

INTRODUCTION

The Dutch Reformed Mission in Sekhukhuneland has passed through different phases, the first of which was the pioneering phase of missionaries and evangelists. This led to the establishment of the first Dutch Reformed Church mission congregation in Sekhukhuneland, called Burger, in 1932. From 1932 to 1960 this congregation was part of the Presbytery of Kranspoort. On 30th March 1960 the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church of Transvaal, which met at Potchefstroom, decided to form a new presbytery for the Sekhukhuneland region. It was called the Presbytery of Burger and included the following congregations: Burger, Erasmus (Bronkhorstspuit), Philadelphia (Groblersdal), Sekhukhuneland (Klipspruit), Marble Hall (Goedvertrouwen) and Premier Mine (Cullinan). Further developments took place when Erasmus became part of the Presbytery of Middelburg and Premier Mine of the Presbytery of Mamelodi.

Presently the congregation of the Presbytery of Burger consists of several congregations: ¹Burger 1926 – The year 1926 is when the first missionary of the DRC, Rev AJ Rousseau started with mission work in Sekhukhuneland. His mission station was called Burger, established at Mooiplaats in 1929 and relocated to Maandagshoek in 1944. The other mission stations which were established in Sekhukhuneland contributed to the formation of the following congregations: ²Sekhukhuneland (Klipspruit Mission Station – 1946), ³Lerato, previously called Potgietersrus East (Groothoek Mission – 1957), ⁴Lepelle, previously called Marble Hall (Goedvertrouwen, later called Matlala Mission – 1958), ⁵Lebowa-Kgomo – 1990, ⁶Motetema – 1977, ⁷Sebetiela 2000, ⁸Bothanang – 2008, ⁹Philadelphia – 1943 (Philadelphia Mission). Geographically Philadelphia congregation is mainly an Ndebele speaking region and does not fall under traditional Sekhukhuneland. At the establishment in 1956 of the new mission station at Goedvertrouwen by Rev JT Jordaan, minister of the DRC congregation of Marble Hall, the Northern region of Philadelphia which fell within the borders of Marble Hall congregation, seceded from Philadelphia and became Marble Hall Mission Congregation. I include the history of Philadelphia because this congregation has remained part of Burger since the establishment of the Presbytery of Burger until now.

Sources of Study

The reports, bulletins, prayer letters and articles written by the missionaries were used in my research programme. Thus, their voices especially during the early phases of mission work are better recorded. The voices of those black partners were made audible in the interviews and questionnaires. After power was transferred, the notes of the presbyterial meetings and agendas of the synods were valuable sources of study.

The history of each of the congregations of Burger is described; its consolidation and the life-sketches of the white missionaries, evangelists and black ministers are given to illustrate the important role that each of them played in carrying out the Great Command of Christ. Special attention is given to the Dutch Reformed Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (further referred to as NGKA) Partnership which, since at Whitby the motto Partners in Obedience was coined, existed for more than half a century.

The Dutch Reformed Church and the Utmost Ends of the Earth

The DRC knows from past experience of partnerships that obedience to the calling of the Master to proclaim the gospel, still stands, that the mission task is not completed yet. Partnership is not the ultimate goal, but it is a means of co-operation in fulfilling the mission call. It is a Biblical concept. Geographical, cultural and economical difficulties could be bridged by partnerships.

Mission is His great command. This call is greater than any partnership other than His own partnership with his church. There are indications in Post-1994 that the DRC and the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) will humbly attend to the needs of each other in a Church-Church relationship. There is also reason to believe that the DRC is motivated to reach out to the utmost ends of the earth in obedience to the calling to witness.

1. MISSION HISTORY

1.1 WHAT IS MISSION?

During the 20th century, a new concept has been formed to describe the particular characteristics of mission as a theology. The first aspect is *missio Dei* (God's Mission)

(Pauw 1987:29). This means that mission work is not man's initiative, but comes from God Himself who works in the world, who sent His servants in and through Christ to complete his work of salvation. The church in its totality is involved here (Kritzinger 2007:29). The second aspect is that mission is the realm of God. Pauw (1987:29) refers to Verkuyl who said:

The message of the Kingdom (is) the frame of reference and the point of orientation from which to view our missionary task. With the above definition in mind, in writing about the mission work of the DRC in Sekhukhuneland, we may therefore conclude that it was God who called and who initiated this mission project.

This is in line with the motto of the DRC for their mission, which is defined as follows:

Mission is an act of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the world. Through this act and through His Word and Spirit, He gathers unto Himself from all of mankind's unique people. Through them He lets His Word be proclaimed to a fallen world. This act is God's way of bringing forth a community of saints from all nations and creeds. With a view of extending the Kingdom of God, He also calls this community of holy saints to serve a world in need. (Author's own translation.)

1.2 WHAT IS MISSION HISTORY?

Crafford has his own definition of mission history: "Mission history is the story about the great deeds of God through Christ and the Holy Spirit in the world. It describes how God has moved through his Word and Spirit, people and churches; how the stumbling blocks and the powers of darkness were overcome; how borders were crossed to reach the ends of the earth and how the people of God were brought forth from all people, nations and tongues" (Crafford 1986:30). (Author's own translation.)

Mission history is a subdivision of theology. Thus mission history describes God's self-revelation to mankind. Mission history deals with what God wants and what He did throughout the centuries. Boshoff states that to relate Mission history to Mission as a science is not difficult. Mission history, he says, is to relate that the church has to develop a new Christian community until it has grown into an independent church structure (Boshoff 1972:209). According to him, this history could be divided into two sections, the object and the subject. The sending church plans and channels the results to the

unbelievers, until it has developed into a full church organism; it is a story of wrestling with God. This story of God's dealing with men, His own whom He has gathered as the church of Christ, is the object of researching and reporting mission history.

Crafford and Bavinck (Crafford 1986:30) share the same view on missiology as comprising theory and mission history. Bavinck states that missiology cannot be derived from the history of missions, but from Scripture. He sees, however, a close relationship between mission theory and mission history. The theory will draw its norms from Scripture, and history shows where the theory, norms and practice have succeeded.

The Mission theory must provide the key for correct interpretation of history. The Mission history must in turn again declare why certain methods and theories in praxis have succeeded and others not. The failure of history must bring the church back to Scripture. Therefore, we accept Mission history as independent and a necessary subdivision of Missiology (Crafford 1986:30). (Author's own translation.)

1.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MISSION HISTORY AND CHURCH HISTORY

Crafford (1986:31) refers to TN Hanekom who had the idea that church history and mission history as two separate academical disciplines was fundamentally untenable. Hanekom mentioned that the writing of DRC history focused mainly on the European culture group. Therefore, ethnically and geographically, it concentrates on the history of their church. The history of the younger churches was not attended to. He felt that the task of mission history was to fill the gap, reporting on the proclaiming of the Gospel, the building up of congregations and church planting across cultural borders.

Saayman (2007:6), however, says: "I do not see any reason to separate the two. In my opinion church history occupies one of the rubrics of the wide spectrum of human history." Crafford (1986:31) also refers to Gustav Warneck who stated that the two should be treated in unison but that they must remain two separate disciplines. Mission history must be 'The history of Christian expansion' (*Geschichte der Ausbreitung des Christentums*). Crafford also mentions Bergema, Manfred Linza and Verkuyl as missiologists who are in favour of mission history as a supplementary function to church history (Crafford 1986:31).

I conclude with Bosch's theory (Crafford 1986:28) that missiology should function as yeast within theology. Church history should lead along this line to total reconstruction, so that the church will not always be occupied with an institute but with interaction between proclaiming the Gospel and the world. This means that all of church history will develop a mission perspective. "One of the roles of the church in the world is that of witness. We owe the world faith" (Bosch 1976:181). Considering the view-points of the above missiologists, there is a need for the writing of a history about the mission work done by the Dutch Reformed Church in Sekhukhuneland, the reason for its involvement in Sekhukhuneland in particular. Already the work of the Berlin Mission Society (BSG), established on 29 February 1824 in Germany, was published in a book written by the pioneer missionary Alexander Merensky. In it he describes his mission station and work in Sekhukhuneland before he fled from Sekhukhune I with his Christian followers, to establish his new mission station, Botshabelo (Merensky 1888). A short summary of their work has also appeared in *Lantern Journal of Knowledge and Culture*, February Special Edition. The German contribution to the development of South Africa was described by Werner Schellack, page 52.

1.4 OBJECTIVITY IN MISSIOGRAPHY

In his opening lecture to his students at UP Theological Faculty in 1973, Prof Ben Marais explained the meaning of objectivity in writing church and mission history. He stated that church historians belonging to different denominations may write about the same subject or theme in church history, but every one would reflect the view of their own theological and church denominational background or culture. Every one would strive for objectivity by reporting history as factually as possible according to his research programme, but the outcome would be different. Each has a subjective view influenced by his social or political or denominational background. One usually remains loyal to one's own denomination or group and looks through the spectacles of subjectivity (Marais 1973).

He told the story of an old minister and his grandson who visited the Grand Canyon in America. That evening he wrote to his daughter: "Today I saw the glory of God and all its majesty." His grandson wrote: "Today I managed to spit one mile away!"

Having objectivity in mind in writing this history, I tried to gather information from acquaintances or colleagues I have worked with since 1977. Ministers and evangelists

from other church groups who grew up with the Pedi, Swazi and Ndebele and who knew the culture, language and world view as well as the historical background, were consulted and made a valuable contribution.

1.5 OBJECTIVITY AND SUBJECTIVITY

The historian wants to prove that his story is true and scientifically verified. This honest searching for the truth, to be reported as factual history, is the claim of science – but it also poses a problem. The historian is only human, with his own presuppositions, which cause him to interpret and to judge facts from his own viewpoint and background. There must be an awareness of his subjectivity in his interpretation. Unless recognized, subjective interpretation will render the claim of scientific reporting of history invalid.

As with Church history, Mission history also has an object. This object is Biblically grounded: the Word of God is the norm. The historian works with the church as the Body of Christ. Christ is the Head of his church and the historian cannot base his work purely on scientific grounds – he will have to work through God’s Word, because missionary workers are obeying His call.

The historian must satisfy the criteria that the story of missionaries and their co-workers is true. Their experiences and views must be taken seriously and interpreted correctly. Secondly, the historian has to have knowledge of the indigenous people’s social and cultural milieu. These must be respected and reflected without prejudice.

1.5.1 The dual role of the researcher

The researcher has worked for a long time as missionary in the studied region. Thus he contributed to the development of the very history that he studies. This indeed could cause the researcher to be too subjective in presenting the research material. Within the context of the study, the researcher worked within a social cross-cultural situation where he has, as missionary and as researcher, been in constant dialogue with other role players. The insights presented in this study are the result of his encounter with other role players. The experiences of all the role players in this particular context are important. The researcher was also a role player, which enabled him to obtain insights others would not have been able to obtain. Thus both the researcher and the people in the research carry with them a

history of their experiences, and this study presents the view points of one role player, within an ongoing dialogue and discourse.

1.6 HISTORICITY

1.6.1 Mission history as theology

Brown (1998:203) asks the question: “Is there within the reformed tradition room for a separate practice of church history as a scientific subject? The following hypothesis is presented: The reformed view of history sees the history of God’s creation as a unity. Yet, we must discern between God’s act of salvation within the history of creation: firstly the Church of Jesus Christ and believers and secondly the history of the world and that which is still under His call for redemption.”

The Word of God gives the norms for history and the role the church is playing. The Word of God also describes the church as the Body of Christ which is the object of history as a scientific subject. This same norm is applicable to mission history, which describes church history from the point of view of mission. “Thus the term *history* means the practice to describe what has happened in the past with men and with communities and its entire facets. But when we report on this history-as-reality, we have to submit a report of what has happened based on a critical, scientific and true research. We may view this practice as history done in a scientific manner” (Brown 1998:104).

I conclude with Warren’s definition in Saayman (2007:1): “Research into the history of the past, even the relatively recent past, demands of the historian the protracted and never ending task of distinguishing between pious legend and fact, never forgetting that belief in pious legend may itself not be an inconsiderable fact. What is true for historical writing as a whole is particularly true for the story of the expansions of Christianity.”

1.7 RESEARCH PROJECT AND RESEARCH FIELD

This research study is limited to mission work done by the (DRC) (Dutch Reformed Church) and mission organizations under the auspices of DRC congregations, synods or presbyteries, in the so-called Sekhukhune-land. Sekhukhuneland lies in a triangle between Groblersdal, Zebediela and Burgersfort, with the Olifants River dividing it in half. Previously it formed the south eastern section of the old Lebowa and nowadays it is called

Greater Sekhukhuneland. In the Northern Synod of the Uniting Reformed Church, this area is referred to as the Presbytery of Burger. The following congregations are part of the Circuit of Burger: Burger (Maandagshoek), Sekhukhuneland (Klipspruit), Lepelle (Matlala), Lerato, Lebowa-Kgomo, Zebediela (Grootboek), Motetema (Groblersdal), Philadelphia (Dennilton) and the latest congregation, seceded from Lepelle in April 2008, Botanang (Marble Hall).

One of my correspondents, already in his eighties, mentioned that “if you speak of Sekhukhuneland, you speak of Burger. If you speak of Burger, you speak of Mothopong.” This village at the foot of the Leolo Mountains is looked upon as the birthplace of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Sekhukhuneland. Here my correspondent, Abraham Nchabeleng, and his older brother, Motolo Nchabeleng, already in his nineties, grew up as students of the pioneer missionary of the *Transvaal Vroue Sendingvereniging (TVSV)*, Rev Abraham Rousseau of the Burger Mission Station.

Mothopong is a ward of Lepelle congregation. This is a rural area. It consists of farms previously owned by white farmers, which were zoned under the government of the old ZAR. All these farms have names with a Dutch connotation like Vogelstruiskopje, Goedvertrouwen etc. From 1936 onwards, these farms were bought from the farmers to provide new land for the Pedi clans descended from Sekhukhune I (Mönnig 1967:37).

The new villages were far apart to ensure enough grazing for cattle farming. Communication was bad, as were the roads. Unemployment and poverty increased, although some roads were tarred and electricity and water were provided in some areas. Tribal chiefs still govern, and ownership is communal.

1.8 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.8.1 African Pioneering Work

This study involves the very beginning of Christian mission work done in the area, even before organized efforts were made.

The period under consideration started in 1875, when a black Pedi man returned from Tulbagh where he worked for the local minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, Rev Robert Shand. Rev Shand was instrumental in his conversion to Christ. He and his

coloured wife started to work among the people at Mothopong. In those days many young African boys went to the Cape Colony for employment. They returned to their local kraals and some of them formed a nucleus for worship and further mission development. Among these were Philippus Mantsena and his wife, who contacted Rev and Mrs AP Burger of Middelburg for Christian support in 1889. With the aid of the Zusters-Sending Vereniging of Middelburg, the Mantsenas became totally involved in mission work (Louw 1972:10).

On the other side of the Olifants River, not far from Mothopong mission, work was started by Samuel and Miga at Mphahlele during the eighties and nineties of the 19th century. This became an outstation of the Kranspoort Mission under Rev Hendrik Hofmeyr, son of Rev Stefanus Hofmeyr of Kranspoort (Maree 1962:98). After the Anglo-Boer war and until 1926, missionaries of the *Ned Geref Kerk* assisted at the outstation at Mothopong (Dutch Reformed Church Lydenburg) (*TVSB Ligpunte* 1975:18).

1.8.2 The Work of the TVSV (Transvaal Women's Mission Society)

The *TVSV* had to wait until 1925, when Rev Abraham Rousseau became their first missionary in Sekhukhuneland. His arrival led to the establishment of the first Mission station, Burger. The congregation was called Burger in recognition of the support and influence of Rev and Mrs AP Burger of Middelburg. Unfortunately the Burger Mission Station at Mooiplaats near Apel was closed in 1943 (Louw 1972:69). Due to fever and unhealthy conditions, it was relocated to Maandagshoek. In 1946, the second congregation was formed at Klipspruit, which was called Sekhukhuneland.

1.8.3 The Growth and Development of the NG Sendingkerk (Dutch Reformed Mission Church) – From Mission to Church

In 1932 the first name given to the black church was the *NG Sendingkerk van SA*. On 10 April 1937 it was changed to the *NG Sendingkerk van Transvaal*. The General Synod of the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika* was constituted on 7 May 1963 and the Mission of Transvaal became a regional synod, called NGKA Transvaal. On 27 April 1964 the Transvaal Synod was divided into two synodical regions, Northern and Southern Transvaal. With the constitution of the NGKA General Synod in 1963, a Church Order was approved for the new church. On 17 April 1964 Rev FE O'Brien Geldenhuys declared, on behalf of the DRC, that the NGKA was now an independent synod. The

regional Synod of Transvaal accepted the new Church Order of the NGKA as guidelines. From this time on, the DRC had no representation in the DRC's governing structure. Church councils called their own ministers and evangelists. The General Synod of 1975 determined that all missionaries would become full members of the NGKA from the date they were confirmed in their congregations (Crafford 1982:41).

From 1932, when Burger Congregation was established, up to 1994, the growth of the mission in Sekhukhuneland was phenomenal. The church expanded and one congregation and mission station after the other was established. Together with the missionaries, evangelists came to assist with church planting. A short description of their names and work, as well as that of the black ministers, who became co-ministers with the missionaries, is contained in the historiography. The co-operation and support of the *TVSV* and the DRC Regional Synods, as well as the work and support of the different DRC congregations, is fully recorded.

1.8.4 Development and Changes Within the Mother and Daughter Churches in Sekhukhuneland from 1975 to 1994

During this period it was decreed that mission hospitals would become government hospitals, and the DRC and other churches transferred their medical work to the South African Government. The Medical Mission of the DRC was phased out. The missionaries supported by the DRC were also no longer replaced. Financial contributions to the NGKA congregation decreased and were even suspended in some congregations. Training of evangelists was discontinued and their posts abolished. The NGKA Synod agreed to concentrate on tent-making ministries. During this period, some conflicts occurred among missionaries, black ministers and evangelists within the same congregation. This led to disputes that were handled by the Presbytery of Burger and the Northern Synod.

1.8.5 Statistical and other Trends to be Considered

When studying some statistics of the NGKA congregations [which since 1994 (URCSA News:6) became the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa] one could ask what the role of the DRC would be in ensuring that this church would remain a self-help, self-rule and self-support institution. The question today is whether the DRC and the URC are still committed to bringing the Gospel to those outside the fold of Christ and His Church? So

much time and effort is put into the possibility of structural unity and reaching an agreement on the matter. The crux however is: What are DRC congregations going to do about actively supporting the Church in rural areas, where the need is great? In my opinion the DRC still has a role to play in being involved in what I would call establishing the Body of Christ across cultural borders.

1.9 THE CHOICE OF RESEARCH METHOD

This study may be seen as a practice research study where a theoretical model is tested, but also as an action research project, where I will try to formulate the work of the role players and consider the influence their work has had on ecclesiastical mission work as input to the existing ongoing work. Another goal is to evaluate their contribution with a view to consider further steps. In order to obtain the necessary insight and knowledge, the qualitative research method has been chosen.

1.9.1 Participant Observation

Since 1977, when I started as a missionary of the NGKA in Lepelle congregation, I was directly involved in mission work. Thus, observing while being part of the process, I had first-hand experience of the development of ecclesiastical mission work. This method could be described as follows: “To understand fully the complexities of many situations, direct participation in and observation of the phenomenon of interest” (Patton 1990:25).

According to Schurink (1991:3) participatory observation could also be described as an unstructured and flexible data collection method, in which the researcher is part of the everyday world of the group or institution. Usually the participant observer is himself connected for quite a long period with the group he wants to study. It could be weeks, months or years.

1.9.2 Structured Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire is to help the role players to write down their own stories. Bogdan and Biklen (1975:61) say the following about life history research: “The feasibility of life history case study is mostly determined by the nature of the potential subject. Is the person articulate and does he or she have a good memory? Has the person

lived through the kinds of experiences and participated in the types of organizations or events you want to explore?”

Structured questionnaires oblige the subject to give information that is needed for the case study. It helps him to do some research himself. It also helps the researcher with the analysis of the data. Hence I preferred this method rather than oral history.

I returned some of these questionnaires after they were rewritten by me. Flummer (s.a.:98), who suggested in this regard: “It is often good practice to send the transcript to the interviewees too, so that they may both enjoy re-reading their observation and provide stimulus for further comment and revision.”

1.9.3 Documented Information

Schurink (1991:3) states that documented information is an important data-resource method for the qualitative researcher. He mentions the following kinds of data-resource that falls under documented information: human documents, life histories, human accounts, personal documents, first-hand reports, auto-biographies and also documentary tradition. Documents could be divided into two types: documents on specific requests, which are called requested documents. Documents that were not recorded for research purposes are known as unrequested documents. Schurink (1991:3) quotes Burgess (1984): “In the case of unsolicited documents the researcher has to make use of what is available, while solicited documents allow the researcher some control over the material that is produced” (Burgess 1984:124-125).

1.9.4 Analysis of the Documents

How could one interpret the stories of these role players in the mission field? The researcher must have their names, he must obtain knowledge about their situation, families, where and when they served. Where did they study, with whom did they serve and in which congregations? They preached, taught and built their respective congregations or outposts. They worked together with community leaders, colleagues and teachers. They worked under difficult circumstances. They were living documents themselves and in some cases pioneers and co-church planters.

Their stories are important to the researcher. The written documents and the solicited materials must be constructed in an orderly fashion. For that reason, this dissertation also contains biographical data.

I agree with Mouton and Marais (1988:103) that the qualitative researcher is not specifically searching for evidence in support of a hypothesis that has been formulated before the study commences. Rather, a hypothesis could be constructed while analyzing the data. Qualitative researchers, they say, usually intend to use the inductive method to analyze and to interpret. In this regard it is important to quote Bogdan and Biklen (1975:29): “Theory developed this way emerges from the bottom up (rather than from the top down), from many disparate pieces of collected evidence that are interconnected. It is called *grounded theory* as a qualitative researcher planning to develop some kind of theory about what you have been studying; the direction you will travel comes after you have been collecting the data, after you have spent time with your subjects. You are not putting together a puzzle of which you already know the picture. You are constructing a picture which takes shape as you collect, shape and investigate parts. The process of data analysis is like a funnel: things are open at the beginning (or top), and more directed and specific at the bottom. The qualitative researcher plans to use part of the study to ascertain what the important questions are. He or she does not assume that enough is known to recognize important concerns before undertaking the research.”

1.9.5 My Own Research Method

My research programme started in 1977, when I became minister of the NGKA Lepelle congregation. Travelling in this area and visiting the different mission stations, working together with black and white ministers and evangelists, learning to know the leading church council members in the Presbytery of Burger and discussing their family and clan relationships, brought the inspiration to preserve the history in some form or other. I wrote articles for Church congregation bulletins, prayer and newsletters and *Die Sendingblad*.

The information was obtained by means of tape recordings, notes of conversations and letters received from previous missionaries or their descendants.

The DRC synodical administration played an important part in gathering and preserving material from their mission fields. Each synodical office had a mission secretary. His work

was to oversee the salaries of missionaries and to support them with certain projects in his own congregation and with administration. Some of the mission posts were synodical, others of the DRC Presbytery, and some subsidised by a congregation. The DRC synodical offices transferred much of their mission administration to the local DRC congregations which were in direct contact with the mission stations, missionaries or NGKA congregations that received subsidies for their ministers and evangelists, or were engaged in support projects. The PSK (*Plaaslike Sendingkommissie* – Local Mission Committee) carried this responsibility on behalf of the DRC Council. Missionaries had to submit progress reports to the PSK of the relevant congregation. They, in turn, usually provided the DRC Presbytery with information regarding mission work. The Secretary of the Synod also received a copy of the report so that he could provide a general report to the Synodical Mission Committee. Occasionally the secretary would also write articles for the church Mission magazine. These reports, bulletins, prayer letters and articles were of biographical help in my research programme.

During the eighties and nineties all these missionary posts were gradually discontinued due to rationalization and transformation. Some congregations suspended all financial support to local NGKA congregations. Synods even closed their mission offices and discontinued the secretarial posts. No information could be obtained from any of these *sending* bodies during this time. The only information available was the reports of the Secretary of the Presbytery of Burger from the local synodical office of the URCSA in Mamelodi. At the end of each financial year the Presbytery has its Presbytery meeting, after which the reports are sent to the archives of the URCSA at Mamelodi general office. I wish to thank the Synodical Secretary, Dr MD Maluleke, for his kind assistance in allowing me to search through the documents in the URCSA archives at the Mamelodi Dienssentrum.

1.10 RESEARCH ASSUMPTION (HYPOTHESIS)

1.10.1 Partnership

When one reads the reports, articles and documents etc., of the church planters in Sekhukhuneland, it is clear that these men (and women) were driven by a God-given passion to proclaim the Gospel and gather those who obeyed the calling into the *Koinonia* (the new people of the Kingdom).

One is also struck by the partnership that existed between the evangelists, the missionaries and people like school teachers and medical professionals during the pioneering stages of the mission. The one section could not succeed without the other in building the new Kingdom of God. Saayman (2007:68) says: “There can be little doubt that during the Second Wave the DRC mission was intensely concerned both with spiritual and physical well-being.” This trend overflowed to the Third Wave, as Saayman called it. He says: “During the early and mid-sixties the South African economy experienced an unprecedented boom (which affected the church in terms of rapidly escalating budgets) and it seemed as if the only way for DRC mission was to expand. Church membership in the DRC in Africa (the racially separated church for Africans within South Africa) expanded rapidly, and the church was organized into various regional synods and a national General Synod” (Saayman 2007:76).

According to Saayman (2007:69) this wave lasted chronologically from 1954 to 1976. Saayman extensively deals with the phenomenon of church and state partnership during this period. He says: “The perception took root that the NP Government financed the DRC mission expansion in support of its apartheid policy, thus strengthening the perception that the DRC was ultimately nothing more than the NP at prayer. These perceptions gave rise to sometimes frightening suspicion against the DRC mission and DRC missionaries – something which I experienced personally more than once in SA and in Namibia a decade later” (Saayman 2007:98).

In church mission history this period is the period of partnership between the two churches. I started my missionary ministry in 1977, when I was ordained as minister of the NGKA and formed a partnership with my black colleagues in Lepelle and in the presbytery of Burger. This partnership started with the establishment of the Synod of the NGKA in 1963 and continued during the first period up to 1976. However, from 1977 this partnership underwent certain changes, as will be indicated later. In analyzing this partnership, using the method of qualitative research, some questions could be asked: Firstly, what happened to it and what caused its demise, and secondly, is this partnership still a concept to be focused on when thinking of mission within the Biblical concept of *missio Dei*?

1.10.2 Mission is Obedience

Looking at the mission in Sekhukhuneland, we may characterize it as an act of obedience to the calling of God in the so-called *missio Dei* (the Mission of God). How shall we define the mission work done by the DRC in Sekhukhuneland? Firstly it has its roots in Pedi Christian pioneers such as the case with Philippus Mantsena, who obeyed God's call as a young African boy in the employ of Rev Robert Shand, pastor of the Tulbagh DRC congregation. Following his conversion to Christ, he went back to his village, Mothopong, at the foot of the Leolo Mountains, where he started witnessing and serving his own people. At the end of the 19th century, before the Anglo-Boer War, he visited the DRC minister of Middelburg, Rev AP Burger, and requested his assistance (*TVSB Ligpunte* 1975:9).

That opened the way for the *TVSV* to start their mission work in Sekhukhuneland. Their first call for a missionary was sent to Rev Abraham Rousseau who, at that time was serving the DRC in Nyasaland (Malawi). He did not accept this call, but reacted positively to a second call after being reminded by his nephew of a promise he had made while being a soldier of the ZAR during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902).

After considering the call, and his erstwhile promise, he agreed to become a pioneer missionary of the DRC in Sekhukhuneland. Evangelist Mantsena had already started the work among his own people in 1875. I am reminded of the definition of David Bosch: "Mission is the church – crossing frontiers representing the Kingdom of God" (1978:240).

I view Mantsena's call to Rev AP Burger for assistance as a Macedonian call, an invitation from God to be obeyed: "Come over and help us." I also regard Rousseau's call and mission as obedience to God. This is *missio Dei*. This definition is strongly based on obedience to His call for witnessing among people of different races, crossing the borders of culture and language. This is not piety or to teach people civilization or to avert 'the danger of blacks' (*swart gevaar*). This is obedience to God. This is the task of the Church. Mission is founded by God Himself, the God of history. To say that mission is 'witnessing to the Kingdom of God' may not be too far off the mark (Pretorius, Odendaal, Robinson & Van der Merwe 1987:5). On this prime base of mission in Scripture (Matt. 28:18-20), the DRC built its regimentation for their mission policy. As *mission ecclesia* (mission of the

church) the *missio Dei* is founded on the *missio Dei Triune* “The sending God, who sent his Son, also sends his Church” (Pretorius, *et al.* 1987:7).

The story of mission work in Sekhukhuneland is founded on God sending, and the church obeying by accepting the call in total obedience, notwithstanding the danger of malaria or any other obstacles.

1.10.3 The Phases of Mission History in Sekhukhuneland

Mission work in Sekhukhuneland underwent several phases:

The mission work in Sekhukhuneland also corresponds with the third wave (Saayman 2007:76). He says:

In the budding black ‘homelands’ the DRC was involved in partnership with the NP Government, providing social services (hospitals, special institutions for the disabled etc.) on an unprecedented scale. The rapid growth in DRC ‘home’ mission therefore was consolidated and growth continued, also in administrative matters. More regional mission secretaries were appointed and with the establishment in 1966 of the General Synod to unify all the regional DRC synods, a General Mission Secretariat was created with the task of co-ordinating the formulation of mission policy for all the regional synods. The late 1960’s and early 1970’s can indeed arguably be termed the heyday of centrally organized ecclesiastical mission work in the Dutch Reformed Church (Saayman 2007:77, 78).

Broadly speaking, these phases correspond with some of the waves mentioned by Saayman (2007:65): “As with the first wave, *ministers* played an important motivating role – Andrew Murray Junior, AC Murray, Andrew Louw, Stephanus Hofmeyr. Indeed, in his biography of Andrew Murray Junior, Du Plessis (1919:374) explicitly states that the new wave of mission enthusiasm was directly related to the reality ‘that ministers became more actively interested in missions, and that the sons of ministers came forward in larger numbers to offer themselves for service in new and distant fields.’ More so than in the first wave, the second wave indeed was structured as centrally organized ecclesiastical mission. It would probably be possible to argue that the foundations for the strong and efficient missionary bureaucracies formed in the regional synods of the Dutch Reformed Church were laid during this period.”

1.11 THE DRC MISSION WORK IN SEKHUKHUNELAND COMPLETED

1.11.1 Commencement

It is not difficult to find a date when the DRC officially moved into Sekhukhuneland. The *TVSV* decided to become involved in mission work in Sekhukhuneland by calling Rev Abraham Rousseau in 1925 (*TVSB Ligpunte* 1975:36). His mission work developed and the first congregation, Burger, was officially established in 1932 (Louw 1972:19) on the farm Mooiplaats, bought by the *TVSV*.

1.11.2 General Growth of the DRC Mission in the Transvaal

“The period 1932 to 1955 was a period of consolidation, growing slowly and the establishment of the Mission Church” (Crafford 1982:323). In May 1963, when the first General Synod of the NGKA was constituted, the days of fostering the mission church was over. A new era of collective mission work had commenced (Crafford 1982:324). Dick does not find any problem with collective responsibility (1978:302): “In the present mission situation, where the borders of the Dutch Reformed Church family consist of different population groups, the unity of the Church must not be given up in the midst of a pluralistic policy. The DRC has accepted the idea of unity of different DRC relationships as well as collective responsibility of the mission task. While the ‘mother church’ wants to practice its policy to continue evangelization work through their missionaries, the ‘daughter church’ shares in it through a special relationship with the missionary.” Yet the missionary work of the DRC in co-operation with the NGKA gradually landed in a crisis. Crafford (1982:387) puts it this way: “The NGKA congregations covered the whole of the Transvaal. The DRC did not find any open spaces for mission initiative anymore. The NGKA did not develop a sense of accepting collective responsibility with the DRC. Missionaries were called by the local church Councils of the NGKA without taking responsibility for salaries, because the daughter church was not financially in a position to even keep to the scale for their own ministers put up by the Synod of the NGKA. The DRC supported ministers and evangelists of the NGKA financially in accordance with their salary. Unfortunately the political influence from the side of the ANC and PAC contributed to increasing unrest among members of the NGKA and their church officials. Blacks became sensitive to what was called paternalism. As a result the PSKs’ (local

congregational mission committees) function faded and the missionaries slowly disappeared.”

1.11.3 Closing of Mission Work

In Sekhukhuneland missionaries were being phased out. The following dates may be seen as the end of missionary work done by the DRC mission. At Groothoek Mission (Lerato URCSA) the last missionary left in 1990. At Maandagshoek the last missionary left in 1995, and at Matlala Mission the last missionary left in 1995. At Klipspruit (Sekhukhuneland URCSA) the last missionary left in 2001. Kgatla wrote that the objectives of the DRC policy of 1935 had been fulfilled. “It is clear in the 1935 DRC mission policy that the mission churches were to be developed to become self-supporting and self-governing and that the DRC would gradually shift the load onto the shoulders of the indigenous church. It was according to the influence of the missiology of Venn, Anderson and Warneck” (Kgatla 1989:536).

1.12 INTERPRETATION

I do not agree that the objectives of the DRC policy of 1935 have been reached due to influence of the missiology of Venn, Anderson and Warneck. The transition from mission to church happened because the younger churches started to develop naturally. Gerdener (1958:157) believed that this “has always been and still remains a method of Divine order,” however revolutionary it may be at times in the life of the church or of an individual. During the early stage of the NGKA’s existence, the report of the Commission for Planning (*Beplanningskommissie van die Ring van Burger*) (1969:4) seriously urged the partnership of the DRC and the NGKA to focus on a strategy aimed at being more effective in fulfilling the Great Command (Matt. 28:19). The Commission said: “Establishing an independent church is not the end of the road. On the contrary, before the two churches unite, a new experience of the mission task has to be fulfilled in JOINT CO-OPERATION. We are co-workers and each church must share in this task.” The mission strategy of the Dutch Reformed Church has always been PARTNERSHIP as is described extensively, and was also envisaged by the Federal Council of Dutch Reformed Churches (Crafford 1982:274).

Other elements and the currents of government policies into which the churches were drawn, caused the quick step-out of the younger members of Dutch Reformed Churches (30.12-30.14.1). In spite of this, the missionaries of the four mission stations of the DRC jointly and honourably worked with their black colleagues until their retirement, the only exception being Rev Johan Koen of Burger, who was still young and accepted a call to Mauritius. The Dutch Reformed Church Eastern Region ended their subsidy because of financial constraints.

1.13 LIST OF INTERVIEWS AND RESPONDENTS IN THE RESEARCH

Interviews and returns of questionnaires were handled in Afrikaans except where otherwise stated.

- Banda, TM – minister Burger congregation 1993-2011. His report was written in English (30/06/2010).
- Bester, Wessel Christiaan – missionary Sekhukhuneland congregation 1980-1985 (09/06/2010).
- Conradie, Tokkie – nurse 1959-1962. Missionary's wife 1961-1995. Women's elder (13/07/2010).
- Etsebeth, PJ (Petrus) – missionary Lerato congregation 1976-1980, missionary Sekhukhuneland congregation 1987-2002 (29/06/2010).
- Jordaan, JT (Hans) – missionary Marble Hall (Goedvertrouwen) 1956-1959 (21/07/2010).
- Koen, JPJ (Johan) – missionary Burger congregation 1991-1995 (oral communication July 2010).
- Kritzinger, JJ (Dons) – missionary Burger congregation 1972-1980 (14/07/2010).
- Maduane, Mphofe Thomas – grown up in Sekhukhuneland, evangelist Burger congregation 1974 up till the present (24/06/2010).
- Mahlobogoane, SP – evangelist Lerato congregation 1974-1986 (13/07/2010).

- Mankoe, MJ – minister Lerato 1987-1994, minister Burger congregation 1977-2000 (15/06/2010).
- Maphanga, Sive Elon – evangelist Sekhukhuneland 1978-1992, minister Tembisa West since 1993 (13/07/2010).
- Masaku, Elizabeth, Lepelle congregation (15/07/2010).
- Masuku, Obed – elder in Lepelle congregation. His story was written in English (08/06/2010).
- Matemane, JM – evangelist Lepelle congregation 1966-1967. Lepelle congregation 1985-2005 (21/04/2009).
- Mojela, Lengana Petrus – grew up in Sekhukhuneland, presently minister of Myibuye (Tembisa) (29/03/2010).
- Moloantoa, MJ – evangelist Lerato 1963-1982, minister Lepelle congregation 1990-1995.
- Morofi, Mathuti Ezekiel – evangelist Lerato congregation 1972-1973, Bakenberg 1973-1978, Bethesda 1978-1979, evangelist Motetema 1979-1985, minister Motetema congregation 1986-2003 (14/07/2010).
- Nchabeleng, Solomon Pitsadi – minister Sekhukhuneland congregation 1981-2012 (28/06/2010).
- Nchabeleng, LA and SM – elders Lepelle congregation. Their story was written in Sepedi which was translated into English (05/04/2011).
- Olivier, OJ (Ockie) – missionary Lerato congregation 1981-1983 (02/07/2010).
- Phatudi, MLS – minister Lepelle 1977-1981 (25/11/2010).
- Phetla, JS – minister Lepelle congregation 1967-1971 (information given by his widow – Sept 2008).
- Ramaipadi, Enos Setjhakadume – minister Burger congregation 1962-1976 (information given by his widow in English).

- Rousseau, Kaboet – secretary of Matlala Mission Hospital 1959 (tape recording 1977).
- Shaku, Mabu Benjamin – grew up in Sekhukhuneland, evangelist Burger congregation 1965-1996 (oral communication April 2010).
- Tladi, Lesetja John – evangelist Lerato congregation 1971-1985 (July 2010).
- Van der Merwe, IM (Sakkie) – missionary Burger congregation 1963-1966, missionary Lerato congregation 1986-1990 (information given by his widow) (29/07/2010).

2. THE HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE OF SEKHUKHUNELAND

2.1 THE COUNTRY

Mönnig (1967:3) describes the area as follows: “The country can be called Bopedi, lying between the Olifants and Steelpoort Rivers and slightly over the Olifants River to the North. It continues across the Great Eastern Escarpment or Drakensberg range, passes along the south eastern region and, curving slightly westwards, towards the north.

“The Escarpment is divided into three distinct mountain ranges. In the south-east the Sekhukhune Mountains lie roughly along the western bank of the Steelpoort River. On the northern bank of the Olifants River the Strydpoort Mountains stretch roughly from east to west. Almost connecting these ranges, the Leolo (Lulu) Mountains run from north to south through the centre of the country, and roughly along the eastern border of Geluks Location. This large range, which lies in the centre of Bopedi, has great significance for the people. The whole range consists of a complex system of conical mountains of a characteristically dark colour, forming many deep valleys. As the Transvaal Sotho in general and the Pedi in particular, tend to build their villages at the base of the mountains, many villages lie stretched along the valleys of this range” (Mönnig 1967:4).

This region consists mainly of District municipalities formed in 2003. The Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality has five local municipalities: Groblersdal, Marble Hall, Tubatse, Fetakgomo and Makhudu Thamaga (see map DC47). The Zebediela and Mphahlele region is part of the Capricorn District Municipality. The magistrate’s offices still remain the same as before: Schoonoord, Nebo, Groblersdal, Praktiseer, Lebowa-Kgomo and Lydenburg.

2.1.1 The People

The boundaries of Sekhukhuneland are not easily determined. Firstly, one has to look at the history of the great Sekwati, who gathered his people from all over the Transvaal and who succeeded in uniting the Pedi into a strong nation again. After his death his two sons, Mampuru and Sekhukhune both tried to obtain power, but this resulted in what is known as the Sekhukhune wars. This geographical area could be referred to as Sekhukhuneland. History also tells us that many small tribes were formed, each with its chief’s name as

described in *TŠA MAGOŠI LÊ DILETE SESOTHO SA LEBOWA (History of Native Tribes in the Republic of South Africa – Author unknown:76-79)*. Some of these tribes settled across the Lepelle River towards Chuenespoort and even as far as the Turfloop region (Dikgale). The Mphahlele group came from Tzaneen and settled towards the Lepelle River on the western side, not far from Zebediela and Chuenespoort. It is here at Mphahlele where the Kranspoort Mission of Stefanus Hofmeyr started a mission, with the assistance of faithful evangelists. The Mphahlele chief, Mmutle, married Sekhukhune's daughter so that inter-relationships were created – as was the case with the other tribes as well. Geographically the Olifants River (Lepelle) did not adversely affect inter-relationships.

2.1.2 The Mission at Mooiplaats

Once the first missionary, Rev AP Rousseau, had completed Burger, his Mooiplaats mission station at the foot of the Olifants River; he started outstations towards Zebediela, in the west near Chuenespoort, and along the Olifants River towards the south as far as Ottensville, near Marble Hall. One of his outstations was situated on the high plateau near Nebo at Gembokspruit in the south-east. He also worked among the Pedi along the Leolo Mountains towards Ga-Ratau (Maandagshoek) in the east near the Steelpoort River, and had outposts such as India on the eastern side of the Leolo Mountains.

He even investigated the possibility of erecting a mission hospital at Zebediela. We will see how this led to further developments and the building of the Groothoek Mission Hospital in 1941 by the Dutch Reformed Church Synodical Mission Commission. The project was completed in 1943.

As Burger Mission grew and developed, the geographical region of the Burger congregation took shape. This later led to the establishment of several other congregations to form a presbytery called Burger. The presbytery of Burger was closely connected with the *TVSV*. The *TVSV* greatly contributed towards the extension and growth of the mission at Mphahlele and the villages on the western side of the Olifants River towards Zebediela. In 1966 they even built an institution called Sekutupu for 150 old people and 56 chronically ill patients, which formed part of the Groothoek Mission Hospital. This was part of their contribution towards mission work in Sekhukhuneland. In its earlier stage, Lerato congregation must also be seen as part of the mission outreach in Sekhukhuneland.

Today this vast area comprises of the following:

1. The area between the Steelpoort River in the east, the Olifants River in the north and the Leolo Mountains in the south-west, which roughly describes the borders of the Burger congregation of the URC.
2. The north-eastern area, where the congregation of Sekhukhuneland is situated, and which consists of the Steelpoort River to the point where the Diepkloof stream flows into the Steelpoort River, which borders the Eastern Highveld plateau of Bopedi.
3. The southern and western area, which includes Motetema village (Motetema URCSA), Marble Hall and Leeuwfontein villages (Bothanang URCSA).
4. The northwestern region, which includes Zebediela (in this manuscript, Zebediela is referred to as a place and Sebetiela as the name of the congregation), the Chuenespoort Mountains (part of the Strydpoort Mountains) up to the point where the Leolo Mountains meet the Olifants River.

Today there are three congregations of the URCSA presbytery of Burger, covering the area all along the Olifants River: the Eastern borders of Sebetiela congregation, the Lerato congregation, with Lebowa-Kgomo at Chuenespoort sandwiched in between.

5. From Marble Hall the Lepelle URCSA Congregation lies stretched out along the Olifants River, called the Lower Olifants River Irrigation Scheme, as far as Mphaaneng and India on the northern side of the Leolo Mountains, a distance of nearly 120 km. This congregation is in a central position and touches the borders of all the congregations of the presbytery of Burger URCSA. Lepelle is the Northern Sotho name for the Olifants River.

2.2 HISTORY OF THE PEDI OF SEKHUKHUNELAND

At the time when mission work first started among the Pedi, by far the largest portion of the Bopedi in Sekhukhuneland were located in the Lydenburg district, where chief Sekhukhune was recognized as paramount chief (Mönnig 1967:1). In 1860 the BSG (Berlin Mission Association) sent two young missionaries, Alexander Merensky and

Heinrich Grützner, to start working here (Schellack 1992:54). The main group lived south of the Leolo Mountains near Geluks Location. “One may say that Bopedi is Sekhukhuneland with slight extensions towards the north and more particularly, in the south. The heart of the Bopedi is the so-called Geluks Location” (Mönnig 1967:1). Today, Geluks Location no longer exists, but the old ruins can still be seen near Jane Furse. The 1961 census figure for Sekhukhuneland was 118 743 (Mönnig 1967:3).

2.2.1 Genealogy of the Pedi

The early traditional genealogy of the Pedi chiefs started with Thobela and covered several generations up to Sekwati. Then Mzilikazi, one of the lieutenants of the great Zulu warrior and chief, Tshaka, defeated the Pedi and ravaged the country (Mönnig 1967:22). When Sekwati returned after an absence of four years, he started to re-establish the old Pedi ascendancy. He gained victory over his half-brother Kabu and finally rid the country of all remaining cannibalism, which had been the practice until Sekwati managed to put an end to it by distributing captured cattle (Mönnig 1967:23). Sekwati settled at Phiring, later called Magalies Location. Today it is known as Masemola.

In 1837 the Pedi first made contact with the trek of Louis Trichardt. In 1845 another group under Hendrik Potgieter entered Bopedi. “They settled at Ohrigstad. The initial relations with the trekkers appeared to have been very friendly” (Mönnig 1967:24). Sekwati left Phiring and moved to Thaba Mosego on the eastern slopes of the Leolo Mountain, where he built his fortified village called Tšate.

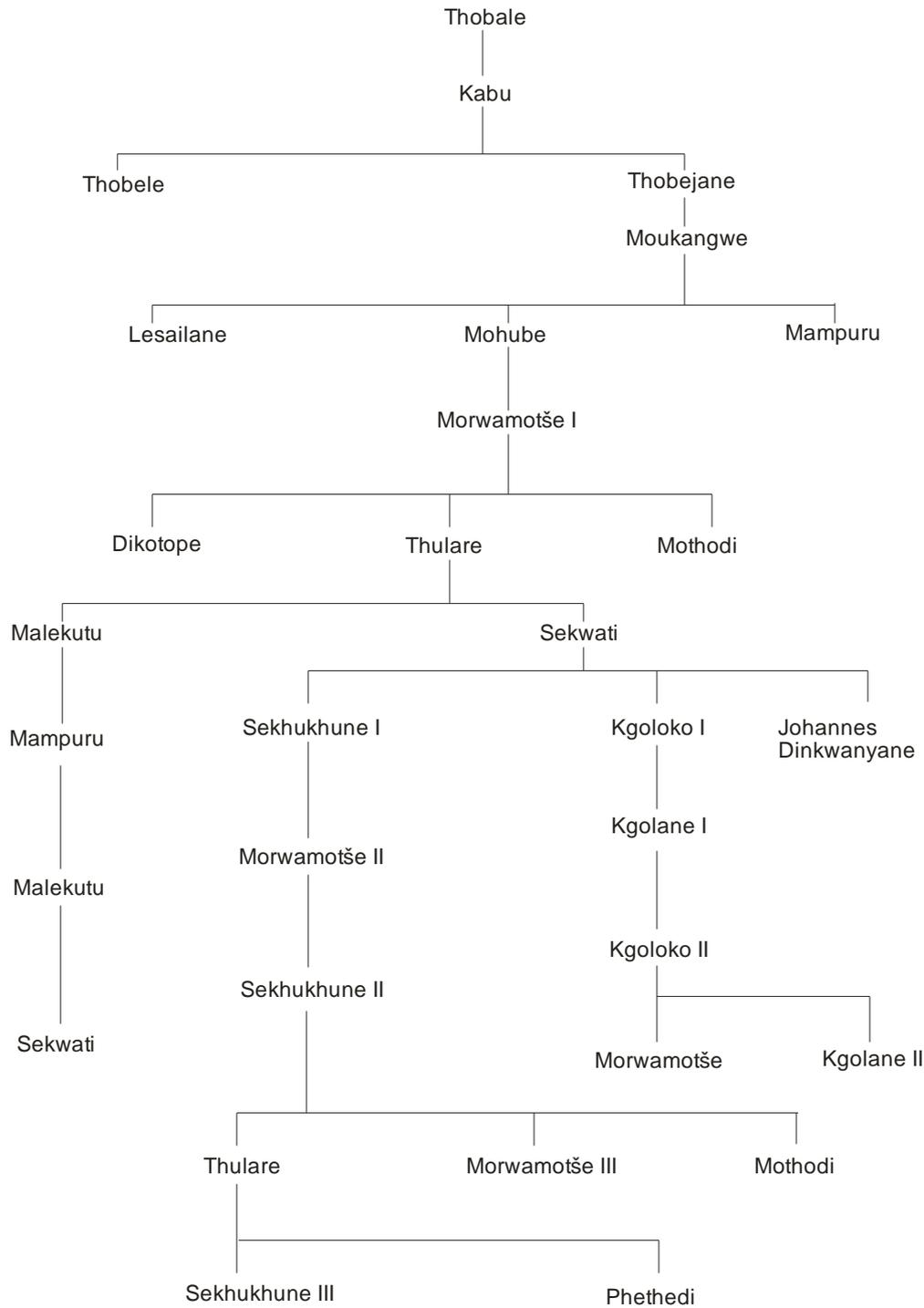
On 17 November 1857 he signed a peace treaty between the Pedi and the Boer Republic (Mönnig 1967:24).

In 1860 (Mönnig 1967:25) Sekwati was visited by Alexander Merensky. Sekwati told Merensky that he was welcome to build a mission station in his village. “Finally on the 14 August 1860, Merensky and his fellow missionary Grützener started their first mission, Gerlachshoop near Bopedi, among the Kopa tribe under chief Boleu. They were joined in 1861 by two more missionaries, Nachtigal and Endemann” (Mönnig 1967:25). In 1861 Merensky again visited Sekwati and obtained permission to build a station a few miles from Tšate, on a hill called Kgalatlolo.

On 22 September 1861 Merensky held the first service at the new station. Sekwati died on the same day (Mönnig 1967:25).

Figure 1: THE PEOPLE AND THEIR COUNTRY

SKELETON GENEALOGY OF PEDI CHIEFS



(Mönnig 1967:15).

2.2.2 Mampuru

Now the spotlight fell on Mampuru, the son of Sekwati's wife, Kgomo Makatane. Mampuru was not Sekwati's biological child, as Sekwati was too old to have children, and the chief, according to custom, designated another man for the purpose. Mampuru was not raised by his own mother, but by Thorometšane, the first wife of Sekwati, and mother of Sekhukhune.

On Sekwati's death, Sekhukhune claimed the chieftainship. He killed the councilors who supported Mampuru and claimed all his cattle. Mampuru was forced to flee on 17 June 1862 (Mönnig 1967:26).

Mampuru formed his own regiment and succeeded in establishing his own tribe, but remained on the look-out for an opportunity to wrest the chieftainship from Sekhukhune (Mönnig 1967:26). Under Sekhukhune, inter-tribal warfare continued. He was also trying to enhance his influence and regularly attacked disloyal tribes (Mönnig 1967:27).

2.2.3 Sekhukhune

Because of Sekhukhune's friendship with the missionaries, mission work progressed. The Berlin Mission treated the ill and the wounded. One of Sekhukhune's wives and his half-brother were among those converted. The chief was not pleased with this, because his authority was being undermined. Early in 1864, he had two Christians severely lashed as a warning. At the time, Merensky had been summoned by the President of the ZAR and appointed as representative of the Transvaal Republic among the Pedi. On his return to Bopedi, he was at first well received by the chief (Mönnig 1967:27), but soon afterwards all their cattle, land and grain were confiscated.

On 15 November 1864, thirty-two Christians were brought before the chief. They defied his authority and professed their faith. The Pedi chief was very angry with them; they were beaten mercilessly, and their homes were attacked. The missionaries were accused of stealing his people and undermining his authority. "He forbade them to do further mission work, and ordered all the Pedi Christians to forsake their religion" (Mönnig 1967:28).

Because of the intolerable situation, the Christians, led by Merensky and Sekhukhune's half-brother, Johannes Dinkwanyane, fled towards the south. They eventually bought a

farm near Middelburg and started the Botšhabelo Mission Station, which in later years was declared a historical site. Merensky also began to build a stone fort as protection against attacks from Sekhukhune. The fort was named Fort Wilhelm, after the German Emperor. Situated 12 km north of Middelburg on the Middelburg-Groblersdal road, Botšhabelo has become a historical town where the buildings and annals are open to the public (Botšhabelo information bulletin).

Johannes Dinkwanyane, however, became disillusioned with life away from the tribal context and in 1873 left with a considerable following to settle as an independent chief in the Spekboom Valley north of Lydenburg. Sekhukhune openly acknowledged him as a chief under the Pedi Empire. In this way Sekhukhune extended his territory beyond the Steelpoort River, which ended all hope of peace with the Boer Republic (Mönnig 1967:28).

2.2.4 The First Sekhukhune War 1876

In March 1876 some warriors of Dinkwanyane detained a Boer with a wagonload of wood and ordered him to unload before allowing him to proceed. This proved to be the last straw and on 16 May 1876 the Boer Republic declared war on the Pedi, which was later to become known as the first Sekhukhune war. There were sporadic attacks but in February 1877 the two sides signed a treaty (Mönnig 1967:30). The Pedi had to pay 2 000 head of cattle to the Republic. On 12 April 1877, Sir Theophilus Shepstone annexed the Transvaal on behalf of the British Crown. He considered the treaty between the Boers and Pedi to be valid, and notified Sekhukhune that the Pedi would be recognized as British subjects. Sekhukhune only sent 200 head of cattle, followed by another 45 as well as some elephant tusks at a later date. Shepstone returned these as insufficient, thus setting the stage for the second Sekhukhune war (Mönnig 1967:30)

2.2.5 The Second Sekhukhune War

The Pedi once again started cross-border raids, rustling cattle and killing a Boer farmer. Captain Clarke had to intervene, but realized that his contingent was too small. Additional troops were sent under Colonel Rowlands, but had to wait for the end of the Zulu war for assistance from General Sir Garnet Wolseley, who felt that Sekhukhune might wish to pursue peace. Sekhukhune refused an agreement.

Sir Garnet Wolseley immediately mobilized a strong army, a total force of some 12 000 men. In a well executed flanking attack, the Pedi were completely routed on 28 November 1878. The Sekhukhune era ended and the Pedi Empire was crushed, never to regain its old glory. Sekhukhune was taken to Pretoria and imprisoned (Mönnig 1967:31).

2.2.6 The Founding of the Pedi Lutheran Church

Lobethal, another Lutheran mission station was started in the south of Sekhukhuneland by Rev Posselt, who was the first missionary in Bopedi after Merensky had fled. (This modern mission station is situated at Phaahla on the road between Marishane and Lebowa-Kgomo, and can accommodate approximately 400 conference delegates). Another mission station was allowed on the site of the ruins of Tšate. Rev JA Winter was sent to this station. Wanting to grant his converts greater control in the church, Winter soon became dissatisfied with the attitude of his fellow-missionaries towards the Pedi. He finally adopted the Pedi way of life, which forced the mission authorities to expel him. In 1889 he founded the Pedi Lutheran Church, one of the first separatist church movements in South Africa (Mönnig 1967:32).

2.2.7 The Retrocession of the Transvaal

On 8 August 1881, after the first Anglo-Boer War came the retrocession of the Transvaal (Mönnig 1967:32). Sekhukhune was released from prison and immediately took control of the chieftainship once again. Mampuru remained at Kgono. He refused to acknowledge the new Republican Government and fled to avoid arrest. Abel Erasmus was appointed as Native Commissioner and was assisted by Sekhukhune. Mampuru and Sekhukhune were the two chiefs recognized by the Pretoria government. Mampuru was dissatisfied, because he wanted the tribe to consolidate. He rid himself of Sekhukhune by murdering him at Manoge on the night of 13 August 1882, together with a number of men and women. This did not have the desired effect of consolidating the Pedi under Mampuru, who once more had to flee for his life. He sought refuge with the Ndebele chief Nyabele (Mönnig 1967:32). (Author's own translation.)

2.2.8 Sekhukhune II

Sekhukhune's son and heir was killed in the war against Wolseley. He had married a wife from the Mphahlele chief's family, but she died childless. A substitute was chosen by the name of Thorometšane. She was allowed by her parents to have a child by a certain Sekwati, who was the son of Moyalodi, a senior brother of Sekhukhune I. Thorometšane's son was named after Sekhukhune and he became Sekhukhune II. While he was still too young to rule, Kgoloko, the son of the fourth wife of old Sekwati, was appointed as regent. "Kgoloko immediately requested the Government to deal with Mampuru" (Mönnig 1967:32). Nyabele, who sheltered him, refused to hand him over. A commando, sided by Kgoloko, was sent to attack Nyabele, but they found him heavily fortified, and the campaign, which became a blockade, lasted for nine months.

Finally, Nyabele surrendered on 11 July 1883, and handed Mampuru over. The latter was found guilty of murder and hanged in Pretoria on 22 November (Mönnig 1967:33). Sekhukhune II completed his schooling in Pretoria and assumed the chieftainship at the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War in 1899. He died in 1943, after having led his people for a relatively peaceful decade. Sekhukhune II was pre-deceased by his son and heir, Thulare. Sekhukhune was succeeded for a short while by his brother Phatudi as regent, until Morwamotše III, the brother of Thulare, was appointed as regent in 1964. He, in the name of his brother, married the tribal wife, Mankopodi. She had two sons, the eldest of whom, Sekhukhune III, was the heir-apparent to the chieftainship. Morwamotše was chief only of the section of Bopedi known as Sekhukhuneland.

In other districts a number of chiefs had been appointed, including Chief Sekwati of the Pedi at Mamone and Chief Frank Maserumule of the Koni tribe near Jane Furse.

Appointing Morwamotše as chief over the whole of Sekhukhuneland was not acceptable and immediately caused trouble. To solve the problem, the Pedi decided to form a tribal authority under the Bantu Authorities Act. The outcome of this meeting led to the appointment of 18 heads of larger tribes and 17 councillors from Mohlaletse, where Sekhukhune III grew up. This naturally led to dissatisfaction, as many tribal heads, who in fact functioned as chiefs in their own right, were overlooked (Mönnig 1967:39).

Among the Pedi, however, were those who did not agree to this government scheme because, they said: "it is meant to force agricultural planning on the tribes." The whole of

Sekhukhuneland then became divided into the so-called ‘Rangers’, the government supporters, and the ‘Voortrekkers’, those who opposed the government programme (Mönnig 1967:39).

All efforts to solve the problem politically among the different leaders, failed and fighting between the Rangers and the Voortrekkers spread throughout Sekhukhuneland. “On 16 May 1958 a meeting was held at the local Commissioner’s office to discuss the appointment of Mothodi in place of Kgobalala, who realized that he could not control his people” (Mönnig 1967:41).

Attempts at internal reconciliation led to the appointment of Morwamotše as acting Paramount chief of Sekhukhuneland, on 27 July 1961. Unfortunately he died on 3 January 1965. The young Sekhukhune III was still not old enough to assume the chieftainship and his mother, the tribal wife Mankopodi, was designated as regent (Mönnig 1967:41). This caused a break-away of many newly formed tribes, each with its own chief. Towards the south, in the Nebo district, chief Sekwati at Mamone regarded himself as superior to the Pedi of Mohlaletse, where Sekhukhune III was situated. The tribe at Mamone was much larger and stronger than the one at Mohlaletse, but his superiority was not recognized (Mönnig 1967:41).

The homeland of Lebowa was eventually formed, with its own local government. The capital was Lebowa-Kgomo. The first prime minister was Dr Cedric Phatudi, who was the son of Chief (Kgoši) Phatudi Mmutle Mphahlele, also called Chief Mmutle III (Phatudi 1989:2). The Mphahlele village is situated 60 km south-east of Pietersburg, now known as Polokwane.

2.3 OTHER INDIGENOUS GROUPS IN SEKHUKHUNELAND

2.3.1 The Swazi of Hoepakranz

Mönnig (1967:27) mentions two groups of Swazi, one under Msutu and the other under Mpehle, who fled Swaziland because of unrest. They obtained permission from chief Sekhukhune to settle on the Leolo Mountains. A large Swazi army followed the fugitives to recapture them, but was crushed by the Pedi, who were well armed with guns. Malan (1963:2) wrote a script on one of these groups, that of Johannes Nkosi, son of Ngobe, son of Mabhedla. The group that came first was under the leadership of Ngungunyane, son of

Shopeane, son of Msutu. This group settled further south near the offices of Schoonoord. The group of Johannes Nkosi made their home further and settled on top of the Leolo Mountains, on the section 24'30 and 24'45 south. The habitable plateau is 5 000 to 6 000 feet above sea level (Malan 1963:1). The DRC missionaries started to work among the Swazi of Hoepakranz and also enlisted a full-time evangelist. Ever since the establishment of Burger mission and later Maandagshoek mission, this was an outpost for Holy Communion. Even today the present minister, Rev TM Banda of Burger congregation, has Hoepakranz on his programme for Holy Communion. Well-known Christian families in the church are Lukhele, Moekoena, Nkosi and Zulu (Banda 2009).

2.3.2 The Swazi People of Gareagopola as told by Elizabeth Masemola

Her grandfather, Noag Mashayela Maseko, and grandmother, Joan Sebengwa (Nkosi) lived in Swaziland. During that time they became dissatisfied with life in Swaziland. Noag had to look after other people's cattle and was also forced to become an impi. When he got married, he decided to move to the Transvaal. They went to Lydenburg and Noag became a farm worker for Mr Hendrik Coetzee on the farm Badfontein, between Lydenburg and Machadodorp. He stayed with Hendrik all his life. The farmer took very good care of the family. He even gave him his name, because he said that Noag was a man of integrity. The couple had the following children: David (1880), Johanna (1882), Thomas (1888), Elizabeth (1891), John (1896) and Alida (1902). Elizabeth married Uncle Ngomane of Witrivier. Alida married Jacobus Mnisi of Lydenburg.

2.3.3 Jacob Masina

The Maseko family came in contact with Jacob Masina. He was the son-in-law of our grandfather, Noag. He stayed at Lydenburg. The Masina family belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church. Jacob Masina was the leader. He attended night school and he was able to read the Bible. He preached to the congregation, although he was still a youngster. The Maseko family was all baptized and became members of the DRC. It was Rev Maritz who worked here and assisted Masina with his ministry. Masina grew old, almost 100 years. When he was ailing, a certain Moruti Koenraad took him to Matlala Hospital, from where he was transferred to the Pretoria General hospital, where he passed away.

2.3.4 The Maseko Family

Elizabeth wrote that their father, John (1896) married Emmah Nkosi. God blessed them with boys and girls. The Maseko family was all members of the DRC. We had two brothers who assisted old man Jacob Masina. Brother David helped the church very well, but died in 1970, a year before old man Masina. My brother Esau also continued the work but died in 1983. Our sister Mieta's son, Mphete Shongwe, continued as elder and leader and is still here. His father, Andries, helped him and made a wooden bench which is used by the church members while waiting outside the building for the minister.

2.3.5 Alida Mnisi (1902)

Alida married Jacobus Mnisi. Ever since the beginning of the DRC in Lydenburg, the Mnisi family as well as the Masina family were Christians. Their children also helped to expand the church. Noag, one of the sons, married Batseba. He went with his family to Arnot, where he worked as evangelist for almost ten years. From Arnot he moved to Saaiplaas. Both he and his wife were buried there. He also had a younger brother, JS Mnisi (28.5.1), who became a full-time minister in the NGKA (*Ned Geref Kerk Jaarboek* 1975). They can say the Swazi families of Lydenburg who came to Gareagopola were all Christians. After 100 years we and our children are still with the church. Our grandparents and parents showed us the way to Christ.

2.3.6 Gareagopola

This is the place where they stay now. In 1929 a law which was called ICU came into effect for the whole of Lydenburg district. This allowed all Bantu people to obtain farms for farming purposes. Our father, John Maseko and Jacob Masina, who were brothers-in-law, decided to find their own place. In 1930 they moved to Middelburg. The magistrate of Middelburg, Mr Wesman, allowed them to stay. After two years they moved to Gareagopola (Klipspruit 377). The owner of Klipspruit was Mr Misioner. The magistrate of Nebo, Mr Grobler, helped them to buy a farm. He arranged with the Department of Native Affairs in Pretoria, so that they could obtain a deed of sale for the farm. The group had to choose a committee with a chairman and a secretary. They chose Johannes Kgoroba and Dan Mashiloane as their leaders. They arranged for every household to pay £25 to become full members and owners of the farm. Amongst this group of Swazi and Pedi

people there were many Christians from different Church denominations. A school was erected first. It was called Gareagopola Tribal School. It was the second school in the whole of Sekhukhuneland built by a community. The first was Marishane Tribal School. In 1940 the Gareagopola Tribal School was named Gareagopola Primary School for pupils from Substandard A to Standard 5. Two languages were spoken in the school, namely Sepedi and Zulu.

After the school was built the different church denominations, about 8 of them, began to build small church buildings for worship. The DRC also built their church of clay bricks, with a grass roof. All the churches were built in a row next to the road that led from Marble Hall to Nebo via Arabie and Mogaladi.

Rev Abraham Rousseau of the Burger Mission Station visited them and served the Sacraments. In 1946 when the Sekhukhuneland congregation was established, the missionary at Klipspruit took over the ministry services. The first missionary at Klipspruit was Rev Attie van Niekerk.

2.4 THE MASUKU FAMILY OF MATHUKUTHELA AT PHOKWANE AS TOLD BY OBED MASUKU

“A long time ago our grandfather came from Swaziland and settled at Lydenburg. He had three wives. The second wife was our grandmother, the mother of our father, Stefans Masuku. They were blessed with four girls and two boys. The second son was our father. We lived on the farm Doornhoek, Lydenburg, which belonged to the Vosloo family. We were five boys and five girls and I, Obed, was the third child. My family started to attend the Dutch Reformed Church under old man Mnisi, who lived at Goedgedacht. I was sent to my grandmother to stay there, but when my second grandfather died, I had to return to my parents. Till then I looked after the cattle, sheep and goats of my grandparents, at Waterval between Lydenburg and Steelpoort. I started school in 1939 at Goedgedacht School, where I passed Standard 5.

“My brothers and sisters were all baptized when they were small, but I, being older, had to first attend catechism under Rev Prinsloo, who only came for Holy Communion and evangelistic campaigns. I worked for three months without pay every year, attending school for the remaining nine months. In 1949 I went to high school at Lydenburg. There

were no boarding schools, so I had to look for a place of employment while attending school. I found employment and my employer wanted to register me, but the farmer refused to give me a permit. After my father talked to him, he gave me a ‘trekpas’ showing that I no longer belonged on the farm. From 1949 to 1952 I stayed and worked in town while studying. I worked in the early hours of the morning and after school. Our father passed away in December 1952.

“In 1953 I enrolled at Fortcox for two years’ training. My younger brother left school, as he wanted to work instead. When I came home during the December holidays, I learned from my mother that she wanted to leave the farm to move to Phokwane to her eldest daughter, where she lived with her in-laws. My brother and I searched for transport and a farmer near Ohrigstad came to our assistance. My brother paid for the transport and we obtained the necessary permits to drive the cattle.

“It was a sad day when we had to say goodbye to the farmer and his wife, as we had lived on the farm since the days of our grandfathers. We left our grandmother in the care of our aunt who lived nearby. We also left our brother and sister who passed away. I helped my other brother and for two days we drove the cattle via Lydenburg and Steelpoort to Phokwane. We stayed with one of our family members at Gareagopola and I returned to school at Fortcox. I found them staying with my sister at Mathukuthela when I returned at the end of 1954.

“A certain Maseko offered us a temporary place at Platklip to do some ploughing while waiting for a permanent place. I helped my mother and family with temporary shelters. All through this period the family attended the church at Gareagopola. Rev JS Malan from Klipspruit was our minister. In 1955 I obtained a temporary teaching post at the Acornhoek mission. In 1956 I managed to move nearer home, when I worked for Aboo at Phokwane. In 1957 I was appointed in a permanent position within the Department of Agriculture. In 1977 we moved to our new stand at Mathukuthela – Stand 197.

“This is the story of Obed Masuku: His brother Daniël was married to Katrien Maphanga. She and her husband, together with Obed and his wife, Anna, helped me in building the Mathukuthela church in 1993 and 1994. Katrien lives opposite the church and is also the caretaker of the church. She and her brother-in-law are the elders of this congregation. Obed is in charge of the administration and finances and Katrien is a colporteur for

Dibukeng, selling Bibles and Hymn Books. She lost her husband, Daniël, in 2007, as well as her son and daughter-in-law. As a grandmother, she is looking after their two children. These two families are the spiritual leaders of the village, caring, praying and serving the Body of Christ.”

2.5 SAMSON MNISI: A PIONEER CHURCH PLANTER

The above stories of the Maseko and Masuku families, who relocated from Lydenburg to Gareagopola and Mathukuthela near Phokwane, are an indication of the influence they and others like the Maphanga, Shongwe and Mnisi families had on the mission work done in Sekhukhuneland. The Swazi Christians of Lydenburg were inspired by one man, whom I have already mentioned, as told by Rev PNJ Maritz in his biography. His name is **SAMSON MNISI**. Mnisi was General Burger’s sidekick in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902. He was also his personal bodyguard and master of the horses. When General Joubert visited Pretoria he allowed Mnisi to be taught at the Presbyterian Church School. Samson Mnisi, who was looked upon as the ‘old man’, was actually the Lord’s trailblazer among his own people, the Swazi and a shining light amongst the non-believers. The fruits of his labour were carried by the Swazi families into Sekhukhuneland. Although more than eight decades have passed since these families arrived here, their descendents continue with unwavering faith to witness among the Swazi and Pedi in their congregations, Gareagopola and Mathukuthela.

2.6 THE SOUTH NDEBELE – THE NDZUNDZA

Mabhogo gathered all the Ndzundza and settled at Namshazelo, also known as Mapoch’s cave, near Roosenekal. Mabhogo ruled from 1837 to 1865 (Coetzee 1980:245). When the Voortrekkers arrived in the Eastern Transvaal, they were far from welcome, and clashes occurred as early as 1849 (Coetzee 1980:245). Another clash came when Maleo, the chief of the Kopa, and a citizen of Sekhukhune, entered into a conspiracy with Mabhogo to kill Sekhukhune. This did not happen immediately and the two chiefs decided to riot against the white farmers, destroying some of their property, as well as the Berlin Mission Station at Maleoskop. The farmers campaigned against them, but were unsuccessful. The Swazi, however, conquered the Kopa in 1864, but were unable to take the Mountain settlement of Mabhogo. Mabhogo died in 1865 (Coetzee 1980:246).

After the death of Mabhogo several successors of the same lineage ruled the Ndzundza nation. When Nyabela became chief, he refused to work under the ZAR government. He preferred to work under the English, who took over the government of the Transvaal for a short period of time. Another incident caused serious trouble for the Ndebele. This was when the Pedi chief Mampuru (Mampoer) was charged by the ZAR with the murder of a farmer, Gert Viljoen. He then committed another crime by murdering the chief of the Pedi, Sekhukhune.

Mampuru sought shelter at Nyabela's place. This caused the ZAR to take over Nyabela's kingdom by military force in the winter of 1883. Nyabela and Mampuru were taken to Pretoria and Mampuru was hanged while Nyabela was sentenced to life imprisonment (Coetzee 1980:248). Parliament decided on 20th July 1883 to terminate the kingdom of Ndzundza. Their citizens had to find employment on the farms in the Transvaal Highveld and in 1895 the Mapoch's land was incorporated into the district of Middelburg.

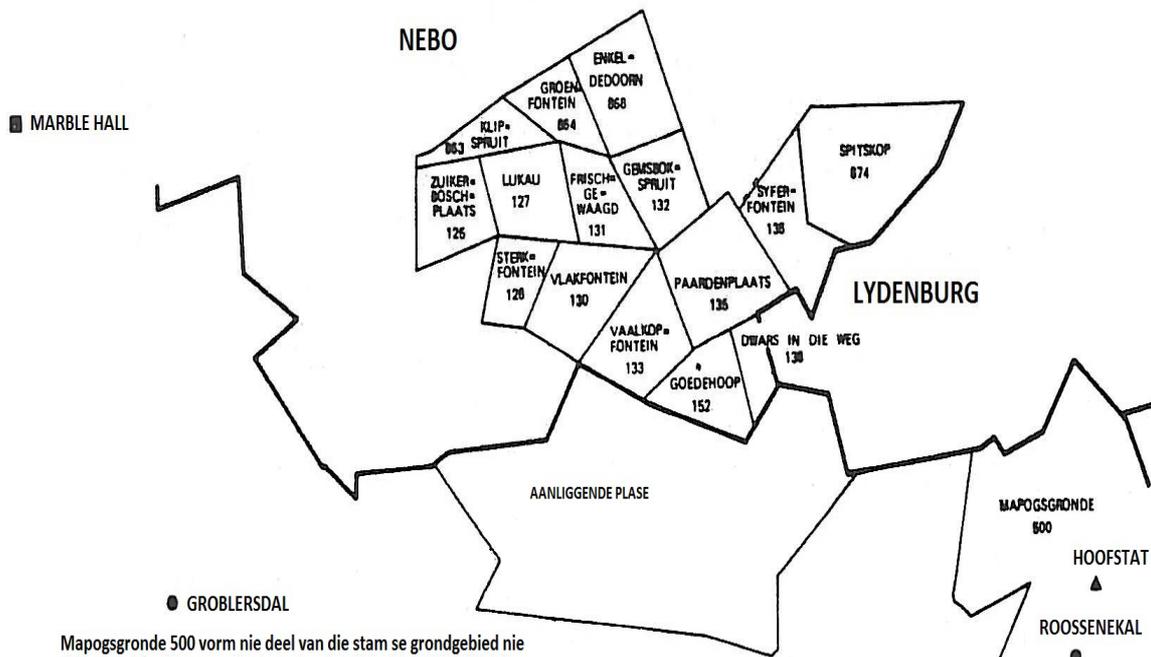
Nyabela was freed from jail in 1897 and settled with some of his followers at Derdepoort, near Pretoria (Coetzee 1980:250). Another section of the group settled in the district of Middelburg (Kwa-Mkhina) under Jafta Mahlangu. A son of Nyabela, Fene Mahlangu, settled with his group near Bronkhorstspuit. Fene tried to return to Mapoch's land, but it was refused again. When he died in 1922 at Welgelegen (Kwa-Hlanga at the Wilger River) he was succeeded by Cornelis Mabhogo. They bought the farm Weltevreden 158 JR in the Dennilton district and settled there in 1923. When he died, he was succeeded by his son Fene II, also known as David Mabhogo Mahlangu. This Ndzundza (Mabhogo) tribal authority was institutionalized in 1969 (GK 2143/1969), with Weltevreden as the tribal farm, along with several other farms in the Dennilton region. Geographically these farms were seen as part of the Lebowa Regional Government. In 1974 this section became a Regional authority (R135/1974) and in 1977 it was included within the Ndebele Regional Authority (R2021/1977) (Coetzee 1980:256).

This group was reached by the DRC Mission work of Philadelphia. When the homeland expanded to Kwaggafontein and Kwa-Mhlanga, a new congregation, called Hlanganani, seceded from Philadelphia, in 1981. At this time I was the secretary of the Ndebele Mission Committee. This region does not fall under Sekhukhuneland, but the other two Ndebele divisions captured our attention because of the very important part they played in the establishment of mission work in the Sekhukhuneland and Lerato congregations.

2.7 THE NDEBELE OF NEBO (SEKHUKHUNELAND)

This group is referred to as the Ndzundza of Jack Mahlangu. They were living on the farms shown on Chart 1 (Coetzee 1980:269). With the creation of the Nebo regional authority, the Ndebele tribal authority was included and eventually became part of Lebowa (R1247/1962). The refusal of Jack Mahlangu to form part of the new Ndebele Regional Government was a great disappointment to David Mabhogo. Some of Jack Mahlangu's people were also connected to Mabhogo. This schism went back to the 1883 war, but it also contributed to later rioting and political division and unrest in the Dennilton-Mutsi region (Coetzee 1980:272). As far as the ministry is concerned, the two languages, Sepedi and Zulu, are still being used in congregational meetings. The Ndebele members have no problem with Sepedi. They are bilingual.

Chart 1: TRIBAL AREA OF THE MDZUNDZA OF NEBO (GK 1139/1957)



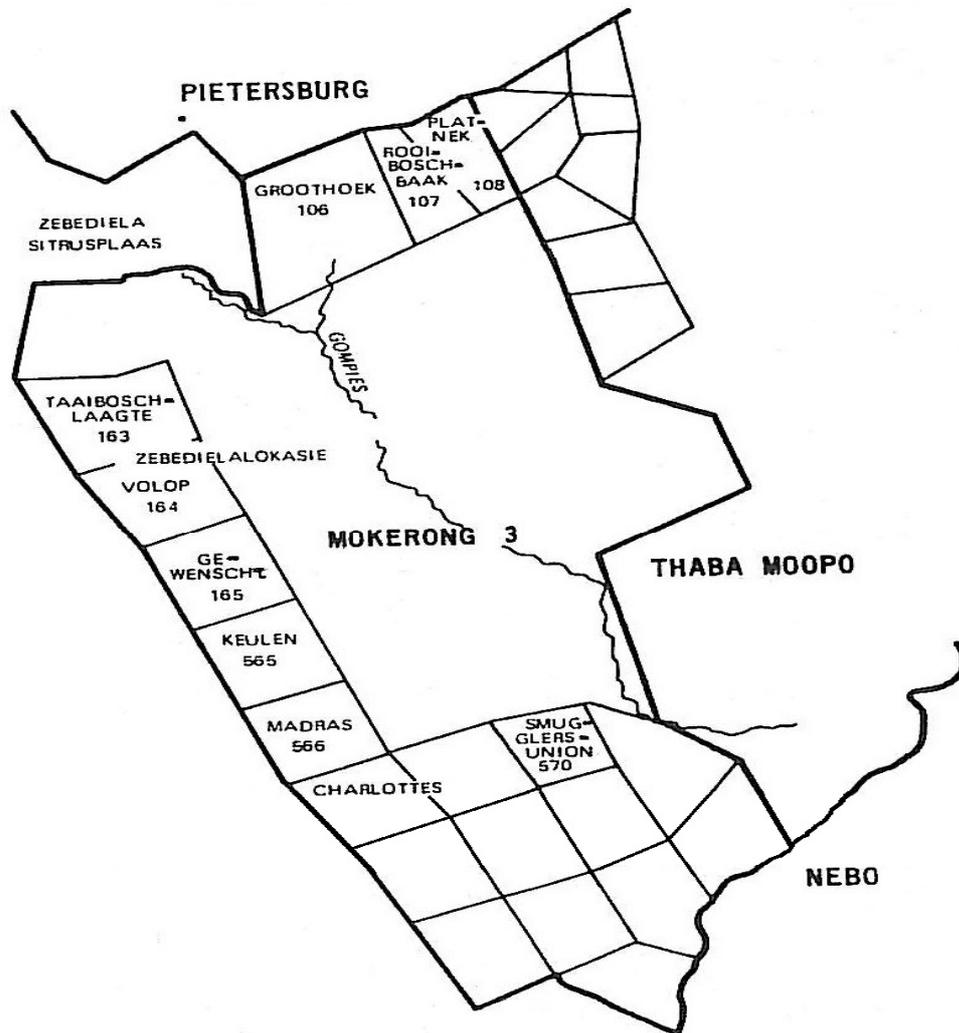
2.8 THE NORTH NDEBELE OF ZEBETIELA

According to Coetzee (1980:287) Kekana, who stayed near Premier mine, broke away from the Yakalala/Madidzi tribe and settled at Moletlane. This group must not be confused with the South Ndebele. They had different chiefs, but the one known to historians is Sebetiela, who was the successor of Sello Kekana. The commissioner for Soutpansberg,

Mr Barton, visited chief Sebetiela, who was crippled. He was succeeded by MmaMokebe, who had contact with the Europeans. The Kekana tribe of Sebetiela helped President Krüger in the war against Sekukuni and Magoeba. They also helped during the Second Freedom War. One of the later chiefs was Ramabele, but there were many others. Johannes was chief in 1980 (Coetzee 1980:302). This region of Kekana was allocated on 4 June 1884 by the Location Committee of the ZAR, represented by Christiaan Joubert, Piet Cronjé and P Muller (Coetzee 1980:302). The Sebetiela Tribal Authority was eventually included in 1972 as part of Lebowa in terms of Mokerong district. This tribe has a dominant Northern Sotho milieu (Coetzee 1980:306).

The Farm 7785 allocated to this group is shown on Chart 2 (Coetzee 1980:303). They played a very important role in the establishment of the Grootboek Mission Hospital, mission work at Zebediela (Orange Farm) Estates and the development of a congregation. The history of the congregation of Lerato started here. In 2000 this section seceded from Lerato to form a new congregation called Sebetiela. The name is derived from the history of the Ndbele (Yearbook 2006 URCSA:74). Most of the farms in the Sekhukhuneland area have Dutch names, because the surveyors of the ZAR were Dutch speaking. The s, z, d and t in Zebediela (the place) and Sebetiela (the tribal name), explains the difference in spelling, because of the difference in pronunciation.

Chart 2: KEKANA TRIBAL AREA IN SEBETIELA (GK 110/1957)



2.9 THE BA-KOPA AND THE BERLIN MISSIONARIES

According to Grosskopf the Ba-Kopa tribe split from the Kwena of Matshabela (approx. 1740) and settled at Moganyaka (Leeuwfontein). Before eventually relocating to Thabantsho in 1856, they first settled at De Oude Stadt west of Groblersdal. Following an agreement with the Lydenburg Republic in 1859, they relocated from there and moved to the farm Rietkloof. They settled on a hill flanked by two smaller hillocks in the centre of the farm and named the prominent central hill Thabantsho or Black Mountain.

Maphogo of the Ndebele, and Boleu (sometimes referred to as Maleo) of the Ba-Kopa, decided to declare war on the Boers in 1863 when a commando of 350 men showed up. (The reason for this was the constant cattle theft committed by the tribe.) The commando

decided to attack the Ba-Kopa but not the Ndebele under Maphogo, as the latter were successfully barricaded at Mapochskraal near Middelburg. The attack was a dismal failure and due to internal strife in the Boer camp, the ZAR decided to employ the Swazis as mercenaries.

On 10 May 1864 a combined force consisting of Swazis and Boer forces attacked the mountain settlement from the rear and succeeded in surprising the enemy. During the attack the Ba-Kopas were nearly annihilated and the king and some of his sons were killed. The survivors dispersed after the battle but later assembled at the Gerlachshoop mission station where food and medical services were provided. Ramapudu, the son of Boleu, was appointed king. The farmers in the area allowed the survivors to settle in an area to the west of the mission station.

Because of tribal tensions, the tribe eventually split into two groups. On 27 January 1865 a group under Ramapudu moved away and settled near Botshabelo, in the Middelburg district, while the other group joined up with Matsepe and moved to Leeuwfontein near Marble Hall.

In recognition of their valuable assistance during the First Boer War, the ZAR allowed the tribe to move back to the farm Rietfontein. In 1889 the Ba-Kopa settled at Thabantsho, now referred to as Boleu, where they lived until 1962, when they were moved to Tafelkop.

2.9.1 The Mission at Gerlachshoop

The missionaries and the mission station at Gerlachshoop played an integral part in the history of Boleuskop and the people of the Ba-Kopa tribe. After receiving their orders from the executive council in Utrecht, Alexander Merensky and Albert Grützner travelled to the settlement of Boleu accompanied by Rev van Heiningen (from Lydenburg), Field-Cornet JC Holtshausen and Commandant P Nel. The missionaries reached an agreement with Boleu allowing them to settle in the area and work with the tribe.

A church was constructed with the help of the local Christians and the first sermons were delivered on 20 September 1863. Although the missionary work prospered, it also caused discord between Boleu and the missionaries. The first major disagreement occurred during conflict between Boleu and Sekhukhune, when the tribe of Boleu employed witchdoctors to strengthen their foot soldiers. The missionaries fervently opposed this practice and

derided them for employing such heathen beliefs. The confrontation escalated to such a degree that the settlers on the outlying farms had to come to the mission's defense.

The derision gradually intensified, which led to an attack on the tribe in October 1863, led by 40 Boer commandos. The attack failed and gave Boleu the added determination to oust the missionaries from the area. Merensky and Nachtgeal eventually returned to Europe in January 1864, which provided some respite in the ongoing confrontation. The conflict nevertheless continued and together with other factors, such as the unremitting instances of cattle theft, led to the combined Swazi/Boer attack on 10 May 1864.

The missionaries saw the fire on Thabantsho and realized that a major attack was in progress. Grützner rushed to assist the people of Boleu but was stopped by Andries, an interpreter and one of the first Christians, after it became clear that the Swazi forces might also attack the mission station. The missionaries undertook the necessary precautions to avert an attack. Boleu's surviving son informed Grützner of the intense battle, the ensuing conflagration and the fact that the king and most of his sons had been killed in battle.

The population dispersed after the battle. Some stayed on outlying farms while others went to the mission station for help. Although confusion reigned, the population eventually converged on the mission station. The Christians chose to follow Ramupudu, Boleu's only living son, while those who chose the traditional belief system, followed Matsepe, Boleu's half-brother. Chaos and uncertainty prevailed during this time, with instigators stirring rival clans, which prompted the January 1865 Maphogo attack on the Ba-Kopa. Alexander Merensky took it upon himself to mediate on behalf of the rival clans, which resulted in the returning of the plundered goods and livestock.

Merensky decided to move to Botshabelo, where Ramupudu and his Christian contingent would join him. They arrived on 27th January 1865. The tribe members who chose to follow Matsepe settled at Leeuwfontein. On 13th February, the missionaries left Gerlachshoop and joined Merensky and Grützner at Botshabelo. The mission station at Gerlachshoop continued to be owned by the Berlin Mission Society until 1964, when ownership was transferred to the South African government (Grosskopf 1957).

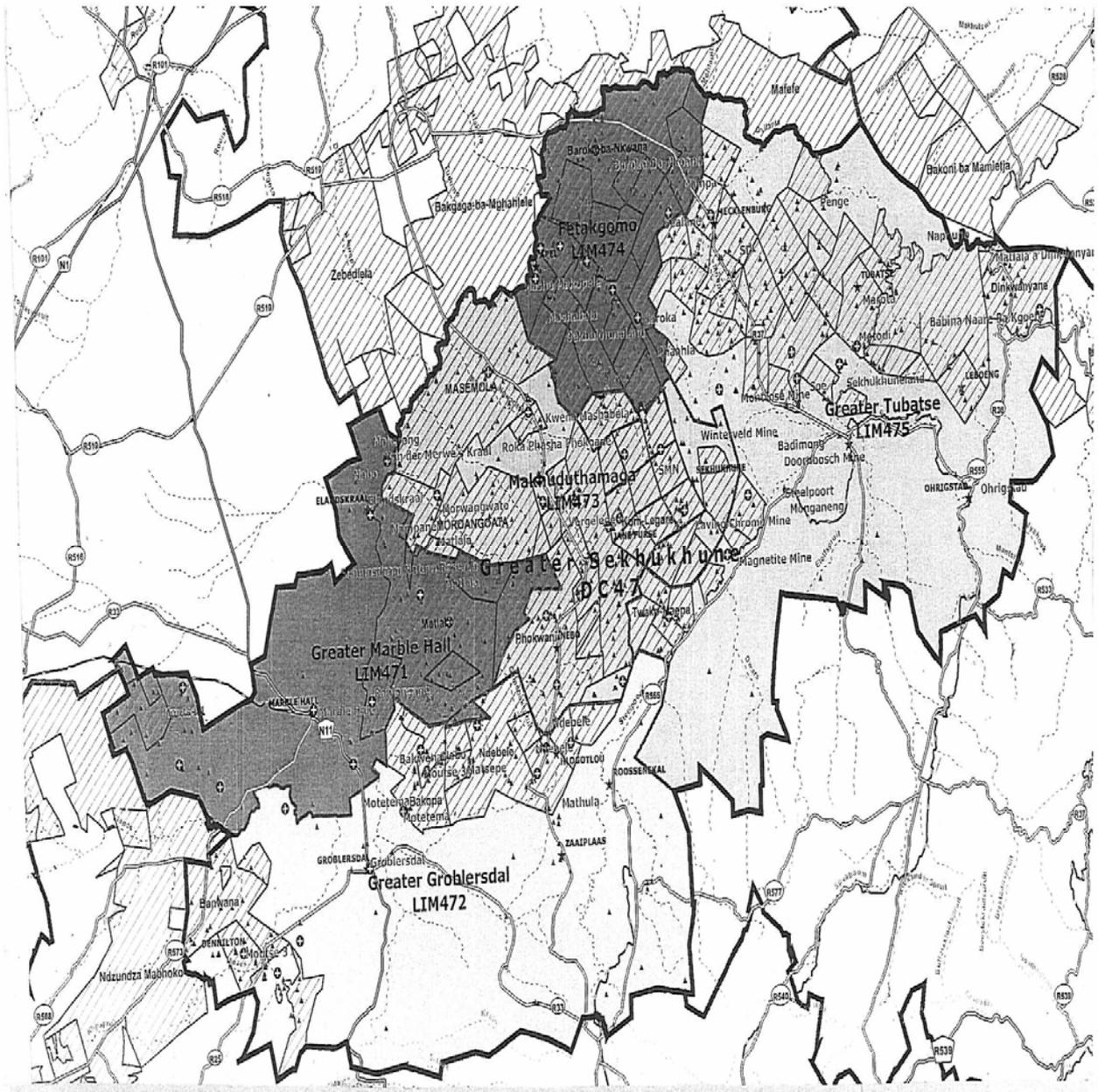


Chart 3: Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality (DC47)

2.10 MANCHE MASEMOLA – A MARTYR’S DEATH

The female members of the congregation told me about the grave of a young girl who was buried in the mountains near Marishane. I have always felt the need to see it for myself, because once a year the prayer ladies of the different churches around Marishane would travel to her grave for prayer and worship. It was only in 2009 that I had the opportunity to do so. When we had finished with the service at Mathapisa I asked my colleague, Rev

Moroaswi, to accompany me to the lonely place in the mountain. He agreed and when we arrived we noticed signposts and a freshly scraped road leading to the spot. When we read the signposts we realized that the grave has become a tourist attraction, because it is looked upon by the Limpopo Government as a monument. The words on the stone read as follows: *MANCHE MASEMOLA – HER LIFE STORY*.

Manche, a young woman of the Pedi tribe, lived her short life in Sekhukhuneland. It is believed that Manche was born around 1913 in Marishane. Father Augustine Moeka of the Anglican Community of Resurrection had established a mission at Marishane. It was with her cousin, Licia that Manche first heard Moeka preach. She wished to learn more and began to attend classes twice a week. Fearful that she might leave them or refuse to marry, her parents sought to discourage her. When she defied them, she was beaten on 4 February 1928. Her mother and father took her to this lonely spot, killed her and secretly buried her here. Shortly afterwards, her sister Mabule also died, apparently from shock, and was buried next to her grave. *MABULE MASEMOLA – MAY 1928*.

Manche's tombstone carries the following inscription, being her last words before she died. Her vow:

I WILL BE BAPTIZED WITH MY OWN BLOOD. (In Northern Sotho: *Manche Masemola yo o kolobitšwego ka madi a gagwe February 4, 1926. O re rapelele.*)

2.11 EVALUATION

Why was it necessary to have given a brief summary of the history of the people of Sekhukhuneland? Firstly any historian would like to know why this part of the world is called Sekhukhuneland, and who the people are that live there. This area is inhabited by mostly Bapedi and by other groups like the Ndebele and some Swazi families. Although the tribe of Chief Sekwati Mampuru was the largest and the Sekhukhune tribe small, the latter built up a considerable empire by the end of the 19th century. The Sekhukhune tribe eventually became the paramount tribe of Sekhukhuneland. They are called Pedi and they are the people of Sekhukhuneland. The position of the Pedi during the time the historical churches started their mission stations, could be described as follows:

The Pedi Empire in Sekhukhuneland under the chieftainship of chief Sekhukhune with Mohlaletse as his base has dwindled through internal strife and secession. However, the

internal *political* situation was temporarily stabilized by the national policy of the homelands (Mönnig 1967:42). The tribe also acts as a social, unifying group, controlling the *social* life and activities of all its members. Such a group under a chieftainship and a tribal name is called *setšhaba* (community). Conflicting claims on chieftainship sometimes caused the breaking away of one of the leaders with his personal followers.

The *economical* life consisted of agriculture and mainly cattle farming. The low and unpredictable rainfall is a factor in determining their well-being. The traditional Pedi *religion* still plays a role in this area. The Pedi's conception of religion is called *borapedi* (devotedness). They strive for a proper relationship with the supernatural. Most of the ritual actions are performed by the community or kin groups as a whole (Mönnig 1967:44).

In this context the churches like the Lutheran, Anglican, Wesleyan, Roman Catholic and the DRC moved in during the 20th century.