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Government of The Basotho Nation,
The Council, the Leader.

Tr. 1b

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The statement of Labajwa, a Mofokeng, is as follows: I am a Mosotho from the country of Moshweshwe, my tribal totem is the dew. My home is in the district, of Mōlapo and I belong to the age-group of Tshotēse. I know the Government of the Basotho without having to remind myself. The Government of the Basotho differs from that of the other nations. The chief commands but he cannot give orders in a manner which contrary to the custom of the tribe. Moreover, a chief cannot make or institute any law without consulting his tribe or his headmen or his sub-chiefs. If the chief wants to attack another tribe, he first informs his people, councillors and his petty chiefs. If they are in agreement with what he says, it is done accordingly. If they refuse, the chief cannot do anything. If the chief says that something must be done which the tribe does not like and which only his councillors wish it to be done, it cannot be done because the tribe is itself the chief. Formerly, when a person broke the chief's law, he was put to death. The chief does not govern alone according to Sesotho law. He is assisted by his councillors, petty chiefs and the Council. The Sesotho government has three heads: 1. Petty chiefs. 2. Headmen. 3. The council. The head however, is the chief. If these councils do not agree with the matter placed before them by the chief, it cannot be dealt with just because the chief alone wants it to be dealt with. The duty of the headmen is to urge the tribe to do good works and to keep the laws of the chief with mutual sympathy. They help the tribe to obey the chief's established law. The duty the councillors is to advise the chief, if he wants certain duties to be performed, they should refuse if it is not in the interest of the tribe. Even if the chief says that a certain chief should be attacked, they should refuse if no good purpose would be served.

First of all a "pico" (public meeting) is attended, but this public meeting is at ended after the headmen have had a consultation with the chief. Tax paying began during the time of Letsie of Moshweshwe. The tax was five goats per annum. When he was nearing his death, the tax became ten shillings (10/-). During the chieftainship of Lerothodi, when he was still ruling jointly with his father Letsie, the tax was raised to a pound (£1). Now when Griffiths (Kerefisi) was chief, the tax was again raised to one pound eight shillings (£1-8/-). His headmen who were then Makgaola and Sekhonyana agreed to this. The chief councillor of Moshweshwe was Makoanyanae. His interpreter was his son whose name was Tshekelo. It was he who was in charge of the operations at Seqiti when the Boers besieged Moshweshwe's stronghold Thab Bosigo. The councillors of Letsie were Bapedi, and the senior councillor was known by the name of Kgwidl. The men who were known to belong to Lerothodi's council were Tladi and Khau. These Bapedi were made councillors because they were people who were only aliens and were made councillors for that reason. The duty of these Bapedi was to cook meat for the chief, but in fact their real duty was to attend the council of the Government. The councillors of Lerothodi were Tlhakanelo, Mochekwane and Raebele. Tlhakanelo and Raebele were members of the council. Mochekwane was Lerothodi's messenger to Maseru. Lerothodi's petty chiefs were Tshepe, Kompf and Rajane. The headman of Letsie II were Sesa, Ramoalahi and Mafona, Sesa and Mafona attend the council. Ramoalahi lived in Maseru, his duty was to guard there. Mafona was Sesa's senior. His headmen were Mofoka of Sebedi, Motlhetlhi of Letsie and Lepolesa. These headmen lived with him and brought news to him. The councillors of Griffiths were Matlabe, Kgajwane and Makgabane. His headmen were Taelle, Toka and Mphathe. Matlabe and Kgajwane were members of the council. Mphathe was the secretary. Taelle was the one who sat next to the chief. All of them, as headmen and councillors,

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ware members of the council. If a man was found to be guilty of an offence, he was brought before the chief, When he was fined, he was made to pay five head of cattle. Two went to the chief, the headmen were paid by the month. If a headman contravened the law, he was sentenced to a year and six months imprisonment. If a councillor contravened the law, he was fined three head of cattle. If the chief did not act in accordance with the law, he was adjudged by the headmen and councillors, and fined ten head of cattle. If a man attends the council regularly and acquires the knowledge of discussing matters that come before the council, he is appointed the chief's councillor. If a person or a different tribe comes to Basutoland to ask for a place to live, he is given by the chief in consultation with the council. They are not asked to pay anything because they will serve the chief. This tribe has the right of inter-marriage with the owners of the land. Their chief is appointed as a headman and councillors are also appointed. The Basotho know how to make provision for the people of foreign tribes if they come to live under their vernalment. The headmen have the powers to fine a person who admits his guilt, if he does not admit his guilt, he taken to the chief to be tried there. Lands of the chief are ploughed and reaped by his people for him. They thresh corn or mealies for him, they gather firewood and weed the lands for him and they smear the walls and floors of his houses for him. None of the headmen or councillors or those who use force may choose food for themselves. If the people go out on a hunting expedition, the chief is given meat by his people. If a stranger comes to the headman's village, the headman takes him to the chief because he is the only one who is the ruler. Then the council gives him permission to make his abode if he desires to do so. If he is just a visitor, he stays at the "kgotla" and serves the chief. He is however provided with food and is well looked after.

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