enforced by Modisaotsile.¹⁷ Sekgwama himself neglects the fact that after 1960, many Babirwa who stay next to Lentswe-le-Moriti started to join Zionism and abandoned the London Missionary Society. It is this new religion which is explained in this paper because of the contrasts that it brought in the region.

This paper is a departure from the earlier works in that it clarifies the fact that there is a farm in Tuli Block which was bought for religious rather than farming purposes. It is also a departure from the tendency to explain the events that preceded the eventual occupation of Lentswe-le-Moriti.¹⁸ The study treats 1953 as a crucial date because it marked a turning point in the history of the Zionists in Bobirwa/ Tuli Block area. Its impact among Babirwa is also a factor that this study takes into serious consideration.

In field work, a survey was carried out for at least nine weeks and 48 people were interviewed. An open ended questionnaire was administered each time a respondent or group of respondents was interviewed. The questionnaire carried questions concerning the socio-economic and political aspects of Lentswe-le-Moriti. Sometimes respondents were visited more than once to verify certain issues. It is likely that some information was concealed because some things can only be said after the approval of Engenas Lekganyane, the bishop of the Church in South Africa. Most selected respondents were members of the original Zionist expedition to Lentswe-le-Moriti. Hence the knowledge they shared is invaluable to the production of this study. The Zionists themselves dominated the sample size but interviews in Ramotswa and Mochudi were also carried out to determine the factors that led to the Zionists' expedition. Babirwa living near Lentswe-le-Moriti were interviewed to determine their relationship to the Zionists since their arrival. Zionist migrant workers (they were reached through referrals by their relatives), a few government officials, and workers in the village were either formally or informally interviewed.

This study has been divided into four parts. It is concerned mainly with the period between 1953 and 1980. The first is an appraisal of the politics of the establishment of

the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) in Bechuanaland Protectorate. This part analyses the politico-religious dynamics which were to form the basis of the subsequent emergence of Lentswe-le-Moriti. The second part traces the interaction and conflict that followed the arrival of Zionists in Bobirwa/Tuli Block area. It includes an assessment concerning provision of labour for both the Babirwa and the Boer farmers by the Zionists, competition over wildlife, and survival in a new territory.

The object of the third part is to explore the origin, obstacles and role of the development of Lentswe-le-Moriti school. The transformation of this school from a private one into a state school is closely examined. This part will shed light on what may be treated as the social consequences of the evolution of Lentswe-le-Moriti school in Eastern Botswana. The fourth and final part will focus on issues characterising post independence developments in Lentswe-le-Moriti. Attention will be paid to the elections of 1965, the impact of independence and socio-political changes that occurred with particular reference to the Zionists. The fourth part ends by investigating questions that surround the absence of *bogosi* (headmanship). It also attempts to give reasons explaining the lack of development activities in the village. The year 1980 is this study's terminal date because it marked a break of debate between government and Zionists on the issue of *bogosi*.

The establishment of the ZCC in the Protectorate

Religion and politics in the history of Botswana is the thrust of this chapter. It begins by tracing the origins and growth of the ZCC in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. The aim is to show how Tswana *dikgosi* (Chiefs), the colonial administration, the missionaries and the ZCC inter-acted particularly in Mochudi. The Chapter examines the sources of opposition to the establishment of the Church and of course other African Independent Churches in general. It will be established that the *dikgosi* and missionaries were opposed to the ZCC. The colonial administration also allowed the *dikgosi* to persecute the ZCC thereby hindering the growth and spread of any Independent church in the country. The chapter ends by showing how *Mazioni* (Zionists) after experiencing persecution and banishment from the 'Reserves', finally acquired a farm in the Tuli Block.¹⁹ This is the farm, which became their permanent home. It will be pointed out that the problems involved in the acquisition of this farm can be best understood against the background of the land policies of the time, which favoured Europeans at the expense of Africans.

Bishop Engenas Barnabas Lekganyane of Pietersburg in South Africa started the ZCC in 1924. It then grew into Botswana during the latter part of the 1930s. The spark, which gave rise to the Church in Bechuanaland Protectorate, was lit by the suspension of *kgosi* (Chief) Molefi by the administration. The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) had influenced the administration to take this action. And the supporters of the new religion were against Isang, the new *kgosi*. In 1937 Zionism therefore started in Mochudi as a 'political movement' -called *Ipelegeng*-aiming to secure Molefi's reinstatement as Kgatla *kgosi*.²⁰ In 1938 the *Ipelegeng* changed its appellation to that of the ZCC in order to pursue its political intrigues under the guise of religion. Ralefala Motsisi, a former migrant labourer in South Africa, and Bogatsu Dintwe received the blessing of the leader of the Zion Christian Church, Lekganyane, to start a ZCC congregation. Upon its inception, some royalist members including Mohumagadi Seingwaeng, Molefi's mother, and Bakgatla Pilane, his uncle, joined it. Bakgatla Pilane was later to become minister of the congregation following the death of Rev. Motsisi Ralefala in 1945. Morton affirms that though Seingwaeng could not occupy this

position, she still was a pillar of Zionism.²¹ It seems that the involvement of some royal members attracted a larger following among the Bakgatla.

The establishment of the ZCC in Mochudi was apparently a direct opposite of the inception of the Ethiopian church in Kanye which was 'used as a vehicle for opposing the ruling *kgosi* Bathoen'.²² While the former agitated for the reinstatement of the *kgosi* the latter conversely argued for the removal of the then traditional leadership. The only similarity is that each of these parties involved some members of the ruling dynasty. It is perhaps more against this background of political intrigues within these Tswana Chiefdoms that one may justly reject the conventional wisdom that anti-white and 'Africa for the Africans' feelings are universal grounds for the formation of Independent churches. In Lubinda's words Tswana cases were linked up with traditional politics and the element of White-black confrontation is secondary.²³ The reason may be that in Botswana there were not many whites as was the case in countries like South Africa and Zimbabwe. As already stated at the outset, Sundkler's generalisation to the effect that the racial issue is at the centre of Zionist and Ethiopian Churches formation is therefore not the only factor.

The formation of the ZCC in Kgatlang comparatively differed with the formation of the Church elsewhere in the protectorate. Among other Tswana ethnic groups the Church was formed independently of royalist politics.²⁴ By and large the Church came through poor migrant labourers who learnt of it in South Africa where it originated. It then grew because of the healing service it rendered. In light of this evidence it is most likely that in most chiefdoms the origin of the church was largely apolitical. Both the white-black confrontation and the struggle between the administration and the *dikgosi* did not prompt the birth of the Church. It was therefore only in the wake of the Church's inception that the administration and the *dikgosi*'s influence came to the fore.

The establishment of AICs was generally not appealing to the politics of the time. In fact the laws of the country did not provide for the registration of Independent churches.²⁵ There was consequently a countrywide protest against Zionism by several *dikgosi* who felt Zionists defied their authority. For example, *kgosi* Kgari Sechele who was installed in 1935 by the British against the Bakwena's wishes was disturbed by the growing interest in Independent churches, especially the ZCC.²⁶ The reaction of Bakwena towards the administration was very similar to that of the Bakgatla whose *kgosi* Molefi was deposed in 1937 by the administration for various administrative wrongs. As such, those candidates for *bogosi* who the administration installed were not always accepted by their subjects. This always polarised Tswana chiefdoms. The polarity resulted in political factions comprising individuals who shared a common interest, ideology, or relationship to other individuals as was typified in the case of Kgatla Zionism.²⁷

In Kanye and of course Mochudi, the *dikgosi* opposed the ZCC by arguing that the Zionists divided their people and did not attend tribal duties. There was also an outcry against the general refusal of the AICs to allow their members to consult western doctors and attend medical hospitals. This was not peculiar to Bechuanaland. In Zululand, for instance, chiefs also believed that Zionists disturbed the community life of the tribe.²⁸ It would appear that the Bechuanaland Protectorate administration also frowned at the ZCC. Traditional leadership was effectively used by the colonial administration to thwart the development of AICs. The ZCC was conceived as a challenge to the administration, especially as its establishment in Mochudi was premised on challenging the decision of the administration. Jean Comaroff also argues

that the ability to win a population of multitudes across South Africa by the ZCC—even if for *bona fide* religious purposes—was extremely threatening to the state.²⁹

The Mission Churches were also not happy with Zionism in Bechuanaland. They viewed AICs with serious hostility. They also influenced the *dikgosi* and the administration to take measures against these churches. Their argument, particularly among the Bakwena and Bakgatla, was based on the feeling that the ZCC poached their membership. However people voluntarily joined Zionism. After the Second World War, Mission Churches therefore increasingly lost members to the Zionists.³⁰

The tendency to repulse AICs especially by the *dikgosi* was not a novel practice. It did not begin with the AICs. When Christianity first came into Bechuanaland and to most parts of Southern African, reaction to it was initially negative. But interestingly and not surprisingly, Mission Churches were later accepted as official 'state' religion in the 'Reserves'. This was despite the fact that they attacked many Tswana practices and customs such as *bogwera* (male initiation), *bojale* (female initiation) and rainmaking. Independent churches were also denied church sites. For example, the Spiritual Healing Church was denied permission to build a church in the Bamangwato Reserve by the Ngwato rulers in the early 1950s.³¹ This course was challenged by the Zionists who protested about the ecclesiastical monopoly of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in Gammangwato. However, Seretse Khama is said to have asserted that Mission Churches 'respect' Tswana law and custom, and they were not like Zionists who were ruled by 'spirits' and drank ash and water and who disobeyed the law.³² This was incorrect. Most Mission Churches discredited Tswana law, and if the ZCC philosophy defied Tswana law and custom, the both parties deserved equal rejection. It is logical to assume that Mission Churches appeased the *dikgosi* by building schools and hospitals. This, together with the administration's support, gave them an advantage over the AICs. However, it would appear that some Batswana voluntarily joined the Mission Churches. As Landau points out, the Word of God was spread because of spiritual hunger. Small villages within the Ngwato District asked for preachers from Serowe to come and begin church services.

The persecution of the Zionists ultimately culminated in their banishment from the Reserves especially in the Southern part of the protectorate. On his return from the Second World War, Molefi declared himself in favour of 'freedom' of worship but announced that the DRC was to be the only church in Kgatleng. The ZCC was to be eradicated. In 1947, Queen Seingwaeng was beaten in public by her son Molefi, for refusing to abandon Zionism. Bakgatla Pilane, Sebele Motsisi and Sephitse Tau were also among the Zionists convicted by *kgosi* Molefi. Some Zionists were sentenced to two years imprisonment with hard labour.³³ Molefi betrayed the Zionists who had rallied behind him during his suspension. He did this in order to appease the administration so he could be reinstated as the Kgatla *kgosi*. Apparently the administration entertained Molefi's decision. The Government Secretary merely emphasised that the ZCC was more political than religious.³⁴ In this way he deliberately and not surprisingly overlooked the fact that even the DRC was taking a political course by inciting the administration to suspend Molefi.

As a result, in 1947 Bakgatla Zionists were ordered to leave the Bakgatla Reserve. An inquiry was held in the same year to determine the circumstances that led to the banishment.³⁵ Unfortunately the Zionists were not represented. The Commission became an affair between Molefi and the administration. The Zionists were naturally disfavoured by the findings of the Commission.³⁶ According to Schapera, the administration could intervene if the *dikgosi* took actions that it did not approve.³⁷ This

is because in the final analysis the laws and authority of the colonisers were pre-eminent. The fact that the administration did not modify Molefi's banishment order attests to its approval. The administration simply did not want the church as already argued. This also explains why at a meeting held in 1947 between the Zionists and Molefi, prior to the banishment order, Mr Alastair Macrae, the then District Commissioner in Mochudi, is said to have told the Zionists that 'the door is closed but not yet locked.'³⁸ This statement was intimidating to the Zionists. The Zionists were either to abandon their Zionism or face banishment. As the Zionists refused to abandon their religion they were immediately exiled. This practice was not new. Because of conflict between *kgosi* Bathoen Gaseitsewe and Mothowagae Motlogelwa, the latter and his followers were unceremoniously banished to Lekgolobotlo, an undesirable part of the chiefdom in 1910. Motlogelwa's group was seen as subversive and threatening the unity of the tribe.

The Bakgatla Zionists were initially banished to Metsimotlhabe in the Bakgatla Reserve in November 1947. *kgosi* Molefi believed that hunger and starvation would persuade the Zionists to abandon their Church in this small dry land. As this failed the Zionists were forced to move to Gaborone railway station in June 1949. Here an old man, an old woman and two children died of exposure to the winter.³⁹ In the same year Bakgatla Zionists were joined by Zionists from other Southern Reserves. The new population comprised Balete, Bakwena and Barolong. Bakgatla Zionists remained the dominant group. It is notable that the non-Bakgatla Zionists did not leave their Reserves entirely out of their own volition. The administration, Mission Churches and the *dikgosi* harassed and rejected them. For instance, *kgosi* Mokgosi III was very much opposed to Zionism in Ramotswa.⁴⁰ Followers of the ZCC, including Dihutshane Mosienyane and Johannes Kobe, were beaten up in public for refusal to abandon their Church. Those who claimed to have left the Church were forced to eat pork, which in tradition was forbidden by Zionism.

The moment of succession to leadership is a critical event in the maintenance and change of any political system as it tests the extent to which a population accepts the right of rulers to rule.⁴¹ This is not peculiar to political systems. Whilst the Zionists were at Gaborone, the mother Church in South Africa split because of succession disputes following the death of its founder and leader Bishop Engenas Barnabas Lekganyane in 1948.⁴² This division affected the life of the Church in Botswana, which was simultaneously facing its particular turmoil. This section of Batswana Zionists joined the section of the Church that recognised Joseph Lekganyane, the younger son, as the rightful successor in accordance with the prophecy made by his father. Divine selection is what they considered rather than secular rules of inheritance. They adopted the dove as their emblem and became the St. Engenas ZCC, which is today the only Church in Lentswe-Le-Moriti.⁴³

These Batswana Zionists were landless. We cannot understand how the Zionists acquired land without recourse to the land policies of the time. After the demarcation of tribal reserves in 1894 and the alienation of other land to European settlers since 1905, it became more difficult for large groups to move away and become independent 'tribes' with their own territories.⁴⁴ Sundkler asserts that in South Africa too, the Native Land Act of 1913 had made it impossible for 'Natives' either individually or as a syndicate to acquire land. The Zionist group in Bechuanaland found itself in this situation.

In the first place they were denied the right to settle within 'tribal land' by the authorities. By the same token their quest for land worried European farmers who did

not want blacks on or near their farms. In August 1949 Mr Coulson, their Zeerust lawyer, tried to buy land for them in Gaborone Block, but was frustrated by objections raised by European farmers there. The rejection was based on the proclamations that had deliberately settled the Africans into the Reserves and whites into frontier lands. Also the Zionists were barred by the administration from settling within the Crown lands in the railway strip which in principle—not practice—'could even be sold or leased to those natives who had advanced so far that they were not satisfied to continue living under tribal conditions'.⁴⁵ This evidence suggests that Maruatona's general claim that Batswana did not respond to the call to buy farms⁴⁶ is unconvincing: it does not take into account the factors that prevented Africans from buying land in their own country.

In 1950, the Zionists further migrated and settled in Hildavale near Lobatse in a certain Mr Familion's farm. Mr Familion, though sympathetic to the Zionists' plight, also saw them as a source of cheap labour. Here in the Lobatse Block the poor Zionists eked out an existence as underpaid employees. Some of them died of smallpox. Meanwhile the Zionists pursued their search for a better place to live in. It was only in 1952 that Mr Coulson found a remedy by finding land for the Zionists.⁴⁷ Three thousand morgen of the northern Tuli Block in the Eastern corner of the protectorate was sold for £7000 to the Reverend Joseph Lekganyane as head of and representative of the ZCC by Carel Van Heerden and Philip Wouter Roos. Bakgatla Pilane, the Zionists' *moruti* (Church minister), and Albert Mabusa were the witnesses to the deed of sale. It seems the farm was sold because irrigation appeared to be remote and the soil was infertile and stony.⁴⁸

Sundkler maintains that Lekganyane had no difficulty in securing the cash for buying considerable farms where he could let hundreds of his followers settle down, forming Zionist colonies owned by the Prophet himself.⁴⁹ Engenas Lekganyane's ZCC has developed into the largest indigenous church in South Africa, financially self-reliant and exceptionally strong. Therefore Church funds bought farms, provided loans to business people to build shops run by the Church, and bought gifts for secular authorities.⁵⁰ This is how Lekganyane, through Mr Coulson, acquired Zionist farms in Bechuanaland—notably Lentswe-le-Moriti (Shady Rock) or Loenza-la-Moridi as rendered by the colonial records.

It is in the light of the preceding developments that the Zionists at Lentswe-le-Moriti saw and still see Lekganyane as their black Moses-figure who liberated them from their painful sufferings. This is the suffering that even made them name their truck *Matlhomoleng* (grieving).⁵¹ *Matlhomoleng* transported the Zionists to their farm in the course of their turmoil. On their journey to their new home they first stayed for two weeks in Mahalapye as they could not cross the flowing rivers. They later proceeded to Sefhare where they spent some time obtaining food by working in the fields of Tswapong. Oral traditions indicate that here the Zionists were joined by some few Tswapong people from Sefhare who also loved their Church for its healing services. As Landau suggests, many Tswapong villages including Lerala, Ratholo and Sefhare had already experienced the growth of AICs. In Ratholo there was the Spiritual Healing Church of Rev. Mokaleng. So the Zionists' arrival in the area did not mark the beginning of AIC Movement there. Perhaps it increased the love of Zionism by the local people. In 1953, a population of 312 Zionists, comprising children and adults, settled at Lentswe-le-Moriti (some 460 kms from Bakgatla Reserve). Some of their colleagues had died whilst they were camped at Gaborone and Hildavale. Bakgatla

Pilane was in charge of the party. They had no cattle or considerable property.⁵² Clearly, life was not going to be easy for the Zionists in Tuli Block.

The arrival of the Zionists in the Tuli Block

The arrival of the Zionists in the Bobirwa/Tuli Block area was not without conflict and rejection. The area was on the one hand inhabited by a mixed farming community of the Babirwa, and on the other by the Boers of the Tuli Block. The Zionists were therefore squeezed between a settler community involved in game hunting and cattle keeping, and the mixed farming community of Babirwa. The situation of the Zionists was not helped by the fact that they, like the Boer settlers, occupied freehold territory. Their farm was not clearly demarcated or fenced, and they were seen by the Boer settlers as competitors. More importantly, though surprisingly, the colonial administration appeared to support the Boer settler community against the interests of the Zionists and the Babirwa communities.

The conflict and rejection surrounding the Zionists' arrival in Tuli Block can best be traced against the transformation of the conditions of land tenure in Bechuanaland Protectorate beginning from 1905. This was the period when some tribal land was alienated to European settlers. In this way the Tuli became a European farming area. After the Second World War, however, the BSAC sold the land cheaply. Occasionally buyers were people who wanted the land as no more than shooting ground. This was due to the considerable herds of game that came to the Limpopo River to drink. Apart from a very few long established English speaking settlers, the majority of land holders were Afrikaners from the Transvaal. Some of them, indeed, continued to live in the Transvaal. Boer farmers were largely game hunters and cattle keepers in isolated farms.

It was evident that the white community of Boer farmers was going to be hostile to the black community of Zionists. Even as early as the days of the BSAC, it was clear that white farmers were generally not ready to accommodate black communities. After the eviction of Babirwa in 1920 the BSAC ruled that whoever returned to the Tuli Block was to live under a white 'land owner'.⁵³ The white settlers did not wish to compete in any sphere with the Africans. When the Boer farmers started to occupy the land, they inherited the same culture, and by 1952 it was obvious that local Boer farmers were opposed to the establishment of the Zionist settlement in Tuli Block. They did not want an autonomous black community owning land independently of white control. From the Tuli Block farmers' point of view, the coming of Zionists was in itself an encroachment by Africans upon European Reserves.⁵⁴ Similarly, Sundkler notes that in South Africa, the Zionist settlements became what were termed 'Black Spots in European areas'.

The Boers argued that insofar as the Africans were an 'inferior' race to the whites it was an offence before the Law and the Lord for the two to share the same territory. They requested the then District Commissioner to repatriate the Zionists.⁵⁵ Their chief pretext was that the Zionists were frightening game from their farms. They also claimed that this group of Africans was spoiling the appearance of the game farms and the white area in general. (Similarly the Afrikaner farmers in the Ghanzi Block petitioned the government against the large number of Bakgalagadi at Kalkfontein and suggested their removal.⁵⁶

The Boers had ulterior motives. First, there was racial prejudice, but secondly and perhaps more importantly, the Boers feared that the presence of Zionists near their

farms would lead to competition over game resources. The Boer farmers were in fact seriously depleting game in the Tuli Block. Available information shows that there was considerable wildlife poaching along the Limpopo River.⁵⁷ Cases were also reported of shooting parties coming from the Transvaal to hunt game in the Tuli Block. Although there was some competition, the Zionists only snared small game for immediate consumption.

Boer farmers believed that their freedom to unlawfully kill game was going to be threatened. Although the Boers objected to the creation of the Zionist farm on the grounds that game was to be frightened away from their farms, the fact is that they saw it as an attraction to various government agents including the police. These government officials were now frequenting the Tuli Block to investigate the lives of the Zionists. Some informants state that at least some Zionists reported those Boer farmers who carelessly destroyed game, although this seems to have been rare. The Boer farmers did not respect the Zionists' freehold title:

One day we killed small game in our farm. Some three Babirwa labourers saw us while on transit to their working area. These men reported us to their Boer master who then told us that we had no hunting right.⁵⁸

The Zionists were poor refugees in the Tuli Block. They had sold their property and livestock upon their banishment from the Reserves. Therefore survival in the new territory was not easy. Their small and unrewarding trade (selling bones to the Transvaal Boers) could not solve their economic decline.⁵⁹ The alternative was to work in Boer farms where their working conditions were generally poor. Low wages were common and Africans had to accept them in order to pay tax. But unlike the poor Zionists, most of the richer Babirwa were good arable and pastoral farmers who did not rely solely on working in Boer farms. The rich Babirwa sold cattle to generate money and some of them only sold their labour in times of drought or when cattle diseases broke out.⁶⁰ There was no job specialisation on the farms and the Zionists were ploughing, harvesting crops or repairing fences. Boer farmers assumed that African labour was simply "unskilled".

The law did not protect labourers in the Tuli Block. Workers were employed without the consent of the District Commissioner and "protection" existed only on paper. Apart from the meagre wages, they received a bag of mealie-meal as payment. The informants stress that the Zionists, nevertheless, shared with each other the little they obtained from work.

Poverty forced the Zionists to flock to the Ngwato Reserve to become cattle herders or domestic servants of the richer Babirwa farmers. However, oral traditions indicate that though the Babirwa employed the Zionists they feared them. There were (unfounded) suspicions that the practices of their Church included *boloi* (witchcraft) and *dithabelo* (human sacrifices). The Zionists also worked as share-croppers in the fields through *majako* system (labour provided at another person's arable lands in exchange for a small amount of the crop produce). The workers provided labour for ploughing, weeding and harvesting of crops and food was provided as well as a portion of the crop yield.⁶¹ Workers were often paid in kind. Their employer might, for instance, feed and clothe them, or let them use his plough and oxen.⁶² It was in this labour provision that the Zionists were also paid with cows, goats and sheep depending on the kind of animals they herded. This was an old practice in Babirwa area. Poor Babirwa have been hired as labourers by rich Babirwa farmers since 1900.⁶³ The

labourers acquired cows through the *mafisa* system. It was the Zionists who usually went to Babirwa to look for jobs. Zionism, as already argued, was not yet something attractive to Babirwa because of allegations that the Zionists killed people. Therefore despite the Zionist supply of labour to Babirwa, close interaction was not something that developed overnight between these parties. By 1955 the then Resident Commissioner also commented that Zionists "have lived on their farm in Tuli Block for the past two years and had no apparent effect on their neighbours in the Ngwato Reserve."⁶⁴

After acquiring cattle, sheep and goats from Babirwa the Zionists began to experiment with agricultural projects in their poor and small land. Pieces of land inside their farm were now allocated to the Zionists to start ploughing. The community had formed a committee which was a sort of Land Board. Informants state that despite destruction of crops by game especially elephants agricultural production was generally good. However, the attempt to introduce animal husbandry and cultivation in the farm was not without problems. It appears that this signified the beginning of competition for land between cattle farming, wildlife and arable farming in Lentswele-Moriti. The farm was bought for religious rather than for economic reasons, but in order to make a living the Zionists had no choice but to introduce agriculture. Consequently, in addition to destruction of vegetation caused by the Zionists' animals, there was also heavy overgrazing by game and even cattle from neighbouring farms.

Meanwhile there was pressure from the Boer farmers yet again. Boer farmers captured the Zionists' animals which strayed onto their farms and killed those whose owners failed to claim,⁶⁵ although their own animals strayed onto the Lentswele-Moriti farm without the Zionists confiscating them. The Zionists were debarred from grazing their few cattle along the greener pastures of the Limpopo River. The Zionists had been guaranteed by those who sold them the farm that the ground was on the Limpopo River and that they would be entitled to water from the river,⁶⁶ but the neighbouring Boer farmers did not accept this.

The Zionists' problems may have been compounded by the existence of farms dividing the Tuli Block and the Transvaal. Mazonde observes that this feature created problems in the understanding of simultaneous use of grazing pastures between these two places. For instance, some unclear cases were reported in which cattle crossing the Limpopo were shot on sight by Transvaal Boer farmers. This is because cattle movement across the Limpopo river was statutorily forbidden especially during the outbreak of cattle lung disease.⁶⁷ Consequently many Zionists and some Boer farmers in Tuli Block lost their animals. Such were the problems that the Zionists encountered in their early period of settlement in eastern Botswana.

Western education in the Tuli Block

As in many parts of the then Bechuanaland Protectorate, there was generally a lack of schools in the Babirwa area. It was only until the coming of the Ngwato rule in Bobonong in 1920 that the church which was built was now used as a school during the day.⁶⁸ By 1930 there was consequently one small primary school which operated under the influence of the London Missionary Society. This notwithstanding, many Babirwa children continued to go to nearby parts of Zimbabwe and South Africa for schooling until the breaking of the Zimbabwe Liberation war in the 1970s. And the Zionists' children (newcomers in the Ngwato District) could not go to Bobonong primary school. The school was far away from their farm. The Mission Churches did

not want the children of AIC members, while the Zionists did not want to send their children to non-Zionist schools.

However, the period between 1955 and 1962 was a period of remarkable change in Tuli Block and the Bobirwa area in general. The residents of Lentswe-le-Moriti built a school through self-help.⁶⁹ This project involved the entire Zionist community. The Zionists' children had not been to school since their parents were banished from the Reserves in 1947. Four years before independence, this private school was taken over by the colonial administration. This development brought the Zionists and Babirwa closer and closer together, as children of the latter began to attend school in Lentswe-le-Moriti. The remains of the old school's building, including the very first building, were recently demolished in order to create space for further development.⁷⁰

The founding of a school in Tuli Block can be best understood against the background of the Zionists' initiatives from 1955. A small number of Zionists who had received Western education in the Reserves was inspired by the enthusiasm of their young brothers and sisters.⁷¹ Soon the Zionists' children began to gather under trees for lessons. Meanwhile a building site was allocated for the school. A campaign for clearing the site for the new building followed immediately after the design was made. This was a project which involved self-supervision and depended largely on the enthusiasm of the people.

The end result was the establishment of a private school whose building was a rough grass-roofed shelter measuring 60 square metres.⁷² In the meantime, the construction of other two shelters of the same kind were planned. The spirit of self-help in this project no doubt had some of its roots in the Zionists' background, the Bakgatla in particular—the Bakgatla Zionists had in 1937 formed themselves into the *Ipelegeng* society to claim the reinstatement of Molefi. But in fact "*Ipelegeng*" projects had become a part of the way of life of Batswana as a *kgosi* could call upon regiments to construct a dam, build a school or even a church.⁷³ A good example is the building of Isang school in Mochudi in 1921.⁷⁴ "*Ipelegeng*" was inevitable. The fact of the matter is that the circumstances in which they found themselves in Tuli Block were naturally calling for such an initiative.

Upon the completion of the building, two women, Khumo Kgetsi and Lesego Dintwa—who had done their standard six and seven respectively—volunteered to become the first teachers of the school.⁷⁵ These qualifications were adequate inasmuch as most teachers of the time possessed them. The major problem was poor facilities. There was no remuneration whatsoever. Dihutshwane Mosienyane, though inexperienced, became the school administrator. Books were ordered and sold to the pupils of the school. There was one big and two small rough black boards. By 1957 the school had an attendance of between 30-40 children, taught up to standard II.⁷⁶

However, there was already signs that the Bakgatla authorities were trying to reconcile with the Bakgatla Zionists. The Bakgatla Zionists were many families and they comprised some royal members. But other *dikgosi*, whose people were also in Lentswe-le-Moriti, remained aloof: their people were merely a few families with no attachments to royalty. In 1956, after the death of Bakgatla Pilane, *kgosi* Molefi visited the Zionists at their farm. He told his mother and the other Zionists that they were welcome to return to Mochudi and enjoy freedom of religion. Seingwaeng and her colleagues refused.⁷⁷ She built her house on the compound of Bakgatla Pilane, her long-time companion and the Zionists' minister.⁷⁸ It appears that *kgosi* Molefi held an informal meeting at his camp site on the Motloutsi River on his visit to Lentswe-le-Moriti. It was agreed at this meeting that the administration should make every effort

to encourage Zionist parents to send their children to Kgatleng for schooling.⁷⁹ The reason, so it is said, was to win over the children to the Bakgatla.⁸⁰ But it seems that now Molefi was ready to positively assist the uneducated Zionists.

In 1957 Linchwe II also paid an official visit to Tuli block to appeal to the Zionists to return. He was accompanied by Rev. Thema, the then DRC senior *moruti*. Linchwe told the Zionists to forget about the past and think of the future with him. He was also worried about the inadequate education that the Zionist children were receiving.⁸¹ The Zionists appreciated Linchwe's plea, but chose to remain there. They argued that they were already established and happy in their new home. They were already doing farming. And the small school was a clear sign that they were settled. His request having been rejected, Linchwe alternatively asked for his grandmother alone. Again Seingwaeng said no.⁸²

The Zionists were never discouraged in their endeavours to become an established community in their farm. In 1957 they requested the District Officer in Machaneng to build them a better school staffed with confirmed teachers. But the government took its time. The administration believed that the erection and furnishing of a school could be interpreted by the community as an indication that the government expected them to remain there permanently.⁸³ By the same token, the administration hoped that the removal of the entire settlement could be considered one day.

It was believed by the administration that the area was overstocked and overpopulated, and that its neighbours were unaccommodating. The administration also believed that the provision of a school for one particular sect was undesirable as it would result in difficulties concerning doctrinal teaching and admission or exclusion of non Zionists.⁸⁴ All these reasons convinced the government that the Department of Education could not take over the school. In the meantime, some of the elder children of the Zionists went to Moria in Pietersburg in South Africa for schooling.⁸⁵ The Moria Church Head Office had by 1958 considered the significance of admitting these children in its school. As already stated, the children could not go to non-Zionist schools. The community believed that there could be bad influences such as drinking and smoking at these schools. Whilst at Moria these children formed the Amazioni Football Club which continued to exist for some time after their return to Lentswe-le-Moriti.

It appears the mother Church in South Africa did not assist the Zionists in the area of education except through the above mentioned initiative. Informants note that whenever Joseph Lekganyane visited Lentswe-le-Moriti he only addressed issues of faith, without providing any material support.⁸⁶ However, his image and authority remained strong among his people. This relationship between Lentswe-le-Moriti Zionists and the mother Church in Moria is better explained by the following factors. The 1949 ZCC schism had lasting effects on the St. Engenas ZCC. The fate of the church's funds and property remains controversial,⁸⁷ as a result of the split the St. Engenas ZCC faced financial crisis. And Lentswe-le-Moriti was not the only farm the Church owned. In South Africa, Pudungwane and Mokgwaneng farms also required financial support, while Moria took priority since it was the headquarters. Another explanation is that in fact the Church's philosophy emphasises that the congregations, especially those at farms, must be self-reliant rather than dependent. This philosophy of being independent is common among many AICs.⁸⁸

The Zionists perseverance in their efforts to introduce Western education in Tuli Block was later to bear fruits. Already by 1958, it was clear that the British administration was thinking of a process which would result in a state school, though it

was not clear when, where and how. But by and large the administration was more positive in attending to the Zionists' initiatives than it had been in 1956. First, the African population was larger in Lentswe-le-Moriti than elsewhere in the Block. Secondly, government officials visiting the farm including junior District Officers such as Philip Steenkamp and Colonel Grey were impressed by the Zionist children who showed great commitment to education.⁸⁹ Lastly, neighbouring farmers and farm labourers were also keen on the idea. Their children attending school in the Reserve would be removed to attend school near where their parents worked. These conditions naturally favoured Lentswe-le-Moriti as a more suitable site for introducing a state school than the Voortrekker farm.⁹⁰

However, the implementation of the project depended on certain conditions being met. Firstly, if the Zionists could erect a suitable school the government would appoint a teacher and equip the school. The second condition was that non-Zionist children from neighbouring farms would be allowed to attend.⁹¹ Thirdly, no Zionist doctrinal teachings were to be allowed. Finally, the Zionists had to accept the appointment of a non-Zionist headteacher. These conditions were not novel: the High Commission office had always confirmed that the government had no money but was willing to help, provided such schools were located or administered on neutral ground.⁹² The office also required the 'tribes' and the Missions to take a lead. On the whole, the idea of neutrality was therefore a pre-requisite of putting private schools under government wing. For instance, when Moeng College was turned into a state school around 1959, this was on the understanding that various tribes in the country would have as much access as was enjoyed by the Bangwato.⁹³

In 1962 Lentswe-le-Moriti private school was transferred to the Department of Education. Thereupon a state school, with standard 7, a national syllabus and two trained teachers was introduced.⁹⁴ The emergence of Gasonto Ltd in 1959 (today Talana farms) meant that many African children whose parents were labourers there would go to this new school. Gasonto was a 'town' at which the Zionists and most Babirwa were working. Another catchment area for the school was the Tuli Lodge which employed African labour since 1960. Children from the Wildlife department—built in 1965—also went to Lentswe-le-Moriti primary school. At about this time there was only one Primary school in Bobonong.⁹⁵ It was nearer for Babirwa, particularly those from Semolale and Kobojango, to go to Manama, Thakadiawa and Gwanda in Zimbabwe for school than to go to Bobonong, Palapye and Serowe. With the emergence of a state school in Lentswe-le-Moriti, many other children from the Ngwato reserve had an alternative of receiving their education there. A school board, headed by Petros Mosienyane, was formed comprising representatives from all the catchment areas.⁹⁶ The school was entirely an African affair. The Boer farmers did not send their children to this school. They had access to better schools in the Transvaal.

This school was unique in that it served as an instrument for cementing the relations between the Zionists and Babirwa. Now that there was a school in Lentswe-le-Moriti, many Babirwa went there in pursuit of knowledge since there were very few schools in Eastern Botswana. Babirwa children now stayed with the Zionists in their homes without fear.⁹⁷ However, these children were not forced to be Zionists and they rarely became such. But some Babirwa informants note that many of their children went to the school with the hope that they would excel since the school was in a sacred village.

This new kind of interaction had paved way for the spread of the St. Engenas ZCC in the Bobirwa area. More and more Babirwa patients were sent to the Zionist village

for treatment.⁹⁸ Interestingly, some Babirwa belonging to the London Missionary Society now abandoned it and joined the new religion according to the brief testimony 'I found healing there'.⁹⁹ This development became an alternative for the lack of the modern health facilities in the area. For medical treatment, as for education, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa were often preferred over the protectorate. Patients suffering from TB usually crossed the border into Rhodesia, where they went to Manama hospital in Southern Matebeleland.¹⁰⁰ This continued until the outbreak of the liberation war in that country. In the protectorate itself there was only one clinic at Bobonong which catered for all the villages in the Bobirwa area since 1960.¹⁰¹ The few medical doctors in the Ngwato District were limited to the capital, Serowe. People consulted local *dingaka* (traditional healers) for most health complaints, but the Babirwa patients realised that some of their health problems could not be cured by traditional healers. Some of those who had the privileged opportunity to consult medical doctors did not receive adequate healing too. One informant revealed a story to me concerning his aunt, Elinah Nare, who was failing to get treatment from both the traditional healers and medical doctors until she was treated by the ZCC in Lentswe-le-Moriti. This patient was one of those Babirwa living in Zimbabwe, which would seem to suggest that the influence of the Lentswe-le-Moriti church was also felt among the Babirwa found on the other side of the border.¹⁰²

Faith healing was thus a major factor which made this church so interesting to the Babirwa.¹⁰³ One other important aspect in this church became that of emphasis on prayer for healing. The *baruti* (ministers) could pray over substances such as water or coffee with which to treat their patients. According to the Church's beliefs and practices, these substances can not render healing in the absence of prayer. Whilst in Kgatleng, this healing practice was questioned by one DRC minister after his daughter was healed from nose bleeding by the ZCC. The minister argued, "can prayer alone render healing?"¹⁰⁴ It appears that the church also attracted many followers because it provided healing without payment, unlike both the traditional and medical doctors. The early missionary to the Bangwato, the Rev. Price, charged for dispensing medicines and therapy to the sick, although his wife thought he charged much less than "native doctors."¹⁰⁵

The evidence does not suggest that the Zionists were completely averse to medical health facilities. Since 1964, they received health care through a mobile clinic which was co-ordinated by the Mmadinare Health Post.¹⁰⁶ The purpose of this mobile clinic was also to cater for those Babirwa children who were attending school in Lentswe-le-Moriti, including their teachers. There were allegations that the Zionists were generally opposed to consulting medical doctors and medical hospitals, especially while they were still in the Reserves, but the truth seems to be that, while the Zionists may have heavily relied on prayer and faith healing, at times they accommodated Western medicine.

On the whole, this chapter suggests that the Lentswe-le-Moriti Church became a 'hospital' of its own in the Bobirwa region. It can also be argued that the coming of a national school in Lentswe-le-Moriti had softened the relations between people who once feared each other. Babirwa began to go to Lentswe-le-Moriti to see their children thereby getting closer and closer to understanding the healing power of the ZCC. However, it is correct to note that there was a limit to how far Zionism could spread.¹⁰⁷ Lastly, the abandonment of the LMS by Babirwa did not produce hatred between the church, *dikgosi* and missionary Christianity similar to that which occurred in Southern Botswana.

Post-independence developments in Lentswe-le-Moriti

Between 1965 and 1980 the Zionists witnessed a series of socio-cultural and political developments. These developments manifested themselves at three levels. First the Zionists participated in the first elections of 1965 which carried the country to independence. Secondly, the presence of a non-Zionist community (teachers) and the emergence of towns in the 1970s have become the major sources of internal and external influence. In addition, since the 1969 elections the Zionists' party affiliation has changed as people joined various parties. Last but not least, the issue of *bogosi* (chieftainship) has become one of the most striking developments. The Zionists' objection to this institution has produced a controversial debate between them and government.

The elections of 1965 and Africans in "Non-Tribal Areas"

The preparations for the self-government elections in Bechuanaland Protectorate started in the early 1960s. In 1965 all Batswana including those staying or working in the Non-Tribal areas were ready to vote. The Zionists of Lentswe-le-Moriti farm were also affected by these changes. However as a religious community, they did not want to be fully politicised at the expense of their faith. The participation of these people has unfortunately escaped scholarly investigation. The general trend has been to explain the electoral processes in the Reserves without ever providing an explanation of the same in Non-Tribal areas.¹⁰⁸ It is to this subject that we now turn.

By 1961 tribal and area councils were formed throughout the Reserves. In Non-Tribal areas like Kgalagadi, the government created District Councils.¹⁰⁹ Tribal leaders were the heads of these councils because they were to be successful intermediaries in the future planning for the elections in the Reserves. For instance, in June 1963, government appointed three officials to begin consultations with them for the purpose of creating a plan for self-government.¹¹⁰

However, in the Non-Tribal areas of Tuli Block, Lobatse Block and Gaborone Block, the plans were unique. District Commissioners (DCs) were gazetted as African Authorities to execute electoral processes.¹¹¹ The Blocks were generally populated by African workers who came from the surrounding Reserves, but the Zionists in Tuli Block were an exceptional case. They had bought their farm for purposes of worship. Working in Boer farms was secondary. Interestingly, they did not have a *kgosana* (headman) who could be consulted by central government on national developments. The Zionists had rejected *bogosi* in their farm from the 1950s.¹¹² The DC was therefore given responsibility for electoral procedures on the farm. In early 1965 he (Mr. D.L. Pilane) visited the Zionists to give them an orientation on the elections.¹¹³ The Zionists welcomed him because voting was not against their Church regulations, but the leaders of the village did not want radical politicisation of their community. The aim was to preserve their religion.

In the meantime, the electoral college for the three European Blocks was nominated to assist in the elections.¹¹⁴ It was agreed that those Africans who had resided outside their own 'tribes' for more than two years would have to vote in the European Blocks. This electoral provision also applied to the Zionists though they were exiles who had lost their tribal rights and connections, while other Batswana voters in the European Blocks (workers) still belonged to their tribes. A minority of whites wanted their representation through a separate electoral roll or through

delimitation of a special constituency in freehold areas dominated by the white electorate,¹¹⁵ but their demands were not supported by the Legislative Council in 1963.

When the time for campaigning started, only the Bechuanaland Democratic Party (B.D.P.) was able to recruit members in Lentswe-le-Moriti. Many informants note that the Zionists were in the main pro-B.D.P. It would appear that the B.D.P. was favoured because it was not as 'radical' as its principal opposition of the time, the Bechuanaland People's Party (B.P.P.). The Zionists generally feared radical politicisation in order to protect their religion.¹¹⁶

However, Sekgwama asserts that the Zionists followed the B.P.P. He further argues that the B.P.P. was popular among the Babirwa and the labourers who were dissatisfied with their working conditions in Tuli Block farms. The B.D.P. only became important among the Babirwa after 1970. While it may be true that the Babirwa and labourers in the Tuli Block farms were followers of the B.P.P., it is difficult to accept Sekgwama's view that the Zionists were also pro-B.P.P. Sekgwama's fieldwork did not cover the Zionists' oral traditions concerning these elections. During the same elections, one ballot box was used for all Non-Tribal areas. In Tuli Block, Lentswe-le-Moriti school was used as the only polling station. The African population was considerably large here. Both the Zionists and Babirwa labourers, therefore, voted in the Zionist farm.¹¹⁷ Thus no clear voting information can be recovered.

The elections led to the independence of the protectorate in September 1966. Philip Matema became councillor of the Bobirwa East constituency, which included Lentswe-le-Moriti farm.¹¹⁸ The independence constitution extended freedom of worship to Independent churches without exception. All churches were now officially registered regardless of their origin and practices. Consequently Zionism rapidly spread in Eastern Botswana particularly because of the influence of Lentswe-le-Moriti Church. Also, what seems to have encouraged more Babirwa to join Zionism by this time was the migration to Bobonong of Dihutshwane Mosienyane.¹¹⁹ Mosienyane, who was a junior *moruti* at Lentswe-le-Moriti farm, had moved to Bobonong to start better farming. In the course of time, he established a ZCC congregation there. The congregation gradually attracted Babirwa. This in itself also increased the Birwa-Zionist interaction, which has already been referred to in this study. Inter-marriages became common. Female Babirwa married to Zionists necessarily joined Zionism, but female Zionists could be married to non-Zionists.¹²⁰ According to oral traditions, this practice was in violation of Lekganyane's instruction. The Bishop had instructed his 'tribe' not to intermarry until he made an official announcement,¹²¹ but this never materialised.

With the declaration of freedom of worship, the Zionists began to freely visit their relatives in the Southern Reserves. Their initial fears that the *dikgosi* could interrogate them were now dispelled.¹²² Also in 1968 the newly instituted District Council, with *kgosi* Linchwe as its chairman, agreed that Zionism could not be prohibited in Kgatlang.¹²³ As a result, interaction between the Zionists and their relatives was revived. Family matters of either party began to be addressed together.

However, central to the Zionists' revival of tribal connections is the problem of identity. This identity crisis divides the community into three groups. One group has retained its identity as either Bakgatla, Balete, or Bakwena. Conversely, another group believes that they are an established "Zionist tribe" whose identity is *Mazioni*.¹²⁴ They are individuals who reject their ethnic and cultural identities to become simply Zionists. These individuals seem to believe that they must respect the identity of Zionism, which they suffered for. Their position is similar to that of some immigrants

in the United States who have rejected their ethnic and cultural origins and identified themselves religiously as either Protestants, Catholics or Jews.¹²⁵ Interestingly, there are other Zionists who have accepted the identity of "Babirwa", because of location.

Socio-cultural and political developments

The attainment of independence resulted in the transfer of Lentswe-le-Moriti school to the new Department of Education. This was the third stage in the development of the school. In March 1968, the Secretary of the School committee, Moatshe Dintwe, wrote to the Secretary of Education in Serowe requesting the construction of two more classrooms.¹²⁶ By mid July the same year, he wrote another letter requesting more trained teachers. More teachers were consequently brought in. The end result was the creation of a non-Zionist community, which could stay in the village but could not have access to land.¹²⁷ Residence was only to be allowed to church members (including the second generation).¹²⁸ Government workers have been seen as a source of evil by some Zionists, some of whom allege that some teachers have influenced their children to drink beer and smoke by ignoring Zionism's opposition to these practices.¹²⁹ The Zionists could not openly attack this "foreign" community, but they remained unhappy with some of its activities. They would prefer those teachers who neither drank nor smoke. The original rule of the village was that both drinking and smoking were forbidden, but over time the Zionists have compromised with the non-Zionist workers, who were permitted to bring in beer on condition that they were to drink privately at their places.¹³⁰ This was supposed to protect the Zionists from their influence, but it is very unlikely this has been completely successful.¹³¹

The influences that have affected the Zionists since 1966 are too extensive to be described briefly. The Zionists' socio-economic organization changed because this is the period in which Botswana's economy witnessed great changes. With the emergence of towns in the 1970s, including Gaborone and Selibe-Phikwe, many Zionists became migrant workers. Those who remained behind, especially the old and the young, started to rely on what these workers could provide because agriculture in their farm had declined since 1964. The accumulation of wealth led to some of the Zionists building better houses on the farm.¹³² Government also started supplying water to encourage development. Some of the children began to attend schools in other parts of the country, where some of them were influenced by modern ways of dressing. Young girls began to wear trousers, which were not allowed at home, and their parents could not stop them.¹³³ These experiences have influenced other children back home. Some of these children living in towns could not receive baptism at an early stage. In effect baptism had become a matter of choice than in the past when it was a compulsory practice.¹³⁴ As such slight deviations from previous norms became more common, the community could not impose serious sanctions on the concerned individuals other than to preach against such practices during church services.

Since the elections of 1969 some individual Zionists have changed in terms of party affiliation. The formation of the Botswana National Front (B.N.F) immediately after the first elections attracted some of them,¹³⁵ as some of its policies appealed to Zionists. The Zionists occupied freehold land where government developments could not be as easily implemented as they could in Tribal land, which gave an opportunity for th opposition to attack the government; though even in Tribal land the government was open to similar criticisms. According to Picard, before the 1969 elections, little was done in rural Botswana except a few general promises by the ruling party.¹³⁶ He concludes that this lack of rural development resulted in the B.D.P losing some of its

votes in the 1969 elections. This argument would appear valid in the Lentswe-le-Moriti case.

Generally, although the Zionists started to join political parties of their own choice, their religion discouraged active involvement in politics. This has helped the Zionists in retaining their religion rather than letting it be disturbed by serious party politics debates. In fact the Independent churches may not be involved in active politics but they often allow individual members to take part in political organisations of their choice.¹³⁷ In spite of participation of Zionists in politics and the aforesaid socio-cultural influences, the religious character of the village has remained somewhat resilient.

Contradictions of leadership and administration

In Tswana communities, the traditional political structures are those of *bogosi* and *kgotla*. *Bogosi* became hereditary in order to perpetuate and maintain the dominance of the ruling dynasty. The *dikgosana* administered wards and villages on behalf of the *dikgosi*. However, the case of the Zionists shows a move away from this. The leadership and administration of Lentswe-le-Moriti is possibly the first of its kind in eastern Botswana. The village is a freehold farm and thus independent of the chief's normal control of land. Lentswe-le-Moriti is dominated by Church authority, and *bogosi* has always been either absent or subsidiary. The result was a politico-religious debate between the Zionists and the government. The government proposed a fully-fledged traditional *kgotla* and *kgosana*, but the Zionists simply refused. This refusal challenges the common assumption that the traditional *kgotla* commands respect and allegiance beyond any other village institution.¹³⁸ In Lentswe-le-Moriti, it is the "religious *kgotla*" and not the traditional *kgotla* that commands respect. This issue, together with the location of the farm, has affected development activities. The issue raises questions about the the *kgotla* as an authentic voice of the Batswana in rural areas, particularly in the development process.¹³⁹ Lentswe-le-Moriti is a freehold farm. However, the fact that the government wants a *kgotla* there to facilitate development suggests that it is viewed as though it is a rural tribal area. In other freehold farms the *kgotla* is irrelevant because the residents are workers who are not permanently established like the Zionists of Lentswe-le-Moriti.

The government's pursuance of *bogosi* in Lentswe-le-Moriti dates back to the colonial period. As early as 1953 the District Commissioner had considered the appointment of Bakgatla Pilane (Church minister) as a *kgosana*.¹⁴⁰ This proposal was based on the idea that a *kgosana* could be a successful intermediary between government and the Zionists on various national projects. The response was persistently negative. The Zionists believed that such a step would give the Bakgatla in Mochudi an impression that Pilane seceded with some members to establish himself a *kgosi* elsewhere.¹⁴¹ Above all they maintained that they could not introduce a 'foreign' office within the church administration. They also affirmed that they were content with their own religious *kgotla* presided over by a *moruti* (minister) and his advisors. Their system of administration constituted what became known as "*banna ba kgoro*" or "*banna ba lekgotla*"—a religious council of men.¹⁴² Members of this council are usually selected by a gathering of the congregation, but alternatively they can be selected by some senior *baruti* who are well experienced in the theocratic administration of the village.

Interestingly, if the community loses faith in one member of the *lekgotla*, he is often removed and replaced by another trusted candidate. The *kgotla* itself became a

physically distinct arena which performed its own religious functions. Visitors were to be received here before they were introduced to the entire community. And they had to be sprinkled with sanctified water upon agreement (there was a belief that visitors bring impurities to the village).¹⁴³ Strangers accommodated by community members, and sick Zionists, were reported to this *kgotla*. The Zionists planned to hold prayer meetings three times a day in the area within their *kgotla*. Although this *kgotla* was the first institution to be introduced in Lentswe-le-Moriti, it ought not to be blurred with the ordinary village *kgotla* as discussed by Malcolm J. Odell, Jr.¹⁴⁴

Thus, the colonial government's request was not met. They only went as far as introducing a '*kgosana*' who was not officially gazetted with definitive powers or legal jurisdiction. The community argued resolutely that a formal court was uncalled for.¹⁴⁵

The post-independence government inherited the Lentswe-le-Moriti *bogosi* debate. The absolute authority that the owners of the farm have was to pose a serious dilemma for them. It is the Church Head Office in Moria, South Africa, which has the Title Deed to the farm. Thus the introduction of *bogosi* would be difficult to implement. Before any major development could occur, government had to notify village elders (*banna ba lekgotla*) who in turn would contact the Church leadership in Moria for permission¹⁴⁶—a process which involved delay. For instance, in 1968 thirty hectares was reserved for developments after permission was granted by the relevant authorities.¹⁴⁷

Thus it could be argued that even if *bogosi* was present, developments were still going to be hindered by certain procedures that always had to be followed. In a nutshell, it is Lentswe-le-Moriti's location and its ownership (and of course its religious character) which are largely dictating terms. This also explains why government has advised the Zionists to practice farming in the Ngwato tribal land so that some developments could reach them.¹⁴⁸ Government schemes such as Arable Land Development Programme (ALDEP) and Financial Assistance Policy (FAP) could not be introduced in Lentswe-le-Moriti because it is freehold land, and the Zionists did not have Land Board certificates to claim these schemes, which only applied to tribal land, where they were advised to go and continue farming projects. However, only two to three prosperous farmers have taken this advice ever since 1969. The rest of the community remained unmoved. They argued that this would disturb their church life as most time would be spent outside the village. Also however it seems as though the community has intimate connections to their land. Similarly, writing about the Zionists' farms in South Africa, Sundkler notes that whether the property belongs to the Bishop himself, or is held in trust for the Church, it is unmistakable that both the Bishop and the members of the church take a very considerable pride in the fact that they own property.¹⁴⁹

In all this period, Bogatsu Dintwe was the Church minister. After his death in the late 1960s, Kgetsi Dintwe took over but died in the early 1970s.¹⁵⁰ There was no *kgosana* at all. Notwithstanding the fact that the Zionists have more attachment to Lekganyane's authority than any other figure the government resumed the issue of *bogosi* in 1974. The result was the introduction of Sebele Motsisi as a new '*kgosana*' replacing the late Sephitse. The latter was the grandson of *kgosi* Pilane and the former was once a *kgosana* in Manamakgothe ward in Mochudi.¹⁵¹ Informants note that the Zionists could not nominate a member from the Kgatla royal lineage because their *bogosi* was supposed to be only nominal. Paradoxically, it seems they had been selecting their 'traditional authority' along the lines of important figures from the Kgatla 'tribe'. Sephitse belonged to the royal lineage. Sebele was possibly selected on

the basis of his former headmanship in Kgatleng. However he could not enjoy the same rights he enjoyed in Manamakgotle ward. The Zionists saw him as a "government's *kgosana*" who had little meaning to them.¹⁵² Church administration still constituted a far more important village authority than *bogosi*. Similarly among the Vapostori community of Prophet Johane Masowe in Zimbabwe, church doctrine prescribes behaviours that regulate all aspects of daily life, and church elders resolve conflicts between members.¹⁵³ In the Zionist case, Sebele could settle small disputes but more often than not his decisions were limited by the authority of the church. There was no way he could act beyond the requirements of Church administration.

As late as 1977 the Lentswe-le-Moriti *bogosi* debate intensified. Government officials, including the Mahalapye District Commissioner and *kgosi* Mmirwa Malema of Babirwa visited the Zionists.¹⁵⁴ They maintained that Sebele had to be elevated to a real *kgosana* who would work with a court clerk and a policeman. The Zionists were divided on this proposal. It appears that some of them now saw merit in *bogosi*. Perhaps they were disturbed by the fact that they had to go to neighbouring village *kgotlas* for services which required the intervention of traditional authority. Surprisingly, they challenged the traditional thesis that Lekganyane is the supreme ruler who decides on such issues (which may explain why they later abandoned their move).

On the contrary, their antagonists seem to have worked on the principle that religion and *bogosi* could not successfully work together. God is worshipped every day, they argued, while *dikgosi* have their own duties which may interfere with church services. So it is better not to combine these institutions.¹⁵⁵

It is obvious from this version that the Lentswe-le-Moriti *bogosi* debate revolved around the struggle for power. The government had declined to give the Zionists' '*kgosana*' certain local administrative duties—especially those concerning identity cards—so that the Zionists would be compelled to accept a real *kgotla* and its *kgosana*. On contrary, the Zionists felt and still feel that *kgotla* meetings may interfere with their prayer meetings which are held three times each day. Also, they may arrange for their *kosha* (a special church service) at times when a *kgosana* has convened his own meetings. The Zionists believe that if they allow such a secular authority, their sacred power would be suppressed and even be destroyed in the process. Local government would be used by central government to manipulate church leaders. Another illuminating explanation is that *bogosi* may still remind the Zionists of their persecution and banishment from Reserves. In this way the introduction of this institution is conceived as reviving conflict between church and state.

In 1979, government officials revisited the same issue but still to no avail. The only alternative was that the Zionists were going to use Motlhabaneng *kgotla*.¹⁵⁶ It was agreed that Sebele would settle minor misunderstandings in Lentswe-le-Moriti and could refer major cases to this new *kgotla*.¹⁵⁷ This arrangement was made as though the Zionists were going to be subjects of secular authority. The Zionists have, however, requested the government to contact Lekganyane for further negotiations. The government responded that it was incumbent upon the Zionists themselves to discuss their situation with their Bishop.¹⁵⁸ It was concluded that if they could take the lead, government would assist. The government has taken the view that since these people are Batswana, they have to be looked after regardless of the nature of their village.¹⁵⁹ But the issue of *bogosi* remained unresolved. Also Sebele himself has recently died and it is the two ministers, Lebotse Matshego and Abe Seele who continue to run the administration of the village.

Conclusion

Lentswe-le-Moriti exists as a result of the conflict between Zionism and the State in the colonial period. Had it not been for the political dispute that polarised the Bakgatla, Lentswe-le-Moriti would not have emerged as a Zionist village. In major politico-religious events from 1937 until today, Bakgatla Zionists appear repeatedly as participants at the centre of the history of the village. This has been explained by the available archival records and oral traditions. However, this should not obscure the role played by the non-Bakgatla Zionists who live there. Some Balete, Bakwena and Barolong have shown their love towards Zionism. They joined the Bakgatla to preserve Zionism by forming a unique and religious community. Abe Seele, who is a Molete by origin, has enjoyed a senior position as one important member of the *lekgotla*.

The emergence of Lentswe-le-Moriti is similar to the emergence of AICs themselves. Like Independent churches which grew up all over Africa in response to the desire for a church where Africans may "feel at home,"¹⁶⁰ the village emerged to provide asylum to those Batswana who suffered religious persecution in the Reserves. Today residency is only offered to those converts who feel that they should establish a sense of belonging with their Zionist brethren there. About two to three Birwa Zionist families have settled in Lentswe-le-Moriti, adding to the Batswapong families which had long joined the Zionists. Members of the ZCC section identified by a star emblem are denied residence until they join the St. Engenas ZCC whose emblem is a dove.¹⁶¹ This is despite the fact that the two churches are basically the same in nature, belief, teaching, worship and ethos. They also share the same geographical location for their headquarters at Moria and the leadership of both is that of Lekganyane lineage. The only major difference of practice is that whilst the members of the St. Engenas ZCC wear any type of shoe—but they occasionally prefer black shoes—their cousins strictly wear white boots.

The major theology reflected in the historical development of Lentswe-le-Moriti has strong parallels with the Old Testament Judaism.¹⁶² The community portrays Lekganyane as their black Moses figure who liberated them from the hands of cruel leaders, particularly *kgosi* Molefi. In church services, the minister often recites passages which relate the history of the Israelites.¹⁶³ The aim is to show the younger generation that Lekganyane is central to the history and life of every Zionist. He must be obeyed. Similarly, when the Jews were at the foot of Mount Sinai, it was stated that future generations were to be told, "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Before our eyes the LORD sent miraculous signs and wonders—great and terrible—upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers."¹⁶⁴ Another striking theological parallel is that in which the Zionists reject *bogosi* as Yahweh opposed the monarchy for Israel (I Samuel 8). Yahweh saw the request for king by the Israelites as a rejection of himself from being their king. The Israelites were told that the monarchy would limit their freedom and subject them to despotic tyranny. This struggle for power between theocratic and secular leadership is manifest in Lentswe-le-Moriti. Lekganyane is seemingly the "king" of the village. In this way it is crucial to remember Sundkler's argument that the characteristic of Independent churches (at least in rural areas) is such that the Bishop is a king and the church is his tribe.¹⁶⁵

This paper suggests that Lentswe-le-Moriti represents something resilient over time. With few exceptions, it has been found that the village is remarkably unshaken by the penetration of the secular world. Its objection to *bogosi* is almost 45 years old. And, currently, it is not clear when and how the next *kgosana* replacing the late Sebele will be introduced. The Botswana state seem to have temporarily withdrawn its request for the institution. It is the church which is creating village authority in Lentswe-le-Moriti. Even the newly instituted Village Development Committee (VDC) does not have powers that can threaten the church authority.¹⁶⁶ However, the Zionists use a *kgotla* outside their village for activities that require a *kgosana's* intervention, which implies a recognition of the necessity of *bogosi* in some respects.

The sociologist Emile Durkheim once argued that 'religion promotes social cohesion'.¹⁶⁷ Zionism has played this social function by uniting people of different 'tribes' in Lentswe-le-Moriti. Also some members of the Church in Botswana tend to treat the village as their headquarters, second only to Moria.¹⁶⁸ On Christmas holidays they go there to worship as a unity since the Church Head Office in Moria had bought the farm primarily for that purpose. Almost all Zionists there cling to Zionism, which has become in a way their own culture. Most educated members are proud to preserve their religion and also respect their Zionist identity. However, the Zionists still give their children names connected to their tribes. They speak their languages too. Unity tends to be cemented by the founders of the village who often inculcate a culture of loyalty and responsibility in the youth. Consequently, it is too early to predict the future. The Zionists are involved in national activities such as elections and party affiliation. But they avoid radical political moves for the interest of their religion. During the 1980s, the church's vast gathering at Moria were addressed by South African cabinet ministers, and in 1985 by President Botha, who congratulated the Church for keeping religion and politics separate.¹⁶⁹ In this respect, Independent churches appear in a new total or comprehensive community, a holy village or Zion city with its own way of life.¹⁷⁰ The Lentswe-le-Moriti Church addresses problems of life particularly through prayer and faith healing. This is service freely given to the patients. Consequently, the St. Engenas ZCC has apparently become the largest Church in the Bobirwa area.

Development in Lentswe-le-Moriti is lacking. Hitherto the mother Church in South Africa has not put any impressive structures in the farm. Lekganyane and his Church Head Office receives allegiance from the Zionists but gives nothing tangible in return. However, on his visit in November of 1995, Engenas Lekganyane made a promising statement to his 'tribe'. He told the Zionists that Lentswe-le-Moriti is due to receive assistance in the near future just like other farms in South Africa.¹⁷¹ But so far, the developments found in the village, which include a VDC, a primary school, a postal agency and a health post, have all been provided by the Botswana government. There is only one shop owned and run by a church member. It seems paradoxical that government introduces development in privately owned land. If the Zionists were to be resettled to an area where amenities could be easily provided (that is, after agreement between Lekganyane and the Botswana state)¹⁷² structures put up there would turn into 'white elephants'. For instance, at a farm called Two Rivers near Tsetsebjwe, a school which was built for children of farm labourers there was closed in 1992.¹⁷³ The workers were chased away by the owner and moved to settle in the villages of Lerala and Moletemane. In light of these controversies, this study cannot be the final word on the history of Lentswe-le-Moriti.

Notes

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¹ B.G.M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948). Also see his second and third editions.

² A more comprehensive critique of this argument appears in J.P.Kiernan, "Poor and Puritan: An attempt to view Zionism as a collective response to Urban Poverty," in *African Studies*, Vol.36, no.1, (1977), p.31.

³ For a good summary, G.C. Oosthuizen et.al (eds.), *Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots: Its Dynamics and Strategies* (New York: Leiden, 1994). This book's third section is mainly a review of what have always been known to be the main causes for secession.

⁴ G.C. Oosthuizen et.al. (eds.), "Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots: Its Dynamics and Strategies," as reviewed in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. xxvii—Fasc.1, (1997), pp.109-110.

⁵ See C. Kileff and M. Kileff, "The Masowe Vapostori of Seki: Utopianism and Tradition in an African Church," in B. Jules-Rosette (ed.), *The New Religions of Africa* (New Jersey: Ablex, 1979), pp.151-167. It is noted that Masowe moved about with his followers first in Zimbabwe and later into South Africa and Botswana.

⁶ H.W. Turner, "The Place of Independent Religious Movements in the modernisation of Africa," as reviewed in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 2, Leiden, (1969), p. 59.

⁷ N. Long, *Social Change and the Individual—A Study of the Social and Religious Responses to Innovation in a Zambian Rural Community* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968), p.238.

⁸ J. Amanze, *African Christianity in Botswana: The Case of African Independent Churches* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1998), p.68.

⁹ Jules-Rosette, *The New Religions of Africa*. The second section of the book. Of more relevance to this study see F.Morton, "The Politics of cultural conservatism in colonial Botswana; Queen Seingwaeng's Zionism campaign in the Bakgatla Reserve 1937-1947," Paper delivered at 41st African Studies Association Meeting, Chicago, November, (1998). This paper depicts Seingwaeng as an influential woman in the religio-political history of Bakgatla especially those who live in Lentswe-le-Moriti farm today.

¹⁰ R.J.Cazziol, "The Role of Women in the Leadership of the Churches in Swaziland," in G.C. Oosthuizen, *Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots* pp.211-225.

¹¹ P.S. Landau, *The Realm of the Word: Language, Gender and Christianity in a Southern African Kingdom* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1995). The book is reviewed in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Volume xxvii-Fasc.2, May (1997): pp.194-195.

¹² I will be drawing parallels between the Zionists and the Vapostori in this study. About the Vapostori, see Kileff and Kileff, "The Masowe Vapostori".

¹³ Metlobo was created into a Zionist community in 1958 when Kgosi Bathoen expelled the adherents of Zionism. The movement of non-Zionists, particularly farmers, into this village broke the Zionists' unity and isolation. See M. R. Gaborone, "The Metlobo Migrations: A Question of Religious Intolerance among the Ngwaketse 1957-1966," B.A.Thesis, History Department, University of Botswana, 1987.

¹⁴ See for instance, B.N.A. S.497/5/4: School for Zionists of Lentswe-le-Moriti, Tuli Block, District Commissioner to Director of Education, Machaneng, 29 May 1998.

¹⁵ Such studies include, D. Wylie, "Migrations of Freehold Farmers to Farms in South Africa," Draft, Department of History, Yale University, October 1981. L. T. Maruatona, "A Historical Analysis of the conditions of Farm Labourers in Freehold Farms: a case of the Tuli Block 1930-1975," B.A.Thesis, History Department, University of Botswana, 1988. J.A. Croston, An Economic and Social History of the Freehold Land Tenure Districts of Bechuanaland Protectorate 1903-1966, Ph.D Thesis (Michigan: UMI Dissertation Services, 1993). And I. N. Mazonde, *Ranching and Enterprise in Eastern Botswana: A case of Black and White farmers* (London: Edinburgh University Press, 1994).

- ¹⁶ J.Z. Sekgwama, "Aspects of the socio-economic and political History of Babirwa", M. A. Thesis, History Department, University of Botswana, (Gaborone, 1996).
- ¹⁷ Landau, *The Realm of the Word*, p.199. Modisaotsile was a kgosi imposed on the Babirwa by the Bangwato.
- ¹⁸ See especially, P. Monnaatsie, "Growth and Spread of Religious Sects in Kgatleng: The Case of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) 1933-1977", B.A. Thesis, History Department, University of Botswana, (Gaborone, 1980).
- ¹⁹ The name Zionism in this study is used to specifically refer to the followers of the Zion Christian Church of Bishop Engenas Lekganyane. Zionism is a concept used to refer to the Church (religion) itself. It is not applied as in Judaism where it refers to an attempt by the Jews to establish a Jewish state.
- ²⁰ See for instance, B.N.A. S.497/5/1: Banishment of certain Bakgatla from Bakgatla Reserve, District Commissioner to Government Secretary, Bechuanaland Protectorate, 9 December 1947.
- ²¹ His study is gender sensitive in that it gives women a place in the trend that Zionism operated. Morton, "The Politics of cultural conservatism".
- ²² L.D. Ngcongco, "Religion and Politics in an African Chiefdom: The Mothowagae Secession Revisited," *Pula Botswana Journal of African Studies*, Vol.3, no.1, (May 1983), p.60.
- ²³ L.S. Lubinda, "Ethiopianism in Botswana," B.A. Thesis, History Department, University of Botswana, (Gaborone, 1979), p.31.
- ²⁴ Interview with B. Tsheelo, 72 years, Ramotswa, 6 August 1998.
- ²⁵ See for instance, B. Rantsudu, "The Conflict between the Spiritual Healing Church and the Authorities before Independence," in Oosthuizen, *Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots*, p.51.
- ²⁶ According to information, Kgari Sechele was installed against his elder brother Mosarwa because the British saw in him a *kgosi* they could manipulate.
- ²⁷ Notes on political factions can be found in M. Crowder et al., "Legitimacy and Faction: Tswana Constitutionalism and Political Change," in J. Parson (ed.), *Succession to the High Office in Botswana* Monographs in African International Studies, no.54, (1990), p.5.
- ²⁸ B.M.G. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: Oxford, 1961), p.24.
- ²⁹ J. Comaroff, *Body of Power Spirit of Resistance* (Chicago: Chicago Press, 1985), p.238.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.188.
- ³¹ Rantsudu, "The Conflict between the Spiritual Healing Church and the Authorities", p.52.
- ³² N. Parsons et al., *Setsele Khama 1921-1980* (Gaborone: Macmillan Boleswa, 1995), pp.163-164.
- ³³ Notes on this cases are found in the Botswana National Archives. See for instance, B.N.A. DCM 6/7: Zionist Movement – Kgatleng 1947-49, Government Secretary to District Commissioner, Mochudi, 14 August 1948.
- ³⁴ See for instance, S. Grant, "Church and Chief in the Colonial Era" in *Botswana Notes and Records*, Vol.3, (1971): p.60.
- ³⁵ See B.N.A. S.497/5/1: District Commissioner to Government Secretary, Machaneng, 26 June 1949.
- ³⁶ It is said that the Zionists sued Molefi in 1948 while at Metsemothaba. Mr Coulson was their lawyer whom Lekganyane had recruited from Zeerust on their behalf. Mr Percy Fraenkel was Molefi's lawyer. Unfortunately I could not find archival records revealing the final judgement.
- ³⁷ I. Schapera, *Tribal Innovators: Tswana Chiefs and Social Change 1795-1940* (London: Athlone, 1970), p.64. Also see J. Gledhill, *Power and its Disguise, Anthropological Perspectives on Politics* (London: Pluto Press, 1994), p.1.
- ³⁸ Interview with L. Pilane, 75 years, Bontleng Customary Court, 12 August 1998.
- ³⁹ See D. R. Boschman, "The conflict between the New Religious Movements and the State in the Bechuanaland Protectorate prior to 1949," *Studies on the Church in Southern Africa*, Vol.3 (Gaborone, 1994), p.39.
- ⁴⁰ Group interview, Ramotswa, 6 August 1998.
- ⁴¹ See for instance, Crowder, "Legitimacy and Faction", p.2.

- ⁴² One section of the Church recognised Banarbas Lekganyane, the elder son, as the rightful successor in accordance with principles and rules of succession and inheritance in patrilineal societies. They adopted the star as their emblem.
- ⁴³ In this study we should not confuse the St. Engenas ZCC with the ZCC identified by the star.
- ⁴⁴ Schapera, *Tribal Innovators*, p.205.
- ⁴⁵ Government owned farms along the eastern frontier of the rail (today's Gaborone city). I. Schapera, "History of Tribal Land Settlement—The study of Tswana Land Tenure," (Unpublished paper, no date).
- ⁴⁶ L. T. Maruatona, "A Historical Analysis of the conditions of Farm Labourers", p.10.
- ⁴⁷ B.N.A. S.497/5/4: Confidential Circular Memorandum No.10569 of the 14th January 1956 (No.11 of 1956)
- ⁴⁸ B.N.A. S.435/3/1: Inspection of farm Loensa-la-Moridi, Tuli Block, I.H. Hutcheson (Agricultural officer) to Director of Agriculture, Machaneng, 13 April 1953.
- ⁴⁹ Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets*, p.129.
- ⁵⁰ See for instance, H. Haselbarth, "The Zion Christian Church of Edward Lekganyane," in H.J. Becken (ed.), *Our Approach to the Independent Church Movement* (Natal: Missiological Institute, 1960), p.64.
- ⁵¹ Upon banishment Zionists sold some of their livestock and bought a vehicle that catered for their migrations.
- ⁵² B.N.A S.497/5/4: District Commissioner to Mr Batho, Machaneng, 17 February 1953.
- ⁵³ The northern Tuli Block was the Babirwa territory before the arrival of the White settlers. Maruatona, "A Historical Analysis of the conditions of Farm Labourers", p.22.
- ⁵⁴ B.N.A. S.435/3/1; Resident Commissioner to Chief Secretary, Pretoria, 28 May 1953.
- ⁵⁵ Interview with M. Dintwe, 54 years, Gaborone, 9 August 1998.
- ⁵⁶ W.G. Morapedi, "The Boer Trekker Settlement in Ghanzi and its impact on Indigenous people 1895-1980," B.A. Thesis, History Department, University of Botswana, (Gaborone, 1989), p.14.
- ⁵⁷ Boer farmers violated the hunting laws. If elephants could wander on to privately owned land, they could not be shot unless a licence for the purpose was issued by the government. See especially B.N.A. S.157/2: Dr P. Evans (the ecologist) to Mr F.Thompson (the Resident Commissioner), Mafeking, 5 November 1941.
- ⁵⁸ Interview with J. Kobe, 89 years, Lentswe-le-Moriti, 11 June 1998.
- ⁵⁹ Group interview, Lentswe-le-Moriti, 15 June 1998.
- ⁶⁰ Maruatona, "A Historical Analysis of the conditions of Farm Labourers", p.19.
- ⁶¹ Interview with M.Monekwe, 75 years, Mathathane, 18 June 1998.
- ⁶² Schapera, "History of Tribal Land Settlement", p.115.
- ⁶³ Sekgwama, , "Aspects of the socio-economic and political History of Babirwa", p.24.
- ⁶⁴ See for instance, Grant, "Church and Chief in the Colonial Era", p.62.The 'Ngwato Reserve' is here specifically used to refer to the Bobirwa area. The Tswapong area, though part of the Ngwato, was already affected by Zionism. It has been noted elsewhere in this paper that in their transit to Lentswe-le-Moriti, the Zionists were joined by few Tswapong converts. However, it is not clear why there was this difference in the communities that belonged to the same 'District'
- ⁶⁵ Interview with M. S. Nage, 70 years, Gaborone, 10 August 1998.
- ⁶⁶ B.N.A. S.435/3/1: Report on a Tour of the Northern Portion of Tuli Block, District Commissioner to Mr Germond, Machaneng, 27 August 1953.
- ⁶⁷ B.N.A. S.555/7: Tours of Tuli Block and Reports, 9 July to 16 July 1958.
- ⁶⁸ G.B. Molelu, "The History of the Babirwa from Pre-colonial Times to Early Ngwato Rule 1820-1926," B.A. Thesis, History Department, University of Botswana, (Gaborone, 1985), p.9.
- ⁶⁹ The term self-help, usually known as "*Ipelegeng*" projects, was officially used in the late 1960s.
- ⁷⁰ Interview with O. Molefofe, 62 years, Lentswe-le-Moriti, 15 June 1998.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁷² B.N.A. S.497/5/4: School for Zionists of Lentswe-le-Moriti, Tuli Block, District Commissioner to Director of Education, 29 May 1958.

- ⁷³ B.C.Thema, "Moeng College—A Product of self-help," in *Botswana Notes and Records*, Vol. 2, (1969), p.71.
- ⁷⁴ See S. Grant, "A very Remarkable School", *Botswana Notes and Records*, Vol. 8, (1976), pp.87-92.
- ⁷⁵ Interview with D. Mosienyane, 80 years, Bobonong, 30 June 1998.
- ⁷⁶ Standard IV was only introduced in 1959. B.N.A. S.497/5/4: School for Zionists of Lentswe-le-Moriti, Tuli Block, District Commissioner to Director of Education, Machaneng, 29 May 1958.
- ⁷⁷ That was the last time Seingwaeng saw her son. Molefi died in 1958 as his vehicle overturned.
- ⁷⁸ Morton, "The Politics of cultural conservatism", p.15.
- ⁷⁹ B.N.A. S.497/5/4: District Commissioner to Government Secretary, Machaneng, 9 July 1957.
- ⁸⁰ Hence, the Resident Commissioner commented, "I think the truth of the matter is that Molefi was and still is jealous of the power which Joseph Lekganyane has over his people and works on the principle that no man can serve two masters." This quotation is cited in Grant "Church and Chief in the Colonial Era", p.62.
- ⁸¹ By this time he was a student of Metrics in Pretoria, South Africa. His position as future *kgatla kgosi* was on the hands of his Regent, Mmusi Pilane. He became *kgosi* in April 1963. Interview with *kgosi* Linchwe II, 62 years, Botswana Customary Court of Appeals (Gaborone), 4 August 1998.
- ⁸² She was only taken back to Mochudi in 1967 in a car driven by Linchwe himself. She died shortly after her arrival.
- ⁸³ B.N.A. S.497/5/4: Director of Education to District Commissioner, Mafeking, 7 January 1959.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁵ Oral traditions agree with this statement as recorded in B.N.A. S.497/5/4: Zionists at Lentswe-le-Moriti (Shady Rock), District Commissioner to Government Secretary, Machaneng, 16 September 1957.
- ⁸⁶ Besides in 1952 when he came to Tuli Block to buy the farm, he visited the Zionists about three times. His first visit was in 1953 when he came to receive the Zionists in their new home. In 1956 he made his second visit to Lentswe-le-Moriti to mourn Bakgatla Pilane's death. Information on his third visit is not clear. This was his last visit until he died in 1972. His successor, E.J. Engenas Lekganyane became bishop in 1975. He has visited the Zionists in 1995.
- ⁸⁷ Follow up interview with K. Lebotse, 33 years, University of Botswana (Gaborone), 5 February 1999.
- ⁸⁸ It seems it owes its origins from the causes of their formation. The Vapostori are also a good example.
- ⁸⁹ Interview with M. Dintwe, 54 years, Gaborone, 9 August 1998.
- ⁹⁰ At Voortrekker farm, like in any other farm besides Lentswe-le-Moriti, there was not a large African population warranting such a project.
- ⁹¹ B.N.A. S.497/5/4: School for Zionists in Tuli Block, District Commissioner to Director of Education, Machaneng, 24 February 1959.
- ⁹² Grant "A very Remarkable School", p.92.
- ⁹³ Thema, "Moeng College", p.73.
- ⁹⁴ According to informants, one teacher came from Transvaal and the other from Serowe.
- ⁹⁵ See for instance, R. Sanoto, "The Impact of the Zimbabwean Liberation War on the Babirwa, 1970-1980," B.A.Thesis, History Department, University of Botswana, (Gaborone, 1992), p.10.
- ⁹⁶ Interview with M. Tsheole, 56 years, Motlhabaneng, 22 June 1998.
- ⁹⁷ Interview with E. Makgosa, 72 years, Mathathane, 18 June 1998.
- ⁹⁸ Interview with T. Molapisane, 63 years, Motlhabaneng, 20 June 1998.
- ⁹⁹ Oosthuizen's book shows that many followers of African Independent Churches have generally appealed to this testimony whenever they joined these churches. Oosthuizen et.al.(eds.), *Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots*, p.ix.
- ¹⁰⁰ Molelu, "The History of the Babirwa".
- ¹⁰¹ See Sanoto, "The Impact of the Zimbabwean Liberation War".
- ¹⁰² This would be an important aspect of research in future.

¹⁰³ In the case of the International Pentecostal Church (IPC) of Rev. Modise in South Africa, leaders of the church point to healing through songs as the main factor attracting new members. This church has spread to Botswana, and its members are fond of singing.

¹⁰⁴ The patient became a follower of Zionism after this healing experience. Interview with M. Dintwe, 54 years, Gaborone, 9 August 1998.

¹⁰⁵ Landau, *The Realm of the Word*, p.114.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with P. Matema, 60 years, Semolale, 11 July 1998. This would explain why today there is a health post there.

¹⁰⁷ Some Babirwa remained believers of African traditional religion (they preserved the practices of magwasha) and others followed Christianity.

¹⁰⁸ See for instance, S. Grant & J. Ramsay, "One Botswana, One Nation; The Arrival of Independence," in F. Morton & J. Ramsay (eds.), *The Birth of Botswana-A History of Bechuanaland Protectorate from 1910 to 1966* (Gaborone: Longman, 1987), p.183. Also see, L. A. Picard, *The Politics of Development in Botswana—A Model for Success?* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1987), p.151-158.

¹⁰⁹ Grant & Ramsay, "One Botswana, One Nation", p.167.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.170.

¹¹¹ B.N.A. S.544/5; Notes on District Councils in Non-Tribal Areas, no place, 23 December 1960.

¹¹² This issue of *bogosi* and the Zionists is discussed at length under part three of this chapter (i.e. Contradictions of Leadership and Administration in Lentswe-le-Moriti).

¹¹³ Interview with M. Dintwe, 54 years, Gaborone, 9 August 1998.

¹¹⁴ B.N.A. S554/5: Notes on District Councils in Non-Tribal Areas, no place, 23 December 1960.

¹¹⁵ Grant & Ramsay, "One Botswana, One Nation".

¹¹⁶ Interview with T.M. Lebotse, 68 years, Lentswe-le-Moriti, 20 June 1998.

¹¹⁷ Interview with L. Matshego, 84 years, Lentswe-le-Moriti, 9 June 1998.

¹¹⁸ He became councillor from 1966 until 1994. Interview with P. Matema, 60 years, Semolale, 11 July 1998.

¹¹⁹ Interview with D. Mosienyane, 80 years, Bobonong, 30 June 1998.

¹²⁰ Group interview, Motlhabaneng, 5 June 1998.

¹²¹ Group interview, Lentswe-le-Moriti, 1 July 1998.

¹²² Interview with M. Kgetsi, 82 years, Mochudi, 1 August 1998.

¹²³ Grant "Church and Chief in the Colonial Era" p.62.

¹²⁴ They could not identify themselves with people who chased them.

¹²⁵ The examples of identity crisis cited are striking and relevant in interpreting the present case. F.B. Welbourn, *Religion and Politics in Uganda 1952-1962* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1965), p.48.

¹²⁶ Interview with M. Dintwe, 54 years, Gaborone, 9 August 1998. I had the chance to look at the letter. Mr Dintwe has a file containing some of the records concerning development projects in Lentswe-le-Moriti.

¹²⁷ Members of the other 7CC section can also not be residents unless they join the section that the Lentswe-le-Moriti Zionists belong to. This is despite the common practices of the two sections.

¹²⁸ However, female Zionists can not have access to land until they get married. Also, because of the growing population, some Zionists build their homesteads at abandoned plots. Interview with T.M. Lebotse, 68 years, Lentswe-le-Moriti, 20 June 1998.

¹²⁹ Interview with O. Moleofe, 62 years, Lentswe-le-Moriti, 15 June 1998.

¹³⁰ Interview with T. Tautsagae, 42 years, Bobonong, 29 June 1998. Recently the single shop in the village has begun to import cigarettes to cater for the workers.

¹³¹ I have observed a case where by one man from Lentswe-le-Moriti was drinking beer in the neighbouring village of Motlhabaneng. It seems that the Zionists can not offer immediate solution to this problem.

¹³² Some informants note that the accumulation of wealth has reduced the original spirit of sharing among the Zionists.

¹³³ Interview with D. Lebotse, 41 years, Barclays Bank (Gaborone), 10 August 1998. She claims that sometimes her children refuse to go to Lentswe-le-Moriti on the excuse that they have no dresses. Occasionally she leaves them behind lest they embarrass her at home.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Interview with L. Matshego, 84 years, Lentswe-le-Moriti, 9 June 1998.

¹³⁶ L.A. Picard, "Rural Development in Botswana: The District Administration and the creation of District Committees- 1966 to 1973," Working paper No.14, (October 1977), p.33.

¹³⁷ See for instance, H. Pretorius & L. Jafta as cited in R.Elphick & R.Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa—A Political, Social and Cultural History* (Capetown: David Philip Publishers, 1997), p.225.

¹³⁸ See especially, M.J. Odell, "Local Government, Traditional and Modern Roles of the Village *Kgotla*," *The Evolution of Modern Botswana* (London: Rex Collings, 1985), p.79.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* p.83. Odell discusses this same theme in M.J. Odell Jr, "The Evolution of a Planning and Development Strategy for Communal areas in Botswana," in R.R. Hitchcock and M. R. Smith (eds.), *Settlement in Botswana – The Historical Development of a Human Landscape* (Gaborone: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982), pp.327-339.

¹⁴⁰ For more information about Bakgatla Pilane see chapters one and three. Also see, B.N.A. S.435/3/1: District Commissioner to Mr Batho, Machaneng, 17 February 1953.

¹⁴¹ Group interview, Lentswe-le-Moriti, 1 July 1998.

¹⁴² Some of the aspects of this *kgotla* may be similar to that given by Kuper but the two councils are not the same. For confirmation sake, see A.Kupper, *Kalahari Village Politics* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1970), p.78.

¹⁴³ Each time I visited the village to conduct research, I directly went to the *kgotla*. A member of the *lekgotla* always met me at the entrance with a bucket of sanctified (holy) water. He sprinkled this water on my face and my back. I even swallowed some of the water given to me after this process. We could then formally greet each other.

¹⁴⁴ Odell gives a good case study of a traditional village *kgotla*. To him, it is the first institution of local government to be established when any group of people seek stability and guidance when settling far from permanent and recognised communities. Odell Jr, "The Evolution of a Planning and Development Strategy".

¹⁴⁵ In 1956 Phiri Kgote (an oldman and former schoolteacher in Mochudi) was introduced as the first '*kgosana*'. He was replaced by Sephitse Tau in 1957 who also died within two years. See for instance, B.N.A. S.442/10: Report on Investigations into the Zionist Settlement at Loensa-ya-Moridi Farm, Government Secretary to District Commissioner, Serowe, 2 August 1956.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with M. Tsheole, 56 years, Motlhabaneng, 22 June 1998.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with M. Dintwe, 54 years, Gaborone, 9 August 1998.

¹⁴⁸ Both government officials and the Zionists alluded to this statement.

¹⁴⁹ Sundkler *Bantu Prophets*.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with R. Madisa, 80 years, Lentswe-le-Moriti, 15 June 1998. The fact that these two men were related would seem to suggest that the Zionist's most senior post in the church was hereditary (at least in this particular incidence only).

¹⁵¹ Interview with M. Dintwe, 54 years, Gaborone, 9 August 1998.

¹⁵² Interview with K. Lebotse, 33 years, University of Botswana (Gaborone), 6 August 1998.

¹⁵³ Kileff & Kileff, "The Masowe Vapostori" p.159.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with *kgosi* Mmirwa Malema, 78 years, Bobonong, 30 June 1998.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with M. Tsheole, 56 years, Motlhabaneng, 22 June 1998.

¹⁵⁶ They reject an institution which is indirectly serving them some function. Similarly, although the Vapostori reject the servitude of the industrial society, they seek to enjoy the benefits of it in the form of consumer goods. Kileff & Kileff, "The Masowe Vapostori" p.162.

¹⁵⁷ This was welcomed by the entire community. But few informants (migrant workers) have expressed concern that they are disturbed by this procedure. They feel that they should have their own *kgotla* which will relieve their relatives from going to outside *kgotlas* to register for *omang*

cards (identity cards). Therefore it is most likely that some other Zionists are also sharing the same view especially that at one point some of them wanted *bogosi* to be introduced.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with J.J.Maruatona, 68 years, Bobonong, 2 July 1998.

¹⁵⁹ See for instance, G.Molapisi, "Bobirwa Farm Reserved for ZCC," in M. Mpaphadzi (ed.), *Kutlwano*, Volume 35, no.6 (June, 1997), p.13.

¹⁶⁰ N.S. Booth Jr, *African Religions: A Symposium* (New York: NOK Publishers, 1977),p.269.

¹⁶¹ The reason thereto stems from the 1949 succession dispute which led to the ZCC schism.

¹⁶² The reader is again reminded that the term "Zionism" in the context of the ZCC should not be confused with "Zionism" in the context of Judaism or Jewish history.

¹⁶³ Interview with O. Moleofe, 62 years, Lentswe-le-Moriti, 15 June 1998.

¹⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 6: 21-23 (NIV). See J.B. Mzizi, "Swazi Zionism and the Royal Politics of the kingdom," in Oosthuizen, p.55.

¹⁶⁵ Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets*, p.102.

¹⁶⁶ Scholars on rural development in Botswana generally agree that the institution is reducing the powers of the *dikgosi* insofar as its discretion dictates terms in village development process.

¹⁶⁷ A. Giddens, *Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity press, 1989), p.468.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with K. Lebotse, 33 years, University of Botswana (Gaborone), 6 August 1998.

¹⁶⁹ P. Walshe, "Christianity and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle: The Prophetic Voice within Divided Churches," in R. Elphick & R. Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa*, p.389.

¹⁷⁰ See H. Turner, "Independent Churches of African origin and form," in C. Geffre & B. Luneau (eds.), *The Churches of Africa: Future Prospects* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), p.110.

¹⁷¹ Interview with K. Lebotse, 33 years, University of Botswana (Gaborone), 6 August 1998.

¹⁷² Today the government intends to repatriate Basarwa communities to areas where they are supposed to easily receive social amenities like other citizens. This can be achieved because, unlike the Zionists, the Basarwa occupy non-Freehold land where government can easily exercise its powers.

¹⁷³ Interview with J.J.Maruatona, 68 years, Bobonong, 2 July 1998.

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