

DRAFT

**KGATLA CONSPIRACIES, PEDI PLOTS;
AFRICAN NATIONALIST POLITICS IN THE TRANSVAAL
IN THE 'DEAD' DECADE OF THE 1930'S**

Philip Bonner

On 17 June 1933, at a Transvaal National Congress provincial conference, long-standing President Sefako Mapogo Makgatho lost his position by a vote of 73 to 52 to relative newcomer Simon Petrus Matseke. Z.K. Ramailane, a Matseke supporter, was voted in as General Secretary, in the place of Moses Mphahlele. Richard Vernon Selope-Thema, the former Vice President and Matseke sympathiser retained his position.ⁱ Stunned by the ouster Makgatho temporarily withdrew from Congress politics, at least at the Provincial level. Mphahlele, by contrast, almost immediately rejected the June election as unconstitutional and began organising a rival faction, under the leadership of the former executive, which he claimed had been improperly voted out.ⁱⁱ

In late December early January 1934 delegates to the ANC Annual Conference, led by President General Pixley ka I Seme endorsed the Makgatho/Mphahlele faction, and Seme's new national cabinet was made up almost wholly of people in their camp.ⁱⁱⁱ In April 1934 a new pro-Makgatho cabinet appointed itself in open opposition to the Matseke Congress. A formal split had now been proclaimed. It was to last until Makseke's death in 1941, during which time it gravely impaired the effectiveness of Congress in the Transvaal.^{iv}

This episode and its aftermath have passed almost wholly unnoticed in the literature on Congress or on anything else. Walshe's still unsurpassed monograph on the subject mentions in passing that S.P. Matseke replaced Makgatho as provincial president in 1933, but is oblivious to the disputed nature of the election and the political rift that ensued.^v No other study accords it even a mention. This is perhaps not entirely surprising, for what followed, from the point of view of the nationalist grand narrative, was at best a period of marking time. By most obvious measures the TAC, along with its parent body, went into a state of suspended animation. *Nothing happened*; no memorable campaigns, no surges of popular mobilisation, no serious challenges to white rule. Most historians would probably concur that they are generally best equipped to explain why things change. Periods of quiescence and stability, especially in resistance politics, generate less data and excite still less interest or attention. In the case of the 1930's in South Africa and the Transvaal the period is hastened by with averted eyes and is explained away by such generalities as the enervating effects of the depression. This paper seeks to reclaim the 1930's (and particularly its first half), as a worthy subject of historical study. It suggests that when historians have paid any attention to these years they have looked in the wrong places for the wrong things. It proposes that a great deal of great significance was taking

place in this period, which would have profound implications for what would follow, not least the course of political struggle.

THE KGATLA COUP

Three factors swept the Matseke/Thema faction to victory. The first was the new national constitution for the ANC drawn up by its President P. ka I. Seme which proposed subdividing the national body into 11 regional congresses (in place of the four Provincial congresses which, up to that point had existed) and in the case of the Transvaal, cutting it into three. Many leading Congress figures in the Transvaal objected strongly to the proposed constitution, apparently on the grounds that it would gravely weaken the leading position the Transvaal Congress had previously enjoyed in the national body's affairs (which one imagines was precisely Seme's objective).^{vi} Both Matseke and Thema successfully tarred the then President Makgatho with accepting Seme's constitutional proposals which the June Conference of the TAC roundly rejected, before proceeding to the leadership elections.^{vii}

The second factor which assisted the Matseke/Thema faction in their bid for power was mounting desperation at the ravages of depression and drought, and both the national and provincial Congresses' seeming incapacity to react. As early as November 1931 Selope-Thema then writing for the Chamber of Mines financed newspaper *Umteteli wa Bantu* had asked "Where is the ANC? This is the question that is being asked by many of our people ... Hundreds have been thrown out of employment and thousands are starving. Leaders have become inactive and nowhere to be found".^{viii} No response was forthcoming from Congress President P. ka I Seme and in May the following year members of the national executive called a meeting in Johannesburg in an effort to trigger some action. In a damning indictment that was issued at the end of their meeting, they pronounced:^{ix}

We have been perturbed at the culpable inertia of the President-General, who, since his election has given very little attention and time to the most vital questions affecting the well-being of the race and has failed to give the lead necessary in the present situation.

Almost in every industrial centre the numbers of our people who are unemployed and cannot find employment is increasing monthly. Their difficulties are aggravated by Pass Laws and ejection from locations when they cannot pay rates.

Reports from the rural areas show that owing to drought there is a state of famine. As this is happening the Contract Service Bill is being piloted through Parliament which will cause dislocation and chaos."

Any residual hopes of action and change that Transvaal members of the national executive might have still harboured were dashed at the ANC's Annual conference at Bloemfontein held in April 1933. A meagre 64 delegates attended of which over half (37) represented Bloemfontein itself. Some was voted back into office by a tiny majority mostly comprised of Bloemfontein votes. The entire fractious proceedings were pilloried in the columns of the *Bantu World*, an African newspaper recently established and edited by R.V. Selope Thema, which headlined its article on the subject "African National Congress - Farcical Session".^x

The Transvaal Congress leadership under Makgatho did little better. As the depression deepened during 1932 Makgatho and his close lieutenant lapsed into complete inactivity. In a letter to *Umteteli wa Bantu*, written in mid 1933, Makgatho despaired "The nation is disintegrating because of famine"^{xi} but beyond uttering this lament, he seemed incapable of acting.

Faced with this continued display of 'culpable inertia' some younger and in some cases more militant members of the TAC concluded that it was necessary to take matters into their own hands. The national body, as they saw it, was thoroughly discredited and bankrupt; it was time the Transvaal took the lead. Here lies the third factor propelling the Matseke/Thema faction to power. A belief that the TAC provided the backbone of Congress had long been abroad among leading Congressmen in the Transvaal. Lurking deeper was the idea, which will be explored more fully later, that its predominantly Sotho-Tswana populations were the primary part of its constituency and that they had been politically short-changed. An article written for *Bantu World* and almost certainly penned by Selope-Thema spelled out what at least a segment of Transvaal Congressmen

felt. In rare moment of public candour, the article observed:

"Since Congress's founding most of the people joining Congress are Sotho Tswana. No person can dispute the fact that all monies used to pursue the hard work of Congress came from the Sotho and Tswana tribes.

In 1914 when the Congress sent its deputation to England no other chiefs were visited by Congress leaders except the Sesotho chiefs of the Transvaal.

I can recall President J.L. Dube and Mr H. Selby-Msimang visiting Bopedi in Sekhukhuneland where they were gladly received by Chief Sekhukhune and came back with £200. I cannot remember them visiting Zululand or Swaziland. I believe they never went there.

In 1919 the Congress chose a deputation to England to report on national discontents. The money used to fund the trip came from the chiefs of the Transvaal Sotho tribes. Pedi chiefs to be honest shouldered the funding of this trip to England. Money collected from Tembuland people ended in one

Xhosa leader's hands. I also recall the first chiefs to contribute to the African National Congress were from Lehurutse. They contributed this money through chief Lucas Mangope.

The truth is the Sotho leaders in the Transvaal did their best to make a call to the people and the chiefs. They tried to spread the gospel of unity. On the other hand Ndebele leaders never bothered themselves about spreading the gospel of unity among their people. They were satisfied after visiting Sotho's only."^{xii}

This perception of the role of the Transvaal Congress in the affairs of the national organisation, was not confined to the Transvaal. The Rev. James Calata's autobiographical memoir is particularly revealing in this regard.

"The early ANC", he remarked, "was unpopular with the Xhosa. They thought it was a Basuto affair connected with the mines and people working in the big towns. More on urban organisation. Actually the ICU reached the Xhosa first."^{xiii}

The unrelenting impact of depression further heightened the xenophobic proclivities of certain section of Congress leadership in the Transvaal. An appeal by a delegation of the Matseke/Thema Congress to the Minister of Native Affairs Grobler in December 1933, suggests the way the two issues might intersect. At this meeting the delegates complained that:

"hundreds of Africans were being dismissed from work to make room for Europeans and were thereby disqualified from obtaining a pass, with all the penalties this entailed. Worse still *a number of educated men were being thrown into the ranks of the unemployed.*"^{xiv} (My emphasis)

What this hints at, and what will be explored later in this paper was elite Sotho/Tswana antagonism to educated interlopers, especially 'Ndebeles' from the Eastern Cape and Natal, into the job market of the Transvaal. Among the Sotho/Tswana of the Transvaal the word 'Ndebele' evoked images of intruding predators battenning on to peaceable Sotho/Tswana communities. As the political contest quickened, Selope-Thema and his political associates played with such images in their polemics by depicting such outsiders as bloodsucking 'parasites' leaching off the bodies of their Sotho/Tswana hosts.^{xv}

These sentiments only began to take distinct shape in 1931-32. They were first publicly acknowledged by *Umteteli wa Bantu* columnist 'Enquirer' from Lady Selborne, when he noted that the conflict between Seme and a number of his senior Transvaal executives had:

"fostered bitter racialism in the ranks of Congress with the result that the Transvaal Provincial Congress is today regarded as the preserve of the Transvaal Sesotho speaking tribes only."^{xvi}

A similar note of alarm was sounded by G.A.B. Sebotse Mabeta in a letter written in Sesotho to the editors of *Bantu World* in November 1932.

"There are complaints here in Gauteng", Mabeki declared. "... These complaints are from Zulu-speakers and Xhosa-speakers who are residents of the Transvaal. A call was made by the Transvaal Sotho-speaking men: Let's establish a Sotho-speaking congress, its leaders Sotho speaking, even its members restricted to Sotho's. We are tired of these Ndebeles."

So strong was this feeling among sections of the politically conscious youth of the Witwatersrand (and Pretoria) that even Makgatho went with the tide, chairing, so Mabeta claimed, a Sotho only congress meeting on October 23rd, 1932.^{xvii}

During the first half of 1933 Makgatho's credibility was progressively more tarnished by his reluctance to distance himself from Seme and his reviled revised constitution. In January 1933, Makgatho attended Seme's ANC conference in Bloemfontein which many leading Transvaal Congressmen boycotted. The widening rift between Makgatho and other leading Congress colleagues is illustrated by his refusal to report back on the Conference to a meeting of the TAC because so many Johannesburg delegates had refused to attend.^{xviii} Finally in April Makgatho's already battered political standing was decisively undermined by the debacle of the ANC's annual Bloemfontein Convention whose decisions he continued to endorse.^{xix}

Meanwhile, signs of a generationally and ethnically inflected political faction on the Rand were beginning to emerge. In February 1933 a TAC meeting in Johannesburg embarked on a re-organisation drive in the city under the direction of J. Mareme Modiselle. His fellow committee members were H.V. Selope Thema, S.S. Maloka and H. Mabitsela, all of whom were either Kgatla or Pedi.^{xx} The composition of the committee reflected an increasingly close rapprochement between R.V. Selope-Thema and S.P. Matseke. Modiselle was chair of the Bakgatla National Association based in among his native Bakgatla-ba-Makau in the Hammanskraal district. After residing in Pretoria he had then lived for many years in Johannesburg.^{xxi} Modiselle was a close friend and political ally of S.P. Matseke, as were S.S. Maloka and J. Mabitsela. All three, like Moidselle were Kgatla. Thema, for his part proclaimed himself Pedi.

Both Matseke and Selope-Thema brought their own distinct contributions to the alliance. Matseke had dominated black politics in Pretoria ever since leading a highly effective resistance to pass raids in Marabastad in 1928. He was subsequently patronised by former ANC President Josiah T. Gumede, being elevated by him to the executive of the national body.^{xxii} Marabastad's population was drawn from a rural hinterland in the western, northern and central/eastern Transvaal, of which Matseke could claim to represent at least its Kgatla component and, at least initially, probably much else. Selope-Thema for his part was one of the most distinguished black intellectuals of his generation. He controlled the powerful propaganda platform of the African

newspaper *Bantu World* of which he had been founder editor since April 1932; he enjoyed huge prestige among sections of the educated black elite, and he could and did claim to speak on behalf of certain sections of the Pedi. From April 1933, and probably earlier, they worked energetically if circumspectly to unseat the distracted and apparently unsuspecting Makgatho. In June Makgatho walked unawares into their carefully laid political ambush and was voted unceremoniously out of the Presidency of the TAC.

The Matseke/Thema ticket was ethnic, but it did not embrace anything like their entire available ethnic constituency in the Transvaal. By mid 1934 the opposing Makgatho/Mphaphede faction had cobbled together support not only from Zulu, Xhosa and other immigrant residents on the Rand, but also members of the Sotho/Tswana educated elite, as well as, (importantly) several Transvaal chiefs. The Transvaal constituency of the TAC was thus itself fissured. At the same time, significant areas of the Transvaal shared a politically accessible sense of ethnic affinity into which the Matseke-Thema faction tapped. This rested on a number of key and hitherto unrecognised "peculiarities" of the Transvaal. It is to these that the paper now turns.

THE PECULIARITIES OF THE TRANSVAAL

A defining feature of the political geography of the early 20th century Transvaal was the huge industrial power house that lay in its southern part. A second less remarked diacrytic feature was the juxtaposition of a large number of African reserves under communal tenure alongside huge expanses of formerly African owned land which had been seized in the middle decades of the 19th century by intruding immigrant Boers. In no other province in the Union of South Africa had Africans simultaneously lost but also retained ownership of so much land. Besides those that retained ownership in African reserves, many other African communities remained resident on and enjoyed some limited possession of white owned land. Such a massive scale of formal dispossession combined with continued African occupation of land bred an appetite for land acquisition unparalleled anywhere else in South Africa, save certain parts of Natal. At the same time the continued existence of African chiefdoms some within and some outside the African reserves provided a political and material springboard for efforts to recover property in land. It was in recognition of this unique situation that the Report of the Native Land Commission of 1916 recommended the allocation of 4 753 992 additional morgen of land to African communities in the Transvaal beyond that reserved three years earlier under the 1913 Natives Land Act which was five times more than any other province in the Union (see Table 1).

All African chiefdoms in the Transvaal suffered in some measure from the process of dispossession, but none more so than those in the centre west and north west. Some chiefdoms that had allied with the Boers in their wars against Mzilikazi were rewarded with grants of land.

The great majority, however, were reduced to the status of sharecroppers or rent or labour paying tenants on Boer farms. From as early as the 1860's such communities sought to buy back lost lands, sometimes in their home areas but often in places well removed. The government of the South African Republic frowned on such endeavours and prohibited the transfer of land ownership directly into African hands. They did nevertheless relent on this blanket refusal in one crucial respect; white missions (mostly Dutch Reformed, Berlin and Hermansburg Lutheran) were permitted to purchase land on behalf of their African congregations with funds that these communities had collectively subscribed.^{xxiii} The opening of the diamond fields at Kimberley at the end of the 1860's greatly augmented the funds at the disposal of such groups. Several still unconquered African chiefdoms such as the Pedi in the east and others in the far north-east of the Transvaal made use of this opportunity to buy firearms with which to repel any further Boer advance, and indeed to roll back the frontiers of Boer occupation.^{xxiv} Others such as the Fokeng and Kgatla in the west and centre west who had capitulated to the Boers in the 1830's, channelled the income generated in this manner into the purchase of lost lands. In the early 1870's, to cite just one example, the Fokeng Chief Mokgatle despatched around 500 young men to work on the fields so that he could purchase farms in the name of the local Lutheran mission.^{xxv}

A symbolic moment that captured the tensions generated by the economic and political fluxes that resulted was the flogging of the Kgatla chief Kgamanyane by S.P.J. Kruger, subsequent State President of the SAR and at that time probably the leading Boer notable in the western Transvaal. Kruger wished to take advantage of the new market for grain opened up in the Kimberley diamond fields by irrigating his land. To do this he needed to build a dam which required him to mobilise much larger drafts of African labour than hitherto. When the local chief Kgamanyane declined to lend his authority to these demands Kruger summoned him and his people to a public assembly at which he bound Kgamanyane to the wheel of a waggon and subjected him to a public flogging. Kgamanyane immediately departed to his Kgatla kinsmen at Mochudi in the west in what was later to become Bechuanaland. But the humiliation he experienced remained embedded in the collective psyche of both those who left and those who remained and was still vividly recollected when Mbenga conducted his researches in the area in the early 1990's.^{xxvi}

S.P.J. Kruger later reneged on an agreement into which he had entered to sell his Pilanesberg farm named Saulspoord to the Kgatla after this had been vetoed by the SAR's Volksraad, and then added salt to Kgatla wounds by refusing to return the money that the Kgatla had paid. Shortly afterwards, however, the Kgatla succeeded in repurchasing Saulspoord as well as a number of other farms through the agency of the local Dutch Reformed missionary Gonin. Elsewhere, across a huge swathe of the centre, western and northern Transvaal a similar process was underway. In the Rustenburg district Hermansburg Lutheran missionaries^{xxvii} bought farms

for chiefs Mamagole, Mosane, Mokgatle and many others.^{xxviii} In the Pietersburg and Middelburg regions Berlin Lutheran missionaries did the same.^{xxix}

Following the second South African War of 1899-1902 a renewed and much larger surge of land purchases occurred. Simpson considers it

"something of a mystery how chiefdoms so recently impoverished by the effects of the rinderpest pandemic [of 1896-7] were able to generate the funds necessary for land purchase."

and falls back on the presumption that this was made possible by "the opportunities of the Anglo-Boer War" such as service with British troops and the sale of produce to the British occupying forces.^{xxx}

Among the new opportunities opened up by the war which the Pilanesberg Kgatla enthusiastically exploited was the freedom to loot. The rankling grievance at the flogging of Kgamanyane was now amply avenged. So severe were the losses suffered by the Pilanesberg Boers in this period that they abandoned the district and did not return to occupy it in any large numbers until after World War I. In 1906 the largely African population of Pilanesberg was reported to possess more cattle than any other district in the Transvaal, permitting the purchase of a number of new farms "concurrently and promptly".^{xxxi}

In 1905, a Supreme Court judgment in the case of Rex versus Tsewu allowed Africans to buy land in their individual capacities.^{xxxii} Many Transvaal chiefs now bought farms in their own names, generally with the aid of a tribal levy or contribution.^{xxxiii} An additional spur to the accelerated purchase of land in the immediate aftermath of Union in 1910 was apprehension at impending exclusionary land legislation which was enacted in 1913. A principal purpose of the Act was to preclude tribal purchase of land outside a narrow range of areas delimited by the state.^{xxxiv} The miserably inadequate amount of land reserved by this Act for Africans in the Transvaal was recognised first by the Beaumont Commission, and even more so by the Land Committees for the Eastern Transvaal, whose recommendations were tabled in 1918. None of the additional reserved land was purchased by the state until after the passage of the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936, but in the meantime, in some of these areas Africans were permitted to continue to purchase on their own behalf.^{xxxv}

The conditions under which Africans occupied land in the central, western and north western Transvaal helped fashion an amorphous, fissured but nevertheless shared collective consciousness. The African chiefs of this part of the Transvaal almost exclusively funded the SANNC delegations to Britain and Europe to protest the Land Act in 1914 and 1919 and by so doing gave voice to the common aspirations of the overwhelming majority of Africans in that Province. Likewise sedimented into this bedrock of collective consciousness were other shared experiences of Africans in this central, western and north western zone of the Transvaal. For many communities living in this area the reverse side of dispossession was a kind of

marginalised acculturation into the society of the dispossessors. Acculturation proceeded across two intersecting planes, firstly into the language of Afrikaans and into Afrikaner social customs, secondly into closely related Dutch Reformed and German Lutheran religions. Morton estimates that on the eve of the Anglo-Boer War 6-7 000 Pilanesberg Kgatla lived on mission owned land, while the balance of 15 000 remained rooted on Boer farms.^{xxxvi} Rustenburg exhibited a greater degree of polarisation. Large chiefdoms succeeded in acquiring farms through the agency of their German Lutheran mission mentors, on which the bulk of their populations lived. Smaller chiefdoms, by contrast, were less successful in raising the money for the missions to buy land, and had half of their populations living on white farms or as migrants in the towns.^{xxxvii} Large numbers of African families throughout the whole area were thus intimately imbricated in many areas of Boer life. Mbenga concludes that "Boer culture had an enormous impact on Batswana generally from very early on" and cites Emil Holub's observation from the early 1870's that "nearly all of [the Kgatla] speak Dutch". By the late 19th century numerous Dutch/Afrikaans words had been absorbed into Tswana vocabulary, while many Tswana men sported beards after the fashion of the Boers. Boer impoverishment after the Second South African War helped even out the balance in this cultural and economic exchange. By 1910 the sub-native commissioner of Pilanesberg observed that "the natives [here] are wealthier than the whites", while in 1928 the magistrate for the Rustenburg/Pilanesberg region reported that "many whites were working for blacks".^{xxxviii}

Dutch Reformed, Berlin and Hermansburg Lutheran missions also capitalised on the favourable circumstances they found. Unlike the situation they confronted in Bechuanaland, they found the power of the chiefs in this part of the Transvaal already broken by the Boers. This greatly aided their endeavour.^{xxxix} Kgafela Kgatla chiefs initially resisted their overtures, but in 1864 Kgamanyane's half brother Moselekatse converted to the Lutheran faith in an intimation of a general softening of attitude, and two years later Kgamanyane himself invited a DRC missionary to Saulspoort. In the late 1880's, Linchwe, the Kgafela Kgatla paramount chief, just over the border in Bechuanaland, began attending Baptism classes and in 1892 he was finally baptised.^{xl} Within a relatively short space of time scores of Kgatla fellow tribesmen followed suit. By the turn of the century 75% of the African population of the district professed the Christian faith.^{xli} According to Breutz the DRC had become something akin to a national church. Many Kgatla cultural practices had been abolished or modified (notably rain-making, circumcision and to some extent bridewealth) and Christianity had become a dominant force in Kgatla life.^{xlii}

At the forefront of this process of proselytisation were a group of Dutch/Afrikaans speaking Africans who had already converted to one or other branch of the DRC before the missionaries arrived, who were also sometimes literate and who performed various kinds of skilled or specialised tasks on farms or in small rural towns.^{xliii} Known as 'oorlamse' these

cultural brokers (or their forebears) had been bought or seized as spoils of war while they were still children, and then indentured as 'apprentices' ('inboekselings') on Boer farms in the first decades of Boer occupation^{xliv} Brought up and socialised in an alien environment many became largely or wholly deracinated. One classic example of this process is the indenture of the heir of the chiefly dynasty of Makopane, after being smuggled out of the cave of Gwasa (Makapansgat) during its seige by the Boers in 1854. Following their surrender at the cave Makapane's people were scattered on farms across the Eastern Transvaal. A small nucleus gradually re-assembled as squatters on a farm a short distance north of Potgietersrus, but all contact with the boy chief was lost. Some years later, a group of men from the chieftom, either by accident or design, were able to locate the chieftoms once again. In one version of Kekana oral tradition they were aided by a neighbouring Kgatla chief and a coloured foreman on the farm on which the boy worked. (The powerful resonances of these points will emerge later in this discussion.) In another the men were on their way back from migrant contracts on the Kimberley diamond mines. A pivotal moment is arrived at in the oral tradition when the young heir is asked to identify himself by his erstwhile kinsman. He replied "I am Klaas", signifying the degree of his deracination (only later admitting to the second name of Mokapane). Thereafter, upon payment of a ransom, he was released back into Kekana hands.^{xlv}

Over time the less favoured and greatly preponderant unransomed 'inboekseling' servants assumed an independent existence from their Boer masters, and took up employment as interpreters, hunters, artisans and even farmers. When the DRC missionary Gonin arrived in the Pilanesberg to start his mission enterprise he encountered a large number of such literate, God-fearing, African Lutherans scattered in different parts of the district. Once he had securely established his central mission at Saulspoor he recruited their services as teachers/evangelists in the numerous out-stations that mission sprayed off.^{xlvi} A prominent figure among these teacher/evangelists was J. Letanka, whose kinsman D.S. Letantka sat for many years on the Executive of the Transvaal African Congress, and was closely aligned with S.P. Matseke before his death in 1932.

In some instances these evangelists operated independent of mission control. One such person was John Jonathan Moloto whose father was kidnapped from Saulspoor by Boers at the beginning of the Second South African War. Some years later, his brother, in a manner reminiscent of the kinsmen of Klaas Makopane, visited Potchefstroom, discovered his lost and now almost wholly acculturated relative, and persuaded him to come back and teach at the Bakgatla school in Saulspoor.^{xlvii} This experience of re-indenturing and forced aculturation was by no means exceptional, being undergone by none other than S.P. Matseke, leader of the Kgatla-Pedi Congress in the Transvaal.^{xlviii}

One distinctive feature of the evangelical practice which the Dutch Reformed Churches held in common with the German Lutheran churches, and which both shaped and delimited the

cultural universes of their converts, was their insistence on focusing the greater part of the educational effort on religious instruction. With few exceptions the Lutheran churches ceased instruction at Standard 3, and were generally loathe to teach both religion and more worldly subjects in any language other than the vernacular.^{xlix} It was their conservatism which recommended them (as opposed to the British mission) to the Boer authorities in the early days of the SAR and gave them virtually unchallenged dominance in the Transvaal until its annexation by the British between 1877-1881. Thereafter their influence was gradually diluted. Even so the cultural nexus comprising Boers, Lutherans and oorlams continued to imprint itself in crucial ways on the consciousness of the African inhabitants of these sections of the Transvaal until well into the century that followed.

The Matseke-Thema wing of Congress grew out of this social cultural and political milieu but so too, in a less pronounced fashion, did that of Mphahlele and Magkato. In a sense they can be seen as representing two sides of the same political coin. The side on which individuals and social categories would fall was determined by several variable elements in the social and cultural mix that has just been described. Two stand out as particularly important. The first was the size of individual chiefdoms, which generally correlated with the amount of land that they possessed. The second was the scale and character of the mission impact. It is to the first of these issues that this section of the paper devotes its attention.

Larger chiefdoms, like the Fokeng of the Rustenburg district, whom Simpson discusses at length, were able to construct a kind of virtuous circle of land, followers, wealth and political cohesion. Larger acreages of land could support more substantial populations at lower densities than their smaller counterparts could sustain. Larger, less congested arable and pastoral lands generated greater prosperity and yielded the economic surplus with which to buy additional farms. Between 1896 and 1938, for example, Chief August Mokgatle, was able to buy nine new farms in his own name.^l Ready access to land promoted social harmony and aided social cohesion. In such a relatively favourable environment chiefly authority was also more easily and effectively preserved. Smaller chiefdoms by contrast were often twice as heavily populated as their larger neighbours, and typically had half their members living on white farms or working on the Rand. Lower agricultural productivity reduced surpluses which chiefs could tax in order to buy additional land, and threw a greater burden on the earnings of migrants which chiefs repeatedly levied to pay instalments on mortgaged property. Many migrants saw little immediate prospect of themselves gaining access to land on such farms, which predisposed them to oppose or circumvent tribal levies and often to repudiate the authority of chiefs.^{li} A similar pattern of polarisation can be detected in the adjoining district of Pilanesberg, where the Kgatla-Baka-Kgafela chiefdom owned a substantial tract of land at Saulspoort which provided a solid platform for chiefly authority and enabled the construction of a pan Kgatla-Baka-Kgafela identity which spanned the Bechuanaland border to Linchiwe's Kgatla at Mochudi. Smaller chiefdoms in the

area were, by contrast, riven by dissention and witnessed the steady erosion of the chiefly power.^{lii}

The Waterberg and Pretoria/Hammanskraal districts present contrasting variations on the latter theme. In the northern Waterberg extensive tracts of Crown and Land Company lands had lain vacant up until the First World War which, allowed "the free run of the whole part of the district [to Africans] without let or hindrance" and which provided no incentive to this population to purchase new land. After the war the delimitation of released areas by the Beaumont Commission and the Land Committees precluded land purchases by Africans in this area at the very moment "an influx of Europeans [began] ... to exercise ... their rights of property".^{liii} Elsewhere in the Nylstroom region of Southern Waterberg "many bought farms in better times" at the start of the century. Subsequently many buyers found it difficult to repay the bonds on their farms, leaving these properties to relapse "into the hands of the sheriff".^{liv} Drawn "from every tribe" this increasingly unpropertied labour tenant and farm labourer population was "scattered about a very large area in very small kraals with no cohesion or unity whatever tribally", and living side by side Afrikaner farmers, who in the jaundiced eye of the local Sub Native Commissioner "were [of] a class which converses with too much familiarity with the natives".^{lv} Clearly the pattern of acculturation described earlier for parts of the Pilanesberg was here even further advanced.

The picture presented by the Pretoria/Hammanskraal district was in some respects different but in other important respects the same. Its most striking difference with Waterberg was that 159 000 morgen of land was purchased by African buyers in this district, most of it in the first three decades of the 20th century. The scale of this accomplishment can only be fully comprehended when one is reminded that the largest official location (i.e. reserve) in the Transvaal at this time was 120 000 morgen in extent.^{lvi} In marked similarity with Waterberg, however, the district was occupied by a multiplicity of small, diverse, African communities and chiefdoms. It was here, this paper argues, that the cultural conglomerate produced by landlessness, land purchase acculturation and the atrophy of "tribal cohesion" was at its most compacted and dense. It was here, it should be no surprise, that the Matseke/Thema faction found its most congenial home.

J.C. Yeats took up office as Native Sub-Commissioner of Hammanskraal in 1931. By that stage he had worked 25 years in the service of the Native Affairs Department in different parts of the Transvaal. Yeats told the Native Economic Commission that this area had problems of a totally different order to those that he had encountered in his former posting of Pokwani or indeed anywhere else. Despite the massive buy back of land "the native tribal system had been comprehensively broken". This was partly due to education but even more so the result of the creation of "little artificial tribes". Anything from 50 to 200 individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds would band together, elect a headman, collect money and buy land. These

contributors were often scattered over a wide distance on white farms or were working in the towns (a full 50% of the district's tax payers being routinely absent from the area). Such artificial creations were in Yeats' view, almost guaranteed to produce dissension. From the moment the various members tried to divide up the land disputes would arise. When tribal levies were imposed to pay the balance of the purchase price or instalments on the mortgage a recalcitrant section invariably emerged who refused to pay their dues. These would hire a separate firm of attorneys to those who had undertaken the initial transaction who would then "interfere" through such devices as interpleader action to frustrate the collection of funds thereby "converting [tribal] reserves into attorneys' fees".^{lvii}

T.A.C. Emmet, Native Sub-Commissioner of the neighbouring Pilanesberg district painted a similar, if slightly less bleak, picture in his evidence to the Commission. Here, as at Hammanskraal, Crown Lands were not available for leasing. In their absence, small "companies of natives" combined to buy land with funds obtained by working on the mines or in the towns. This caused "detrribalisation" with all its attendant evils. Even where a measure of tribal cohesion survived, traditional practices were diluted or abandoned and chiefly authority came under threat. Polygamy was almost extinct, circumcision was rapidly dying out, and when a chief imposed a levy of a few pounds on adult males in the chiefdom, with the aim of buying land, the young men of the chiefdom simply "cleared out".^{lviii}

Chiefly authority came increasingly under challenge through this whole zone of the Transvaal in the 1920's and 1930's. The core issues, invariably, were levies and land. As chiefs sought to buy back more land they became increasingly indebted. Land values soared upwards in the immediate aftermath of World War I, and nowhere more steeply than in areas scheduled by the Beaumont Commission and the Transvaal Land Committees. There a mounting shortage of land open to African purchase left buyers vulnerable to over-charging to a point where they were commonly compelled to buy at twice the price paid by white purchasers of equivalent land.^{lix} Deep troughs of economic depression in the early 1920's and early 1930's circumscribed employment opportunities in the towns and reduced the value of agricultural produce, making the repayment of instalments on mortgages difficult if not impossible. Yeats testified to the Native Economic Commission that 20 000 morgen of land purchased by Africans in the Pretoria area were, as a result, on the verge of being lost.^{lx} Recurrent drought between 1925 and 1934 further aggravated these problems.^{lxi} In 1932 Rev. Stegman wrote of the Pilanesberg district:

"Things have never been worse for the last 26 years at least. For three years running crops have failed due to drought and there has been a drastic reduction in the size of herds of cattle."^{lxii}

Chiefs sought to extricate themselves from their dilemmas by imposing more and more levies on their wage earning young men. Young migrants, who also suspected that their contributions were being misappropriated by chiefs, responded by resisting or decamping.^{lxiii}

Chiefly authority, above all in smaller chiefdoms steadily unravelled. When D.S. Letanka, and S.P. Matseke toured the reserves of northern, western and central Transvaal in August 1929 to drum up support for Congress (and particularly their own wing) they were unavoidably embroiled in this debate.^{lxiv} Where Matseke stood on this issue is shown clearly by his aborted interventions in the Kekana chiefdom of Zebedelia, where he sided with young migrants against a tribal levy imposed by the chief.^{lxv}

The experiences of the various fragments of the Bakgatla ba Motsha offer a textured and instructive case study of many of the trends outlined above. From the late 19th century (1882, to be precise) members of the dominant branch of this chiefdom purchased nine separate tracts of land in the Hammanskraal district. By the time the Transvaal Department of Native Affairs published its *Short History of the Native Tribes of the Transvaal* in 1905 the original core group had sub-divided into five separate petty chiefdoms spread over these and various other farms.^{lxvi} Subsequently, in 1917, Stuurman Lefifi, along with his Pedi following, who had earlier fled from Phokwane in the Middelburg district to seek the protection of the Kgatla, and who had successfully negotiated the purchase of the farm Rooifontein 378 a short while before repudiated the authority of chief Roberts Moepi after he had tried to extend a tribal levy on to Lefifi's group to purchase another farm (Geelbeksvlei) for the main line of the chiefdom. Because of the physical distance between the two groups and Lefifi's ownership of his own farm, the Native Affairs Department acquiesced in his secession.^{lxvii}

In 1912 chieftainess Lehau Maloka, elder sister of Chief Roberts Moepi of the Kgatla ba Motiha core at Schildfontein, also purchased a 1 172 morgen section of the farm Pankoppen 505, a good way further south in the Hammanskraal district. Some while earlier she had married Piet Maloka, a petty chief of the same Kgatla group, and went to live with him on the farm Bultfontein in the Waterberg district. When Piet died Lehau quit Bultfontein to take up residence as labour tenant on a farm known as de Kuil. At this point her following numbered about 120 tax payers scattered across 11 farms in the Hammanskraal district, in addition to those living on de Kuil. It was from de Kuil that Lehau secretly negotiated her purchase of the section of Pankoppen 505 in 1912. A first down payment on the farm was successfully collected from her followers, but by the beginning of 1914, Lehau was already complaining to the SNC Nylstroom that 27 of the subscribers to the farm were refusing to pay £13 towards the purchase price of the farm. She accordingly requested that he compel them to discharge their liabilities. By the end of the year Lehau had again fallen into arrears on her payments, and with the approval of the government, took out a mortgage to cover the balance of £500, in favour of the farm's owner C. Marais. Over the next 18 months Lehau paid off the mortgage and the title deeds to the farm were transferred. At this point most of Pankoppen's inhabitants still found it necessary to seek access to cultivable land on neighbouring white farms for which they gave two months' service to the farm owner. Responding to their plight Lehau became increasingly,

unrealistically ambitious and entered into negotiations to purchase three adjacent sections of the farm. The larger piece comprising 1 189 morgen was purchased with a loan of £2 000 taken out with the owner of the original section of the farm, C. Marais, at an interest rate of 8% p.a. Both the new purchase and the original section of the farm which Lehau now owned were offered as surety for the loan. It was agreed that failure to pay either the interest or instalments on the capital sum would result in the instant forfeiture of both farms. Provision for the payment of interest and instalments was made by tribal levy sanctioned by a tribal resolution signed by Lehau and her councillors, among whose number featured Samuel Matseke.^{lxviii}

By October 1921 Lehau and her council were already defaulting on their payments. Former owner, C. Marais, "while appreciat(ing) the natives, like everyone else are affected by the prevailing depression" threatened legal proceedings and the distraint of the two farms. Lehau "fully appreciated the seriousness of her situation" but was trapped between hard economic times and the recalcitrance of at least some of her own followers who "have no money and who through lack of cohesion are unwilling to open the gates of the cattle kraals" to save the situation.^{lxix} A complicating factor was the suspicion that chieftainess Lehau and a local European trader named Stokes who had insinuated himself into her confidence and with whom she was "somewhat intimate" was "meddling with tribal funds".^{lxx} Two opposing factions, the one led by Saul Maubane, the other grouped around S. Moema, each of whom employed their own separate attorneys surfaced in the course of this dispute, at least one of which refused to pay any further contributions until Stokes "had no more part in the handling of moneys". Stokes was quietly despatched from the scene by the SNC, but by then the damage was already done and late in 1922 the farms reverted to their former owner, C. Marais. The following year Lehau and her councillors were reduced to a state where they were forced to propose hiring the original section of the farm which in 1921 had been fully paid for a 12 month period and at a rental of £140, with an option to purchase it again for £2 000 at the expiry of that period.^{lxxi}

It was at this point that a new and significant name appeared on the list of four councillors signing with Lehau, that of Simon Petrus Matseke, Marabastad Congress leader and soon to be President of the Transvaal African Congress.^{lxxii} Matseke, it transpires, was Bakgatla ba Motsha by origin. He was born at Pankoppen in 1878 and his association with the area continued to the end of his life.^{lxxiii} Matseke's presence at this point in the negotiations is suggestive in both a narrower and broader sense. Shortly before this in July 1922 Chiefs Robert Moepi and Abram Kekana had been summoned to arbitrate in the dispute between chieftainess Lehau and the disgruntled Moema group. "A strong committee of both sides had been set up to raise the funds to release the property".^{lxxiv} Matseke's elevation to councillor followed hard on the heels of this decision and suggests his connection to the dissident Moema group. This may in turn indicate or confirm a broader anti-chiefly inflection in his thinking, which would accord well with the testimony he presented eight years later to the Native Economic Commission,

where he voiced the view that "the tribal system is not satisfactory and is discouraging natives from buying land Buying land on the communal system is better than the tribal system."^{lxxxv}

Matseke's name dropped out of the record of the Pankoppen negotiations almost as abruptly as it first appeared, although it is likely he retained a watching brief from Marabastad. Leheu and her followers were thereafter never able to raise a down payment on the farm and they continued leasing it on an annual basis until they fell into arrears with rent in 1930 in the midst of the next economic depression. Only in 1944 was another portion of the farm known as "Leonie" purchased on behalf of Leheu by the Native Trust.^{lxxxvi}

While chieftainess Leheu scratched around to no avail to put together a credible down-payment on her portion of Pankoppen 505, similar endeavours by others were proving more fruitful. Half of the adjoining farm (Zandfontein 26) which comprised 1 988½ morgen of land was sold to the Minister of Native Affairs on behalf of another Kgatla fragment led by Alfred Maubane. Bultfontein 472, which itself abutted Zandfontein 26 and comprised 2 209 morgen, was likewise sold to the Minister on behalf of Chief Makhokho and his people.^{lxxxvii} Other sections of Pankoppen 505 were meanwhile also being eyed by aspiring buyers. In October 1927 Frederick Simon Motau and 37 associates approached the Acting Assistant Magistrate of Waterberg to request permission to purchase section C of Pankoppen 505. Motau had been elected headman of a committee of co-subscribers (whose number rose to 45 a short while after), most of whom had been living up to that point on Zandfontein 258 in the Waterberg district. Motau and his fellow buyers had been spurred into action by the imminent sale of the farm by its Lutheran (presumably Berlin) Mission owners. The name revealingly chosen by this newly constructed entity was the "Pankop School Plaatz tribe", in an effort, one imagines, to connote their Berlin Lutheran origins and education. In addition to these cultural credentials Motau and his fellows also appeared to have money at hand. The asking price for that portion of Pankoppen 505 was £2 380, of which they were able to pay £1 410 in advance and in cash. Motau and his co-subscribers may have been able to pay off an additional £6-700 shortly after through the proceeds of the sale of 150 cattle. However, as depression and drought bit in 1930 they found themselves, like many others, unable to pay the instalments due on the capital sum. They nevertheless scraped together enough to pay interest, and continued in this fashion until the drought and depression lifted in 1934-1935. By October 1936 the bond was finally repaid.^{lxxxviii}

The case of the Bakgatla ba Motsha offers one further insight into the cultural and social universe of the land-starved peoples of the Western/Central Transvaal. In 1921 Chief Roberts Moepi, chief of the ruling dynasty at Schildfontein died, immediately plunging the chiefdom into a dispute over the succession. The two rival candidates for the office, Henry and Mankulane Moepi, were sons of Roberts' marriages to Sophia and Ntipane respectively. Sophia was Roberts' first wife who had been married to the chief in common law and by Christian rites. Ntimane was sister to Chief Sekgnati of the Ba-Masemola (Pedi) royal house and had been

married by tribal cattle and by rituals which marked her out as the "tribal" wife - and hence as mother of the heir.^{lxxxix} Up to this point Supreme Court decisions on such issues had repeatedly affirmed the precedence of the "legal" Christian wife. Now, at the urging of the majority non-Christian section of the chiefdom, and remarkably, all but one of the missionaries consulted in the area, Ntimane's rights were upheld.^{lxxx}

The case is significant, not only for the precedent it set, which reverberated down the next two decades, but also for what it reveals about the cultural and social complexion of the Bakgatla ba Motsha. Like the Fokeng chiefdom of August Mokgatle in the Rustenburg district, Moepi's chiefdom was substantial, and, by the standards of the time, relatively well off. Traditional customs and chiefly authority had, as a result, survived in a much more intact state than almost anywhere else in the Hammanskraal and Waterberg districts. Reflecting this background, the non-Christian faction which backed Ntipane was supported by the majority of adult men and women in the chiefdom. Every single other offshoot of the Bakgatla ba Motsha, including Chieftainess Lehau, as well as several Kekana and other Ndebele fragments, by contrast, supported the claims of Henry Moepi.^{lxxxix} The episode thus speaks volumes about cultural orientations and social predispositions throughout the whole area.

In his Marabastad stronghold S.P. Matseke reflected and gave voice to this cultural world. N.J. van Warmelo alerts us, in a brief, almost throwaway line, that the overwhelming majority among the permanent residents of Pretoria's black locations were of Kgatla stock.^{lxxxii} Many, like S.P. Matseke himself, retained an interest in rural land. A close nexus thus existed between Pretoria's black urban population and politics and those of its huge rural hinterland. Matseke embodies in many senses the historical experiences and cultural conditioning of this group. Like the independent DRC teacher and preacher John Johannes Moloto, of Saulspoort, he had been kidnapped and pressed into Boer service for most of the Second South African War. When this ended, Matseke exposed himself to the diversity of cultural currents in the Sotho Tswana Transvaal when he took up employment on the Middelburg coal mines, and successfully mastered a number of Transvaal African dialects which he put to good use when he worked as court interpreter in Pretoria for two years. Matseke's early experiences left him already well versed in High Dutch, and he continued to maintain friendly relationships with a number of Afrikaner patricians, as well as his membership of the Berlin Lutheran Church (which he only relinquished under great pressure from his social and political circle on the Rand).^{lxxxiii} Matseke's multilayered and contradictory experiences left him shot through with ambivalence, as his religious equivocation suggests. He loathed the system of racial discrimination and domination which he encountered daily in Pretoria, yet he was enmeshed in its cultural world. In many senses he sums up the peculiarities of the (African) Transvaal.

The other leg of the slightly improbable political pact into which S.P. Mabeke was conjoined was Richard Vernon Selope-Thema. To all outward appearances Selope-Thema

presented a total contrast to his Pretoria ally. Cultivated, lettered, Lovedale educated, and quintessentially a Joint Council man, he shared little that was obviously in common with the largely self taught, unsophisticated, Lutheran, populist, sometimes veering on radical, small town backveldler Matseke. Yet even here, despite such contrasting backgrounds, there existed a sufficient sub-stratum of shared early experience to permit the forging of a common bond.

Selope Thema identified himself and his people as Pedi.^{lxxxiv} His columns in the newspaper *Bantu World* are studded with Pedi aphorisms and proverbs. What is easy to lose sight of when contemplating the very considerable body of his writing, is that his people, the Mamabolo were, in any strict sense of the term, not Pedi at all. Like many chiefdoms spread out in an arc around the west, north and east of Pietersburg, they shared linguistic and cultural affinities with the Pedi, but have never been incorporated as an integral component of the Pedi paramountcy.^{lxxxv} They rather constituted a kind of Pedi penumbra, distinct in various respects from the Pedi themselves. By common usage in the twentieth century Transvaal they were nevertheless invariably designated a Pedi and to this convention Selope-Thema conformed.^{lxxxvi} The Pietersburg chiefdoms to which the Mamabolo belonged, in fact shared a number of similar conditions with their Kgatla counterparts in the West, albeit in more attenuated forms. Chiefdoms were relatively small, and had generally lost considerable quantities of land.^{lxxxvii}

Many worked on white farms and were subject to the acculturative influences this involved, in a way that sharply contrasted to much of the Pedi heartland to the south and the east. Land shortage also helped nurture social tensions in each of these chiefdoms and engendered opposition movements to weakened local chiefs. Acquiring access to land was high on everyone's agenda, sometimes throwing elements from these chiefdoms into the hands of the locally ascendant Berlin mission.

Selope Thema's early life, which he recorded in an unpublished autobiography, condenses the varied and contradictory formative influences that came to bear on Africans growing up in this and other parts of the Transvaal between the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 (which coincidentally was the date of Selope-Thema's birth) and the Act of Union in 1910. Selope-Thema was born into the Balepye clan of Bakolobe chiefdom under Chief Mamabolo.^{lxxxviii} Many years before, the chiefdom had been removed from 'Byaltash' on the fertile banks of the Lebaka river and were allowed to re-settle at a place called Mafarane, 15 miles from the town of Pietersburg. Two years after Thema's birth a veldkornet accompanied by armed Boers rode in to Chief Nlowashilo Mamabolo's village to instruct them to remove from the hills to Mafarane, which was suitable for European occupation and to take up occupation in an area which had been set aside for them on the plains below. Realising that it "was useless" to resist, the chief's council reluctantly obeyed. "With hearts full of bitterness, the people packed their belongings, pulled down their huts and gathered their children, cattle, sheep and goats and trekked through the scorching heat of the African sun to the area set aside for them" (Mabula's

location).^{lxxxix} Lack of land meant that many Mamabolo were forced to squat on white farms. "As a boy", Thema writes, "I had two residential places - the one at home and the other at my maternal grandparents who lived as labour tenants on a farm belonging to Mr van Heerden." This was situated on the eastern side of Dikgale's location. Thema spent two years in van Heerden's service, working, playing and fighting with van Heerden's sons. "There was no apartheid between us", Thema pointedly observes. Van Heerden's sons conversed with Thema in Sepedi,^{xc} but a range of cultural influences obviously rubbed off in this exchange. "Oubaas Moxhelo", the name by which Thema called van Heerden, "was a very religious man and he saw to it that Tandabantu [Thema's Pedi workmate] and I participated in the evening prayers before leaving for our village not far from the big house" (which they did despite not being conversant in Dutch). When Thema returned to his parents' home after two years of work on van Heerden's farm he had resolved he would relinquish his traditional faith and convert to Christianity.^{xc1}

This was not an easy decision. Since Thema's grandfather was both *induna* of the clan and a traditional doctor (who in fact was often approached for treatment by Boer neighbours.^{xcii} His opportunity came when some of his kinsmen who had converted to Christianity in Kimberley and had gone on to Basutoland to receive further teaching in the mission centre Morija (returned home with rifles purchased in Kimberley and bibles bought in Morija.)^{xciii} A mission and a school attached to the mission was staffed by African evangelists which made them somewhat more acceptable to the Mamabolo chief and made it possible to Thema to enrol. There now mingled in Thema's consciousness African customs (though initiation was apparently not practised in his clan), Christian teaching and socialisation experienced on an Afrikaner farm.

When the Anglo-Boer War broke out the African missionary Rev Mpamba and chief Numabolo were arrested and then imprisoned in Pretoria apparently on the suspicion of being pro-British. Even so "when a call was made for service with burghers the men freely responded [going] to the front to serve as drivers, leaders and in other capacities". This, it will be recalled, was the fate that befell S.P. Matseke. Thema's situation was in this instance somewhat different. "Boys of 12 years and over were commandeered and distributed on Boer farms" and Thema spent the next 18 months working on a farm in Haenertsberg.^{xciv} When the British captured Pietersburg he deserted and then volunteered (due to starvation at home) with the British forces in the Waterberg. Thereafter, he took a sequence of jobs and then succeeded in gaining admittance at Lovedale College where he studied for five years.^{xcv} Thema thus shared, albeit in modified and attenuated form, in the collective experiences of the Kgatla and other peoples of the Western and Northern Transvaal. It was this which at least in part provided the basis of the alliance with Matseke.

GOOD CHIEFS, STRONG CHIEFS AND HOPELESS CHIEFS

Matseke, nevertheless stood on one edge of the Kgatla-Pedi Congress's political spectrum and Selope-Thema on the other. Matseke was no great admirer of chiefly rule and openly expressed his preference for what he called communal as opposed to tribal land tenure. Selope-Thema was himself branded as being anti-chief, but this rested on remarkably flimsy evidence. Several times his detractors claimed that "he had given evidence against chiefs at a Parliamentary Committee".^{xcvi} The Select Committee in question was never identified in these statements, but it is highly probably that the one alluded to was "The Committee on the subject matter of the Masters' and Servants' Bill" which sat in 1925. Here Thema was asked "of course you have read the history of the natives Chaka and Dingane. Did the natives have the right to life or property under these chiefs?"

To which he replied

"I do not think that ... because the native under Chaka did not have the right to be protected by law, he should not have that right today under a civilised government."

Under further cross questioning Thema described the "Transvaal natives" as being more democratic than those in Zululand".^{xcvii} Such sentiments may have opened him up to the charge of harbouring unflattering images of the Zulu past, which we know to have become more pronounced in the early 1930's, but they hardly qualify as a denunciation of chiefly power.

Selope-Thema could not, nevertheless, have remained wholly unaffected by currents of anti-chiefly sentiment circulating in various quarters of the Transvaal and which had surfaced in his home district of Pietersburg in the 1920's and 1930's. Indeed it was to this disaffected element that the Matseko-Thema Congress mainly appealed. Prior to World War I the Pietersburg area was a stronghold of Congress and its antecedent organisations. The chiefs of Mphahlele and Matlala were both active supporters of Congress's predecessor body in the area, the African National Political Union as were many Pedi and Transvaal Ndebele chiefs further south and east, including Sekhukhune Phasuane and C.J.L. Kekana.^{xcviii} None of these chiefs featured in the proceedings which led up to the formation of the South African Native National Congress in 1912, which may explain why they attracted no further historical attention,^{xcix} but several gave generous support to Congress's fund raising campaigns to send delegations to Britain to protest the Land Act and other issues in 1914 and 1919.^c Interest was sustained in Congress activities in several Pietersburg chiefdoms up until the early 1920's at least. In May 1919 local chiefs from Pietersburg as well as a number from Zululand were invited by the Pietersburg district branch of Congress to consider the creation of a paramount chief.^{ci} A year later the same district was in the forefront of a campaign initiated by the Transvaal African Congress to oppose the Poll Tax recently enacted by the Transvaal Provincial legislature which doubled the previous rate of tax and extended it to all men over the age of 18.^{cii} For some while before this local chiefs and their peoples had suffered from the overbearing and capricious

behaviour of the local Native Sub-Commissioner, C.D. Wheelwright, members of the Matlala and Mphahlele chiefdoms being subjected to particularly heavy fines, the former for the illicit brewing of beer, the latter for continuing to display buttons on uniforms presumably brought back from World War I.^{ciii}

The Matlala chiefdom was a particular hotbed of opposition. In April 1919 a branch of Congress was formed with the sanction or at least acquiescence of the newly installed chief Sekgoari. At its inaugural meeting the various objectives of Congress were expounded, most notably opposition to Poll Tax and a commitment to the acquisition of new land. A year later disaffection erupted into open resistance. At a meeting summoned by local Native Affairs official Snyman, which took place in Matlala on 14 July 1920, local Congress leader Nong climbed a table which had been brought out for Snyman to conduct departmental business and declared that they (the local Matlala population) would refuse to accept or allow the collection of taxes. A scuffle ensued which led next day to the arrest of 112 Matlala tribesmen. In the subsequent trial the accused were defended by an advocate that S.M. Thema, a school teacher, and member of the neighbouring Mamabolo chiefdom had imported from the Transvaal. They were acquitted on the grounds of provocation, and Wheelwright was re-deployed to the Transvaal.^{civ}

The political temperature rose throughout the whole district as a result of this incident. Congress meetings in July 1919 advocated violent resistance to a variety of government impositions. On 13-14 August a general meeting of the Pietersburg branch held at the Ethiopian Church of Zion on the farm Sterkloop, which drew several chiefs or their representatives on the first day of its deliberations, resolved on the second day to end the ill-treatment of blacks in the Pietersburg district, and to demand the removal of C.D. Wheelwright as Sub-Native Commissioner as well as the ending of hut tax in the Transvaal, failing which a general strike of workers throughout the Transvaal should be called.^{cv}

The Poll Tax was ultimately overturned in the courts and C.D. Wheelwright as we have seen shortly moved on, but well before that alarm bells were ringing in chiefly councils about the confrontational atmosphere that was developing, as much within local chiefdoms as against authority outside. When the Matlala tribesmen had wrestled with NAD official Snyman in July 1920, he had called on Chief Sekgoari Matlala to intervene. At such moments of conflict chiefs found themselves in an utterly invidious position. Any sign of them siding with malcontent tribesmen could lead to their own deposition, while even token efforts on their part to impose restraint on truculent followers could lead to their authority being challenged. This was exactly what happened when Sekgoari pleaded with the Congress faction to back off. Not only did they ignore his requests, but they did so in a profoundly demeaning language, dismissing him with the words that he was "just a fly to them".^{cvi}

Sekgoari Matlala was not the kind of man to take such treatment lying down. He would later gain a reputation for harshness and refusal to brook opposition and this episode opened up a breach between him and his Congress followers that would never fully heal. Barely a month after the collision the rift widened to a point where it was totally unbridgeable. Early in 1919, before Congress had become a real presence in Ga-Matlala, Sekgoari had purchased a farm named La Pucella on Crown Land in the Potgietersrus district. After securing the sanction of the Native Affairs Department, he instituted an annual levy of £2.10.0 per adult man to generate the funds with which to pay instalments on the outstanding payment for the farm. This payment became due in September each year. When Sekgoari sought to collect it in August 1920, he met with flat refusal from Sekotla Lamola, a Congress leader in Ga-Matlala. Sekgoari was acutely conscious of the challenge this posed to his authority. Lamola was voicing the objections of countless migrants from the chiefdom working in Pretoria and on the Rand. Days later Lamola made the unfortunate mistake of visiting the homestead of some of his relatives where he encountered Sekgoari's recently estranged wife Maria. When this came to Sekgoari's notice he had Lamola killed, claiming that he and Maria were engaged in a surreptitious adulterous relationship. In the ensuing trial Pietersburg's magistrate judged that Sekgoari had used the occasion as a pretext to remove somebody who was flouting his authority. Sekgoari was then sentenced to death, and it was only an eleventh hour appeal by Pietersburg attorney Frederick van Zyl Slabbert (a relative?) which caused the sentence to be reduced to two years hard labour.^{cvii}

Sekgoari returned to his chiefdom and his office as chief in 1923, to find the ranks of the opposition swelled and their attitude hardened. They not only rejected the officially enforced dipping of cattle but also refused to pay the levy authorised by the councillors of the chiefdom to buy additional farms at Saaiplaas and Sandfontein. Migrants, who made up many of their number, also declined to pay long established tributes to the chief. Sekgoari responded with characteristic decision and vigour. The church of Jude Motsha, which had served as the meeting place of Congress was burnt down, opposition leaders were harassed and eventually took refuge outside the borders of the chiefdom; Congress withered on the vine. The branch was clandestinely revived in the early 1930's but never got off the back foot.^{cviii} Its sympathies can be presumed to be with the Kgatla-Pedi TAC, but no record exists to give an indication one way or the other.

Sekgoari Matlala might well have earned the subriquet from the fraternity of Sub-Native Commissioners of a chief who was indisputably strong, but who fell some way short of being good. Further South, Phatudi III, head of the Mphahlele chiefdom was widely regarded as a chief who was both good and strong. After his initial skirmishes with Sub-Native Commissioner C.D. Wheelwright which he himself had probably not provoked, Phathudi held aloof from the political arena and devoted his energies to entrenching his authority and uplifting his chiefdom.

Unlike the Pietersburg chiefdoms of Matlala and Mamabolo the Mphahlele had constituted a core component of the 19th century Pedi paramountcy, and had not suffered quite as serious losses and displacements as their neighbours north and west.

Phathudi III exploited these advantages following his accession to the chieftainship in 1914 to consolidate his position by the purchase of tribal farms. A voluntary levy of £1 each year was imposed on each adult male in the chiefdom in February 1914 to meet the costs of purchasing such farms.^{cxix} This was soon doubled to cover repayments on a £1 000 loan taken out with the Provincial Council to finance a large, amalgamated, tribal school in Mphahlele, as well as a hospital on the farm Kleinenburg Estates which had recently been purchased by the chiefdom.^{cx} In 1926 the levy was extended and expanded into three new £3 instalments some of which was used to purchase the farms Spitzkop and Kameelbult.^{cxii} Phathudi's exceptional acumen and success in prosecuting these ventures is shown in van Warmelo's 1935 *Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa*. At this point 1 970 of the chiefdom's tax payers lived on "Locations and Native owned farms" compared to 168 on "European farms". The Matlala, it should be noted, had been only slightly less successful. The remainder of the Pietersburg chiefdoms straggled out behind.^{cxiii}

Phathudi III benefited from the material pre-conditions that allowed him to act as a strong chief, but in the reckoning of most Sub-Native Commissioners he was a good chief as well. His most celebrated achievement was gaining authorisation (as well as a Transvaal Province loan) for the construction of a non-denominational amalgamated primary school in Ga-Mphahlele in 1919.^{cxiiii} Only one other school of this kind had been sanctioned by the Provincial authorities, at the Johannesburg urban African location at Klipspruit, and no others were permitted for many more years despite repeated appeals from the whole spectrum of the African population of the Transvaal (and especially chiefs).^{cxv} Many Sub-Native Commissioners were as keen as chiefs on the creation of non-denominational schools, believing that mission denominationalism fractured chiefdoms into rival segments.^{cxvi} Mission lobbying with the Provincial education department, however, ensured that such requests were repeatedly turned down. Mabyanamarwana-Ga-Mphahlele's tribal school was thus a singular achievement and marked out Phathudi III as a model enlightened chief.^{cxvii}

Further confirmation of Phathudi III's progressive views came with the erection of a tribal hospital a couple of years later. Phathudi's enthusiasm for such projects presumably derived in part from his education at Lovedale from which he returned to take up the chiefship in 1914.^{cxviii} However much this moulded Phathudi's attitudes, however, it was his astute blend of the old and the new which was the key to his success. Phathudi's predecessors, like many other chiefs in the Pietersburg area, objected to the presence of white missionaries in their chiefdoms. Christianity was introduced into Ga-Mphahlele after Mphahlele migrants to Kimberley converted to Christianity and then returned to spread the gospel in their homes. Two Dutch

Reformed churches along with the Wesleyan mission were founded in this way. The ban on white missionaries testified to some extent to the continued cohesion of the chiefdom which was one of Phathudi's main assets who on assuming the chieftainship continued to enforce the same rule. Phathudi's strength, along with his brand of progressive traditionalism, was what probably allowed him to establish his non-denominational provincially subvented school. When asked to explain how this was possible by the Native Economic Commission, Sub-Native Commissioner Yates replied:

"He has five mission schools Wesleyan and other, but they were run by the natives. Here (i.e. in Phokwane) you have white missionaries. Phahlele, too, was a very strong chief. They simply took their children away from the mission schools."^{cxxviii}

Even the progressive Phathudi was not entirely spared the travails of his neighbours. In July 1924 Phathudi, together with the Pietersburg chiefs Matlala and Moletsie requested the assistance of native inspectors and sub-native commissioners on the Reef in collecting levies from young migrants who were "avoiding their obligations".^{cxxix} In 1926 Phathudi personally visited the mines with lists of defaulting followers.^{cxxx} In 1924, 1927 and most seriously in 1931 levy defaulters, who went under the name of the Mphahlele Cattle Owners' Association, actively resisted cattle dipping and other levies. Apart from the movement of 1931 which was bolstered by the economic difficulties arising from the Great Depression, such resistance was confined to "a comparatively small number of young men" and Phuthudi was able to surmount it with ease. In the latter instance he intelligently defused it by a graceful withdrawal.^{cxxxi}

Ga-Mphahlele was the birthplace of S.M. Makgatho and Moses Mphahlele, leaders of the rival Congress faction to Matseke. It remained their spiritual home. S.M. Makgatho was the son of an Mphahlele chief.^{cxxii} It seems likely that it was one of his relatives, also by the name of Makgatho, who returned from Kimberley to introduce Wesleyan Methodism to Ga-Mphahlele.^{cxxiii} S.M. Makhatho enrolled at the Wesleyan Mission Teacher Training Institution of Milnerton at Pretoria in the 1880's., and then accompanied one of its British instructors to England, where he attended school for three years. Upon his return he served as a teacher at Milnerton where he remained until 1906.^{cxxiv} In 1908 he established Ga-Mphahlele's first undenominational school. Throughout his life Makgatho expressed great respect of chiefs and constantly sought their co-operation. In 1931 Makgatho resigned from the Wesleyan church to set up a United Bantu Church of all African sects.^{cxxv} The imprint of Ga-Mphahlele, and of its model chief Phuthudi on his political behaviour is clear. It seems likely that the same applied to Moses Mphahlele, who first surfaces on the historical record in 1920 at a political meeting in Pietersburg, and who was likewise a strong supporter of chiefly authority, but whose background for the moment is otherwise totally obscure.^{cxxvi}

In the largely Pedi district of Phokwane, which abutted the Pietersburg district on its south, both strong and weak chiefs made more or less of an impression. Land access and land shortage once again were critical variables in determining into which category they fell. By the early 20th century all "locations" in this area were heavily congested and many members were forced to rent or work on white farms.^{cxxvii} Prior to 1917 efforts by local African communities to purchase white farms were obstructed by white officials who were awaiting clarity about what land would be delimited for future African occupation. Thereafter extensive land purchases were made especially between 1927 and 1929.^{cxxviii} By 1931 tribally and even individually owned farms were an increasingly common feature in the area amounting to 27 000 morgen in the scheduled area, 29 000 tribally bought and 3 000 individually purchased.^{cxxix} Tribally bought farms were financed by tribal levies, which often ran up against the same resistance as elsewhere. In 1922 the Sub-Native Commissioner of Phokwane reported that "young men at the labour centres [from some of the chiefdoms] have refused to pay the levy".^{cxxx} By 1931 he was supervising 14 separate tribal accounts devoted to the purchase of land. "Strong" chiefs like Sekgoathi Mampuru of the Hooggelegen location collected the money relatively efficiently. Others had much less success, and were written off by Yates as being "hopeless".^{cxxxi} What governed their capacities, other than personality traits, were size of location, access to Crown and Land Company lands, the degree of geographical fragmentation of the chiefdom and the penetration of missions. Chiefs' subjects on farms 20-30 miles away from the chiefdom "move[d] away from tribal influence and got out of control".^{cxxxii} Elsewhere, in places like Mooifontein location

"where there are any amount of missionaries' tribal influence broke down with some members not even bothering to attend circumcision school."^{cxxxiii}

Young men from poor, disorganised, weakly led locations such as Mooifontein constituted a potential pool of support for the Matseke-Thema Congress. One such individual was H.K. Nkalakeng Nkadimeng who was born and brought up in Phokwane and who worked as a printer at Selope-Thema's *Bantu Press*. In July 1932 Nkadimeng introduced a new organisation known as the Eastern Transvaal African Association to the Secretary for Native Affairs. Nkadimeng was Assistant General secretary of the new body. Among his fellow office bearers were A.E. Motle (Honorary President), E.P. Moretsele (Senior Treasurer) and S.D. Moretsele (Assistant Senior Treasurer)^{cxxxiv} and each of whom was Pedi, and each of whom put in their first appearance at about this time in the political activities of the Transvaal African Congress on the Rand.^{cxxxv} The aims of the organisation, as spelled out by Nkadimeng in an interview with a Native Affairs Department official in Johannesburg, were to collect money "to open some kind of co-operative association and if this is successful ... a school ... for the children of the members. [And] if successful land will be purchased for the members".^{cxxxvi} One could

hardly hope to hear more clearly enunciated the concerns and aspirations of the new Transvaal migrant elite. Nkandimeng also disclosed in the course of the same conversation that

"The Association was formerly formed with a different objective, which was to enable members charged in court of law for contravening any laws ... if there is a doubt about the law."^{cxvii}

but that this had been abandoned.

Further enquiries made by the SNC Phokwane brought to light other aspects of the recent history of the organisation, or at least that of its principal officer. It now transpired that Honorary President A.E. Motle had

"been wandering about in the area for the last six or eight months, holding meetings without permission, of such a character as to stir up feelings of the native here."

At one of these meetings, which all seem to have been held at the Mooifontein location, "he discussed, inter alia, the validity of Proclamation 81/1919 as amended by Proclamation 4/1928" and asked for support in an appeal that was being mounted on this issue against conviction of a certain Ramphelane. Motle was soon arrested for his pains and charged with holding a meeting of more than ten people without the permission of the chief.^{cxviii} The target of his agitation (Proclamation 81/1919), for which he was duly convicted and sentenced - authorised tribal levies in Phokwane and elsewhere, to pay for the dipping of cattle.^{cxix}

It is unlikely that the original aims of the Eastern Transvaal Native Association were unrelated to Motle's brushes with the law. Moreover, if the experiences of Ga-Matlala and Ga-Mphahlele are anything to go by, Motle's political leanings, and one assumes those of the Eastern Transvaal Native Association were to some extent anti chief (or at least the local Mooifontein incumbent). This would have meant that their most natural alignment within the field of Transvaal Congress politics was with the Matseke-Thema rather than the Makgatho-Mphahlele camp. It may also be just possible to see in their brief interaction with the Native Affairs Department a measure of instability and equivocation in their political attitudes. H.K. Nkalakeng-Nkadimeng's conversation with the Johannesburg Native Affairs officer at least hints at a gradual shift of political position from a critique of chiefly authority and even that of the Native Affairs Department, to a review of political options, to a retreat from direct confrontation with chiefs, to a re-engagement with the politics of self-improvement and collaboration. This same journey was re-enacted in the political careers of at least two of the Association's office bearers in the Transvaal African Congress on the Rand. H.W. Nkalakeng Nkadimeng gravitated first towards the ethnic migrant Congress of Matseke and Thema and only some while after swung back to an ambiguous position between that and its rival group. E.P. Moretsele likewise positioned himself momentarily in the Kgatla-Pedi camp but then moved more decisively into the orbit of Makgatho and Mphahlele.^{cxl} What prompted these movements is unclear. For

Nkalakeng Nkadimeng and others whom we have yet not encountered it may have been the gradual lifting of the depression, and the pressures on migrant lifestyles that this produced. For Moretsele it may reflect the more powerful grip of Pedi traditionalism in the Pedi heartland chiefdoms of Sekgoati and Sekhugkune, which, if they had a political home, was with Makgatho and Mphahlele.

The gathering economic recession of 1931-1933 further heightened tensions between migrants and chiefs. The only occasion when "strong" chief Mphahlele faced serious opposition from levy defaulters was in the midst of these travails. When a council was summoned by the chief and the Sub-Native Commissioner in November 1931 in an attempt to thrash out these problems, a migrant dissident named Petrus Mpafeni voiced the dissatisfaction of many of the 300 present when he complained

"We have been buying farms for years. We are now disappointed. If a poor man is forced he is killed as there is no work for us now. We have been on the streets every day. I left here in May and went to Johannesburg and I have been looking for work ever since and I have not got a job yet. There are people there for years who are afraid to come back as the police are standing at our gate."^{cxli}

EDUCATED "NDEBELE" AND "MAKWEREKWERE"

Escalating migrant discontents yielded a slow trickle of new recruits to the Matseke-Thema faction as it coalesced in 1931-1933. The objects of their dissatisfaction were unsympathetic and sometimes discredited chiefs. The ravages of depression also brought another target of resentment into sharper focus. This was the educated immigrant from outside the Transvaal. Literate African Transvaalers had long been disadvantaged on the Witwatersrand's labour market by their inferior educational qualifications. The competition that they faced in this regard from better qualified immigrants, especially the Cape and from Natal, necessarily sharpened in the course of the depression. From 1932 resentment was more frequently voiced, not only against educated "Ndebeles" but also against Livingstonia mission educated Nyasalanders (or "Makwerekwere" - term of disparagement applied to foreigners from North of the Limpopo that is still used to this day), who as one writer to the *Pretoria News* put it, were "tak[ing] our jobs".^{cxliii}

African education in the Transvaal lagged at least a half century behind its counterparts in the Cape and in Natal. Free or subsidised primary education had been offered to Africans via mission schools in the Cape since 1855. In the Transvaal state subvention of African primary education was only provided after the advent of Crown Colony government in 1903. By 1910, 162 government aided schools staffed by 382 teachers catered for 12 447 pupils in the Province.

By 1920 this figure had risen to 409 schools staffed by 891 teachers providing tuition for 28 953 students. Comparable figures for the Cape are only available from 1921 at which point 1 602 government aided schools were admitting 11 059 pupils, who were instructed by 3 412 teachers. Over the next 15 years the gap in the numbers of African pupils attending school in the Cape and the Transvaal narrowed appreciably, but even in 1935 the pupil teacher ratio was 169 367 to 3 900 in the Cape compared to 82 219 to 1 449 in the Transvaal.^{cxliii}

The concluding primary school standard, which was slowly hiked up over the years, gave access to teacher training institutions, which were the sole form of more advanced education in the Transvaal until 1928.^{cxliv} Two teacher training colleges had opened to train African teachers in the Transvaal in the last third of the 19th century, these being the Berlin Mission's Botshabelo in 1872 and the Wesleyan Mission's Kilnerton in 1886.^{cxlv} Neither made much impact on progress prior to Crown Colony rule. Kilnerton's enrolment remained tiny and its standards of tuition low until 1903.^{cxlvi} Botshabelo, for its part, concentrated on teaching the scriptures and vernacular languages until it was required to broaden its curriculum in 1905 in order to qualify for government aid.^{cxlvii}

Several mission sponsored teacher training institutions were founded in or near the Transvaal in the early part of the new century; St Peter's (Rosettenville), Johannesburg in 1902, Tigerkloof in Vryburg, northern Cape, in 1904, the Swiss Mission's Lehana in the northern Transvaal in 1905, the Anglican Grace Dieu in Pietersburg in 1906 and Jane Furse in Sekhukhuneland in 1916.^{cxlviii} Enrolments of teacher trainers across the three years of tuition stood at 141 in Grace Dieu, 100 at Kilnerton, 66 at Botshabelo, 48 at Lehana in 1916.^{cxlix} St Peter's and Tigerkloof were at the lower end of this range.^{cl} I have not yet located comparable statistics from the Cape, but those numbers must have been three or four times higher.

The concluding primary school standard which gave access to teacher training remained rooted at Standard III for many years in the Transvaal, before being raised in two jumps to Standard VI in 1905 and 1924. Similar improvements in the standard and duration of education were made much earlier in the Cape, Standard IV being added in 1894, Standard V five years later, Standard VI in 1901 and Standard VII in 1909. In 1922 training for African teachers in the Cape was further differentiated and refined. Two separate streams of teacher training were now offered, the one a three year Lower Primary Teacher's Course which built on primary school Standard VI, the other a two year Higher Primary Teachers' Course access to which was gained by completing Junior Certificate or Standard VIII.^{cli} Teacher training colleges in the Transvaal only began to follow suit in 1935 when Grace Dieu were granted permission by the Provincial education authorities to teach students for the Cape's Higher Primary teachers' course and to enter them for the Cape's examinations. Transvaal colleges would have to wait until 1945 before its own province, had its own Higher Certificate examination.^{clii} Both primary school and

teacher training education were thus considerably superior in the Cape to that offered in the Transvaal, although that gap would again gradually narrow after 1924.

In the crucial field of secondary education the Transvaal was more laggardly still. In the Cape Lovedale offered Junior Certificate courses and Senior Certificate (matriculation) from the mid 19th century although numbers enrolled remained small until the 1880's and 1890's.^{cliii} Adams College did likewise in Natal. In addition the "Native College at Fort Hare" opened its doors to undergraduate students in 1916 and also enrolled secondary school pupils for Junior and Senior Certificate programmes.^{cliv}

In the Transvaal the first college to undertake secondary level education was St Peter's in Rosettenville. Here Junior Certificate was first offered in 1928, and Senior Certificate several years later, a development which inspired headmaster Alban Winter to rejoice that finally

"the stigma of being the most backward of the Provinces in Native education was removed from the Transvaal."^{clv}

Kilnerton followed suit by introducing Junior Certificate courses in 1932.^{clvi}

Transvaal students were thus denied secondary education in their own Province until the late 1920's and none secured a Junior Certificate from a Transvaal educational institution until the onset of the Great Depression in 1930. A handful ventured to the Cape and Natal to gain access to secondary schooling, but this required the rare prize of a bursary, which even the gifted Selope Thema was fortunate to obtain, or the financial resources that a chiefly house could muster to educate its prospective chief as was the case with Phathudi III of Ga-Mphahlele.^{clvii} For the rest even the most ambitious and upwardly aspiring had to make do with the elementary fare of the Transvaal.

A reverse flow of secondary and other school leavers from the Cape or Natal in search of employment in the Transvaal was much more substantial. All of the African locations across the Rand hosted substantial Xhosa speaking sections of their elites as is evidenced among other things by the choice of Xhosa as the language of preference in which to translate location regulations.^{clviii} As the recession bit in 1931 and 1932 and as the first Junior Certificate holders emerged from Transvaal schools, competition intensified for elite jobs. Better educated Xhosa and Zulu speakers generally had the edge. Adherents of the Matseke-Thema Congress certainly thought so, and roundly denounced Nguni speaking "Ndebeles" as parasites and interlopers, and a threat to their economic well being, not to mention political office and advancement.

LAZARUS' DEATH

In the second half of 1933 the Matseke-Thema Congress was clearly in the ascendent. However, as 1933 slid into 1934, the Makgatho-Mphahlele Congress, which was in reality almost wholly orchestrated by Mphahlele and J. Ramosene, regrouped and began to win back

some of the ground it had lost. The alliance that Mphahlele now started to put together was in many senses determined by the Matseke-Thema Congress's agenda. Practically every politically active Xhosa and Zulu speaker on the Rand rallied to its support. So too did the majority of the politically engaged non-Sotho-Tswana population of the Transvaal. Early in 1934 the "Eastern branch" of Congress began campaigning for a properly constituted TAC Conference and for the restoration of the former executive under the leadership of Makgatho. Exactly who this shadowy body represented is still a mystery to me, but closer scrutiny than I have thus far been able to give to the subject will, I imagine, solve the puzzle. A preliminary review of the data that I presently have at my disposal suggests that some of its leading constituents may have been the Eastern Transvaal towns of Barberton, Ermelo and Volksrust. This has a certain Matseke reactive logic. Most of this area was populated by Swazi speakers, who were pejoratively labelled, along with Zulu and Xhosa as "Ndebele" by the Sotho-Tswana population of the Transvaal. In addition Volksrust was the ANC President Pixley ka I Seme's home and political stronghold, and Seme was aligned from the start with his close political lieutenant Makgatho.

Beyond the "eastern branch" Moses Mphahlele was also able to rally the support of several Fokeng chiefs of the Rustenburg district. This is more difficult to explain. Three possible answers suggest themselves. Firstly, the Fokeng had a history of over 200 years of conflict with the Kgatla, extending up to the Second South African War when Fokeng chiefs lined up with the Boers. Secondly Makgatho had put in considerable effort both before and after the First World War to cement an alliance with the Fokeng chiefs. Thirdly the Fokeng chiefs like many others were challenged by young migrants in their chiefdoms who resented the payment of tribal levies to buy land. More puzzling still on face value was the swing of important Pedi speaking Congressmen on the Rand into Mphahlele's camp. Among these were included E.P. Moretsele, A.P. Kgoathe, and D.R. Hlakudi. As early as October 1933 S.P. Matseke was warning about the activities of those

"who want to divide the Pedi tribe from the Kgatla tribe, and those who lead a parasitic life and are happy with those divisions."^{clix}

My provisional answer to why they allowed themselves to be cajoled out of the Matseke group is that each of these figures was associated with heartland Pedi chiefdoms where "tribal" cohesion was greater and "tradition" held greater sway. The Matseke-Thema Congresses alleged hostility to chiefs was moreover, a constant theme in Mphahlele's speeches and may have struck a sufficient chord with literate migrant traditionalists to swing them into the Mphahlele camp. Whatever the reasons, Hlabudi, Kgoathe and Morebele soon succeeded in mobilising sufficient support in the Johannesburg central and Johannesburg eastern district branches to detach them as well from Thema and Matseke.

By the middle of 1934 the composition of the two rival Transvaal congresses had crystallised. The hard-edged Factionalism that this produced crippled the prosecution of a wider

Congress agenda for nearly a decade, until the dispute was forcibly composed by the national head office in the early 1940's. This did not mean, nevertheless, that nothing was happening. Numerous congress sympathising African commentators pronounced Congress "dead" in the early 1930's and prepared the politically conscious on the Rand for its funerary rites.^{clx} Such judgements were premature and misleading. A host of vigorous and energetic initiatives were embarked upon by both Congresses for the rest of the decade in an effort to resuscitate the provincial body, only to founder on the reefs of personality, politics and a recidivist ethnicity. More percipient was the columnist in *Umteteli wa Bantu* who described Congress as having suffered Lazarus' death.^{clxi} The main shortcoming of this diagnosis was that when Lazarus revived in 1935-4 he took on a deranged and even split personality. This condition could, and did, generate intense bouts of nervous energy but without the focus or direction to prevent them dissipating away. This must be the subject of another paper. The main conclusions that arise from the present section of this study is that the 1930's in the Transvaal were characterised by a quite different kind of politics than has been recognised by the existing canon. These politics were defined by a new kind of non-traditionalist ethnicity. This ethnicity was rooted in the countryside and played out in the towns. These ethnic rural/urban politics thus provide a crucial backdrop for the rural urban struggles of the late 1930's and early 1940's that Delius so illuminatingly describes. This paper must now regretfully stage its own version of Lazarus' death. It will probably be at least a year before I have the time to return to the subject once again.

ENDNOTES

- i. *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 1 July 1933.
- ii. *ibid.* 22.7.33, 2.9.33, 9.12.33 *Bantu World*.
- iii. *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 6.1.34, p.1.
- iv. This requires a separate paper.
- v. P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa* (London, 1970), p.227.
- vi. *Bantu World* 27.5.1933, p.10, 24.6.33, p.12.
- vii. *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 14.11.31, p.2-3.
- viii. *Umtetele wa Bantu* 14.11.31, p.2-3.
- ix. *Umteteli wa Bantu* 21.5.32, p.5.
- x. *Bantu World* 22.4.33, p.13; See also *Umteteli wa Bantu* 29.4.33 'Congress Collapse?', p.3.
- xi. *Umteteli was Bantu* -6.1937.
- xii. *Bantu World* 23.12.33, p.13.
- xiii. Carter Karis Collection. Reel 15A 2:Xc3:94. Interview Calata with G. Carter.
- xiv. *Bantu World* 23.11.33, p.2.
- xv. *Bantu World* 17.6.33, pp. 11, 12; 23.12.33, p.13.
- xvi. *Umteteli wa Bantu* 1.6.32, p.4.
- xvii. *Bantu World* 19 November 1932, p. This was totally out of character with Makgatho. While he himself shared the Transvaal view of the 'Ndebele's' lukewarm attitude to Congress, a central tenet of his belief was the Africans were dispossessed of their lands due to tribal disunity . (See *Umtateli wa Bantu* 10.6.33.)
- xviii. *Bantu world* 14.1.33 pp.711; *Umteteli wa Bantu* 21.3.33 p.4.
- xix. *Bantu World* 22.4.33 p.13; 29.4.33 pp.2, 3, 8; *Umteteli wa Bantu* 29.4.33 pp.3,5.

- xx.*Bantu World*, 17.6.33.
- xxi.*Bantu World* 23.2.1935 p.13.
- xxii.See my manuscript chapter on Gumede and Matseke.
- xxiii.G.N. Simpson, 'Peasants and Politics in the Western Transvaal, 1920-1940', MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1986, pp.84-8; B.K. Mbenga, 'The Bakgatla-Baka-Kgafela in the Pilanesberg District of the Western Transvaal from 1899 to 1931'. PhD thesis, UNISA, 1996, pp.205-213.
- xxiv.P. Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, (Johannesburg, 1983), pp.62-83, 94-104.
- xxv.G.N. Simpson, 'Peasants and Politics', p.93.
- xxvi.Mbenga, 'The Bakgatla-Baka-Kgafela', pp. 38-64.
- xxvii.*ibid.*, pp.105-6, 210-213.
- xxviii.Simpson, 'Peasants and Politics', pp.87-94.
- xxix.See below.
- xxx.Simpson, 'Peasants and Politics', pp.93-4.
- xxxi.Mbenga, 'The Bakgata-Baka-Kgafela', pp.154-9, 220-6, 271-2.
- xxxii.T.H.R. Davenport and K.S. Hunt, *The Right to the Land*, (Cape Town, 1974), p.40.
- xxxiii.Simpson, 'Peasants and Politics', pp.93-4; Mbenga, 'The Bakgatla-Barka- Kgafela', pp. 232-5.
- xxxiv.*ibid.*, p.240; Davenport and Hunt *Right to the Land*, pp.32, 42-3.
- xxxv.*Ibid.*, pp.32, 44-6; E.B. Jones, 'South African Native Land Policy', *Bantu Studies*, XIV, 1940, pp.
- xxxvi.Mbenga, 'The Bakgatla-Baka-Kgafela', p.106.
- xxxvii.Simpson, 'Peasants and Politics", p.104; P-L Breutz, *A History of the Botswana and Origin of Bophuthatswana* (Margate, 1987) pp.119-121.
- xxxviii.Mbenga, 'The Bakgatla-Baka-Kgafela', pp. 97-8, 263-6.
- xxxix.*ibid.*, p.90.

xl. *ibid.*, pp. 58-65.

xli. *Transvaal Native Affairs Department Annual Report*, 1910.

xlii. P.L. Breutz, *The Tribes of the Rustenburg and Pilanesburg Districts*, p.226.

xliii. Mbengi, 'The Bakgatla-Baka-Kgafela', pp. 96-7.

xliv. P. Delius and S. Trapido, 'Inboekseling'.

xlv. I. Hofmeyr, *We Spend Our Years as a Tale is Told*", Portsmouth, USA, 1993, pp. 125-131.

xlvi. Mbenga, 'The Kgatla-Baka-Kgafela', pp. 83-4.

xlvii. Mbenga, 'The Kgatla-Baka, Kgafela', p. 85.

xlviii. T.D. Mveli Skota (ed.), *African Yearly Register*, Johannesburg, 1931 (entry on Matseke), African Yearly Register.

xlix. Mbenga, 'The Kgatla-Baka-Kgafela', pp. 83-4; Simpson, 'Peasants and Politics'.

l. Simpson, 'Peasants and Politics', p.

li. Simpson, 'Peasants and Politics', pp. 104; 172-3.

lii. Mbenga, 'The Bakgatla-Baka, Kgafela', pp.

liii. NTS 7659, File 16/332 Sub Native Commissioner Nylstroom to District Commandant SAP, Pietersburg 30.1.23.

liv. *ibid.*

lv. NTS 7761 File 23/332 Sub Native Commissioner Nylstroom to Mr Dower 30.11.1917.

lvi. Evidence to the Native Economic Commission, J.C. Yeats, p.8849.

lvii. *ibid.*, pp.8840-60.

lviii. *ibid.*, T.A.C. Emmett, pp.

lix. *ibid.* Yeats, pp. 8844-6; Simpson, 'Peasants and Politics', pp. 99, 115, 157-8, 168-9, 172-4.

lx. Evidence to the Native Economic Commission, Yeats, p.8846.

lxi.Simpson, 'Peasants and Politics', pp.160, 120, 128.

lxii.ibid., pp.125-6.

lxiii.ibid., pp. 115, 157-8, 168-9.

lxiv.G. Carter and T. Karis (eds) *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. I (Stanford, 197) I.P.307 Report by T. Mweliso Skota, Secretary General of ANC, January 1930.

lxv.JUS 3/204/18. He was in fact invited there by them.

lxvi. Transvaal Native Affairs Department. *Short History of the Native Tribes of the Transvaal*, Pretoria, 1905, p.29.

lxvii. NTS 336, 72/55 Part J SNC to Native Commissioner, 6.11.17; SNA to Native Commissioner, 26.11.17.

lxviii.NTS 3433, File 39/308.

lxix.NTS 3433 File 39/308.

lxx.ibid.

lxxi.ibid.

lxxii.ibid.

lxxiii.ibid., tribal resolution 25.11.23.

lxxiv.ibid. SNC Hammanskraal to SNA 15.7.22.

lxxv.Evidence to the Native Economic Commission, p.8516.

lxxvi.NTS 3433, File 39/308.

lxxvii.nts 3433, File 39/308.

lxxviii.NTS 3433, File 39/308.

lxxix.NTS 336, File 72/55, Part I.

lxxx.ibid.

lxxxi.ibid.

- lxxxii.N.J. van Warmelo, *A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa*, Pretoria, 1935, p.100.
- lxxxiii.Skota, *African Yearly Register*, entry for Matseke.
- lxxxiv.UWL, HLP, R.V. Selope-Thema, 'From Herdboy to Editor's Chair'.
- lxxxv.P. Delius, *A Lion Among the Cattle*, Portsmouth, USA, 1996, p. ; see also van Warmelo, *Preliminary Survey*, p.113.
- lxxxvi.Thema, 'Herdboy to Editor's Chair'.
- lxxxvii.van Warmelo, *Preliminary Survey*, p.50.
- lxxxviii.Thema 'Herdboy to Editor's Chair', chap 1 p. 21.
- lxxxix.ibid., Chap 2, pp. 1-8.
- xc.THAD *Native Tribes of Transvaal*, P.84.
- xci.Thema, 'Herdboy to Editor's Chair', chapter 2.
- xcii.ibid., pp.25-35.
- xciii.ibid., Chap 1, pp. 29-32; Chap 3, pp. 1-3.
- xciv.ibid., Chap 3.
- xcv.ibid., chap. 3.
- xcvi.*Umteteli wa Bantu*, 6.8.34 (citing Mphahlele).
- xcvii.S.C. Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Subject of the Masters' and Servants' Law (Transvaal) Amendment Bill para 829-830.
- xcviii.A. Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu The Beginnings of Black Protest Politics in South Africa to 1912*, Cape Town, 1984, pp. 74-5.
- xcix.ibid., pp. 270-271.
- c.See above, p.4
- ci.D.C.M. Sepuru, 'Succession Disputes, Ma Congress and Rural Resistance in Ga-Matlala, 1919-1980', Honours dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1992, p.20.

cii. *ibid.* pp.21-2.

ciii. *ibid.*, p.27.

civ. *ibid.* pp. 24, 27.

cv. *ibid.* pp. 27-8.

cvi. *ibid.* p.24.

cvii. *ibid.* pp. 30-32, 38.

cviii. *ibid.* pp. 39-54.

cix. NTS 1378, File 21/213 SNC Pietersburg to SNA 8.4.21.

cx. *ibid.*; *ibid.* Tribal Resolution 6.6.21.

cx. *ibid.* SNA to SNC Pretoria 28.1.27.

cxii. van Warmelo, *Preliminary Survey*, p. 50.

cxiii. M.M. Mphahlele and M.S. Phaladi *Ba-Xa-Mphahlele* (Bloemfontein, 1947), pp. 1-84.

cxiv. Evidence to the Native Economic Commission, Pietersburg Chiefs pp. 317-8.

cxv. *ibid.*, Yeats, p.844.

cxvi. *ibid.*, p.851.

cxvii. Mphahlele and Phaladi, *Ba-Xa-Mphahlele*, pp. 1-84.

cxviii. Evidence to the Native Economic Commission, p.851.

cxix. NTS 2178, 21/213 SNC Pietersburg to SNA 10.7.24, 327, 338-9.

cxx. NTS 1378 21/213. H. Falwasser to SNA 8.10.26.

cxxi. NTS 1378, 21/213; NTS 7664, 332; NTS 334 937/332. cxxi.

cxxii. Mweli-Skota, *African Yearly Register*.

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- cxxiv.J.C. Mphahlele, 'The Methodist Venture in Education at Kilnerton 1886-1962. An Historical Critical Survey', M.Ed. dissertation, University of the North, 1972, p. 60.
- cxxv.*Bantu World*, 1931.
- cxxvi.NTS 7203, 9/326 Report of Meeting held by S.K. Magato, Pietersburg location, 13.10.20.
- cxxvii.R.G. Morrell, 'Rural Transformation in the Transvaal: The Middelburg District, 1919to 1930', M.A. dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1983, p.118
- cxxviii.ibid., p. 138-140, 147-8, 151.
- cxxix.Evidence to NEC, Yates, pp. 822-3.
- cxl.Morrell, 'Rural Transformation', p.150.
- cxli.Evidence to the NEC, Yeates, p.840.
- cxlii.ibid., p.833.
- cxliiii.ibid.
- cxliv.NTS 7219, 93/326 H.W. Nkalakeng Nkadimeng to SNA 2.7.32; GNLB 401, 55/44, Minute 19.7.32 Assistant Native Commissioner, Johannesburg.
- cxlv.Various issues of *Bantu World*.
- cxlvi.ibid.
- cxlvii.ibid.
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- cxlix.Government Gazette, 13.6.19, p.410, Proclamation No. 81 1999.
- cl.*Umteteli wa Bantu*, various issues.
- cli.NTS 334, 37/332. Minutes of Meeting at Mphahlele's location 26 Nov. 1931.
- clii.Reported in *Umteteli wa Bantu* 13.12.1932, p.6.

cxliii.UG, 29/1936 *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education 1935-1936*, pp. 9-18, 122-27.

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cxlv.Mphahlele, 'The Methodist Venture in Education', pp. 59-64.

cxlvi.Mphahlele, 'Methodist Mission Venture', pp. 67-83; UG 29/1936, para 105, p.25.

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clviii.e.g. Germiston, Klipspruit, Marabastad.

clix.*Bantu World*, 14.10.33.

clx.For one among a host of citations see *Bantu World*, 31.12.32, letter from G.A.B.S. Mabete.

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