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Moruti wa Sekuta (The evangelist on a scooter)

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MORUTI WA SEKUTA (The Evangelist on a Scooter)



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A dissertation submitted to the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Johannesburg, 2020

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**Cover drawing of Moruti wa Sekuta by Nkosinathi Quwe*

1. Abstract

Lesley Mofokeng journeys into his past to retrace the steps of a towering and idiosyncratic figure in his lineage, Mongangane Wilfred Mofokeng. Mongangane gained popularity as Moruti wa Sekuta (the evangelist on a scooter) in and around the community of Gelukspan near present day Lichtenburg, North West. This is an immersive literary investigation for the writer as the N.G. Kerk evangelist is his paternal grandfather.

With his ingenuity, Mongangane helped create a community of believers in the area of resettlements, Trust and traditional villages through a singular salt of the earth selflessness and organic immersion in his community's social and spiritual circumstances. He rolled up his sleeves and took on the shovel to build several churches, a hospital and schools.

In this journey of self-discovery, the grandson and journalist investigates and tells the story of his family and how Mongangane changed the trajectory of his life and consequently that of the family and descendants from when, in 1932, he walked through the gates of Moroka Missionary Institution in Thaba Nchu, Free State.

What follows is a series of fortunes and misfortunes as an unskilled Black labourer navigating the tedious and politically charged climate of the Reef, leading to the dawn of apartheid and beyond as an evangelist of the 'apartheid church' with a curious past, a precarious balancing act.

This biographical approach that will employ narrative journalism style, is achieved through interviews with family, community members, church members, leaders in the religious sector, internet searches, public records, published articles as well as site visits.

2. Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts by research in the field of Journalism and Media Studies, in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university. The copyright thereof resides with the University of the Witwatersrand.

.....

Lesley Mofokeng

.....

Date

3. Acknowledgements

Thank you to Bafokeng, my family, especially my children Mahali and Chapatso Mofokeng. Thank you to my extended families and friends who cheer me on and encourage me along.

Thank you to my supervisor Kevin Davie, Prof Lesley Cowling and the MA class of 2019/20, especially Lebogang Seale and Vaylen Kirtley.

Thank you to all who contributed to the completion of this project, those who opened their homes and welcomed me and those who pointed me in the right direction. Thank you for all the support and prayers.

This is a gift to my ancestors, the Almighty and future generations. In the words of Barack Obama, we are just a part of this long chain, and we do our best with the little link of that chain that is allotted to us.

4. About the title

Moruti wa sekuta (The evangelist on a scooter)

In the 1960s, earlier on in his evangelical career, Mongangane Wilfred Mofokeng became a dominant feature on the sleepy, dusty and uninspiring flat landscape of Gelukspan and the surrounding villages. As a young intrepid N.G. Kerk in Afrika missionary sent to spread the gospel in the Lichtenburg district, the church presented him with a scooter than soon gained a legendary status. Roaring, if not buzzing, it brought much excitement to villagers as he zoomed past to the next village, kicking up dust and revving all sorts of delightful squeals in the little ones transfixed on his image as he disappeared into the distance. Almost like a messenger bringing much anticipated news to the village folk, he soon gained popularity as ‘mmoledi wa sekuta’ which literally translates to the evangelist on a scooter. For the purposes of this project, I will use the title ‘moruti’ which means a minister because it is more accessible and understandable than the more accurate ‘mmoledi’. These wheels on a light engine served as a vehicle in his mission to evangelise and complete his assignment in these areas. This topic encapsulates the story of Mongangane, that of movement, duty and service.

5. Meet the Man

History is in interplay with the present – Mbuso Khoza



Evangelist Mongangane Wilfred Mofokeng 1914 – 2009 in a portrait taken in the mid 1950s in Gelukspan at the opening of a school.

See Mongangane recite his Bafokeng ba ha Tshehlo clan praise poem here:
https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=vmz4Ml1ihzc

6. Introduction

For the purpose of the degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies by research presented as a Long-form non-fiction narrative journalism, my project *Moruti wa Sekuta (The Evangelist on a Scooter)* is narrated in five chapters that will provide a view of the life and journey of my late grandfather, Mongangane Wilfred Mofokeng.

It is an incomplete account that I intend to pursue in its entirety as a fully fledged biography/memoir post my studies. It oscillates in the realms of biography, history, health, politics, missiology and theology. It seeks to shed more light on my subject and the impact of his presence and evangelism in the communities he worked in.

This project is of critical importance due to the lack of documented records from the church, the hospital and the schools Mongangane worked in. Save for a few photographs that survived the passage of time and now stand as evidence, his story has largely been told orally. The new minister at Gelukspan church, Rev Moepeng said he inherited no records after the upheavals that beset the church against the minister after Mongangane's retirement and nothing was handed over to him. The hospital also has no records dating back to his time, the same goes for the schools.

I start to retrace his steps and reconstruct his story by revisiting what's left of what Mongangane built some 60 years earlier. The narration includes flashbacks of life back then and how things are currently in a state of neglect and disrepair.

The narration shifts to 1930s Germiston and Johannesburg, the politics of the time and Black life under oppression when the main character follows the migration trail to the city of gold which would be home for the Mofokengs for about a decade. I delve into life in a new township called Orlando in Soweto. Mongangane's own politicisation and awakening also comes under attention. Sport would be an ally both in the struggle against oppression and also in maintaining sanity for Black men (and women) on the Reef.

At the half way mark of his life, Mongangane aged about 40, turns to the church and swaps his unskilled labourer overalls for the collar as he becomes an evangelist. Here I unpack the N.G. Kerk and its controversial history and contribution towards the promotion of apartheid. My protagonist comes under sharp focus for becoming an agent of an institution that aimed to oppress his own freedom.

I settle on a cattle outpost called Gelukspan. It's 1952, the grand project of apartheid begins to sink its teeth as Black people are being evicted from the cities and townships to live in the reserves. We see a new dynamic as villages called reserves and resettlements also known as Trusts spring up. This is where the ingenuity of Mongangane comes into play as he sets out to build a community and contribute towards their spiritual, physical and educational well being.

In the following chapter I focus on Mahadi, Mongangane's wife who was an influential player in his story. She ran the Mofokeng household meticulously and supported Mongangane in remarkable ways worth documenting.

The final chapter drills down into the politics and history of the N.G. Kerk and its Black constituency. I journey to the mission station of Beersheba which marked a turning point in the journey of a church that was brought to South Africa by French missionaries led by Eugene Casalis and Samuel Rolland. In the end, my attempt traces how the Dutch church became to be known as Kereke ya Fora (church of the French).

In this project we observe Mongangane as a man of his time. We see him dance to the rhythm of the most pivotal periods of his life that are punctuated by laws, statutes and events of significant national importance. This story celebrates his spirit, what he stood for and how he charted a new path for himself and his family given the circumstances and challenges he found himself in. People who knew him, and worked for him or under him paint a picture of that time and the lived experiences.

This is a South African story of an unsung hero, a man forgotten by history, whose legacy could easily have been swept under the carpet of our collective memory.

This approach employed narrative journalism style, through interviews with family, community members, church members, religious leaders, internet searches, public records and published articles. The family album has also been an invaluable resource.

Mongangane would have been 106 years old in September 2020. Many of the people I interviewed were in their 70s and 80s and it was not easy for them to reach deep into the wells of their memories. Some of the facts had to be double and triple checked, in the end I had to reach a point of agreement or even state contradictory facts, but that's part of telling a 95 year long life of a servant of the people. What remains clear is that it's on Mongangane's back that Gelukspan stands to this day.

7. Return to innocence



Figure 1: Author Lesley Mofokeng stands in the church his grandfather built in 1958. Photo: Family Album

22 December 2019 – Today I walked into a church my grandfather built in 1958. It was surreal... I was overwhelmed with emotion and memories, stepping back into time. It was like 1982 all over again at my grandparents' mission house. Sunday morning... breakfast on the table, then a hurried walk to Sunday school.

An imposing structure with the trademark N.G. Kerk steeple mounted by a cock that looked like it reached up past the clouds to the blue sky, at least in my eyes as a child. The wooden benches, wooden floor and the chandelier hanging elegantly gave it a dignified touch. The large champagne stained glass windows added an ethereal feel to it. This church was a majestic landmark, jutting out of the uninspiring *platteland* of Gelukspan in the Lichtenburg district in North West. I believed that it was indeed the house of God.

The last time I walked in here was in December 1984 for my grandparents' farewell ceremony. A memory etched in my mind is that of my weeping grandmother, too emotional to contain the sadness of leaving a congregation she worked in for 32 years and what had become home not only to her, but generations of her descendants. They sat in front of the

congregation one last time by the pulpit as the flock paid their respects and gave them modest farewell gifts. The whole affair seemed rushed. It did not fit the stature of my grandparents. I expected bigger crowds and even bigger dignitaries that worked with them for over three decades. Alas, here they were, getting ready for the uncertainty of retirement and the thought seemed too much for my grandmother to bear. I wanted to reach out to her, to comfort her, but with church rules and protocol, I had to sit still in the Sunday School section and look at her helplessly.

On this day, 35 years later and a few nights to Christmas, the church is empty as we wait outside and wander around the premises. My two children Mahali and Chapatso joined me on this momentous trip retracing our family roots. We are accompanied by my cousin Mpho, whom everyone calls Prof, and his wife Nqobile and their three girls in tow. We keep peeping through windows - the stained glass has made way for regular see-through glass, and the wooden benches and wooden flooring are gone.



Figure 2: The great-grandchildren of Mongangane Mofokeng visit their forebear's church. Photo: Author

A friendly lady who identifies herself as Mrs Koko who keeps the church keys, emerges from inside to fling open the doors and welcome us. Her face lights up in an instant, as she immediately recognises us as the grandchildren of Mofokeng. She opens up her arms as she hugs us and wastes no time to tell us how great our grandfather was and about his contribution in making the lives of the people in Gelukspan better. But I point out to her that his name does not even appear on the church stone, she agrees that his name should be there

along with the white minister TI Ferreira's, as acknowledgement of his work in the church, the hospital, schools and community of Gelukspan.

We walk into the church and nostalgia slaps me across the face. The mellifluous voices of the choir of youngsters living with disabilities from Tlamelang Special School that treated us to melodic renditions of the church hymns such as *Ke Na Le Modisa* (I Have A Shepherd), *Bophelo ke Wena Fela* (You, Alone, Give Us Life), *Jesu Motswalle Ya Nkileng* (What A Friend We Have In Jesus) and *Ha Le Mpotsa Tshepo Ya Ka* (If You Ask Me Where My Hope Comes From), and popular choruses have been silenced. They were something of legends in the school music competitions under the baton of Mistress Dorothy Morapedi, picking up all the silverware and leaving their competitors devastated.

Today, all I can hear is the echo of our voices that reverberate throughout the crumbling structure as we peer and peek through the corners and every nook and cranny of the over 60 year old building.

Mrs Koko calls us from the *konsistorie* (the backroom of the church reserved for the minister and the church council). She shows us the exact utensils our grandfather used for *selallo*/holy communion, the wooden tot dispenser, the tithing bowl and the baptismal stand. They are still in use and hold a sentimental place in the hearts of those who witnessed the great work of Mongangane.



Figure 3: Mrs Koko shows the utensils used by Mongangane Mofokeng in the years he was the evangelist of the Gelukspan church. Photo: Author

Memories flood my head as I remember how I stood in the same *konsistorie* as a curious six year old and watched my grandfather count the stock for holy communion. I would beg him to share the communion wine with me, 'just a taste' I would implore him. Ever the disciplinarian, he would flatly refuse and reprimand me '*he-e, o ngwana, ha se dintho tsa hao tse*' (no, you're a child, this is not for you) and instead offer me two cubes of the communion

bread to shush me away. Such were the privileges of being brought up by a preacher man. He would then lock away the communion wine before we leave for home. I promised myself that one day I would device a solid plan to steal the key and help myself to copious amounts of this red drink that seems to be loved by the older members of the congregation, the scheme never came to pass.

Today the wooden flooring has been replaced by tiles and the wooden benches have made way for black plastic chairs. The ceiling is peeling and cracking... like it's about to give in, but by faith it's holding on for dear life. The pulpit has remarkably remained intact. The iconic Modimo o Lerato (God is Love) church *lesela* (cloth) still hangs there. Originally red, it has seen better days and had one too many washes as it has become more orange than blood of lamb red and the gold tassels have all but withered away, not a single strand in sight.

We gather around in the well on the church, near the pulpit and Mrs Koko makes a prayer thanking God for bringing us together and wishing us well as we depart, this after Nqobile led the small congregation in the rendition of the popular hymn *Re Ya Ho Boka Morena* (We Praise You Lord).

We then file out of the church, and it is fulfilling, like we just witnessed a powerful sermon as we felt the presence of our grandfather's spirit. We head towards the hospital complex to walk through the corridors – past the OPD (Out Patient Department), medical wards, TB wards, administration block and out on the cobbled walkway to the now deserted nurses' home. The once noisy handicrafts workshop with machines whirring and burring away has gone silent like a haunted old house. The hall which could sit over 500 people and looking massive in my young eyes is now in a state of disrepair, no sign of the previous life it used to have. Today, the cobwebs and spiders that have found a cosy home here would laugh in my face if I told them about a few beauty pageants that were held on that stage, concerts, music and dance competitions that lit up the place and whipped revellers into a frenzy.

Perhaps the most enduring memory of the hall is of the Good Friday services that were held there and the night vigils over the holy weekend. The hall would be filled to capacity in a Mecca-like, okay make that Moria-like, gathering of the faithful from all the villages around Gelukspan, ferried by trucks, lorries, tractors and even horse/donkey drawn carts.

The services had become so popular that families and relatives would travel from as far afield as Johannesburg and Pretoria to take part. On Friday, a beast, usually a cow and a few sheep would be slaughtered. Pots of *ting* (sour sorghum porridge), pap and samp would be on the braziers as excitement mounted.

The Saturday service would be heralded by pomp and ceremony as a long procession of church elders and deacons draped in their *manele* (coats with tails) would file into the hall and fill up the stage, much like a university graduation ceremony. The last to walk in would be my grandfather and the resident minister. After the opening sermon, my grandmother and Majuffrou would take over the programme with the clothing ceremony.

My grandmother and *Majuffrou* Ferreira, wife of the Afrikaner minister who served with my grandparents in the 50s and 60s, would clothe the new members of the church from the ministries of MBB (Mokgatlo wa Bacha ba BaKreste) for the young and CVV (Christelike Vroue Vereeniging) for the older women. No less than 50 new members would receive the new uniform every Good Friday weekend.

The clothing ceremony would be followed by a highly charged revival that would be hosted overnight where the members would take turns to preach and share the Word.

On Sunday morning, the hall would be filled once more as the holy communion is shared and the holy weekend comes to a close and the congregants embark on their long journeys back home. With the gathering of so many people under one roof, tragedy was bound to strike and I remember once when a tractor drove over a baby crushing it to death. The mother had put its infant sleeping peacefully under the tree in the grass when the driver of a tractor coming to fetch the members stumbled upon a funny object in the grass, in his mind, probably thinking it was a rock and horror of horrors, it turns out to be a small baby that had been brought to be baptised. The mother was hospitalised for a few days from the shock and trauma, I sometimes wonder if that family ever recovered from that ordeal.

Looking at this hall and its dilapidated state, you would agree with the resident spiders that I'm telling a fable.



Figure 4: The neglected hall is falling apart. Photo: Author

We carry on our walk to the house where my grandparents lived – a big structure by anyone's standards. Not much in the way of imagination and architecture, it looks like a loaf of white bread. This is where I grew up. And a lot has changed.

The big peach tree in the front of the house has been uprooted, the hive of activity that this house was has been silenced. There were lots of ins and outs as people queued to buy the

buns my grandmother made. There was always a cock wreaking havoc among the chickens or the delightful screams and squeals of playful children running around.

My grandfather had a study where he used to prepare for his sermons. It also doubled up as a library that housed his collection of Christian books that he used as reference and that he consulted to deepen his understanding of the scriptures.

We find the house locked. The current minister is on leave and there is no access for us. We don't allow this to make us feel despondent. So many memories were made outside this house as they were inside. For example, how we used to eat unripe peaches in the small backyard tree and they would induce diarrhoea, or pitted the cocks against each other for that brutal blood sport of cockfighting, shameful.

In the absence of chickens and no life here, we help ourselves to a few unripe peaches – just for old time's sake. As we drive out of the hospital complex we notice that the orchard that lined the fence has disappeared, here we got endless supplies of peaches, apricots, pears, naartjies and pomegranate - all gone. We wave at the friendly security that checks every car leaving and entering the place with heavy feelings of nostalgia and a time we will never return to.



Figure 5: Once a hive of activity, the Mofokeng house looks forlorn and has lost its charm. Photo: Author

8. Jim comes to Germiston

8.1. Marabi in Magogogong



Figure 6: A dandy Mongangane Mofokeng, left, strikes a pose in a Johannesburg studio with a friend known only as Motsamai. This is the oldest picture of Mongangane taken in his 20s, around mid 1930s. Photo: Family Album

Even in the state of dereliction, Germiston Station on Railway Street stands out for the enduring landmark and transportation hub it has been for decades. The building is majestic and still carries the old world architectural charm of a crown palace. It is painted in decadent red violet and cream and the colonial designs of the 1800s remind passersby of a time long gone.

Interestingly, the hands of time have stood still on the four clocks perched around the sides of the dome on top of the building. I can imagine how at the height of its operation Germiston Station rivalled the likes of Grand Central in New York and King's Cross in London. Little surprise that it has been known as the largest railway junction in South Africa with rail repair shops populating its vicinity.

It bustles on a Friday afternoon as music booms from stalls selling everything from Zulu *imbadada* (traditional shoes made out of tyres) to *mohodu* (tripe). The synthesiser-heavy

Tsonga disco music and the call-and-response praise poetry laced Sesotho *mohobelo* take turns to fuel the energy as I make my way through the maze-like design of the station precinct. In the time of Covid-19 pandemic, forget social distancing here as hordes and hordes pour out of the corridors and corners of the station rushing to the nearby taxi rank since the trains have stopped operating due to rampant vandalism and theft of infrastructure.

Or perhaps they have hastened their steps to get to Cheeky Tiger bar at the corner, for one last one-for-the-road. Intriguingly, the logo of the establishment bears a tiger baring its teeth and two strippers on poles. I didn't go in to check the action behind the darkened windows. Be that as it may, everybody walks as fast as if it's a race of their lives.

As I try to go to the office section of the station, a polite lady asks me to not bother because with the train service suspended indefinitely, the place is a ghost town and security personnel will not allow me to wander about.

I follow groups of men ascending a steep flight of steps, heaven knows where they are going, but we will see. At the end of the steps I find myself at a vantage point seeing the extent of this station. I count over a dozen rails converging and diverging on multiple platforms below. Trains from all directions carrying passengers and goods made a stop here.

The remnants are there to show that in the 1930s this was a destination of choice as many young Black men trekked from their towns, villages and farms hoping to strike it rich in the industrial boom of Germiston.

The irony is overwhelming, that this station, so central to building Johannesburg and the surrounding metros, wallows in disrepair. The effects can be felt in the economy and productivity of a city. It's heartbreaking that this station serviced the needs of the White bosses as it provided a port for labour supply, yet the same infrastructure fails to serve the poor Black labourers who cannot travel sustainably without the rail service. It's a Black government that oversaw the decrepitude of what was a symbol of Black oppression and later became a symbol of the saving grace of Black labour in need of affordable transportation ferrying them from their distant locations to the industrial zones. Poor people are undone here and there is no outrage.

I find myself at Germiston Station because this is a pivotal bookmark in the story of my grandfather Mongangane Mofokeng. He arrived here in 1936 from Thaba Nchu having completed his standard six, the highest class at the Moroka Missionary Institution, making him the most educated man in his family. The gamble by his father, Takatso, had paid off. Takatso anointed Mongangane as the one who would break the chain of servitude that had shackled the Mofokeng family in the eastern Orange Free State working in Madraereng near Senekal. These farms owned by the Dreyer family and the Basotho corrupted the surname to Draere, hence Madraereng, which meant the place of the Dreyers'.

So what would Mongangane do with all this education? He didn't stay long at Madraereng. His elder cousin, Ephraim, was living it up Marabi-style in the rapidly industrialising Germiston and had promised to show the young educated Mongangane a good time in the

bright city lights. Mongangange bade his family farewell, hopped on a train and was welcomed by Ephraim at the Germiston Station.

The culture of Marabi fuelled by the music was in full swing with the raucous lilting melodies and catchy rhythms of the music hanging in the air. It was improvisational and original.

In the cities and towns, habits and opportunities changed. Women brewed and sold liquor, there were shebeen parties that became the culture in the slum yards, and that often resulted in broken family relationships and casual sex. So pervasive was Marabi that the Bantu World newspaper in April 1932 noted that the 'new' music had turned many parts of the Reef into a perfect pandemonium.

Plucked out of sleepy Thaba Nchu, Germiston pulsated to a different rhythm. It was overwhelming for him to see the crowds competing for space and Ephraim provided a steady hand in the maelstrom of a city booming with unprecedented industrialisation. From all directions, KwaZulu in the east, Sekhukhuneland in the north, Basotholand in the south and Xhosaland in the deep south the train churned them out on the platforms as they pursued a dream for a better life.

The words of Stimela, the song by jazz giant Hugh Masekela that he recorded in 1974, come to mind. It was a battle cry against the unjust migrant labour system and he framed it using the coal train that drifted many young Black men into South African towns for the prospect of earning wages by selling their labour: From Lesotho, from Botswana, from Swaziland/From all the hinterlands of Southern and Central Africa/This train carries young and old African men/Who are conscripted to come and work on contract/In the gold and mineral mines of Johannesburg/And its surrounding metropolis/ sixteen hours or more a day/For almost no pay.

The song delivered a poignant reminder of the living conditions of these African miners, and labourers. Masekela rhymed that they sat in their stinking, funky, filthy, flea-ridden barracks and hostels. He could have also meant the shanty slums like Magogogong where Mongangane lived. The train, while it took them closer to the big city was also an object of disdain. They left their families in the farms, villages and reserves where they may be forcibly removed or wantonly murdered in the dead of night by roving, marauding gangs of no particular origin.

Masekela sang that these men in the city cursed the coal train that brought them to Johannesburg.

Magogogong which literally meant a place of shacks, was Mongangane's base as he found his bearings in the city. It fell under the town of Alberton but was close enough to Germiston, it took a single train ride of a few minutes. It was located near the now defunct Newmarket Racecourse before it was demolished by the authorities.

It was a typical 1930s slum - overcrowded, noisy, smelly, violent and bustling. Houses made out of bricks and shacks created a patchwork pattern of the settlement.

The time of Marabi and Black community's migration to cities is romanticised. Truth be told, times were difficult for Black people. Life was hard and perilous. The unhospitable conditions in the barracks, hostels and slums as Masekela painted vividly in Stimela, saw them packed on top of each other.

The scramble for resources became a daily adventure that bred criminality. Dead cats in the streets, sometimes human bodies, were a regular occurrence. The conditions were toxic. But with the money economy driving young Black men from their homes in villages and small towns across South Africa to the Reef, places like Magogogong were never in short supply of starry-eyed 'Jims come to Joburg' dipped in the pond of naivety. These men were the happy hunting ground of the *clevas* (tsotsis), pick-pockets and charlatans.

Mongangane had a softer landing pad with the support structure from his older brothers Ephraim and Naha who joined them later. In African tradition, first cousins are regarded as brothers and sisters if their fathers are siblings, as was the case with the trio.

The story goes that when the two brothers, Mongangane and Naha went to register at the home affairs in Alberton they opted to dump their surname of Chapatso and chose Mofokeng which was their clan name. But Mongangane later in life told a different version. He explained that the original family surname was Mofokeng and that Chapatso was one of their ancestors, and so they were correcting the family lineage.

Ephraim stayed a Chapatso and went on to become a legend of Thokoza township when Magogogong was demolished and the people moved to the new location. In fact, there is a Chapatso street in Thokoza named after him. Although he didn't train to become an evangelist, he was well known at Natalspruit Hospital for his prayer sessions. He went ward to ward praying for the sickly. Those who heard him say he was poetic and rousing. It must have been his influence that planted the seeds of going into the ministry in Mongangane. Interestingly, Naha went on to become atheist and often protested against Christian rites and prayer at family gatherings.

It would not take Mongangane long before he secured a job at a bakery on the populated President Street. Here, he learned how to make bread and did kitchen duty. With the money, he could support his mother back home at Madraereng. His father having recently passed away, the responsibility of ensuring that the family was looked after fell on his shoulders as the eldest son.

Living in the epicentre of the Germiston mining and industry boom, Mongangane quickly learned to be wise, to outsmart the tsotsis from Benoni who usually tricked the Jims come to Joburg (or Germiston) from rural Orange Free State, Natal, Northern and Southern Transvaal.

He had to shake off the image of a Thaba Nchu *bari* (country bumpkin) and walk the talk of the pavements of Germiston. And so a wardrobe change was called for. He stepped out in a three piece suit topped with a hat and voila, he could walk down President Street without

sticking out like a countryman. When the hat was not there, he parted his short hair in the middle as the cool style of the time dictated.

Thrust in the middle of a booming city with different cultures converging to create a melting pot, it must have been here that he developed his lifelong love for fish and chips. It had become a city staple brought over by the British entrepreneurs and it became what distinguished gentlemen had.

I suspect it was during this initiation time that he also confronted the camera and developed his skills in front of it. As a rule, Mongangane said to never look directly at the camera, well except for the image at the top of this chapter. He insisted on looking away by fixing his eyes on an object nearby or far away. He considered it crass to smile and make eye contact with the camera.

He did a lot of adjusting as his landscape took a different picture. Coming from an agrarian economy where open tracts of land were cultivated for mealies, sunflower and sorghum the smoke filled skies of Germiston was a surprise realisation. Here, if it wasn't the choo-choo train that brought him to the city, then it was the steel factories that seemed to spew smoke all day and night as they melted metal. The sound of machinery and tools in operation had replaced the serenity of crops growing and the pristine air of the Orange Free State.

He was soon to learn his place with the Black Jacks, the police who monitored the carrying of the dreaded dompas (an identity document Black men had to carry with them at all times). He may have learnt his way around the city, but he could not outsmart or outrun the damned police that stopped Black men at a whim. As historian Jacob Dlamini posited, the South African police put together civil, judicial, military and political administration under one umbrella and this explained why the colonial an apartheid police acquired a reputation for brutality as they protected White power.

A turning point for an educated young man from Thaba Nchu who could read newspapers, the Bible and eat fish and chips was when he got arrested for the first time. By his account, it was a scary experience that left him shaken. While rushing to work from Magogogong one morning, he got stopped and realised that he forgot the green document and that meant time in the police holding cells.

It made him think twice about moving to the city and face this kind of brutality and restrictive movement. It was his determination and willpower that kept him sane for the time he spent behind bars. He remembered how coming to Germiston meant better opportunities for him and that going back to Madraereng was not an option. He realised that the White man dominated and owned the streets, and he was unforgiving. His was to stay out of his way and carry the dompas.

He left the cells a different man. The naivety was shattered and in its place was the grim reality of how severe segregation really was. So he marched on. While he made every effort to remember to carry the dompas, there were times it would disappear or he would forget it and inevitably a Black Jack would tap him on his shoulder and that led to a night in the dark.

He had toughened up and simply followed the drill. It also helped that the employers knew the harsh reality their Black staff experienced and so he never lost his job at the bakery whenever he didn't pitch.

By the 1930s, the locations of the East Rand (now Ekurhuleni) had become ethnically mixed and housed a growing population of African women. The hybridity, self-assertion, self-confidence and self-construction stamped itself indelibly on the cultures of these freewheeling locations. (Bonner, Nieftagodien and Mathabatha 2012)

Add to this heady mix, a booming economy in the form of gold mining and you have a rush of opportunity seekers from all over the country. The historians put the number of Africans in the East Rand at about 5 000 in 1890 and 12 years later, in 1912, it stood at 69 127. Germiston was founded in 1886 and became a self-governing municipality in 1903 and immediately took steps to control the haphazard mushrooming of African settlements around the mining areas.

To accommodate the influx, a negligible number of municipal houses for Blacks were built. The typical pattern across the East Rand towns was to trim costs by providing serviced plots or stands, upon which stand holders could erect wood and iron structures, sometimes aided by loans or low cost building materials furnished by municipal authorities. This mostly self-built environment opened up a number of spaces and opportunities which allowed its residents to escape some of the structures of urban control and which served to soften the harsh regimen of black urban life (Bonner, Nieftagodien and Mathabatha, 2012).

These new Black work-seekers who thronged Germiston found accommodation as sub-tenants on the stands rented from the municipality by existing tenants in places like Magogogong. It wasn't until 1950 when the sub-tenants moved to the newly built township of Natalspruit (now Katlehong) following the relentless campaign agitation of trade unionist Raphael Phalime of the South African Clothing Workers Union and his friend Johannes Madieleng. (Bonner, Nieftagodien and Mathabatha, 2012)

In the 1930s, the impact of the Great Depression in the US reverberated around the world and declining economic effects pinched South Africa. It hit agriculture hardest and the country abandoned the Gold Standard and delinked its currency from a fixed quantity of gold, sending the price of the metal to double. (Minaar, 1990)

The boom gave rise to the secondary industrial development that exploded from 1935 and the biggest beneficiaries were Germiston and Benoni that saw factories mushrooming. After World War II more factories went up in Germiston such as South African General Electric; Oxygen and Thermal Welding Products; and Robert Hudson and Sons. (Bonner, Nieftagodien and Mathabatha, 2012)

Elsewhere in the East Rand airports were going up. First was Rand Airport in Germiston, then Plamietfontein in the south of the town and then Jan Smuts in Kempton Park. As a result of these multiple transformations, Ekurhuleni's growth rate between 1921 and 1960 exceeded

that of Johannesburg. By the end of the 1940s, Ekurhuleni employed one-third of the industrial employees of the Witwatersrand. (Bonner, Nieftagodien and Mathabatha, 2012)

Mongangane joined the employment queue at Rand Airport and secured a job as a security personnel, which paid a little more than the bakery on President Street. At one point this was the busiest airport in Africa and the southern hemisphere.

The arrests continued unabated, not even a security guard was exempted from carrying a dompas. But the skin had hardened and the lashes from the baton expected, along with the pushing and shoving. Still, something was not sitting right. How can a human being be treated in this way? This was no different to the sheep at Madraereng. Not to mention the state of housing for Africans, smelly waters breeding mosquitoes, dead cats, smoke bellowing from the hundreds of small shacks huddled together could never bring any wellness. It was a helpless and desolate place to be in.

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8.2. Coming of age

Evangelist Jerry Mofokeng is the first son of Mongangane. He is now an octogenarian with the proverbial spring in his step even though his gait has slowed down. He is of a slight build and wears a shy smile. His soft spoken and gentle nature belies his spirited pulpit persona. He transforms into a roaring preacher as his voice goes up a few decibels and he gets animated.

I met him at his house in Thokoza and our conversation was an eye opener on the dynamics of the Mofokeng family. As the eldest son, he has always been independent of the family. He grew up in Libertas, at his mother, Mahadi's family house, the Chaanes. From there he lived in Kroonstad with his aunt, Masabata, before going to school in Makapanstad, in present day North West. He worked in Welkom as a painter and went to the seminary his father attended, except it was in Qwaqwa after it was moved from Viljoensdrif in northern Orange Free State. He went to start his evangelist career in Thokoza and then moved to Katlehong where he retired after over three decades. He never really lived at home with his siblings and parents, seeing them during holidays only.

I asked him to take me back to Libertas, a place named after the ancient Roman personification of liberty. (Dictinonary.com) It hardly represented liberty for the Black farm workers there. It's little wonder that the Basotho even corrupted it to the meaningless Lebertasi.

A recent trip yielded no real clues, except for a tree or two and ruins that were believed to have been a stable for horses. There are no houses to tell stories, only foundations leave a trace of what was once there. But Jerry walked these streets, so to speak.

He remembered the busy train station near the village and Libertas Primary School where his mother went as well as himself.

In between schooling, Mahadi and her sisters worked in the farm along with their mother, Nkileng Rose Dlamini, doing kitchen duty, cleaning and ironing. It was one of the conditions that the daughters work in the *huis* (White boss's house) in shifts.

Jerry's grandfather *ou* (old man) Mmuso Chaane worked for the White farm owner Flip Heyns looking after animals and cultivating the fields. Jerry and the other youngsters in the village including his younger brother Bennet who joined him later, and their cousin Tshokolo (their mothers were sisters) also worked in the fields in winter when extra pairs of hands were needed to harvest mealies.

The Chaane household was a compound of clay houses and huts decorated in *ditema*, the traditional Sotho mural designs. Some were roofed by iron sheets and the others had thatch roof, especially *mekgoro* (kitchens). The family lived on a healthy diet of vegetables, chickens and eggs. *Ou* Chaane owned his livestock including cows and sheep. He was a wealthy man with a stable full of horses. If ever you doubted a man's wealth, you had to look at the frame of his cart. His was made out of steel and decorated with wood. It dazzled from a routine new lick of paint – just the affirmation you needed that he was well off.

The horses were well fed, glistened in daylight from all the care Mahadi and her elder sister Mamokgasi and younger sister Makanono showered them with. The youngest, Masabata was still too small to be running after horses and the younger boys too busy – Moifadi had expressed his interest to be in the army while Thabiso was seldom home.

Jerry remembered how *ou* Chaane always slaughtered a cow in winter so that he could keep the family and grandchildren well fed.

This ancestral place is not too far from the towns of Paul Roux and Senekal. Mongangane had also become a friend of the family. As the most educated young man in the area, he regularly visited the Chaanes to read the Bible to *ou* Chaane. He was illiterate, yet possessed a Bible, and was a preacher of the Apostolic Faith Mission Church. Although his eldest daughters could read, he preferred Mongangane.

When he became his own man at 25 and with all the money he could scrape from the bakery and the airport, Mongangane could finally afford mahadi/lobola for the beautiful and feisty Mahadi he'd been eyeing all the time when he read the Bible to *ou* Chaane.

Back in Johannesburg, a new steel factory had set up shop in the Johannesburg city centre on Jeppe Street and manual labour was in demand. After years in the shelter of his brothers Ephraim and Naha and the unwelcome intrusion by the police, Mongangane was confident to strike it out on his own. He rushed to Jeppe Street where he was signed up as a casual labourer at the steel factory. His young cousins were quite tickled when he visited home and they learnt that he worked on Jeppe Street. They sniggered and nicknamed him 'Jepita' and that became a moniker that stuck for a while. The factory moved to Sauer Street, but that didn't translate into a new pet name.

Having moved from Magogogong, Mongangane set up camp in George Goch where he soaked himself in the culture of the place. It was named after the mayor of Johannesburg

from 1904 to 1905. The weekend tradition of soccer matches became his favourite pastime. Not that he was any good as a soccer player, but he could dribble his way past most opponents. The weekdays were tough and heavy on the body and the soul, but the weekends on the soccer pitch replenished what was lost in the fire of the steel company.

As a young man in his early 20s, Mongangane also got to experience Sophiatown, its magic and broken dreams. But for him, it was its 'roughness' that put him off. He never stayed in the suburb, instead he was based in Fietas, which is present-day Mayfair, and places like Newclare used to be his stomping ground.

Writer Miriam Tlali, shared a glimpse of the ruthlessness of that time, but also celebrated the vibrancy of life in the face of adversity. She wrote of the 1930s: 'We used to call Newclare 'Sdikidiki' then. There, life was really life. The streets were always full of people, young and old. Beggars, robbers, pickpockets, drunkards, prostitutes, prayer women, ministers – everything. But everybody was happy. I used to run a shebeen. They used to call me *Chobolo*, because I was really cheeky. I was hot.'

With Mahadi pregnant with their first child, Mongangane went home to finalise their nuptials and in October 1939, at a sweet traditional and western wedding, Mongangane and Mahadi got married. Following Sesotho tradition, Mahadi was welcomed to the Bafokeng with a new name and she was to be known as MaThabo. This, Basotho would say, is so that their first born son would carry that name. The following month, their son was born and he was named Thabo Makuoe Jerry, Makuoe was named after one of Mongangane's paternal uncles. Later in life he would be popularly known as Jerry.

Now with his own family, a wife and a small baby, Mongangane entered the 1940s to prove his mettle as a man and a provider. Meanwhile, back home things were not going so great.

Life as a new bride in the Mofokeng household proved to be hard for Mahadi. Mongangane's younger sister, Mapiletsa, was possessive of her brother who worked in the big city and she became controlling of whatever he brought home, from groceries to kitchen utensils. She made Mahadi's time as a young *ngwetsi* (daughter-in-law) unbearable, teasing and mocking her and forbidding her to use the things her brother purchased. 'Don't touch it, my brother bought it, I will use it as I like,' Mahadi once told how she would taunt her. Things got so out of hand that she eventually bundled her baby Jerry and ran away back home to Libertas.

It would take Mongangane a trip back home to diffuse the situation. He resolved that Mahadi would not return to Madraereng, instead she would join him in Johannesburg where he had found a new home in a township in Roodepoort. The factory had trekked westward from Sauer Street to Roodepoort and Mongangane sought lodging in the West Rand.

After a lengthy wait, the family eventually settled in the Shelters Number 2 section of the new township of Orlando that was fast developing in what would be known as Soweto. Jerry was left in the care of the Chaanes with Masabata watching over him.

8.3. Life in the Mofokeng household, 1625 Shelters Number 2, Orlando

I make a nervous trip to Devon to see my second uncle. The small you blink-you-miss-it town is wedged in the farming valleys on the border of Mpumalanga and Gauteng. I am nervous because my GPS navigation cannot take me to Palmietdrift farm that I punched in the app, instead I have to rely on my cousin Mpho's directions. 'Right at the curve, just before the big tree, turn right and the dirt road will lead you to a small village,' he told me. I had to cram these words, in that order, all the way for some 50 kilometres making my way to Devon. I couldn't afford to miss the spot, so I drove unblinkingly for the two or three kilometres after the offramp on the highway, lest I end up in the beyond of the beyonds of rural Mpumalanga.

My efforts were rewarded when the dirt road emerged to my right, just before the large bluegum tree to my left. A typical uneven farm road strewn with wild grass and potholes make for a bumpy ride. My uncle doesn't live in the windswept village on my right, but in the *ou huis* (old house), perched up on the little hill.

Takatso Mofokeng, is Mpho's father and the second son of Mongangane. He lived the longest with his parents, travelling with them from place to place. He is now a retired university professor of theology and a keen historian. In his quiet years running his farm, he has dedicated time to documenting, collecting and preserving what's left and known of the family history.

His travels have taken him through most of the Free State towns and Bloemfontein, its capital city. He has also been to Lesotho, travelling up and down the towns and villages as he dug out the forgotten history of Bafokeng as well as the church that he helped birth, the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA), a mutation of the N.G. Kerk in Afrika or Kereke ya Fora as Basotho and Batswana call it.

Takatso was part of the instrumental figures in 1994 that gathered in Belhar, Cape Town to finalise the talks between the unification of the N.G. Kerk in Afrika for Blacks and the N.G. Kerk Sending for the Coloureds. The project is still incomplete until the Whites and the Indians meet at the pulpit of non-racialism, hence the name 'Uniting'.

He welcomes me into his spacious farm house on the chilly Saturday morning. We settle in what looks like his office with all the files neatly packed in rows. It is close to the kitchen where he can make a cuppa as we start our talk about his experiences and life with his parents.



Figure 7: Professor Takatso Mofokeng at his farmhouse in Devon. Photo: Author

'I was born in 1942,' Takatso started. 'I can't say exactly where, but my baptismal certificate says I was baptised at the N.G. Kerk in Steynsrus in the Free State, but officially I will say I was born in Orlando and went to Orlando Primary School in Orlando East, just across the railway line in Mlamlankunzi.

'Ntate (Father) knew Nelson Mandela as a young lawyer and activist, along with Oliver Tambo in town. I also knew James Sofasonke Mpanza. At that time, people were politicised, they had to be politicised. They knew White people as oppressors. Ntate told me that they were oppressors. I can't recall how many times he got arrested over dompas and vagrancy.

'He had a green dompas that he carried with him and he would return home to tell us how, while they were playing soccer and left their clothes by pitch side, police suddenly appeared and bundled them into vans for not having their dompases on them – while playing soccer. All the police would say was that they would explain themselves at the police station. He would only be released after we take his pass to the station.'

Takatso did not recall how they ended up at Orlando Shelters, but what is clear to him is that they lived in a small township in nearby Roodepoort before moving to the Shelters.

He described the house at the Shelters as a one room made out of cheap bricks like today's RDP houses. The room, or house, had a small window. The Mofokeng household comprised his parents, Takatso and his younger brother, Motswantweng Ephraim who was born in 1944 and was popularly known as Spanky. Jerry remained in the Free State with the Chaanes. While the parents occupied the bedroom, the two boys slept in the kitchen, an extension of the house made out of corrugated iron sheets. Due to the small size of the houses, families used to add rooms using iron sheets to create more space. The Mofokengs welcomed their fourth son, Bennet, who was born in the Shelters in 1946.

The streets of Orlando Shelters were narrow, and the houses lined up in rows, with the backs facing each other. Holes were dug in the small spaces between the houses to hide traditional beer from the authorities. This illicit business put bread on the table for shebeen queens and other women and men trying to make ends meet. That practice of digging holes gave rise to

the name *seepamokoti* (a hole digger), a job reserved for the lowest rung of labourers or failures at life, who were paid in alcohol, never cash.

To help me get the picture clearer, Takatso reminded me of *Khawuleza*, the 1950s hit song originally recorded by Dorothy Masuka and made popular by Miriam Makeba when she released it in 1966. There's a famous line where she goes '*Naaank'amaphoyisa/ Azongen'endleni/ Mama khawuleza'* (There are the cops coming to the house, hurry up Mother) as the young girl pleads with her mother to hide and not be arrested by the authorities for selling beer.

Takatso said this song referred to the practice when the Black Jack municipal police would come to raid houses. They came with canes to prod the earth and where it sounded hollow they would dig out the alcohol and dispose of it, if not arrest the brewers.

Takatso started school in Orlando and played in the streets with Spanky and other children. Their neighbours were Xhosa and they gave Motswantweng the nickname of Spanky, probably to save themselves from biting their tongues from the threatening Sotho name that meant 'the one who returned from the war'. The Mofokeng children picked up the isiXhosa language from them too because they spent a lot of time together.

Mongangane woke up at the crack of dawn and rode a train to Roodepoort for work. He returned home late with his sons already sleeping, they caught hazy glances of him in mid slumber on some days.

'As a result, Spanky and I didn't have a good memory of our father,' Takatso shared. 'We didn't have a lively relationship with him because he was simply not there during the week. The only time we saw him and we could relate to him was during the weekend. Some Saturdays we would visit our aunt Makanono, my mother's younger sister, in Springs where she worked as a domestic worker. The trip by train to the East Rand was a family outing we relished.

'On Sundays, without fail, we went to the N.G. Kerk in Roodepoort for church held in a shack and Ntate was very active. There was a very lively community at the church, under Evangelist Santho whom I recall well. I didn't even know that there was a white minister, I only heard from Ntate later in life.'

Mongangane had been introduced to the N.G. Kerk in Thaba Nchu where he lived with the Motsatse family while studying. His father was an elder in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) but the Motsatses belonged to the N.G. Kerk and there was no AME nearby. He attended the catechesim class and got confirmed. He never reunited with the AME, instead giving his life to the new church.

What Takatso remembered about his mother, Mahadi, was that she had always been enterprising. She traded in a lot of things, perfecting the art and science of buying and selling. Alcohol, it would seem, was never one of them, instead she targeted Mongangane's fellow employees at the factory in Roodepoort. Every evening, Mahadi sliced bread and smothered butter and jam before wrapping the sandwiches in foil and stacking them neatly in a small tin

suitcase Mongangane took to work every morning and sold to colleagues. As a housewife, Mahadi found a way to contribute to the family kitty using her industrious streak.

Mongangane was not so inclined towards business especially after one incident that put him off such ventures. He opened a shop with a friend and business partner, who ran the operation while Mongangane worked in Roodepoort. It wasn't long before they were woken up in the night with the news that there had been a robbery at the store in the dark of the night and it had been cleaned out.

'We rushed out to see what happened and found mealie meal poured all over the floor and the entire stock taken. That was the last time Ntate went into business and he swore from such dealings. We later learned that there was a suspicion that the partner might have been behind the burglary,' Takatso reminisced.

'On the other hand, Mme (Mother) remained in business for the rest of her life. Moses (the last born son) is the one who inherited that tradition of buying and selling.'

Life in Orlando was sheltered, excuse the pun. The architects of apartheid had won the battle of keeping the races apart and ensure that the natives stayed put. 'We didn't know White people while growing up,' said Takatso. 'I must have been five or six years old when I first saw a White person. It was a White boy and a White girl who came to Orlando Shelters Number 2 one weekend, probably a Sunday, because we were never around on Saturdays playing soccer. The two came with a guitar and they sang for us, the other White person we saw was the security guard in the train to Springs.'

For Mongangane, two things mattered the most - church and football - more specifically Orlando Pirates. The football team had become the pride and identity of the community and as an Orlandoian he had little choice. He went to watch them in action wherever they played.

8.4. Once a Pirate, always a Pirate

Orlando Pirates, currently a Premier Soccer League outfit in South Africa, carries so much rich history and heritage.

According to information on the team's website, football was used as a political cover in the 1940s because during apartheid, the black majority were not allowed public gatherings in fear of political discussions, it said. (www.orlandopiratesfc.co.za)

Church and soccer became the covers for Blacks to get together, also the game gave the oppressed an opportunity to occasionally leave the country and escape the harsh living conditions if only for a few hours or days.

The People's Club, as it became known, was a subject of Richard Maguire's 1991 dissertation that gave context and significance of the soccer team as a social institution which

impacted on the day-to-day lives of Black South Africans and the role it played in the context of poverty and oppression. Maguire said Orlando Pirates was an expression of urban African culture and that it generated passionate support both as a unifying force and a source of bitter division at the same time. The team became a symbol and the second family name of residents of Soweto as it entrenched itself deeper in the community.

Orlando Pirates started off as Orlando Boys Club FC in 1937 when soccer was a popular pastime in black townships and school soccer was a fertile turf for competition. The pitches were uneven, hard and sandy and the players were barefooted and wore their school uniforms in the field.

The Boys Club had players in table tennis, weight lifting and boxing already. In 1938 they finished the season in a minor division of the Johannesburg Bantu Football Association (JBFA). Travelling on bicycles in fours or cutting across on foot to Sophiatown, they played at the Waterval grounds – barefooted and without a proper playing strip instead in a variety of uncoordinated shirts like a techni-colour coat. It was only when their first patron, Bethuel Mokgosinyana, who was referred to as the self styled social worker, took interest in them in 1940 that they got a kit. (Maguire, 1991)

Another influential figure behind the team was boxer Andries ‘Pele Pele’ Mkwanazi. Pirates was birthed in his house, two blocks away from the Boys Club. With a new and fearsome name the jersey-less team took on competition on the football field and made rapid progress. They were already competing in the Saturday League Division Two of the JBFA and were promoted to the Saturday League Division One in 1939. Their matches were usually played in the township or the city, either in Newclare or at the Wemmer Grounds, the Headquarters of the JBFA. (Maguire, 1991)

They competed against teams from townships and ghettoes around Johannesburg as well as city-based sides of domestic servants or company employees in the city. There was also Eastern Leopards dominated by teachers and students from Kilnerton College based in George Goch (Eastern Native Township) and local rivals, Eastern Brothers.

Pirates also had the support of James Sofasonke Mpanza, the titanic leader of the squatter movement in Orlando and the man regarded as the father of the township. Elsewhere in Soweto, Swallows was patronised by Ntoyi, the leader of the Basotho formation calling themselves Russians. He organised a squatter camp in Moroka. African Morning Stars, in Sophiatown was backed by big time gangsters. (Maguire, 1991)

Interestingly, out of the three, Pirates is the only team that has an unbroken record of playing in the top flight league over 80 years later. Swallows returned to the PSL in the 2020/21 season under a different guise after five years in the lower leagues. They bought the status of another team that earned a promotion for the new season.

Written in the constitution of the club was that only boys from Orlando, or the children of Orlando residents, could play for Pirates and this made it the treasure of the community. The team would become an institution and a source of civic pride. Many clubs in other South African townships were called ‘peoples’ clubs’ in their founding stages and rootedness, but none developed to the extent that Pirates did. (Maguire, 1991)

While the sense of community was deepened, for men, like Mongangane and his young sons, team sport provided a sustained close-knit group in the context of unprecedented urban upheaval, explained Maguire. Belonging in a team meant having friends, sharing a sense of loyalty and facing the struggle together, as well as pride in representing your block in the township.

Soccer was an agent of integration for migrants. Maguire pointed out that in the early decades of organised football on the Witwatersrand, migrants from a particular area would form a club among themselves. They drew membership from a wide range of occupations and even from different townships. For instance, Imperial Air Force was strictly for Basotho and GPO Sweepers was for the labourers from Natal. During the December holidays, these township or city teams would return home, and play against their local brethren, spreading the popularity of the game. (Maguire, 1991)

Weekends of non-stop football action at Wemmer and Bantu Sports was an indulgence for diehard fans and casual spectators who lived in townships, hostels and slums. For a few hours the trouble of shifts in factories and mines and dompas checks were replaced by fervent jubilation and camaraderie. As Maguire put it, football was a means of maximising the quality of their lives. They ran tirelessly up and down the touchline as they exhorted their sides to greater efforts as if their lives depended on it, singing rousing Zulu songs or stealing away from the action to take an illicit swig of home brew: whatever they did at the match, they took the opportunity to do what pleased them.

Mongangane told tales of how he was in the stands when Mpanza galloped on the field on horseback ahead of the start of an anticipated soccer clash. His eyes would light up and he would chuckle as he reminisced about those days. Soccer restored something in him and gave him control of his happiness. At a time when the oppressive world attacked the fabric of family and community, sport would stitch back what was taken away.

Scenes of Mongangane in his 90s, hard of hearing and pressing his ear against his battery-powered transistor radio, as the announcer shrilled and grunted during a thrilling Soweto derby in which Orlando Pirates tackled archrivals Kaizer Chiefs will stay with me forever. His eyesight also failing him and going to the stadium or watching soccer on TV a futile exercise, the wireless became an ally to connect to his past and reignite the fire and magic of a Pirates soccer match at Wemmer or Bantu Sports of the 1940s.

8.5. Stofberg

At the N.G. Kerk in Roodepoort that congregated in a shack, Mongangane threw his life into the service of the church. He was a member of the MBB (youth ministry) and upon seeing his leadership qualities, devotion and diligence, the senior pastors promoted him to become an elder. The fact that he had a natural talent to preach and his knowledge of the Bible vast, also helped. Experience – dating back to the days when as a young man he read the scriptures to *ou* Chaane, Mahadi's father – stood him in good stead.

Joining the seminary became the most natural step. The White minister offered him an opportunity to train as an evangelist. Faced with the long hours in the steel factory, the

unforgiving dompas Black Jacks and limited opportunities in the big city, heading to the seminary made sense to Mongangane. It would be a great place for him to further his studies and receive a qualification since finishing Standard 6 in Thaba Nchu. Also, chances of improving the family's fortunes looked promising. Loving the gospel and already committed to the church in Roodepoort, this was a venture worth pursuing. In the end it would be Mongangane and another young leader, Kgobokoe, along with their families that would be sent off to Stofberg Gedenkskool in Viljoensdrif in the Orange Free State.

At this point, in 1949, the Mofokeng family had been allocated a house in the new township of Mofolo where they had planned to resettle in a bigger home than the Shelters. But the decision was made to leave Orlando and Johannesburg and walk away from the new abode. Whatever happened to the house is unclear, but Takatso seemed to remember his mother saying that Mongangane passed on the keys to a cousin of his known as Lebona, in his typical give-away-easy manner. There is no recollection of what happened of the Shelters house.

Mongangane was 37-years-old and Mahadi was pregnant with their fifth son when they moved to Viljoensdrif. The family had to be broken up. Bennet, the fourth born was taken to Libertas to live at *ou* Chaane's house where Jerry, the eldest, already stayed. With not a lot of money in the kitty, the family could do with help from extended relatives and the support structure in Orange Free State was solid.

Shortly after arrival in Stofberg, Moses was born and this meant more change in the family dynamics. Takatso remembered that when they were in Orlando, he was assigned to carry Bennet on his back as the elder brother whenever they were out playing in the streets with other children. And now with Bennet gone, and a new baby in the house, the responsibility to carry Moses fell on Spanky.

Takatso was relieved that it was not him. He had been frustrated a few times with Bennet who seemed to throw his tantrums just when the fun started for Takatso and other children. 'He knew that all he needed to do was to cry for me to pick him up and carry him on my back. Bennet would stand behind me and wail until Mme came to hit me for not carrying him. So I would be standing there with Bennet on my back while others played.'

This passing on of sibling harmony was a clever tactic by the parents to instil fraternal bromance, the 'I've got your back' bond nobody could break. They literally lived the mantra 'he ain't heavy, he's my brother', something they carried into their adulthood.

The older Mofokeng boys, Takatso and Spanky, went to the primary school in Stofberg. Takatso remembered that the village was big with houses built in rows. On the other side of the village was a boarding school for boys and girls, a teacher training college, the seminary and the primary school.

Going to Stofberg put Mongangane in a class of luminaries of the N.G. Kerk. Many years later, the name is revered in the hearts of the clergy and the older generations of the church. It symbolised prestige and the highest echelons of training for Black ministers and evangelists.

Stofberg-Gedenkskool (SGS) or Stofberg Memorial School in English, was opened on 1 October 1908 on the farm Elandsfontein in the northern Orange Free State. The nearest railway station was Viljoensdrif and the nearest town Heilbron. (Kritzinger, 2008)

The school was established jointly by the four N.G. Kerk synods of the Cape, Free State, Natal and Transvaal and was named after *Dominee* (Reverend) Pieter Stofberg who was an N.G. Kerk missionary in Mochudi, Botswana, from 1898 to 1907. Stofberg had actively campaigned for the establishment of a theological school for the N.G. Kerk mission, but died in 1907 before seeing his dream realised. (Kritzinger, 2008)

The institution grew between 1935 and 1959 when numerous buildings were erected and more students registered. The state subsidies helped Stofberg to cater for a large student number and their families. It took a Standard 4 to be admitted into the three year evangelist course at Stofberg, that prerequisite was taken up to Standard 6 when Mongangane got there.

He and his peers were under the tutelage of White Afrikaner male lecturers such as A.M. Hofmeyr who was the director, A.A. Odendaal, L.P. Maree, Dr J.A. van Wyk, and Dr A.S. van Niekerk.The theological training was diaconological and missiological. The first year was preparatory and the rest comprised theological training.

Prof Klippies Kritzinger explained that the 'missionary theological education' of the N.G. Kerk had been 'rigidly' separated. For White missionaries or *eerwaardes* the *Sendinginstituut* in Wellington in the Western Cape provided training from 1876 to 1962. By the time it was closed it had produced 566 missionaries for the N.G. Kerk mission, which constituted 71% of the total missionary work force of the church. The other 29% were trained at Stellenbosch University and (later also) Pretoria University. These *eerwaardes* played a huge role in N.G. Kerk mission in South (and southern) Africa.

Kritzinger identified this arrangement as the root of racial separation in the church. Since the *eerwaardes* were only working among Blacks, they were not given the same theological formation like N.G. Kerk ministers for White congregations, the *eerwaardes* were not required to learn Greek and Hebrew, for instance. Worse still, they could not be called to serve in White congregations or serve the sacraments in them. Even as visiting ministers, they were not allowed onto the pulpit.

On the other hand the Theological Faculty at Stellenbosch has been training White ministers for over 160 years, equipping them with Greek and Hebrew and everything else required to be a 'proper' Reformed minister. It wasn't until 1999 that ministers of the URCSA were accepted at Stellenbosch University.

The establishment of Stofberg was also to train Black teachers in addition to evangelists and ministers. Interestingly, Kritzinger noted that two ecumenical visitors, Dr Norman Goodall and Rev Eric W. Nielsen, who made a survey of ministerial training in Africa for the International Missionary Council, commented that SGS was well staffed with five lecturers including a recently appointed African tutor and that it was one of the best equipped

theological schools in the Union. The African tutor was a temporary lecturer *Eerwaarde* Thomas Mahlangu who taught an aspect of practical theology between 1954 and 1955.

Also attending classes was Mahadi as a wife of an evangelist. These were to provide 'in-service' training and equip the spouses to become skilled preachers of the Word and leaders of the women ministries.

Takatso remembered time at Stofberg fondly: 'It was a large number of ministers and evangelists in training. In the immediate opposite house was the Buti family, headed by the father of Sam Buti. We called Sam *aubuti* Oupa because he was like our eldest brother in that street. He had a younger sister called *ausi* Palesa and other siblings Monyane, Mohlomi and Mokheseng the last born who was Moses's age. While I played with Mohlomi, Spanky was on duty looking after Moses who played with Mokheseng. The Buti family became closest to ours.'

Stofberg, located in the fertile area between Heilbron and Vereeniging, was overpopulated with peach trees, every yard boasted a few. The oversupply of the fruit took Mahadi back to Flip Heyns *huis* in Libertas where she was groomed in the kitchen. She had the great idea of making dried peaches. She went about the slog of skinning them, taking out the pit and then slice them in halves or quarters.

The houses had thatched roof, and above the poles, she placed them on corrugated iron sheets to dry in the warmth of the roof, even in winter the drying process always went on well. 'But of course Spanky and myself would not let the poor peaches dry peacefully,' Takatso's face went mischievous as he recalled. 'We would climb on chairs to help ourselves to mouthfuls of the peaches. Then one day, when we least expected it, the sheet slipped and fell sending the peaches tumbling and scattering all over the floor. We were still too short to put everything back up, so we had to wait until our parents came back home to discover the 'accident'. The least we could do was to pick them up from the floor and neatly put them back in their rows on the sheet. But, man, we had to take a beating, not that it would make us stop. We carried on raiding the drying peaches in the warm roof.

'Even in the village when our trees were cleaned out, and the Butis had nothing, we would walk around the village to steal peaches until one day we got caught in somebody's garden. I was the first one to be caught and the man recognised me as Mofokeng's son. To get him off my back, I told him that my brother was also in the garden hiding among the trees. He told me to stand there while he went in search of Spanky, that's when I made off. Spanky had long skipped the yards and ran back home. The man eventually came to our house to complain to our parents about our thieving ways, but it didn't work, we never got lashings that one time.'

Stofberg was a closely knit community, where everybody knew everybody and the children knew each other because they played together and went to the same primary school. It was nothing out of the ordinary, therefore, that Mongangane made an arrangement with some of the students from the teacher training college, to cut his sons' hair.

Takatso said the shaving was a traumatic experience. ‘I never forgot that experience and I never liked it one bit. They used a razor and it was quite uncomfortable. You sat there, literally on a knife’s edge, one shake the razor sinks into the scalp and leaves you dripping with blood. Our father left us no choice. We had to bear it and pray for the torture to end.’

Stofberg may have held a promise of a better life, but poverty still stared them in the face. As seminary students, Mongangane and others received rations from the school and they included mealie meal, beans, salt, sugar and no meat. With the little stipend he got or income from other sources, Mongangane bought meat supplies. He rode to the butchery in Viljoensdrif town on the road to Koppies using the bicycle he bought in the village. He would return with *masapo* (bones) and *mala le mohodu* (tripe) meant to last a month.

Looking at the kilometres between Stofberg and the town, the journey was quite a stretch. Living out of a ration wasn’t easy, food had to be used sparingly and portions on the plate were never generous.

During holidays some families went away to visit relatives in towns and villages, but the Mofokengs stayed put in the three years at Stofberg, enduring all the difficulties until graduation.

After Mongangane accepted the offer from Gelukspan congregation, some 350 kilometres in the western Transvaal, the family prepared to move, yet again he did what he had done in Soweto. This time he gave away most of the furniture and what they had gathered there. Their only belongings, as they set off to start a new career in unknown lands, was a bed and some loose items that could fit in a small bakkie.

Some seven years after departing Stofberg its gates were shut but its legacy remains. The report of the Synodal Mission Commission that served before the 1957 Synod of the Transvaal N.G. Kerk described the circumstances of the time as follows: ‘... all three educational institutions (Stofberg Memorial School, Bethesda Normal School and Emmarentia Geldenhuys School) either closed or moved within five years because, according to the Group Areas Act, they are black spots or institutions within white areas.’ (Kritzinger, 2008)

The report said after long negotiations with the Native Affairs Department it proved to be a necessity. It noted that nothing could be done through memoranda and negotiations with the Department, and what was left was to seek where it could be moved and what would be the most advantageous for the church to still play its part in education. It further stated that the government was very lenient, always approachable and served the management with the best advice.

As such, Stofberg Mountain Memorial School’s Normal School students would be enrolled in state institutions such as at Thaba Nchu in the Free State and a possible training school in the district of Pietersburg (today’s Polokwane).

It concluded that the State would welcome it if the church placed its institutions at its educational institutions for the good influence of its pupils and students, and the church on

the other hand, would be grateful if it could use the State's educational institutions for the academic training of its theological students. The four Federated Churches decided to sell the land and buildings of Stofberg. And so the fate of Stofberg was sealed.

Kritzinger counted that in 1959, there were four lecturers and 120 students in the theological school when it had to relocate to a 'Bantu area'.

Up to that point, 84 ministers, 651 evangelists and about 1 100 fully trained teachers had graduated from the school.

Some of its most prominent alumni ministers are Rev S.S. Tema, Rev M.L. Maile, Rev W. Xaluva, and Rev T Mahlangu. There are many more committed and devoted evangelists and ministers who have made an indelible mark on communities and have been forgotten, and this study is a contribution in shining some light on the unsung heroes that Stofberg produced, like Mongangane.

When Kritzinger paid tribute to Stofberg seminary in his address to the URCSA synod, he urged that writing the history of Stofberg from the viewpoint of the receivers of the training would be 'to celebrate the generations of teachers, evangelists, women workers and ministers that the Stofberg-Gedenkskool and its successor institutions produced for the work of ministry in the N.G. Sendingkerk, N.G. Kerk in Afrika and eventually the URCSA.'

He accepted that the racism, paternalism, alienation and exclusion that Black evangelists and ministers experienced in these institutions, the narrow and limited theological perspectives presented to them, as well as the subservience and conservatism transferred to them by the (almost exclusively white) group of lecturers should not be overlooked. But we also need to celebrate the amazingly positive fruits that flowed from the experiences of groups of theological students eating, sleeping, studying, praying, quarrelling, playing together in the apartheid seminaries.

Kritzinger argued that more research was needed to unravel the past. 'The history of these 100 years needs to be written; we need to tell our own stories, we need to listen to everyone else's stories and write them down, especially our older colleagues (ministers, evangelists, women workers, who may not be with us much longer). A series of publications could flow from this, but maybe it could also serve the interest of reconciliation and construct a common past – so that we may have a common future.'

In my effort to retrace the steps of my family in Stofberg, I'm met by a behemoth called Groenpunt Maximum Correctional Facility on the R716 to Deneysville in the Free State. The officers insisted that it's not a prison, but a facility to be politically correct.
My attempts to be granted permission to visit the site hit a few brick walls and left me bruised. What I have been told is that the old buildings and the once vibrant seminary and the village lined by peach trees have been razed to the ground to make way for the incarceration facility managed by the Department of Correctional Services.

The bureaucrats refused me access on the grounds that no photography was allowed in correctional facilities. My pleas and petitions to be allowed access to observe what remains without photography went ignored. A painful reminder of how we are often denied access to

places of ancestral and historical significance, whether it's on farms owned by descendants of Boers, where our forebears are buried or sites ran by government or private companies, it is never easy.

What happened with Stofberg is an aide-memoire that nothing is permanent in life. Verwoerd declared the holy grounds of Stofberg a white area some 70 years ago and closed the seminary down. Today, with a majority population of Black men doing time, this place that was once a centre of prayer and faith, turned a White privilege reserve, is now where murderers and rapists from the Free State serve lengthy and life sentences. As the only maximum security prison in the province it is notoriously over crowded with a high rate of recidivism (repeat offenders). There are reported violent deaths, riots, rapes, intimidation and dangerous gangs behind bars where life hangs precariously in the shadow of communicable diseases and viruses that lurk about. Oh, the chilling irony of the circle of life!

9. Gelukspan – in the lucky/happy lake



Figure 8: Map of present day North West province. Gelukspan is located some 30km west of the town of Lichtenburg (now in Ditsobotla district) Photo: RoomsForAfrica

For over 100 kilometres stretching from Lichtenburg in the north east to Khunwana in south west, tracts upon tracts of land known as the Trust have been owned and tilled by Black communities for generations. A look in the history books tells of the 1936 Native Trust (or Bantu Trust) and Land Act No 18 which extended the land set aside for reserves from 7.3%, as allocated by the infamous 1913 Native Land Act, to almost 13%. It still forbade any ownership and/or purchase of land by natives outside the stipulated reserves and put Blacks under the watch of Native Commissioners and Agricultural Officers. This made for a fertile ground of an unconventional Black South African experience in the Highveld area also known as Ditsobotla of present day North West province.

This unique set of circumstances cultivated a novel self-sufficient and resourceful community. Apartheid engineers had put these Blacks in the Trust's settlements and reserves as part of their grand segregation project, but the oppressor inadvertently created an unorthodox class of independent Blacks who thrived in agriculture and amassed wealth over the years.

This is not to say that it was Shangri-La because they still faced a life of lack and limited opportunities typical of rural settlements. The twin issues of health and education remained arduous challenges, but with the absence of the White man to dictate over them, life was different.

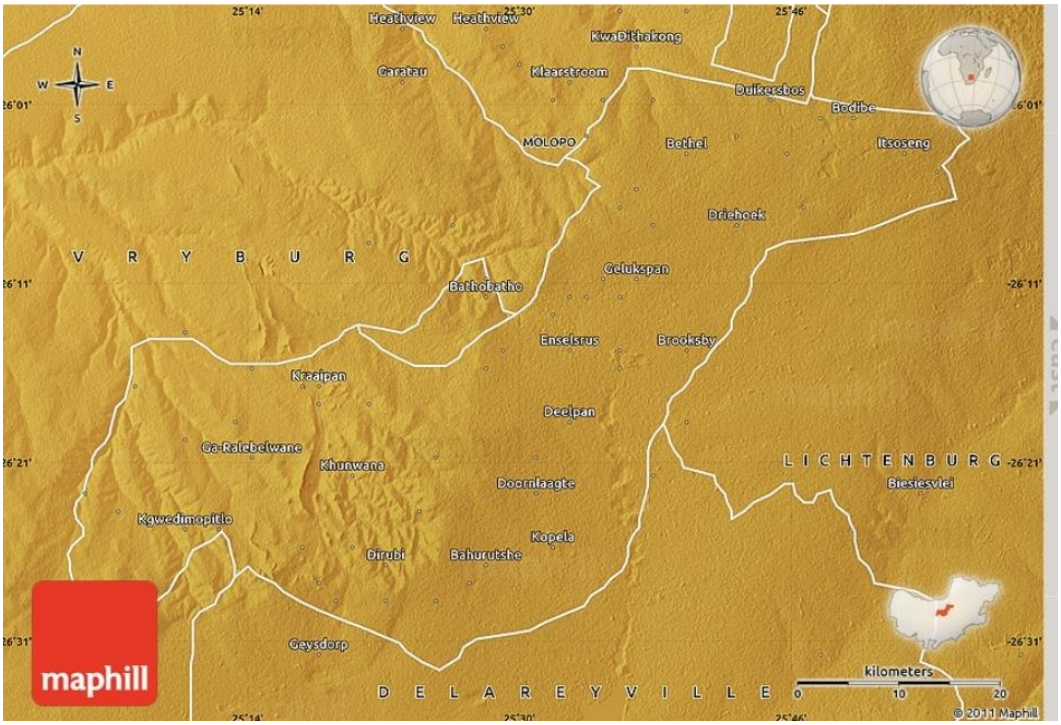


Figure 9: Map of present day Lichtenburg Reservaat (Reserve) broadly referred to as Gelukspan in this project. Photo: Maphill

9.1. Cracking the whip

The young White doctor ran as fast as he could while *ou* (old man) Dikobe gave chase. His sjambok drew squiggly lines in the air as he snapped it and sunk its bite in the back of the doctor, propelling him to run faster to outpace his geriatric assailant. Dikobe frothing at the mouth with rage did not let up, he shouted: '*kom aan baasie, jou klein strond*' (come on small baas, you lazy bugger).

By the time he reached the parking lot and with throngs of amused bystanders keeling over with laughter at this unusual attack, the White doctor was out of breath and relieved by the intervention of the uniformed Gelukspan Hospital security personnel.

Dikobe went on the offensive on what he believed to be a recalcitrant young man that needed to be herded back to the hospital grounds, in the same way he did when his donkeys went missing in the wild.

Dikobe from the village of Lombardslaagte had grown impatient and restless in the casualty department after he brought his critically ill granddaughter in a donkey cart to the hospital only to be informed that the doctor was at home in the staff quarters having tea. With the girl at death's door, he could wait until she died on his watch, or he could do what any good grandparent would do – save her life. And so Dikobe chose the latter. He disappeared into the complex with his sjambok and returned whipping the White doctor.

This incident that Takatso remembered well, may have been a source of fun banter at the time – something out of an unrealistic episode of the Days of our Lives of Black people at a time of apartheid – but it laid bare the power that Blacks wielded in the Trust area. The presence of a White man was of no real consequence to them. It was only when they ventured into town that things became stark and they were 'put in their place' quickly.

'The issue of oppression in the area of Gelukspan did not arise, it did not exist,' Takatso who lived in Gelukspan between 1952 and the early 1970s told me.

The young doctor was only the third White man in the area, the others being *Dominee* (Reverend) Ferreira who also lived in the hospital complex, and Streak, the shopkeeper in the neighbouring village of Uitkyk.

Here is how Takatso explained it: 'Apartheid was not only simply about the relationship between black and white, it was an urban problem. In that whole area of the Trust, there were no white people to give instructions to those Blacks. The communities never depended on government. The people had their own wells and lands and they were resourceful. They got on with life and made do with what they had. Here was *ou* Dikobe who knew that this White man was a baasie (small baas), but he could go to his house and whip him – a White doctor – all the way back to work. That was unimaginable in the 1960s.

'These were independent and well-to-do, hard-working Black people with initiative. Africans who created opportunities for themselves. They had no chief, only a headman and a commissioner in Lichtenburg overseeing their affairs. Even when they went to Lichtenburg, they walked into the *koperasie winkel* (co-operative store) put money on the table and drove out with their tractor or whatever they needed.

'The summer harvest was a carnival in Gelukspan. The farmers would span oxen and draw a trailer full of fresh produce like mealies, pumpkin, sugar cane and watermelon and head out to the city of Mafeking (now Mahikeng) and they would return with handsome amounts of money after a week or two. They were feeding the people in town and the surrounding villages that couldn't produce vegetables and fruit.

'So these Black people never experienced oppression, subjugation and control while living in the Trust. They remained independent and resilient with their own resources and with the money earned they sent their children to schools. They didn't work for White people. It's only their children who left to work in the towns for White people. In my time we didn't go to town to look for work. We went there to buy what we needed or sell our produce.'

Change crept in with the passage of time and Takatso located it in the unpredictable cycles of the weather and population growth. 'The scales were tipped by the natural cycles of agriculture, the good and the bad years of rain and drought. The people in the Trust ultimately weakened and some lost their independence and power. The land didn't increase but people did, so their children could not get land and so they had to go to school and look for work from White people. Their exposure to the urban economy changed power relations and they became subservient and had to learn how to say *baas*, something foreign to them because in

the world they grew up in, *baas* was whipped with a sjambok. Now the tables had turned, *baas* was the one whipping them into line.

‘We were a free people. We saw *ou* Dikobe whipping a white man with a sjambok. One time the son of Streak the shopkeeper hit Moses, my younger brother, and I heard about it. I went straight into the shop and beat this young boy up. I didn’t recognise him as White or superior to me, I saw a young boy who hit my brother and I needed to discipline him, without fear that I would be arrested or the Whites would gang up on me. I only got conscientised when I got to Emmarentia High School (near Warmbad now known as Bela Bela). I even got expelled. I had an awakening to realise that this country was not ours. Having grown up in Gelukspan, I didn’t know what apartheid was,’ said Takatso.

It was interesting that in my conversation with my aunt Tshidiso, she had a different take on Streak. She remembered him as a racist who would not allow them to use his toilets and was disgusted by them speaking Setswana in his store. He insisted that the medium of communication be Afrikaans. Tshidiso’s account dated a few years after Takatso left Gelukspan for boarding school. Could it be that Streak hardened in the time that Takatso was at Emmarentia High School?

Nonetheless, Takatso left me energised with this account of life in Gelukspan that I had been oblivious to. I knew that the people were resourceful and that farming and agriculture formed the backbone of this area, but somehow the proud stories of chutzpah and resilience were never told enough. What stood out for me was disease, especially tuberculosis, and poverty that studies recorded so well.

In his doctoral thesis titled Progress Towards Health For All in the Gelukspan Health Ward – 1985, Dr Marthinus Bac presented a dire picture of a breaking social fabric in the late 1970s and early 1980s Gelukspan when he worked there.

He reported that: ‘A 1983 Annual Report of Gelukspan Community Hospital indicated that infections and nutrition related diseases were very common. Among preschool children diarrhoeal disease, respiratory tract infections and malnutrition are the major killers.

‘Tuberculosis was the most important infectious disease with a high case mortality among adults while hypertension and its complications accounted for the majority of deaths in the medical wards. In 1984 there were 451 known psychiatric patients in the district. The most common diagnosis made was schizophrenia (54%) followed by alcoholic psychosis (10%) and dementia (7.5%). There were 423 known epileptics in the district.

‘In 1980 about 8% of the men who had a pre-school child were unemployed. Of the men who had a job, three quarters worked in South Africa (as opposed to the Bophuthatswana bantustan) and did not live at home. About 30% of the mothers had a paid job mostly as domestic workers, and as a result they did not stay at home and more than half of them only came home less than once a week. Some 40% of households with pre-school children possessed land in 1980 and ploughed at the average 10 morgen. Most people own animals, usually cattle, sheep, goats, horses, donkeys, pigs and chickens.

Bac added: ‘Successive surveys found out that 88.4% of the households lived in their own houses, mostly more than four rooms built out of bricks with only 10% accessing electricity. Wood, paraffin, cow dung and coal are normally used as fuel for cooking and heating the houses. Candles and paraffin lamps are used to light the house in the evening.’

To understand how we got to these figures of the late 1970s and 80s in contrast to the relative prosperity of the 1950s and 60s, I asked Takatso to go back to when the Mofokeng family arrived in Gelukspan in 1952.

This is the year when Mongangane set up a home with his industrious wife Mahadi. In tow were Takatso, the second born who became the erudite book worm; Spanky the headstrong third born who joined the police force; and Moses, the last born with an entrepreneurial spirit.

The other two sons; Jerry the first born, who would become an evangelist like his father; and Bennet the benign fourth born who became a civil servant were left in the care of extended family in the Orange Free State, as many African families – for practical reasons – did at the time. In fact, Bennet became so accustomed to life in the farms that later on when Takatso was sent to fetch him to rejoin his family he refused, opting for a life behind a tractor. It would take him a while to come to Gelukspan. The family welcomed its only daughter in 1953 when they adopted the two-year-old Tshidiso, the daughter of Mongangane’s younger sister, Mapiletsa, who taunted Mahadi as a young bride in the Orange Free State. Tshidiso went on to become a teacher.

9.2. The construction site

Takatso was 10 years old, Spanky (now late) was eight and my father Moses (now late) was just three in 1952 when their parents began a missionary career as fresh graduates from Stofberg Gedenkskool of the N. G. Kerk in Afrika.

The story goes that the place got named Gelukspan after a wanderer, long ago, walking along the pan or a small lake in the area discovered a diamond and for this, the Dutch-speaking farmers who had already settled there called it the ‘happy pan’ or the ‘lucky pan’. The luck quickly ran out as further probing yielded no gains. The diggings are still there standing as evidence of this flash in the pan.

Gelukspan is known for its dry climate with a summer rainfall of 400 to 600mm per year and a dry winter (May to September). The area is part of the so called maize-triangle and is suitable for the cultivation of maize, sorghum, sunflower, beans and groundnuts. The landscape is flat with fields for grazing and bushveld apart from cultivated areas.

Takatso remembered 1952 and how they found themselves in a new world. The place was an arid cattle post. It was nothing like the bright city lights of Johannesburg, or the busy and restless streets of Orlando in Soweto, neither was it the vibrant Stofberg. This was Gelukspan, the lucky pan with not much happening.

The area was divided into three groups of villages: traditional, Trust and resettlements. Researchers note that the traditional villages or old reserves for the black population originated many decades earlier when the Molopo and Setlagole reserves were allocated to some Tswana tribes by the Boers after they had fought together against Mzilikazi. Some of these villages have been in existence even before 1900.

In the 1940s as the architects of apartheid implemented their grand scheme of segregation, they purchased the land of Afrikaner/Dutch farmers under the Bantu Trust and Land Act, Act 18 of 1936. As such, groups of Black people were settled on these farms that have become known as Trust, and have names such as Goedgevonden, Lombardslaagte, Naauwpoort, Nooitgedacht, Schoongezicht, Springbokpan and Weltevreden.

The resettlements came later in the 1970s and were made up of people removed from 'black spots' and black townships and farms.

The land was flat for as far as the eye could see with no prospect of a lively community life. The villages were spread out and far in between, you'd need a bicycle to get to the next one, and people walked for kilometres to visit others.

Dominee Ferreira, the first missionary to arrive in Gelukspan, two years before the Mofokengs, was kind enough to fetch the family from the train station in Sannieshof with his bakkie. With their few items they walked into an *ou huis* (old house). Aged as it was and tearing at the seams, it still had a Victorian charm about it, clacking wooden floors and pressed ceilings. It would have to do for the family.

Takatso remembered: 'We got there to an old house that looked like it was owned by a white family. It was built out of stones. There was one room without wooden flooring that became the pantry. It became known as the *padkamer* used for lashings. That's where we were taken for a good beating. Our father would never ask our mother what we did wrong, he just got home and Mme (Mother) would say 'Chapatso *nchapele bana ba na*'(beat these children for me). All he would say is: '*Padkamer toe*' (to the *padkamer*) and we would head down the corridor to the dreaded room where we knew we were in for a good cry.

'Spanky was tougher and didn't cry easily. I figured out that the longer it took us to cry, the longer our father would keep lashing, he would not let up until Mme said it's enough. I knew that letting out a cry would bring her in to ask for him to spare us. So it took a few seconds and I would start wailing and Mme would rush in to intervene.'

Mongangane picked the distant Gelukspan because he disliked the idea of working among his people. Takatso told me: 'He wanted to go far away. One day towards the completion of his training he visited home at Madraereng in the Orange Free State and went to pass his greetings to the *baas* and the man ordered him to return to his family to evangelise. He knew in his heart that would never happen. He returned at a later time to inform the *baas* that he had opted to go to Gelukspan in the district of Lichtenburg and there was nothing they could do. And that's how he left his family and avoided being an evangelist among his own people choosing a strange land.'

It was also probably a Biblical decision too, based on the scriptures about how a prophet is rejected in his hometown because of familiarity or scepticism. Gelukspan then presented a challenge Mongangane relished.

Takatso said when Mongangane got to Gelukspan he found some converts already who were not 'church people' as they had no shepherd for many years. These people, some of whom were first generation Christians, had encountered the religion through missionaries in their places of origin. They were staunch believers with a conservative disposition. His job was to revive these Christians who were despondent in spirit and needed to hear the message of Jesus Christ, the redeemer. Mongangane also had to embark on a massive project to bring them into the organised church. This put him as the only resident Black evangelist in a large area spanning over 100km from west to east and 60km from north to south.

'Ntate (Father) reintroduced the messages of Jesus Christ as a saviour of people and reminded believers to have hope beyond this life. The people knew about the afterlife but that message had been lost to them after years of not having a messenger of hope. Ntate's presence brought a message of revival as he re-established a living church.'

The other churches in the area at that time were the Wesleyan in nearby Bapong, and the Lutheran in Bodibe some 30km or so away. Going deeper south up to Khunwana there were no churches. The ministers for these other denominations lived in towns and seldom came to deliver the holy communion. *Dominee* Ferriera was *lekgowa* (a White man) whom they couldn't relate to as much as they did with Mongangane. Whatever events happened in the area, funerals, parties, weddings, they knew that Evangelist Mofokeng would be there for them. Gelukspan stood out as an oasis of faith due to his presence and he got stitched into the fabric of the community as one of them.

Without a church structure in place, the new congregants, about a dozen, gathered in a storeroom of the *ou huis* every Sunday, sitting on benches singing Lifela tsa Sione. Some of them were Basotho with strong ties to the Orange Free State and Lesotho and as such bonds were created among the folk and the Mosotho evangelist.

Outside the church, the family had to adjust and get on with life. And for the 10-year-old Takatso and eight-year-old Spanky it presented a few bumps.

Takatso said they went to the primary school in nearby Uitkyk village and attended in an old structure which must have been used as a school for the White farm children before the arrival of the Trust and resettlements. The building was derisively called Jan van Riebeck by the locals.

'Like all other children we had illnesses. We were poor. I didn't have shoes in the whole three years that we were in Stofberg. And I loved soccer and when my feet itched I would kick whatever was in sight. As a result, I kicked stones, bottles, glasses and other things that actually harmed me. I became a regular at the clinic and both my feet carry scars from all the cuts and gashes.

‘As children we had to learn a new language. Imagine we were from Orlando, where we spoke Sesotho and isiXhosa and in Stofberg we spoke Sesotho, from there we had to speak Setswana. We were already of school-going age and had been taught in Sesotho throughout. We walked to school in Uitkyk barefooted and played with Batswana children. We come from the city of Johannesburg, lived in the peri-urban Stofberg and now we found ourselves in a totally rural African area in the western Transvaal, with only two white people in the entire place, *Dominee* Ferreira and Streak, the English shop owner in Uitkyk.’

In no time, there were signs of life in Gelukspan when a clinic was opened inside the *ou huis* after an agreement between the church and Mongangane. They opened the doors of their abode to welcome the sickly and administered treatment. One of the rooms was turned into an out-patient department and the next was where the nurse lodged. Mapanana Bojosi was the first nurse who brought along her daughter Dudu. A doctor de Jager from Sannieshof came to see patients every Friday.

The healthcare facility attracted patients from near and far, and some would be stranded for transport back home and would then squeeze themselves in the Mofokeng children’s bedrooms.

‘Mapanana was succeeded by a nurse from Mafikeng who drank and her name escapes me,’ said Takatso. ‘Then came MaRampa who eventually moved to Botswana and her children are still our close friends. She was followed by Susan Nkeng Molamu who lived with her husband Shepstone Molamu. At the time of Susan, a new structure was built by the church and the nurse did not have to lodge in the *ou huis*.’



Figure 10: The clinic that developed to become Gelukspan Hospital. The photograph was taken in 1958. Photo: Family Album

Not that the Mofokeng family was left alone to enjoy their privacy, the foot traffic remained consistent with desperate travellers who missed the 5pm bus to Mafeking or Lichtenburg seeking overnight shelter there.

With the clinic and the church becoming popular, the area started showing signs of potential for development. It had become a meeting point for travellers and different cultures. The bus to Lichtenburg in the Transvaal picked up passengers near the clinic, while the bus to Mafeking which was in the Cape Province dropped them off. This intersection of the bus routes would eventually bear fruit with all the traffic in transit.

First to go up was the magnificent church built in typical N.G. Kerk style of a steeplechase mounted by a cock and the cardinal signs. The building brought some excitement in the Reserve. Its large brown stained windows gave it the allure and distinction of the white churches seen in some of the exclusive white suburbs that barred Black Christians from walking through their doors. It was with the generous contributions from the congregants and donations from the *moeder kerk* (mother church) that the project got off the ground.

With their hands, the congregation and architects led by Mongangane, laid the foundation. The scaffolding went up, and a modern church with fine finishings of wooden flooring, oak benches with back rests, stained windows and a church bell that could echo tens of kilometres away, stood tall.

In a 2004 interview for the Sunday Times, Mongangane told me: 'I practically laid the foundation, ran the concrete-making machine and formed the bricks. There is not a single iron sheet I didn't touch when we roofed the building. You see the fence that runs around the church, it was also put up by me.'

In outlying villages congregants gathered in people's houses or in schools for Sunday service, and Mongangane made it his priority to build proper church structures. He erected these churches in seven villages and a few more elsewhere in the Lichtenburg district.



Figure 11: The newly completed church in 1958. Photo: Family Album

To replicate the success of this community collaboration, the ambitious project of building a hospital got underway. This time, the church community donated money and contributed with their labour once more. There was also a grant from the Biesiesvlei Mission Committee of the *moeder kerk.*

Mongangane effectively became the project manager, foreman and supervisor. He had to organise the programme and schedule of labour, liaising with church elders across the villages of Lichtenburg Reserve. He would climb on his scooter to inform the teams about their turn on the building schedule and ensure that enough hands reported for duty and that everything ran on time every week.

Mantlaletseng Morobe met Mongangane when she was a teen. Now in her 80s, soft spoken and gentle as she had ever been, she remembered the days fondly: 'For the building of the church, they used to collect stones, using *dikotoko* (a long sleigh) filled with stones and drawn by 12 oxen. Ntate Mofokeng and my father would offload and then go back for more. It was hard labour when you think about it. They were not paid as everyone pitched in for the community.

'The same hard labour went into the building of the clinic and the hospital digging and putting brick to mortar. Ntate Mofokeng lived right next to the hospital, and became the effective supervisor who led the community from the front. He was great as a leader, he was meticulous and precise when he did the stock-taking of the deliveries of stones, sand, cement, the ceiling and all the building material needed to ensure that construction was never disrupted or delayed.'

I remembered Ezekiel Lebotse as a tall and imposing man with a trimmed moustache who became a close family friend. When I met him, decades later, he showed no sign of slowing down. The moustache is still there, completely white. His long gesticulating hands moved animatedly as he reminisced about Mongangane: 'Ntate Mofokeng was the leader in the building of the hospital, I'm not telling you hearsay, I was there. He built the church first with *dikotoko*. After finishing the church he moved on to build the first three blocks of the hospital and then the second block and then he brought in the White contractors.

'He also had a direct hand in the building of other churches outside Gelukspan where he worked, places such as Biesiesvlei; the church in Lichtenburg on the main road and Bospoort near GaMaloka.'

Reminiscing about the massive construction site at Gelukspan, Takatso said they formed bricks and pushed wheelbarrows carrying water. Mongangane mixed concrete with a shovel. 'I for one was a *dagaboy* (a young man mixing cement and concrete) when I came home for the holidays from boarding school. My brothers Spanky and Moses who were older by then also worked on the construction site. My mother was at home cooking meals for the different shifts. After a long day of back breaking labour we would all retire in the family house.

‘We never knew a home where it was just my mother, father, Spanky, Moses and myself. Every day of our lives we lived with people and that’s what we knew a home to be, it never changed until my mother died.’

At the end of the project, a few years later, the sprawling complex of Gelukspan sprang up to add a new landmark on the otherwise flat, uninspiring and dull landscape of the Reserve.

In his thesis, Dr Bac noted: ‘In 1959 the clinic had 20 beds. During the 1960s a whole new hospital was built with 1 100 beds, including a general hospital, maternity ward, TB hospital, an institution for the chronically ill and the physically handicapped and an old age home. At the same time, Tlamelang Special School for special education for the physically handicapped children plus hostels were built in the same premises. The facilities in the hospital were further improved with a new theatre block, a bigger laundry, a boiler house, a mortuary and more houses built for the hospital staff.’

Bac noted that the hospital never had more than one or two doctors on its staff and it rendered only hospital-based curative services. Patients with tuberculosis were referred from a large area in the Northern Cape and western Transvaal. Chronically ill and handicapped patients were referred from all the provinces of South Africa, as far as the cities of Port Elizabeth and Cape Town.

‘The fusion of religion and health care resulted in a holistic patient care as the ministers, evangelists and elders of the N.G. Kerk who lived in the same complex in the hospital supplemented the treatment as prescribed by the medical team with a dose of the gospel,’ said Bac.

Bac estimated that about 50 villages over a 2 500km2 were serviced by Gelukspan Hospital. The population census of 1980 put the figure at 66 097. In 1985 it was placed at 86 604. The population profile of the district shows an expansive population with a high proportion of children and a high natural increase rate of 3.1%. About 16% of the population were children below 5 years of age while 45% was below 15. Less than 5% were older than 65.

The most distant clinic from the hospital was about 90km away. Due to the uneven distribution of villages in the district, 75% of the people stayed more than 50km from the hospital.

According to Dr Bac’s thesis, by 1977 Gelukspan Hospital boasted multiple facilities:

- a maternity ward with 30 beds;
- general wards for medical, surgical, gynaecological and psychiatric patients with 90 beds;
- paediatric wards with 90 beds;
- tuberculosis wards with 400 beds;
- institution for the physically handicapped with 320 beds and an old age home with 80 beds;
- a children’s home;

- outpatient department;
- theatre with basic equipment and instruments;
- X-ray department;
- occupational therapy department;
- four fixed clinics - small 4 roomed buildings. Only 3 were staffed with a total staff of 4 registered nurses;
- mobile clinic which operated 1 or 2 days per week from outpatient department;
- a small fleet of relatively new vehicles (2 lorries, 3 ambulances, 2 combis and numerous other cars).

The staff compliment was:

- one doctor helped by one or two army doctors;
- about 300 nurses, less than 20 were registered nurses or midwives;
- no qualified paramedical staff at all;
- only assistants in X-ray department, pharmacy and occupational therapy department;
- and hospital administrator with a good number of clerks and other supportive staff in the maintenance department, laundry, kitchen and stores.

By any measure it was a bustling hive of activity that launched careers and birthed superstars. I always brag that the most famous person who was born at Gelukspan Hospital is Tshepo Seate, who is better known as Stoan from the internationally renowned Afro-pop band Bongo Maffin. His family lived in the Trust village of Vrede. He was born there in 1975 and went on to become a force to be reckoned with in music, proving that there's more to Gelukspan that agriculture and farming.

9.3. The making of a leader, evangelism and family legacy



Figure 12: Evangelist Mongangane Mofokeng in the late 1960s, standing extreme right in a black waistcoat, as chairman of Phalane Committee that ran Gelukspan Hospital. Photo: Family Album

Takatso beamed with pride as he recalled his father's work ethic. 'Ntate was a real missionary, dedicated and totally committed. Before he moved to Gelukspan, he told me that he converted his mother Selloane, who was a traditional healer in the Orange Free State. He convinced her that those traditional practices didn't work, and so she became a Christian. He says he took her *ditaola* (tools) and threw them in the river Thethana, which the Boers called Rietpoort. Interestingly, this river was crossed by Piet Retief on his way northwards during the Great Trek. His animals drank water from that river while they rested.'

Takatso pointed out that religion was already in the Mofokeng household with his grandfather Takatso (after whom he is named) was the first to convert and ended up an elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME).

Having started his evangelism in his own home and winning his mother over, Mongangane had the energy and zeal to charge ahead with his missionary work in strange lands. In the early days of his work the church gave him a bicycle that he pedalled across the length and breadth of the Lichtenburg Reserve, from as far as the village of Sheila in the east, to the far west in Middleton, on the other side of Khunwana.

His mode of transport was upgraded with the arrival of the formidable pair of Rob and Rox drawing a cart made out of steel. The dark haired fillies became trusted companions for a few years until they retired due to old age.

Moving with the times and embracing the popularity of motorcycles, probably because of speed, Mongangane began an era that would earn him a title for life and cemented his legacy

as Mmoledi or Moruti wa Sekuta (the Evangelist on a Scooter). This exciting piece of transportation had its cool factor and attracted attention.

Jerry remembered the motorbike as a DKW two-stroke RT 125 model manufactured in Germany. The auto maker, Dampf-Kraft-Wagen founded in 1916 is known as an ancestor of the Audi company of today. From the 1920s until World War II, DKW was the biggest manufacturer of motorbikes. It went defunct in 1966.

As children playing in old disused vehicles in Gelukspan, I remember the rusty electric blue motorbike that we used to toss around. I did not comprehend its importance and place in history. To us, it was an abandoned and rusty piece of machinery our grandfather used to ride, so we were told.

Seetso Moremong had a better appreciation. He chose his words carefully as he dusted up the cobwebs in his memory to remember his earliest encounters with Mongangane. The most he could approximate was that he was a little boy growing up in Bapong village when the scooter became a legend of the *platteland* (flat land).

He said it would kick up white dust past the north eastern side of the village as Mongangane approached the graveyard situated by the side of the road. The tiny engine made a buzzing noise to announce his imminent appearance from across the landscape. Curious onlookers with not much to excite them would stand by their doors or closer to the fence to watch this wonder of automation as it zoomed past, eliciting squeals of delight from the children in a frenzy. With everybody in the village calling the man on the scooter Ntate Mmoledi (Sotho for evangelist), the then 10-year-old Moremong, assumed that Mmoledi was his name. It was later that he got to learn that it was only his title.

Tshidiso remembered that Mongangane travelled as far as Botswana with the scooter to visit a family friend, Ntate Twala. On one of the trips he skidded in the sandy desert dunes and sustained an injury in the leg that left a permanent scar. When he recovered he was back on the saddle.

Mongangane's generation of evangelists didn't have many opportunities and were poorly paid, most walked on foot or rode bicycles. That he could afford a scooter was a big deal. And he was soon to upgrade after the scooter gave in.

He had saved enough to buy himself his first car, a second hand white Ford Cortina. On the wrong side of 50, he took driving lessons and acquired his licence, earning him some respect in the streets of the Reserve even with the Whites in town. Speaking fluent Afrikaans, dressed smartly in a three piece suit and a tie, Mongangane always shared the story of how the Whites in town would mistake him as one of the rich Blacks from the Reserve. He said he would always politely disappoint them and explain that he was just *'n boer* (a farmer).

Ezekiel Lebotse grew energetic and jumped in his sofa as he remembered the early days of the Ford Cortina. 'He made me laugh once when he came to complain about how difficult it was to control the car. He said it often lost its grip on the road and he would clutch on to the steering wheel until he dripped in sweat. I knew the problem was the braking system. I took

one of the parts out and showed him what he needed to replace when he had enough money. He came after a few days and I offered to install the parts. The problem was fixed and he left a happy customer. I didn't want him to pay me as I was helping my father out and he never ceased praising me as a mechanic.'

With such a vast area of coverage, Mongangane spent a lot of time on the road and became an absent husband to his wife and a missing father to his sons. It was like Orlando all over again. For him to preach at the Sunday service in a far away village, he would have to leave home on a Saturday afternoon and return on Sunday night. During the Good Friday services he would be gone for the whole 10 day period.

His community leadership projects kept piling up – running the hospital, chairing school governing bodies and doing church administration. He was a man in demand.

Lebotse recounted: 'He was the chairman of the council called Phalane that ran the affairs of the hospital and the community working there. He headed the disciplinary committee also and would preside over hearings. They were merciful, they didn't actually expel people from work. They were more compassionate and more than anything they would have stern words for you to change your ways, without compromising you financially.

'Ntate Mofokeng saw the hospital grow as the leader of Phalane and on the other hand ran the church. I was elected an elder in the church council under his tutelage. He was the senior evangelist, assisted by Ntate Tholo, a Mopedi man from the North (Limpopo province). I became their assistant praying for patients. There were speakers that ran across the wards and the shop, so our prayers were broadcast across the hospital complex. I worked for three months, Ntate Tholo was slow and I was faster and Tholo didn't like it that much. Ntate Mofokeng then deployed me to attend to church matters in villages such as Diretsane and Weltevreden. I became his travel companion on his scooter and then later the Cortina.

'As the chairman of the school governing body (SGB) at Uitkyk Primary School which is now known as Reitsositse Primary School he led the construction of the new school. We collected R20 to extend the building of the school and Jan van Riebeck (the old school building) got demolished as new classes went up. I was against the idea because that building should have been left standing as a reminder of the apartheid school that only catered for the Boers who farmed in the area before we got re-settled here.'

Moremong shared: 'Outside of the church and the hospital I know that Ntate Mofokeng was influential in the building of several schools in the district. As the SGB chairman, he ensured the smooth running of these facilities. His strength seemed to lie in the ability to get people to pull together. When the community needed a school, they didn't have to petition the department of education, Ntate Mofokeng would be the first to agitate for change and the community would soon be sold and in a few years time a brand new school would be standing. He loved education and the community listened to him, that is why he would always be voted in as the chairman of the SGB, at one point he sat on the board of the district as the chairman of schools, that's how powerful he was.'

Mantlaletseng Morobe's eyes hiding behind her black rimmed spectacles twinkled as she recalled: 'Ntate Mofokeng was the chairman of Uitkyk Primary School. He used to visit the schools around the area to pray or host meetings. In the hospital complex he used to wake up early and did the rounds praying for the ill. He worked for the souls of people that man of God.

'He developed this place of Gelukspan and always spoke that this hospital should belong to the community. When there was a disagreement over the hospital some years back when the new government wanted to shut it down, we had to go to his home in Lotlhakane village where he retired and invited him to address the MEC and the government officials at the hospital. The entire population of the Reserve came to hear for themselves. It was through his speech that Gelukspan hospital was saved. If it wasn't for him it might have been demolished because they were determined to close it down.

It is amazing how there is general agreement that even with all the demands on his time, Mongangane played his roles well.

Moremong looked outside his window as if to find the right words: 'He did a great job of encouraging people to be religious and to attend the new church in the hospital complex. I was staying with my grandmother Lydia Ramothibe in Bapong at that time and she was a member of the Methodist Church. She was visually impaired and my job as a grandson was to take her to church. I was soon conflicted because of the influence of the young people at the N.G. Kerk especially my friend and neighbour Jasi Morobe who belonged there. It seemed to be more alive and the atmosphere exceptionally exuberant. I got taken so much that I joined the church. In 1977 Ntate Mofokeng taught me the catechasim class and the following year I joined MBB (youth ministry). I never looked back since then.'

Moremong remembered how famous Mongangane had become in the community. It was not only his hands-on approach and the personal touch he brought in his work, but he was a keen listener and observer that everyone warmed up to. 'He was interested in the well being of people and freely associated with others from different denominations, he never kept to himself and his church, as such he became a father to all without prejudice or bias. I learned how to be a people's person from him.

'One of his greatest traits was the ability to organise and mobilise. He could rally people towards a common cause because his power of persuasion was unmatched. He was charismatic. He was also organised and orderly in his work space. He could have been a teacher, in fact as a preacher of the Word, he was a teacher. He travelled far and wide across the district reaching some of the remotest villages no one ever ventured to visit. He always found a way to navigate the muddy terrains, the thorny back routes and the un-passable tracks, just so that he could reach the people and do God's work.

'He organised the congregation of Lichtenburg Reservaat which was made up of up to 12 or 13 *wyk* (wards). Hundreds upon hundreds of people would descend into the recreational hall of the hospital. It took real skill and flair to pull off an event of that magnitude when you consider what goes into it – collecting the money, transportation, accommodation, catering,

and still ensuring that people were revived at the end of the three day summit. The highlight was always the Saturday night vigil and after the official proceedings, he would hand over the programme to the youth ministry.

'He was physically strong and loved farming. The church had 5 morgen of land that he would work on. Life was different then and it took long hours of hard labour and sweat under the scorching sun as he weeded the crops with a hoe, there was no technology of today that has made things so much easier. When the going got tougher out in the fields he proved equal to the task, if not tougher. The congregation would then benefit from his hard work as we shared the mealies, sunflower or *mabele* (sorghum) that would be harvested.'

Morobe offered: 'Ntate Mofokeng was active, never lazy. He did his work diligently, whether chairing a school committee meeting or praying for the patients he did his work with passion. He was invested in the community and the schools. There is no doubt that he worked for this community. If it was possible he could be raised from the dead to come do the amazing work he did for the people. We need his kind of leadership and skill, but his time had come and gone. He was known for his gentleness and kind heart, always ready to laugh.'



Figure 13: Mongangane, wearing spectacles, leads a hymn along with co-evangelist Ntate Tholo and elder Ntate Bodibe. Photo: Family Album

When it came to preaching, Mongangane was revered. Moremong recalled: 'He was a powerful preacher. A man anointed and ordained by God. His sermons brought you closer to God. His knowledge and interpretation of the Bible was vast and had depth. He made it all easy to understand because he always did his homework and prepared, that's why his sermons always landed so well on the congregation.

‘In his efforts to build the church and entrench new Christian ways of life and culture, Ntate Mofokeng made sure that we honoured the day of Pentecost which followed the 40 days of the resurrection of Jesus. He would invite families to come to church to pray as we await the holy spirit. The numbers were really low in the beginning, but he persisted. He never got discouraged. He knew what he was doing was not for his glory but for the kingdom of God. Ntate Mofokeng worked to save our souls and for us to know God, let it never be forgotten. Ascension day is no longer a public day in South Africa but it’s important for us never to lose sight and to always mark that day. If he was still around, he would have called us up to the house of the Lord to pray while we await the return of the holy spirit.

‘He always read Psalm 27:10: *le ha mme le ntate ba ka ntahla, Jehova o tla nthola* (Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me). His life became all about the Bible and preaching. His style of preaching was educational and informative. He would introduce you to the text and give you the history and context of that place and time and then apply it to practical everyday life of today, so that you can understand your place in the Word. Then he concluded with a summary and a reminder of the take away points from the verse. He supplemented his sermon with a moving prayer, capable to shake mountains really, with his full and loud voice calling on Jehovah. Ntate Mofokeng pulled people towards God with a great and rare talent of a motivator.’

Morobe reminisced: ‘He was a prized preacher. He loved the hymn *Jo Lefifi Le Lekaakang* (Oh What Darkness Upon The World) and *Lona Ba Ratang Ho Phela* (Those Who Long to Be in the Flock of Jesus), in reference to the spirit of the people who were lost. He was a talented preacher and one of his favourite sermons was the story of Nicodemus, who went in the dark of the night to find Jesus seeking salvation and a better life. Jesus told him that he needed to be born again to see heaven. When you want to work for God you have to start again and shun earthly things and strive for the things of heaven... that was Ntate Mofokeng, yes. He showed us the way and built our faith.’

Lebotse agreed: ‘‘He was a preacher par excellence. His word reverberated in our heads and would be recorded in our hearts and souls for days after his sermons. He was skilful. We would meditate on what he said, that’s a mark of a great orator and preacher man. He had a God-given talent, he had a spirit anointed by God. And he lived a Godly life and stayed true to his calling, preaching to people and putting us in the right path.’

Away from the pulpit, Mongangane had to show strength and Moremong described him as such: ‘He was an unflinching disciplinarian. He didn’t waste time to reprimand you when you did wrong. When he chaired council meetings he was quick to call members to order during conflict and he always preached peace.’

Lebotse added: ‘He converted a lot of people. He was stern. When he was really angry he would even shake and then you would know that you are in trouble. I was like his last born so he always treated me with kid’s gloves. He went beyond the call of duty and invested so much of his time, effort and strength in building a community and giving us a better future.’

When all is said and done, Mongangane is remembered as a father by all. The advices he shared and the discipline he inculcated in his ‘children’ remain with those who still remember him.

Moremong told me: ‘Ntate Mofokeng was a father in Christ. I became so close to him. I was terrified of being in the church council when he recruited me and tried to come up with excuses but at the end of the day he won me over and brought me closer to the Christian way.

‘What made Ntate different from other ministers was that he was open, welcoming and fatherly. He had a loud voice and if you were not familiar with him you’d think he shouted, but it was a habit he developed as a preacher. That loud voice ended up being his speaking voice.’

Moremong echoed what many have told me during my interviews, and that is how Mongangane was loved back by the congregation he worked for. Being one to be so involved and invested in his work, the community of Gelukspan proved to be a perfect fit. He took his talents and developed the place, taking care of the spiritual, physical health and educational needs of the people. ‘We never experienced any protests within the church in his time. He lived his life with dignity, and was a diligent administrator, meticulous with the finances of the church, and his private life lacked drama or scandal - he was a father figure and a true leader,’ said Moremong.

In the 32 years that he was posted at Gelukspan, Mongangane served under three reverends Ferreira, Mothobi and Marokane. While they came and went, he remained a constant factor and rooted himself deeper in the church and community life. ‘He encouraged slacking members to attend church and his strategy was to laden them with responsibility by putting them in the church council. That seemed to work. It was either out of the respect we all had for him, or maybe to avoid the shame of having failed the church and our families. I remember these two Mokoena brothers that he always put on the spot to pray, the younger would say the older should pray as he’s older, but he would refuse. In the end, by always picking on them they ended up practicing prayer and eventually became comfortable and rose to the occasion whenever asked to pray,’ Moremong said.

Lebotse’s face got cloaked up in seriousness and his voice rose and softened as he shared his personal story: ‘As a young man working for a furnisher delivery company, one day I got home and my father told me that Ntate Mofokeng had told him that the hospital was looking for staffers. I got the job working in the kitchen. I didn’t like the idea of working with pots, and I thought this would make me less of a man. I asked myself how I could leave a job as a driver only to go tend to pots. I feared that I would even forget driving.

‘As I contemplated to quit and Ntate Mofokeng caught wind of my plans, he gave me a written warning that if I left I would not be allowed to return. As if that wasn’t enough, he came to my house to further instruct me to stay put. This time he was more calmer and gentle. Work hard, it’s going to be okay. Just don’t leave the hospital, he pleaded with me. I stayed at the hospital for 30 years and it’s all thanks to him. The Bophuthatswana (bantustan

government) sent me for training in Bloemfontein and I got promoted and rose through the ranks, all thanks to Ntate Mofokeng.'

He sees himself as part of the family. 'We grew up with Spanky as Boy (Takatso's nickname) was already out of town to study. We played football together as brothers, and never separated. Ntate Mofokeng was my father. He brought me up, gave me advices, reprimanded me now and then. I became a child of the Mofokeng. The only difference was our surnames, but in reality we were one people.

'Ntate Mofokeng was a beautiful soul. He was a well of wisdom and full of good advice. He knew a lot about life and shared those experiences generously. He always cautioned us against the wrong. He went into evangelism fully, he was not a fluke. It was a calling. He did a lot for my family, my brother and I worked in the hospital and my children too and he made it possible. I cannot imagine how our lives would have turned out had it not been for him.'

Moremong went dewy-eyed as he offered: 'I will always remember him as a soldier of Christ, a warrior. In EFF terms he was a Fighter. He brought people to God. Maybe if it wasn't for him I don't know where I would have been with my life. I appreciate that I met him in my life while I was young and I heard his sermons that encouraged us.

'He was a colossal figure of his time who commanded respect, a man of honour and humility. It is unfortunate that there is no monument or statue to show that he was there and planted the gospel. He has done enough to deserve such. When people speak of him they pay attention because his name carries so much power and influence. I can tell you now that if he was still around that place would not be so dilapidated and neglected. The buildings would not be flattened, he would have stood in front of the bulldozer to preserve the heritage and legacy of that place. I am convinced that he would have sourced the funds to preserve the buildings and save them from destruction. Gelukspan was a shining jewel of ingenuity and an example of a community coming together to create their own facilities led by one man and his church. It now lies in ruins.

'No man is perfect, but I cannot find anything to say about his weak points. He was strict, while other religious leaders would not shout as a form of bringing discipline, he would shout. Perhaps what counted against him would be that in tackling issues and disciplining parties at war he'd rather choose to reach a settlement and make peace, instead of getting into the issues. He applied the proverbial elastoplast on top of the wound and not unpack the real cause. In that way he was more reconciliatory and pushed for peace at all costs. He was a peaceful man.

Morobe concurred: 'He was graceful and compassionate. He was soft and disliked conflict.'

Concluded Moremong: 'Ntate had such a sharp and great mind and a gift of memory. If life afforded us a chance to choose what we would like to inherit from our families, I'd have wished that one of his children could inherit his brain. When people talk about a brain drain, it's when we lose the likes of Ntate Mofokeng. He was a reservoir of knowledge and wisdom, a historian and a well of wisdom.'

Lebotse looked defeated as he surveyed what is left in Gelukspan. He reckoned that Mongangane's departure meant the end of an era: 'It's disheartening that after Ntate Mofokeng left, the church lost its belongings, the lorry, the combi and the organ, that got burned by the reverend he left here and who was a reckless driver. We have not known peace since then. A lot of people scattered in different directions others left and joined the church in Itsoseng township. When we lost the elders like him, we took many steps backwards.'

I return to Takatso to reflect on the family legacy and what's to salvage from the ruins of Gelukspan. It is evident that as the hospital grew in stature and size it became a big employer in the area and provided livelihoods. But the growth spurt didn't necessarily make the Mofokeng family wealthy.

On the contrary, when the shovels were put down and the dignitaries cut the ribbon to open the facilities, Mongangane was in the crowds and never received any glory. His name was not included in the memorial stone of the church and the hospital does not bear his name anywhere. This never bothered him, because his was the salt of the earth goodness and didn't seek praise or validation. It was from the goodwill of the church people and the community that he would find his grace.

Takatso shared: 'We got to Gelukspan with nothing to our name but a few items. A church elder named Ntate Twala who lived on the other side of Mafikeng gave us a cow, and a push for my father to get into cattle farming. He sent us the cow with a calf so that we could have a supply of milk. After the calf was grown its mother went back to the Twalas and we remained with it. It was *kgomo ya mafisa*, (a borrowed cow) that was milked by Spanky and my father. I was my mother's son while Spanky was my father's, and he looked after the cows. We have never forgotten the generosity and kindness of Ntate Twala.'

More benevolence was to come when the community offered the Mofokengs a piece of land to cultivate, some 5 morgen which was ploughed by a family friend and congregant Ntate Morobe along with his son Mabuti and Takatso himself. The land yielded a decent harvest of mealies, sunflower and pumpkin in a good year.

Takatso said at that time they experienced the warmth and *botho* (*ubuntu*) of Batswana. 'The people were giving. During the summer harvest we would have a beeline of benefactors dropping off watermelons, mealies and pumpkin, when they came over to the hospital or even in transit to town in Mafeking or Lichtenburg.

'We were brought up in the Setswana ways with all the other children. During the ploughing season I would team up with Mabuti of the Morobe family. We spanned oxen and lined them

up and tilled his 10 morgen first and then move over to my family's 5 morgen. There were no tractors then.

'The first people to own a tractor in Gelukspan was the Ramothibe family and they became so rich. I remember when I finished matric, I was the very first child in the whole of the Reserve to complete matric, and Ntate Ramothibe visited home. On his way out he told me that he heard that I finished matric and invited me to come drive his tractor for him. I politely declined and told him that I was still going to further my studies. I never forget that I, as the first matriculant in the whole of Lichtenburg Reserve, was offered to drive Ntate Ramothibe's tractor as my achievement and reward.'

Takatso said even though Gelukspan had become home, he was never really fully happy that his father lived among Batswana. 'I felt like they had trapped my father against his will. But he never wanted to go back to his people. His idea of missionary work was about developing people and looking after them, and not his own people, but people in faraway lands. He became a Morolong and was welcomed and revered among the Barolong.

'My father was physically strong, not even riding a scooter and being exposed to the elements that could bring him harm could weaken him. Some people have to deal with after effects of spending too much time on motorbikes, but not my father.'

Takatso has come a long way since the offer by Ntate Ramothibe to drive his tractor as the first matriculant in Gelukspan. He has reached the heights of education, earning his PhD in theology from the Ivy League Princeton University in the US.

He said there was no other option. 'We came to Gelukspan with nothing and our fortunes were changed by education. Our hope was to keep education in the family, and indeed we stuck to school. When I finished standard 6 others stayed to drive tractors and I went to boarding school in Emmarentia. I travelled by bus with Hilda Lebotse (who married Ezekiel) as we went to further our education. My parents sacrificed everything to ensure that we went to school because we didn't have anything else. It also helped that we were intelligent.'

After his B.A. degree at Turfloop (now University of Limpopo) he studied in the Netherlands and eventually the US. 'When I got to Princeton University, as part of our training, there was an evening where an African American was invited to conscientise us about the issues of social ills we could face in America. He did a big job that man... He asked us to close our eyes and think back to when we first saw a white person. I went back to Orlando Shelters and remembered the white boy and white girl who played the guitar in the street. I also remembered the white guard in the train to Springs when we went to visit my aunt. Then in Gelukspan, for a stretch of land, over 100km from the east to the west and over 60km from the north to the south, I only knew of three white men, so white people didn't mean anything to us.'

It wasn't until Takatso got to Emmarentia that he felt white power and presence. He got involved in student activism in 1961 for the commemoration of Sharpeville Massacre that

coincided with the first commemoration of South Africa as a republic. He got expelled and had to return to Gelukspan breaking the hearts of his parents.

‘I felt like I had shamed the family and the community, so much so that my father asked me to spend more time indoors than outside because people were beginning to ask why I wasn’t at school.

‘Emmarentia refused to release my books, and told me I wouldn’t be allowed to write my exams in Transvaal. So I went to seek refuge at Barolong High School in Mafeking which was under the Cape Province. The principal there, Mr CN Lekalake was understanding when I told him my story. I was very proud of what I did in Emmarentia and he allowed me space. So I went back home and studied by myself for six months and when the results came, I was the only one who passed that year, all their candidates at Barolong High School failed.’

Thinking back to the poverty that greeted them in Gelukspan in 1952, to the building of the church and the hospital with his own hands as a *dagaboy*, and becoming the first matriculant in the Trust earning the offer to drive Ramothibe’s tractor, only to fall from grace at Emmarentia as an activist, and then to redeem himself so spectacularly at Barolong High School, Takatso stands as proof that the Gelukspan mission headed by Mongangane was worthwhile.

What Takatso is modest enough not to tell me is that, in one generation, out of the desolation and hopelessness of being a Black South African during apartheid, he became the first in his family and extended clan to return from the US as an Ivy League graduate. His grandfather worked in the farms of the Free State, his father was a mission-school-educated community builder and he scaled the heights of education earning a PhD and went on to carve a career for himself as a respected Black theologian. Perhaps that’s the ‘luck’ in Gelukspan.

10.The wind beneath his wings



Figure 14: Mahadi Mofokeng, in the middle holding the clock with cat eyes spectacles, was a leader of the Christelike Vroue Vereeniging (CVV), next to her on the right is Mantlaletseng Morobe, who was interviewed in this study. Photo: Family Album

For the most part of this research I have focused on the work of Mongangane and what he did for the community of Gelukspan, in service of the N.G. Kerk as an evangelist, building Gelukspan hospital and running schools in the area.

His wife, Mahadi, was not an inconsequential bystander. If a man is the head of the family, then the woman is indeed the neck that directs the actions of the head. This rings true of her. She was no pushover and never one to cower and submit. The story of her entrepreneurial spirit and homemaking skills is of great interest and reveals a bit more about the pecking order in the Mofokeng household and daily living.

Wikipedia describes a housewife (also known as a homemaker) as a woman whose work is running or managing her family's home – caring for her children, buying, cooking and storing food for the family; buying goods that the family needs for everyday life; housekeeping, cleaning and maintaining the home; and making, buying and /mending clothes for the family – and who is not employed outside the home.

Mahadi was a textbook version of a housewife.

She was the de facto mother of the Gelukspan Hospital complex. She was called Mme (mother) with affection and sincerity by everybody inside the church and out. It was largely due to Mahadi's warmth and generosity that the mission house in which the family lived became a refuge for many in desperate situations, destitute families and those who simply missed the last bus home. She laid out the bed and offered a warm meal to the guests and offered a sympathetic and caring ear to their troubles.

Mahadi's go-getter spirit shone through when she whipped out her Singer sewing machine to become the local tailor and dressmaker, skilfully crafting the black woollen hats, white collars and black jackets for the Christelike Vroue Vereeniging (CVV women's ministry of the church) and the luxurious black velvet hats for the women in Mokgatlo wa Bacha BaBakreste (MBB – youth ministry of the church) uniforms. As the evangelist's wife, it was her responsibility to clothe the new members at the special Good Friday service and the newly clothed would wear them with pride when attending church services in their local branches.

She also worked in the Herberg/Tlamelang Special School. She would tell us stories of how they kicked the blankets at 4am, so that when the children living with disabilities got up they would have warm water to bath and their breakfast ready. They would make their beds and then wheel them to different sections of the hospital for assessment, physiotherapy, classes or some time outdoors in the sun. I suppose that earned her bragging rights to be known as a nurse.

It was during one of the shifts that she slipped and landed on her knee. An X-ray investigation declared that she was not fractured, but the knee never recovered. She always wondered if she had been misdiagnosed whenever the sharp pain tore through her. Not that it slowed her down, she put on a knee cap to get around and function. She carried heavy loads and buckets of water, always on the move, always fixing something, always cleaning. She was never one to sit on her hands.

Mahadi always reminded me that she was the first patient to get a set of false teeth when the dental clinic opened in the hospital. They lasted decades because of her diligent care and attention. She would frighten us as children when she took them out and exposed her bottom naked gums, like a magician, freaky to us as we gasped in shock.

Takatso encapsulated the spirit of Mahadi when he called her a 'self-made food technologist'. Mahadi became a one-woman-home-industry with her tenacity and her never dying enterprising spirit. She earned her own legendary reputation as the resident baker in Gelukspan, making the most appetising buns that side of the Western Transvaal.

The smell of freshly baked goods in the oven wafted out of the Mofokeng home into the nearby houses, attracting many eager customers who were also taken by their golden brown colour and the cushy soft inside, not to mention her secret ingredients that gave a kick in the mouth. The buns came in plain and raisin variety too. She would extend the life of her bakes by turning them into rusks. A few minutes in the oven hardened them and she would store supplies that would be dipped in tea for months to come.

It was only now in conversation with my aunt Tshidiso, that I learn that Mahadi imported the buns recipe from her sister Masabata Sefatsa's mother in law. The family was visiting in Kroonstad, Orange Free State where she saw the Sefatsa matriarch make what was called *mabaso*, so intrigued was Mahadi that she asked for the recipe and replicated it in Gelukspan adding her twist and flavour here and there. She extended the recipe to include *magwinya*

(fatcakes) that also sold like, well, hot cakes. Tshidiso herself interned in the kitchen as an assistant to Mahadi and witnessed the magic first hand.

Tshidiso said the success of the buns business was nothing short of a phenomenon for a housewife. With the money she made, Mahadi managed to buy furniture at Gremm's Furnishers in Lichtenburg that included a kitchen suite, cupboards, sofas and beds that were delivered home in Gelukspan.

Ever industrious, Mahadi spent time outside in the garden tending to her vegetable patch. She grew mealies, flat white boer pumpkin, sunflower, spinach, beans, onions, tomatoes, carrots, cabbages, and beetroot – although on a small scale, but the harvest was enough to share with neighbours.

A good year with the peach trees would yield hundreds of the yellow cling and dessert variety as well as what was known as *los-pit*, which were popular for being soft and mushy without losing the texture and sweetness of a good peach. Mahadi would 'can' the preserved peaches, cutting them in halves or quarters and boiling them.

From what I remember, she created a thick syrup by boiling white sugar and water. The peaches would be placed in a Consol glass jar and the hot syrup poured in to capacity. The most crucial stage of the 'canning' process was the closure of the jar with a stainless steel lid, this had to be executed swiftly and with precision, one mistake and the oxygen quotient exceeded what's required, the jar would ferment in a few days and the contents thrown out as waste. The jars would be covered in layers of thick cloths to maintain warmth for at least a day and our year's supply of canned fruit would fill the cupboards in the pantry. Custard and peaches or bread pudding with peaches became a Sunday lunch dessert staple at home. She could package these jars and export some to neighbours, friends and family, with a stern warning that the jars must be returned before the next peach season.

She had her secret ingredients I may not remember now, but ever the enterprising home maker, she expanded her preserves to include tomato relish and jam made out of peaches, apricots or mulberry. She managed to pass this skill on to her daughters-in-law who continue to practice this family tradition.

She continued to produce *mangangajane* (dried peaches) like she had done in Stofberg. Much like Takatso and Spanky who in 1949 climbed to the roof to steal the peaches, I have vivid memories from the1980s of us, the grandchildren, helping ourselves to the fruit. If it wasn't our sticky little fingers, it was the pesky little birds which descended to ravage the peaches. Fortunately for us, the years had made Mahadi softer as she didn't unleash her wrath on us like she did on our fathers. Whatever she could salvage in the end of the drying period would be our year's supply of sweet nibbles. Some of the peaches were turned into stewed fruit for dessert or breakfast to go with yoghurt.

Motoho (soft porridge) is a breakfast staple in Basotho homes. It comes in the soured variety, known as *seqaqabola* or plain, called *lesheleshele*. The soured flavour has its roots in the traditional beer brewing culture, using *tomoso* (yeast-like agent). While she never brewed

beer nor drank it, Mahadi was an expert in brewing *seqaqabola* either with *mabele* (sorghum) or mealie meal. She would also extend its life by turning it into *mahleu* (mageu) that she served her guests as an alternative drink to tea or coffee. It also took a skill of its own to ensure that *mahleu* were smooth and not lumpy and this was in the stirring of the pot and the time on the stove. This filling drink was served cold in summer and hot in winter.

Of all the animals that 'agreed' with her, the chickens seemed to be her biggest passion. There were turkeys and ducks in the yard, but they were side shows. The stars were the chickens. She would have over 100 milling the yard, big and small, black, white, yellow and grey. She had the patience to raise little one day old chicks until they were old enough to fend for themselves. Even in retirement, the chicken remained her spirit animal. They would gather around her, sit on her and like the mother hen, she would marshal the flock to their enclosure where she would feed them crushed maize or whole corn depending on their age.

Mahadi believed in the adage, cleanliness is next to godliness. She was obsessed with clean airy spaces. Her kitchen was to be kept neat and spotlessly clean with the dishes washed out of the sink and packed away. She also obsessed about the kitchen cloth that wiped the cupboards and other surfaces. She preferred it white, so that she could quickly spot the dirty ones and without delay relegate them to the shame of being *skrop-laps* (rags to scrub or wipe the floor).

She loved her linen white, because she believed that angels visited us in our sleep in the night and it was fitting that they found you sleeping in the colour of purity, cleanliness and godliness.

She took pride in the beauty of her surrounds and always decorated her house as such, especially the *voorhuis* (sitting room) pairing a new set of floral curtains with an arrangement of flowers from the garden. Little pieces of artefacts that she picked up on her trips to the Orange Free State, Durban or Botswana would be infused into the living room. She may have had western inclinations, but her African aesthetic always found a place of pride.

With a lifelong appreciation of choral music, she loved curling up on the sofa with her Hosanna hymnbook, going through the staff notation as she practised a new hymn. Her depth and knowledge of the hymns of the N.G. Kerk was unmatched. This love for music can be traced back to her earlier years as the daughter of *ou* Chaane, a pastor of the Apostolic Faith Mission church – which she funnily pronounced as Five Mission – they sang a lot of Sesotho hymns from the iconic Lifela tsa Sione hymnbook. The Hosanna took a substantial number of hymns from Lifela tsa Sione. She always occupied her place in the soprano section of the church choir while my grandfather would be in baritone. They earned a plethora of trophies at regional church choir competitions under the baton of Mistress Dorothy Morapedi.

She loved God. She prayed. In fact she once told me that she preferred praying to preaching as she connects better with the higher power in that state.

Shopping brought her so much joy, the mail order kind. She introduced me to the wondrous world of Charles Velkes - a retailer of goods including crockery, cutlery, electrical

equipments, clothes ornaments and decorative stuff. It was ahead of its time. Like today's lockdown and quarantine businesses, it had no showroom or premises, instead it sent out catalogues to customers at intervals throughout the year. The customers then sent their orders to an address in Cape Town and the goods would be delivered by post.

She would browse through the catalogue, ogle over the colourful pictures on paper, read the brief description and price. Then she would cut out a perforated order form and send us to the post office in the hospital complex. Payment had to accompany the order or be made on delivery.

Collecting her packages from P.O. Box 1, Radithuso – our postal address – rivalled Christmas festivities. The oohs, the ahhs and the gasps of delight when she discovers that the ornament she ordered actually looked better in real life than in the catalogue were too precious. She wouldn't waste time placing the second batch of goodies.

A recent search on what happened to Charles Velkes revealed that it was all the rage in the 1970s and 80s and about 40% of its customers resided within the Republic of South Africa; the balance in Botswana, Swaziland, Transkei, Bophuthatswana and South West Africa (now Namibia).

A skilled bargain hunter, we did most of our grocery shopping around the Lucky 7 specials cycle. The local general dealer, owned by Shepstone Molamu, would issue the catalogue of the goodies on sale. Mahadi would sit down with a pen and mark all she needed and the quantity. We would then be sent off in boxes to collect the grocery. The Lucky 7 sign became synonymous with her. Even in retirement, she looked out for the shop that carried the Lucky 7 specials and lo and behold, Shadi's General Dealer in Lotlhakane did. My assignment was never to miss the catalogue and I would rush home to show her the mind blowing special of 2.5kg of flour at a shockingly low R1.29 from the R2.50 it was in store.

Her favourite flower was a rose. White roses, because, well, white is pure and clean, and Rose happened to be her mother's second name. So wherever she lived, she grew a little patch of roses. Even the hard and unforgiving soil of Mafikeng had to be tilled and fertilised until at least two bushes bore some petals to brighten an old lady's face.

She loved education. She always said that if she had been born at a different time she would have gone on to earn a doctorate, but life and the universe conspired that she would go as far as standard 3. But seeing how she wrote her letters in cursive and her command of the language, it is clear that she went further to better herself. She was more than just literate, she was educated straight from the university of life.

As tradition dictated, Mahadi was Mrs Mofokeng, but she didn't lose her birth totem, a lion. She was *moradi wa Chaane* (the daughter of Chaane), a Motaung (a person of the lion). You would never want to get on her wrong side. She could roar when she was mad, a strict disciplinarian who spoke her mind. She had a sharp sense of humour and wit. A Mosotho woman who shot from the hip, never to buy face. There are words she would say and I would

cringe, because they sounded like swear words, but to her Sotho tongue she was being explicit enough to be understood and never misconstrued.

She was irrepressible, indomitable, sophisticated and classy. It was on her back that the family of Mofokeng was raised and rested.

11. The problem with the church – in search of the French connection



Figure 15: The Beersheba Mission station, seen below the town of Caledon on the map of the Orange Free State, depicting the eastern Free State towns, mission stations and the land Moshoeshoe offered Boer settlers in 1845. Photo: James Walton

11.1. The grand theft at Beersheba

By the time the cannons and the guns ceased fire, gun powder hung thickly in the air and the mountains still reverberated with the echoes of the roaring deadly weapons, Black bodies drenched in blood were strewn across the land.

Dismembered and torn limbs bore testimony of the merciless crack-of-dawn carnage that befell the unsuspecting community. The over 2 000 bodies would never be buried. Their graves were the stomachs of wild animals and birds of prey that feasted on them.

Counting the devastating losses beyond human life: over 5 000 cattle, 4 000 sheep, 500 horses and countless goats stolen. Pigs and poultry shot down. Crops burnt and some cut down and carried off. Large sums of money stolen. Male clothing burnt and female garments carried off. Books burnt in a bonfire, some piled in the school house and filled with water. Houses pillaged and burnt, save for the school building and the mission house that survived a cannon shot.

Wagons of those who had fled in the night were overtaken the following day and the old men killed, women stripped and thrown into the river, their Bibles destroyed and wagons burnt. The able bodied men who ran away to the kloof killed.

The marauding Boers were repulsed when a group of armed young men of the station made a stand at the river. The Boers thought it was a force coming against them from Lesotho and they ran back to the mission station.

This blood curdling account of the murder of African Christians in 1858 authored by social anthropologist David Coplan in Erasing History: The Destruction of the Beersheba and Platberg African Christian Communities in the Eastern Orange Free State, 1858-1983 (2009) haunted my recent memory.

The commandos were insatiable, merciless and brutal as they executed their murderous expedition before sunrise on Beersheba, a bustling citadel of Black excellence under the tutelage of French missionary Samuel Rolland.

Coplan stated that Rolland of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (P.E.M.S) established the Beersheba mission station around March 1835 when Moshoeshoe started with the Christianisation of Basotho in the land west of Mohokare River (Caledon). Rolland came from Bothithong near Kuruman, where he ran a mission station in the land of Batswana.

He left Bothithong and followed Batswana who went eastwards in search of better grazing and water. They settled in the area near the Mohokare where they found good grazing and plenty of water.

Rolland established the Beersheba mission station on the land later called Zevenfontein on the west bank of the Mohokare. This part of the country was irrigated by seven fountains in the land of Basotho under two chiefs, Moeletsi and Mooi.

Coplan documented that: 'Under missionary direction, Black Christian artisans trained others to build remarkable houses and public buildings including a primary school, displaying fine stone craftsmanship constructed from local materials. The school could accommodate 200 children and was the first in the area. Books for the school were printed in Cape Town and then at Beersheba itself. In addition a church and a mission house were built; and here were tailoring and leatherworking facilities. Christian practical education proved to be an effective vehicle for both conversion and community-building.'

Pioneering for its time, the mission published a newspaper, Moboleli oa Lithaba (the clarion) in Sesotho in 1841 –a first for the territory – targeting the emerging Black Christian literate. It tackled religious matters and mission activity in the district. Elizabeth Rolland, the missionary's wife, also ran a primary school which was a first in the area too.

After the Beersheba massacre of African Christians and the destruction of the mission station, Rolland was arrested and upon release fled to other mission stations. And in one swoop, Beersheba as it was known, was wiped off the face of the earth.

Anthropologists like David Coplan have dug out the ruins to bring this bloodbath to the centre of discussions on Black Christian history.

Takatso has devoted time lately to look into the Beersheba Massacre and write about it. He corroborated most of what Coplan documented.

Sitting in his farm house in Devon, Mpumalanga, one winter night, he enthralled me with what his research has yielded. He said Moshoeshoe indicated to Sir George Napier of the British government in the Cape Colony that the land inhabited by Basotho included the entire area between the Senqu (Orange River), in the south and Lekoa (Vaal River) in the north. The

Maluti in the east marked the boundary between Basotho and AmaZulu. The boundary in the west was the meeting point of the two rivers. The British government in the Cape Colony recognised those boundaries.

The first white people to cross the Senqu from the Cape Colony were hunters and traders. They first encountered Basotho and sought permission from Moshoeshoe and the chiefs in the area to trade and hunt. They also passed on information about the land, its fertility, its people and its form of government.

When the first Voortrekkers crossed the Senqu, adhering to the conditions agreed to by Moshoeshoe and Stockenstroom, the Basotho already lived there and tilled the land, planting maize, sorghum, watermelons, pumpkins, beans and other agricultural products for their livelihood and trade with the Cape Colony. They were already established hunters of game that was available in great quantities in the area.

When the Boers in the Cape Colony realised that there was more grass for grazing north of the Senqu, they wished to take their cattle there. The entire area was populated by Basotho who had villages governed by chiefs who acknowledged Moshoeshoe as their king. Some of those chiefs were Phoshudi, Moshoeshoe's brother and Mooi, a Morolong chief. They were small farmers who ploughed, kept animals and hunted.

When these individual Boers arrived, they had to get permission from Moshoeshoe. They also knew that they had to seek permission from Andries Stockenstroom, the deputy governor in the Cape Colony. He gave them that permission on certain conditions which were negotiated with Moshoeshoe, including that the Boers should return to the Cape Colony at the end of three months and they were not allowed to erect any buildings or to till the land.

The weakness of this arrangement, Takatso reflected, was that it was not written down, not monitored nor policed by any of the two authorities. It all depended on the willingness of the individual Boers to adhere to it. All historians of the time say that the temptation to transgress lay in the power the Boers derived from owning guns at the time when Basotho owned none. They gradually deliberately transgressed as soon as their numbers and guns increased.

Moshoeshoe appointed Rolland as his representative in that area. His task, in addition to Christianising Basotho, was to receive and register the Boers crossing the Senqu and placing them on land to graze their cattle. All of them recognised Rolland as Moshoeshoe's representative and even called him ‘the President’. Rolland regularly reported to the king on these activities.

J.P. Hoffman, owner of a farm called Jammerberg Drift near Wepener on the west side of the Mohokare was Moshoeshoe's friend, who later became the first president of the Orange Free State republic. He built the first stone church at Beersheba.

Beersheba became a centre of progress, excellence and education in the eastern Orange Free State. The town was bigger than Smithfield of today. It was more important that Bloemfontein. All the meetings of Moshoeshoe and the British government were held in Beersheba, not in Bloemfontein which was just a garrison for the British on guard for the Orange Free State sovereignty.

The seminary for Kereke ya Fora was in Beersheba. The missionaries trained teachers and ministers.

In the early hours of 23 March 1858, Beersheba Mission Station was attacked by Boer burghers under the leadership of L. Sauer, the *Landdrost* of Smithfield, acting on instructions from Boshoff, the president of the Orange Free State republic.

The *staatsraad* of that republic had voted to declare war on Basotho on the west and east of the Mohokare. Boshoff had formally declared that war and informed Moshoeshoe. In preparation, he had written to George Grey, governor of the Cape Colony requesting him to allow the Boers in the Cape Colony to join in this murder, but Grey refused. Boshoff also invited the Boers under Paul Kruger to join and they agreed. Further invitation was extended to Boers under Andries Pretorius who also joined in along with burghers from Bloemfontein.

The unsuspecting, innocent and defenceless Basotho Christians residing in the mission station could never have predicted the bloodshed that would befall them. The Boers left Smithfield at 4am heading for the mission station which they completely surrounded with the instruction to kill every Mosotho, old and young, man and woman, sick and healthy, able bodied and living with disability.

They instructed all of Beersheba to disarm even though they knew that the people were not armed because no black person was allowed by law to import arms and ammunition. Only White people were allowed to do so.

Part of the instruction was to burn all the houses of Basotho, the entire mission station buildings and all the equipment and products which included books, manuscripts and hymn books. The command was also to steal all the crops in the gardens and food stored in the granaries and to burn every crop in the fields of the entire Beersheba farms. Only Rolland and his family, their house and properties were to be spared.

All writers who describe this murder in detail state that the pretext was to disarm Basotho and give them no time to hand in whatever weapons some might have had. They were not warned that war had been declared on all Basotho and the reason for the killing which was about to ensue.

The Basotho were given five minutes to hand in all arms before the random firing started. Rolland said that some who hid in ravines were found and killed. All Basotho were killed and a systematic burning of all buildings ensued. Chiefs Moeletsi, Mooi and Rolland were taken to Smithfield as prisoners.

Takatso said according to Moshoeshoe's account, some old women and sick people were also taken prisoners and marched to Smithfield. Thereafter all Basotho in all the Beersheba farms were hunted down and killed indiscriminately and all their houses reduced to ash and their animals stolen and driven to Smithfield where they were shared among the Boers.

There was a river of blood flowing in the entire village of Beersheba. The dead of Beersheba were left where they were killed. No graves exist at Beersheba for the decent burial of Beersheba Christians.

Takatso said Moshoeshoe wrote a letter to JN Boshoff about this killing of the African Christians. He noted that as a 'heathen' he had attacked Sekonyela but he never burned down the church of Sekonyela's people, but Boshoff, as a Christian burned down a church of the Africans. He questioned what kind of Christianity they practiced.

11.2. The reckoning

As I scavenge for clues in the ruins of Beersheba, the stench of blood and the echoes of gun fire are a distant memory. I stand here as a practising Christian with a conflicted identity. I was brought up in the N.G. Kerk, a church that birthed and justified apartheid. It troubles me that my family has devoted its life to it for decades. I'm also carrying on the legacy, although the church has morphed into the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) and has denounced apartheid calling it a sin against humanity.

My grandfather Mongangane was an evangelist of the N.G. Kerk, my uncle Takatso is now a retired minister, my other uncle Jerry is also a retired evangelist while my late father Moses served as an elder at the Pokello congregation in Katlehong as did my two other late uncles Spanky and Bennet in Itsoseng, Lichtenburg.

We grew up calling the church Kereke ya Fora, literally translated to Church of France or French Church. It has been a source of great conflict and disconnect for me, because N.G. Kerk is rooted in the Netherlands and is also known as Dutch Reformed Church. It used Afrikaans which originated from Dutch as a mode of communication. I have always wanted to establish the French connection. How is it that it is a Dutch church and yet it's known as Church of France? For years, no one could provide answers.

Many years later, and after a few facelifts and URCSA as a new name, I sit in the front pews where the men's ministry of the church sits in Alexandra township in Johannesburg, and recite the Apostle creed and confession, worship and sing hymns that glorify the grace of God just as we did in the N.G. Kerk of old.
How did I get here?



Figure 16: The author, second from right, is a member of the men's ministry of the church. He is seen here singing from the Hosanna hymnbook of the N.G. Kerk, now used in the URCSA, at his home congregation of Alexandra, Johannesburg. Photo: Family Album

This dissertation has been a pursuit of some of those answers and an exploration of self. As I retrace the steps of Mongangane, a cardinal figure in my life and the one who changed the trajectory of my family's destiny, I have walked down meandering corridors of history. He was missionary educated, the first to be literate in the entire family tree and went on to have a successful career as an evangelist and missionary.

In conversation with Takatso, I asked him to explain and account how they got to serve in the N.G. Kerk, a church known to have justified the oppression of Black people.

It had what became known as 'daughter churches'. These were demarcated along racial lines. The mother church was for the whites, N.G. Kerk in Afrika for Blacks, N.G. Kerk Sending for the Coloureds and N.G. Kerk Mission for the Indians. By implication and my calculations, the non-White races in the N.G. Kerk were in bed with the perpetrators of apartheid, their oppressors.

They were seen as sell outs because they attended the apartheid church. On the ambiguity of being black and reformed, Boesak wrote: 'The God of the Reformed Tradition was the God of slavery, fear, persecution and death. Yet for those Black Christians this was the God to whom they had to turn to for comfort, for justice, for peace.' (Boesak, 1984)
It was at the height of Black Theology of the 1970s that these voices within N.G. Kerk in Afrika and Sending began to grow louder and braver in opposition of the mother church's stance of continued justification of apartheid. (Masuku, 1998) They declared that apartheid was a sin, and by association, their mother sinned in her stance on this shameful human right violation. (Plaatjies Van Huffel, 2013)

It culminated in 1994 when the church cut ties with the mother and struck out as the URCSA. They introduced the Belhar Confession that took a stand against segregation and other human rights violations. (Plaatjies Van Huffel, 2013)

The move to URCSA was not peaceful as some congregations, mostly in Free State and North West resisted the change, leading to some clashes that became physical and police intervention sought leading to litigation over the property and recognition of the N.G. Kerk. The relationship has somehow mended in 2015 through a settlement and the arbitration of the mother church and talks are ongoing to unite the URCSA and the remaining N.G. Kerk congregations. (Pali, 2018)

I asked Takatso about the contrasts of his life as a Black Theologian rooted in the philosophy of 1970s Black Consciousness and Black Power yet a minister in the N.G. Kerk. The answers he shared pointed me to another alley of history indicating that this church was not founded by the Boers, but by the French missionaries of Moshoeshoe.

11.3. Establishing the French connection: A Case Study of Lifela tsa Sione

In this part of the research, I set out to build a case that will prove that Kereke ya Fora (Church of France) was 'stolen' if not appropriated without compensation by the marauding Boers of the Dutch origin church who invaded the eastern Orange Free State and spread their

tentacles throughout the Boer sovereign republic. And that the Beersheba Massacre was a turning point in the evolution of the church.

As the Boers grew more economically and politically powerful, they brought in the Blacks they encountered along the way who had already been converted by the French missionaries, and Christened them Dutch.

Hosanna, the hymnbook used in the Black N.G. Kerk, is a practical artefact and remnant that proves the French connection.

Even with a new name, the URCSA has kept the liturgy of the N.G. Kerk in Afrika as well as the Hosanna.

In the foreword of the Hosanna, dated 1966, HCS van der Merwe the chairman of the hymnbook commission noted that for years, the church used hymnbooks of other churches such as Lifela tsa Sione tsa Tirelo ea Molimo mo Kereken le Sekolen published by the Religious Tract Society in 1907 in Setswana. Boasting 361 hymns it became known as Kopelo in 1920. The isiZulu hymnbook known as Dumisani was arranged by Reverend LHM Jandrell whereas the isiXhosa version Incwadi Yamaculo was arranged by Reverend JC Oosthuysen.

The General Synod of the N.G. Kerk in Afrika set up a commission to curate a new hymnbook in different languages on 17 August 1953. This resolution was passed on to the non-white church synod in May 1959 and the four synods chose their respective commissions which started work in October of the same year. (Van der Merwe,1966)

The general synod of the non-white churches resolved that the Sesotho version would be the responsibility of the Orange Free State synod and in 1959 a 10 member commission was set up, chaired by BW Zietsman and HCS van der Merwe as the secretary. Zietsman noted that the translation of the hymns proved to be an arduous and painstaking task that took them four years.

The Hosanna was adopted on 30 March 1966 in Bloemfontein translated in Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana, isiZulu and isiXhosa. It included 111 hymns taken from Lifela tsa Sione from the Morija Sesutu Book Depot and they are clearly marked as such in the Hosanna. Some of the hymns were translated from the mother church hymnbook.

The origins of the generic name *sefela* (plural: lifela or difela) equivalent of a Christian hymn are traced back to the work of the London missionary Robert Moffat who worked among Batlhaping in present day Taung and in Basutoland. Moffat appropriated the term *sehela* (a variant spelling of *sefela*) from the Batlhaping who used it for the sacred initiation songs similar to those known as *likoma* by Basotho. (Coplan, 1994)

Coplan put it this way: Ever seeking to steal the heathen's thunder Moffat brought the term with him when he came to work in Basutoland in 1830 where it was given the local form *sefela*. This perhaps accounts for the otherwise curious association in the minds of some of Guma's informants between the sacred secrecy of likoma and the profane publicity of lifela. The linking quality that attracted Moffat was a moral emotionality, by turns spiritually or

materially animated, for according to Basotho commentators, both the songs of the travellers and the songs of Zion are 'cries of the heart'. Sefela often expresses sincere religiosity as well as satire of Christian institutions and doctrine, explicitly mirroring the emotional catharsis of hymnody. Coplan noted that Lifela tsa Sione (Hymns of Zion) was published in 1854.

Lifela tsa Sione was originally composed by the French missionaries Lesotho namely, E Casalis, F Colliard, T Arbousset, A Mabille, S Rolland and E Rolland who were from the Reformed church. (Letsosa and de Klerk, 2007)

When they got to Lesotho ancestral worship was robust. The teaching from the songs found a home in the hymns they composed. (Setiloane, 1976)

They also adapted hymns composed from Chants de Sion (Hymns of Zion) by César Malan, a renowned Christian hymn writer with over 1000 hymns to his name who was born in Geneva in 1787. (Leshota, 2001)
Malan as the originator of the modern hymn movement in the French Reformed Church composed hymns perpetuated in the analysis of the Christian experience. The hymns were set to his own melodies. He was an artist and a mechanic, his little workshop had its printing press. (Julian, 1892)

The French missionary work began in 1833 and by its end, Basotho were literate, numerate and had attained appreciable levels of Western civilisation and sophistication. (Khati, 2015) Khati argued that this was achieved through the educational, religious, political and diplomatic efforts of the missionaries. He offered that Lesotho was indebted to the missionaries for laying the foundation of the country's formal Western education.

The compositions of Lifela tsa Sione which have been adopted by other Protestant denomination in Lesotho and beyond were influenced by the late 19th century Victorian myth of the Dark Continent, that shaped the thinking of colonisers and missionaries alike. (Leshota, 2014)

In his critical article, Postcolonial Reading of Nineteenth-Century Missionaries' Musical Texts: The Case of Lifela tsa Sione and Lifela tsa Bakriste, Leshota posited that underlying this myth was the predominant thought that Africa was an embodiment of savagery, intractable ignorance, and callous barbarity, and an epicentre of evil. The assumed cultural superiority complex that underpinned the missionary attitude was not a farfetched idea. It was the very air that people at the time breathed.

Prior to their coming to Africa, the missionaries were prepared and strengthened for the task that awaited them. Rigorous training consisted of Latin, Greek, classical literature, philosophy, as well as theological training.

Upon their arrival, missionaries wasted no time in rooting out what they perceived as 'paganism' among the Basotho, which was, in their view, a great obstacle to the progress of the gospel of Christ. There was a clear divide between what the pagans and what the missionaries understood as pagan customs and practices, which were often deemed as non-negotiable. (Leshota, 2014)

The destruction of unChristian societies was a precondition to conversion. It was felt that, first you destroy the culture, then you can convert. (Machobane, 2001)

Over and above the so-called pagan traditional customs of initiation, polygamy, and marriage by cattle – which missionaries spared no effort in rooting out – were issues linked to civilisation, which had a bearing on Christian decency and moderation. Among these issues were dance and music. However, because of their perceived associations with war, violence, ancestral feasts and other traditional rituals, music and dance were viewed with great suspicion by the missionaries. (Machobane, 2001)

When the missionaries introduced the hymns and taught them to the so-called heathens, it was part of a bigger project – that of rooting out pagan and savage customs and replacing them with Christianity and civilisation. In the missionaries' purview, the Basotho music and songs served to promote and entrench the very same customs that they wanted to root out. It did not, therefore, come as a surprise that the missionaries, in more than one instance, expressed their joy that 'the wild dances and warlike songs completely finished', and that 'savage songs have been succeeded by the Songs of Sion, and pagan customs by the Christian service'. (Machobane, 2001)

Leshota said these ideological texts reflect uneven power relations between the missioner and the missionarised; the so-called generous, lovable, courageous European crusades and martyrs on one side and the supposedly thinly veneered, heathen, barbarous African on the other.

Chant de Sion served both as a source text from which translations of most of the hymns were done as well as the template on which the present anthology was undertaken. Malan was associated with the more conservative, new Evangelical revival (Le Reveil), which broke from mainstream French Protestantism. He embodied the never wearied delineation of the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows of the believer's soul, which are still the staple of French protestant hymns. While tunes and melodies from Europe served as the basis for the hymns used by the missionaries, across the denominational divide in Lesotho, the Chant de Sion became the main source and inspiration for the missionaries and early Basotho converts. (Leshota, 2014)

To demonstrate the biases of the missionaries, Leshota presented the first three stanzas of the Eugene Casalis composition, Jehova Molimo oa Iseraele, number 7 in Lifela tsa Sione along with their loose translations. This happens to be a popular hymn in the mutated URCSA where I'm a member.

Sesotho Version	Translation
1. Jehova Molimo oa Iseraele	Yahweh, the God of Israel
U re falalitse lefifing la pele	You have snatched us from the ancient darkness
Re thaba hakaakang ha re u khumamela	We are happy that we are able to worship you
Kajeno re batho, re tseba ho rapela	Today we are human beings, we know how to pray
2. Maoto a khotso a tsoang ho Monghali	The peace-bearing feet from the Lord
A tlile Lesotho, lefatseng la mali	Have come to Lesotho, the land of blood
A re a sa hlaha, Satan'a thothomela	As they approached, the devil trembles
Mokhosi oa khutsa, lira tsa re bakela	The cry dies down, the enemies surrender/convert
3. Mahaheng a matso, thakong tsa lelimo	In the dark caves, where the cannibals used to dwell
Ho binoa sefela se bokang Molimo	Hymns praising God are sung
Naha ea nyakalla, e khabile ka metse	The entire country, adorned with villages rejoices
Nala e hlahile bakeng sa litsietsi	There is abundance in place of misery.

Leshota noted that the song had some historical nuance to it and reflected the missionary interpretation of the events that engulfed Lesotho at the time such as the phenomenon of cannibalism. For some, barbaric as it may appear, it was an act of humans who were fighting for the survival of the human race, which was facing total extinction as a result of wars and famine. For others it was an unprecedented and unequalled act of barbarism.

The hymn displays dominant superstitions of the Western world on Africa, as a continent teeming with wild men and imaginary beasts. The caves that are mentioned had become a common habitation for the cannibals who were spread in small bands throughout the country, from the south to the north, especially in the main route, waiting for their unsuspecting human prey.

Leshota offered that this hymn associated an end to this practice and others with the coming of the missionaries, something which served less historical interests and more those of the Eurocentric missionary. He said cannibalism had often been used by the West to represent the primitive other in imperial discourse and to maintain the binary separation between the coloniser and the colonised.

He further stated that the Victorian novels and poetry of the 19th century reflected a bias against Africa, which was portrayed as a centre of evil, represented by slavery and cannibalism. This way of representing Africa provided a stage on which Europe could display its 'taken-for-granted' superior civilisation epitomised in David Livingstone, and his antecedents were, undoubtedly, the bearers of light.

In the hymn cited above, cannibalism is associated with darkness from which Yahweh has snatched us. There is also an implied association between the same phenomenon of cannibalism and blood that was spilled, either through the slaughtering of humans for eating, or through the wars that were a common feature of the time. (Leshota, 2014)

Letsosa and de Klerk present hymn number 68 in Lifela tsa Sione Lichaba Tsohle Tsa Lefatshe composed by Thomas Arbousset.

Lichaba tsohle tsa lefatshe	All the nations of the world
Li tla tla Sioneng	Will come to Zion
Ba lutseng bochabela-tsatsi	Those in the east
Le bophirimeleng	And the west
Batho bohle ba tla phuthana	All the people will gather
Ho boka Morena	To praise the Lord
Ba tla lula, ba tla ratana	They will live and love each other
Ba lese ho loana	And stop fighting
	*author's translation

The hymn is sung against the background of viewing the Basotho as the lost tribe of Judah that somehow relates to the Arabs. They still have to come back to Zion, stop fighting and start living a peaceful and harmonious life. This song also testifies that the French missionaries had the belief that all are children of Abraham and also believed that there will once again be a re-union in the new Jerusalem and there will no longer be war again.

What is evident is that some Africans had already converted and belonged to the Paris Mission Society of the French missionaries. This explains why the church is known as Kereke ya Fora (the French church). It's the church founded by Casalis, Roland and others.

The confusion over the name persists to this day. When you converse with old members of the N.G. Kerk they will tell you about singing in seRoland or seBeersheba fashion (meaning the Roland or Beersheba way).

Takatso cautioned: 'You can see that singing Lifela tsa Sione in the Hosanna was a political move. I was not there, but it was an obvious political ploy to hide something and to steal something. It must have been engineered from the N.G. Kerk or mother church as they call it. I never got to ask Moruti Buti (father of Sam Buti) and Moruti Ntwane who sat in those meetings to curate the Hosanna in Kroonstad, about the motive behind establishing the Hosanna.'

To many others who ended up in the N.G. Kerk and later URCSA they were reconnecting with the church brought by the French protestant missionaries. How the Boers got to take it and repackage it as a Boer daughter church is a matter to be investigated further.

Takatso added: 'What I know is that the Boers came through Winburg and established their first church and they spread through the Orange Free State with their churches in the towns. The NGK never intended to draw black people into the church. In 1853, the decision not to share the communion with other races, the African, Coloured and Khoisan was taken by the Cape Synod. In the Free State, the N.G. Kerk never took that decision because they didn't share space with them anyway. The first Afrikaner church was built by Sir Harry Smith in Winburg, thanking the Boers for helping the Brits drive out the Xhosas across Fish River.

'The oldest N.G. Kerk in Afrika congregation in the Orange Free State is Brandfort according to my research. The people know it as Kereke ya Fora. I called Moruti (Reverend) Nthakge to ask him how it was established. He said he never looked into it. He didn't know about Beersheba either. Even when we were in training in Turfloop, the white lecturers hid the story of Beersheba from us. I asked a missionary lecturer who taught at Unisa about the story of Beersheba later on and he said he knew about the massacre of black Christians there. He said there was a suspicion that those people would side with Moshoeshoe in the fight over the land of the Orange Free State.'

11.4. Is 'theft' the charge?

In my attempt to provide the White N.G. Kerk an opportunity to respond to my findings and hypothesis, I reached out to Reverend Niels Janse van Rensburg, the moderator based in Cape Town. He directed me to church historian Dr Gideon van der Watt, a senior theology lecturer at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein. Van der Watt was prompt in his response when I emailed him my enquiry about the 'theft' of Kereke ya Fora by the White N.G. Kerk. In his reply, he pointed out that his account was off the cuff, suffice to say, his perspective was detailed and fascinating.

He started off by admitting that the 1858 attack by the Landdrost Saur of Smithfield on Beersheba was indeed a sad and indefensible event in history.

He stated that there were no apparent reasons for the attack in which 13 (most historians put the number at 2000) young Basotho men were killed and the station burned down. The people in the station were innocent. Missionary Rolland and the leaders (who were the chiefs) in the station deliberately tried to stay neutral in the war between the Boers and Moshoeshoe.

They complied with the demands of the Boers, even though the demands were totally unjustified. History shows that Landdrost Sauer deceived them and acted mostly on the basis of his own greed – he personally stole the cattle and other belongings. He also deceived his own government – the then president acknowledged that what happened was wrong, of course this 'acknowledgement' was by far not enough to make retribution for the terrible deed.

Van der Watt said Rev AA Louw, who was then the Moderator of the N.G. Kerk in the Orange Free State, and many members of the church published an open letter of protest against what happened. But the Orange Free State Republic eventually doubled down on this injustice to the French mission stations when in the 1860s they banned missionaries from working in their stations within the area they called the 'conquered territory' west of the Caledon River.

Van der Watt pointed out that despite this problematic and murderous past, the relationship between the P.E.M.S missionaries and the N.G. Kerk in the Free State was restored in the 1870s. He said there were numerous examples of cooperation, mutual visits, official church relationships, joint conferences, sending of greetings at the respective synods, the mutual ordination of ministers, and financial contributions of the N.G. Kerk Free State to the P.E.M.S work in Lesotho.

Addressing my hypothesis that the white N.G. Kerk 'stole' the French church in the eastern Free State, van der Watt charted a long history of co-operation between the two churches.

He noted that in 1887 several mission stations of the P.E.M.S, like in Bethulie, Smithfield (Beersheba), and others in the eastern Orange Free State, were transferred to the N.G. Kerk Mission Church. This was officially done, he said, per agreement, so that PEMS could focus on Lesotho and some congregations in the Witwatersrand (today's Gauteng).

'I think it would be difficult to find historical evidence that the N.G. Kerk 'stole' it or forcefully took it from the P.E.M.S. It was done after deliberations and mutual consent,' van der Watt shared.

He further asserted that the N.G. Kerk in the Free State embarked on what they called 'domestic mission' since 1865 which saw each White N.G. Kerk congregation in the Free State towns establish a ministry to reach out to Black or Sesotho-speaking people. According to the N.G. Kerk Free State's Church Order and resolutions by synod, this work was done by the local N.G. Kerk minister. Later on "missionaries" were called to focus on this work. And eventually black catechists and evangelists were trained to do the ministry. They were mostly responsible for 'recruiting' members for these new congregations.

Van der Watt said he found no evidence in history that Black worshippers were coerced into joining the newly established congregations. He identified the congregations as mainly 'duplicates' of the white congregations in terms of church order, worship services, theology and the like. He offered that this practice was not good, because it kept the young indigenous

church dependent on the White church and prevented enough enculturation into the Sesotho culture. In other words, the 'Dutch' influence had been too strong that in 1910 these young churches/congregations constituted an independent Black N.G. Kerk in the Orange Free State.

In shaping and developing its identity, the Black N.G. Kerk obviously also borrowed much from the older French sister church. Some ministers were trained in Morija, at the Kereke ya Fora ya Lesotho's theological seminary. The hymns they sang were shared, as well as a strong Reformed theological identity.

A P.E.M.S missionary assisted with the commencement of N.G. Kerk's new mission in Qwaqwa (Lefika) and clearly there was a undeniable influence of the 'older' Lesotho church on the younger sister in the Orange Free State – hence the usage of the name Fora (French) for the Black N.G. Kerk in the Free State – definitely implying this influence.

Since the independence of the Black N.G. Kerk in the Orange Free State in 1910, van der Watt said there were good relationships between this church and the P.E.M.S as seen in numerous documented examples of visiting each other's synod meetings. The same applied to the relationship between the N.G. Kerk and the Church in Lesotho.

Van der Watt said during the 1940s/50s an agreement was made that the N.G. Kerk would take care of the ministry of the migrant workers from Lesotho working on the new Free State goldfields while the P.E.M.S focused on Lesotho. The N.G. Kerk would not work in Lesotho, but rather support the P.E.M.S work in the neighbouring country.

This cooperation unravelled after 1948 when the Nationalist government took power and officially implemented apartheid. The P.E.M.S (now known as Lesotho Evangelical Church in Southern Africa - LECSA) grew more and more critical of the N.G. Kerk especially because it tried to justify apartheid on Biblical grounds.

The agreements between the two churches were then broken – LECSA started new congregations in the goldfields and the N.G. Kerk and N.G. Kerk in Afrika (NGKA), the successor of the N.G. Kerk Mission Church, jointly started to work in Lesotho, establishing N.G. Kerk in Afrika congregations in Lesotho. Van der Watt said this was a sad development that caused unfortunate friction between the churches.

Van der Watt said they have been making amends as recently as 2017, where he played a role in restoring the relationship between the N.G. Kerk Free State and LECSA and he reported that the relationships between the two sister churches was very warm.

'The very sad, unbiblical and sinful thing is that the Black church, from its very beginnings around 1865, developed separately from the White church. From the beginning the idea was to establish independent, separate, indigenous and so-called daughter churches – thus entrenching separateness (later on called apartheid). And even to this day, we are struggling desperately to re-unite the separate N.G. Kerk churches. I gave my whole ministry of 40 years to this ideal... but for various reasons we are now further apart than any time in history,' van der Watt concluded.



Figure 17: The women's ministry uniforms of modern day URCSA (top left and bottom right) and Fora ya Lesotho – literally translated to the Church of France in Lesotho as it is colloquially known as and officially referred to as Lesotho Evangelical Church in Southern Africa or LECSA (top right and bottom left) strike an uncanny resemblance pointing to the historical links explored in this study. Photos: Author/Facebook

12. Final Reflections

Taking into account what Coplan and Takatso shared about the Beersheba Mission Station massacre of 1858 and van der Watt's version, the picture is clear. Whether it was an amicable deal or an early morning robbery, the fact is that the Black church exchanged hands and was appropriated without compensation to the French or Black Christians.

A historical note in the Reformed Family Forum website posited that N.G. Kerk ministers like Frazer of Phillippolis and Van der Wall of Bloemfontein objected strongly to the injustices done to the P.E.M.S in the wake of the Beersheba killings. The N.G. Kerk and the church in Lesotho nevertheless collaborated throughout the 19th and 20th centuries on-and-off, leading to the N.G. Kerk taking over some P.E.M.S stations in the Orange Free State and supporting the P.E.M.S work in Lesotho. The relationship broke down at the height of apartheid in the 1950s, only resuscitating as recently as 2008.

This is further evidence that the purported holy alliance between the white N.G. Kerk and the Black church of the French was founded on dubious blood stained grounds.

I also obtained my answer and established the French connection that has been troubling me for so long. I now know that the Black N.G. Kerk is rooted in the work of the French missionaries and I should probably be kinder to my family for devoting so much of their time and effort to the church. For all intents and purposes, it was never the apartheid church that it became known as for decades, its creed and practices were hinged on the mission work of Casalis and Rolland. It is a church that was endorsed by the founding father of the Basotho nation, King Moshoeshoe I. Yes, the influence and power of the racist 'adoptive mother' N.G. Kerk gave it a notoriety it would battle to shake off.

However, I still have to reconcile with the decision Moshoeshoe made to give the French and Boers too much leeway to deculturalise his people. On the one hand, it was visionary of him to see the dawn of 'western-civilisation' and to call on the French missionaries to equip his people with the tools they needed such as literacy and numeracy to navigate a brave new world – but at what cost? African norms and traditions became undermined in favour of the White ways of doing things. On the other, he trusted the Boers to roam unchecked until they became an unstoppable threat and for that I hold a dimmer view of him.

Frantz Fanon in his book Black Skin, White Masks, quotes Kardiner's words when he said: 'To teach Christianity to the people of Alor would be a quixotic undertaking... It would make no sense inasmuch as one would be dealing with personalities built out of elements that are in complete disaccord with Christian doctrine: It would certainly be starting out at the wrong end.'

Fanon argues that for a people to assimilate something new to them, like the teachings of Christ requires that they become ready for it, prepare for it and shape into a new form. I can't help but wonder how this Christening project was implemented in the Basotho nation. Was there resistance? What happened to those who broke ranks? What became of centuries old traditional belief systems? Were they discarded to the dustbin of culture and shunned?

It is also not easy to absolve the Black N.G. Kerk from the painful legacy of its mother church. As Prof Tshepo Lephakga puts it, the church subscribed to separateness, oppression, humiliation and land dispossession that was later called apartheid. He blamed it on the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Bible and Calvinism. The grave consequences of the misguided philosophy have disadvantaged the majority of South Africans who were pushed into the Bantustans and left the country fragmented. The landless experienced a negative impact on their livelihood, psychology, economy and communal structures.

Lephakga argued that because of land dispossession, Blacks internalised oppression and doubted their humanness, fleeing from being Black. He put the blame at the door of the church and called for it to take responsibility in Black people reconciling with their humanity and attaining true reconciliation and true justice through land restitution.

While the focus of my research is not land, it touched on understanding a problematic church that my family gave its life to and bequeathed its legacy to us, the grandchildren. I have to grapple with what this means and find a way forward as a fourth generation African Christian.

What remains clear is that our history is complex and problematic. It leaves one riddled with angst, but here we are. I choose to embrace my traditional heritage and religion, with a better understanding of how I got here.

Masters in Journalism and Media Studies **Research Proposal/Method-document**

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 2019

Moruti wa Sekuta (The Evangelist on a Scooter)

The Untold Story and forgotten legend of a community builder Mongangane Wilfred Mofokeng, Evangelist of the N.G. Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church), ANC card carrying member, Orlando Pirates founding fan and a devoted husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather.

1. Introduction

In my journalism career, I have seized every opportunity to document bits and pieces of the life of my grandfather, Evangelist Mongangane Wilfred Mofokeng (see page 8). I knew that he was no ordinary man. I was in the church pews as a small child to witness his moving sermons on the pulpit, in the church I came to know that he built with his hands. My cousins and I played in the corridors of the hospital I came to understand that he built. And I went to a primary school that I came to find out that he built and ran as the chairman of the school governing body.

Travelling far and wide with him, making countless stops in villages and towns I realised that he was a distinguished man.

As I grew older and wiser and started hearing stories, tales and anecdotes about him, my grandfather became a hero. But I was troubled that while people heaped praise on him and tripped over themselves to shake his hand and more weirdly, called him ‘father’, there was nothing I could hold or read that explained all this attention he garnered.

I set out to collect stories, interviewed him and wrote some pieces down only to be lost when my aged laptop crashed and deleted all the history. To throw a spanner in the works, Mongangane passed on shortly after my computer incident in 2009. For over 10 years I have been attempting to reconstruct the stories he shared as we huddled around the Welcome Dover stove in wintry nights in his retirement. Some are vivid, others are completely wiped out, but what remains is the spark of interest he lit in me, to want to know his story better, if not for myself, then for the community he served so selflessly for decades and for future generations.

Journeying back into his past is a personal quest to discover more about him and the world in which he operated. I believe that telling a story like his, which has long been in the shadows, is a gift for posterity. Knowing the paths of our ancestors helps us to better navigate our own. Chronicling family history leads us to discover recurring themes and universal truths that guide us.

Embarking on this project is a search for answers about my family and hopefully an opportunity to mitigate the feelings of rootlessness and dissonance I have as I navigate the two worlds of Christianity and being an African who recognises traditional practices.

As Africans, not much is written about our history, ways and paths of our forebears. It’s all disjointed folklore and incomplete accounts peppered with fantastical mythology that leave more questions than answers whenever one has to deal with the pertinent question of ‘Where do we come from?’. This expedition into the past will help me anchor this tree by digging to find its roots so that I can better understand the branches that continue to grow as generations replace others.

Mongangane is a man of his time. The choices he made and the challenges he faced are typically South African. I will have the political and cultural context in the background, the monstrous dispensation of colonialism and later apartheid that set to dehumanise Black South Africans and cheapen their lives. Amazingly, their spirit was never deadened and their hearts never hardened. They persevered against all odds and this is what I set out to record – the tenacity of the human spirit and ingenuity for survival.



North West

Food for the soul

Pictures: Mantu Vilakazi

Nothing beats my grandfather's pilchards and mashed potatoes.

At 90, he still hasn't lost his touch. So, it is always with great enthusiasm that I journey home to Gelukspan, where I spent 20 years with him and my grandmother.

Wilfred Mongangane Mofokeng Chapatso is no ordinary man.

He moved from Orlando East in Soweto to Gelukspan, about 35km south of Mafikeng, in 1952, when the area was just a cattle post. He had studied theology at the Free State's Stofberg College, then joined the NG Kerk in Afrika (the black part of the church, that is).

The "scooter-riding evangelist", as he came to be known, has been responsible for much of the good that has happened in this community.

He laid the foundation of the area's first church, which was opened in 1956. He built Gelukspan's first rudimentary clinic, which was opened six years later and has since been expanded into the Gelukspan Hospital.

He built seven more churches in his years as a priest, transformed a two-roomed missionary school into a fully fledged primary school and built the Ipokeng Middle School from scratch.

He chaired the boards which governed the two schools he built, as well as those in neighbouring villages, until the early 1980s when he retired.

Grandpa's contribution, however, was never publicly acknowledged. Even the plaque at the entrance of the first church he built only names the white priest who was based there at the time — a T I Ferreira.

"It was apartheid times," he told me on a recent trip down memory lane. "I practically laid the foundation, ran the concrete-making machine and formed the bricks. There is not a single iron sheet I didn't touch where we roofed the building. You see the fence that runs around the church, it was also put up by me."

The last time we had been in the church together was on a hot Sunday in December 1984, when the congregation gathered to say farewell to Grandpa Chapatso. He was retiring and moving to Lotlhakane village, 15km south of Mafikeng, where he and Grandma Mahali still live.

The church feels smaller now than it did then and it doesn't feel the same. The paint is peeling on cracked walls. The neat rows of wooden benches have been replaced by plastic chairs and the wooden floors creak.

The tennis court on which I first learnt to play has made way for the wheelchair basketball and netball fields of the Herberg School for the Disabled.

Even the eight-roomed mission house in which I grew up has lost its charm. Guarded by a vicious dog, it is nothing like the noisy home I remember. The house was always packed with visitors, there was always someone at the door to "see the evangelist" and the air was heavy with the aroma of my grandma's famous buns.

About a kilometre away, the house where the white priest lived has been demolished. When I was young, we were not allowed to swim in the pool or loiter around the area. It was strictly for whites only.

Back at Lotlhakane, my 85-year-old grandma still cooks and reminds us that "cleanliness is next to godliness". As she settles us down for a long, nostalgic lunch, she tells me that although she still sells sweets, chips and other goodies, she misses her bun business.

She quickly adds, though, that there is other work to be done in the community; that people are poor and development is slow.

Even in retirement, my grandparents remain community builders and spreaders of the faith.

WORKING UP AN APPETITE: Lesley Mofokeng chases Grandpa Chapatso's sheep in Lotlhakane village while, left, his grandparents prepare lunch

Grandpa Chapatso's name is missing from the plaque at the church he built, but for LESLEY MOFOKENG his spirit will always remain

DID YOU KNOW?

- **Gelukspan falls under the Central District of the Mafikeng municipality. The apartheid government bought the land from farmers in 1965, but made the landless black population trustees. Kopano, a gathering of appointed headmen and chiefs, is still involved in running the area**
- **The local hospital serves about 5 000 people and has been declared "baby friendly" by the World Health Organisation because of its good facilities**

An article that appeared in the Sunday Times of 22 December 2004 in which the author interviewed his grandfather Wilfred Mongangane Mofokeng and shared his story in his own words.

Historical context

South Africa in 1914 was going through a watershed moment. Not only was it the start of World War I, but the politics of the country had reached a boiling point. This is the year after the passing of the devastating Land Act of 1913 that rendered Black people landless and gave copious amounts of land to Whites. Under the Land Act, the black tenants had to subject themselves to a life of servitude to stand a chance at the bare minimum of life allowed by the oppressors. The South African native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth. (Plaatje, 1916)

History remembers the year 1914 for what became known as the 1914 Rebellion. With the World War I brewing, it was five weeks after the Union Government took a belligerent stance against Germany when a rebellion broke out in the ranks of the Afrikaner generals. It was led by Manie Maritz in the Cape, CR de Wet in the northern Free State, CF Beyers in the Transvaal and JCG Kemp of the western Transvaal. While it was easily quelled because the rebels lacked proper organisation and supplies, it would rock the state severely and cast a long shadow over the South African political scene, reaching backwards to the days of Vereeniging as the leaders came from among the *bittereinders* of 1902. (Davenport, 1963) It shook the Afrikaner society especially the N.G. Kerk with some congregations wanting to censure the rebels, while others wanted to do the same to government troops who had acted against the rebels. (Korf, 2007)

In the South Africa Reader, an anonymous author notes that Africans had begun exploring new ways of understanding their world, often by elaborating a vision that combined Christian eschatology with earlier ways of explaining misfortune. The writer adds that the worldwide influenza pandemic of 1918 created panic across South Africa's rural communities.

The apartheid legislation also sometimes referred to as petty apartheid (The South Africa Reader, 2014) passed in the period under study impacted on the evangelism of Mongangane:

Population Registration Act, Act No 30 of 1950
Led to the creation of a national register in which every person's race was recorded. A Race Classification Board took the final decision on what a person's race was in disputed cases.

Group Areas Act, Act No 41 of 1950
Forced physical separation between races by creating different residential areas for different races. Led to forced removals of people living in 'wrong' areas, for example Coloureds living in District Six in Cape Town.

Bantu Authorities Act, Act No 68 of 1951
Provided for the establishment of black homelands and regional authorities and, with the aim of creating greater self-government in the homelands, abolished the Native Representative Council.

Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act, Act No 67 of 1952
Commonly known as the Pass Laws, this ironically named act forced black people to carry identification with them at *all* times. A pass included a photograph, details of place of origin, employment record, tax payments, and encounters with the police. It was a criminal offence to be unable to produce a pass when required to do so by the police. No black person could leave a rural area for an urban one without a permit from the local authorities. On arrival in an urban area a permit to seek work had to be obtained within 72 hours.

Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, Act No 46 of 1959
Classified black people into eight ethnic groups. Each group had a Commissioner-General who was tasked to develop a homeland for each, which would be allowed to govern itself independently without white intervention.

Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, Act No 49 of 1953
It enforced segregation in all public amenities, public buildings, and public transport with the

aim of eliminating contact between whites and other races. "Europeans Only" and "Non-Europeans Only" signs were put up. The act stated that facilities provided for different races need not be equal.

Bantu Homelands Citizens Act of 1970
It compelled all black people to become a citizen of the homeland that responded to their ethnic group, regardless of whether they'd ever lived there or not, and removed their South African citizenship. – (Africanhistory.com)

It is in this context and these happenings that we find Mongangane, the subject of this dissertation.

His life story is shaped by the political and social events of South Africa dating back centuries, but the entrenchment of Afrikaner dominion especially after the Union Act of 1910, set the scene for a country that would increasingly be hostile to its Black citizens. The odds were stacked against a Black person and to have a fighting chance at a decent life one had to navigate a minefield of laws and statutes, resulting in a futile exercise. Mongangane was a man of his time.

This dissertation locates Mongangane's place in history and his contribution to the shaping of communities over several decades. We connect his personal details with the political events of the times. We investigate, analyse and interpret the life of the subject in the context of the times in which he found himself. Interestingly, he was born and brought up on a Free State farm, but he never worked as a farm labourer; he moved to Johannesburg while the mine rush was still a boom and working in the mines was an obvious choice, but he never worked in the mines. How did he navigate these worlds and charted a new path from the obvious?

The three main topics of the study are: Firstly, Mongangane was a first generation professional and pastor in his family, this could reveal the novelty of not being tied to the fate of working on a farm and stifling any other ambition except to be at the behest of a White farmer, like some of his siblings experienced. The transition from being a traditionalist and a son of an illiterate farm worker to being a literate city slicker and eventually an evangelist, intellectual and community leader is a major leap and transformation in anyone's life. Here we explore how this laid a foundation and a different trajectory for his children and the generations that followed.

Secondly, as an intellectual and a community leader, Mongangane undoubtedly touched lives and booked his place in history. Some many individuals and families regard him as a father. There are many more that recite Bible verses and prayers that were inspired by his evangelism.
This study unpacks the real impact on the lives of ordinary people and some of his flock that encountered his evangelism. There is a plethora of first person accounts of what Mongangane meant to the community and how his presence set the communities on a different path.

Thirdly, there is the issue of his role in the conversion of African communities towards Christianity. With the introduction of this new religion and the concomitant acculturation to new and Western ways of life, Mongangane became an agent for change that directly and indirectly contributed to the erosion of African practices and belief systems.
It was coated as enlightenment and civilisation, but in the final analysis it stood up against traditions and mores that had been practiced for centuries in African households. An

objective of this study is to look into the issue of the spread of Christianity at the expense of African traditions, norms and rituals.

This project also looked at the contradictions and dichotomies of being sympathetic to the struggle for freedom while being a minister in a conservative church like the N.G. Kerk. Understanding the background of the church will add perspective to his story. Masuku (1998) explains that the church has two names, the N.G. Kerk in Afrika (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika (NGKA) and Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA). He points out that in some areas like the Free State it is called Kereke ya Fora in Sesotho. Curiously, Fora means French in Sesotho and not Dutch, and I explore this further. The Afrikaans version is the one mostly used, even in the context of English publications. It appears in almost all official documents of the church. For the purpose of this research I will use the Afrikaans version.

In his doctoral thesis, The Ministry of Dr Beyers Naude, M.T. Masuku (2010), provides a summary of the ministry in the N.G. Kerk. He says the church was not 'born' racist and the support for apartheid was never on the agenda. He dates back the policy on race relations to the Synodical decision of 1857 after it became clear that the church was aware that racism cannot be Biblically justified and was thus un-Christian.

The decision to bar other races led to the establishment of what has become known as 'daughter churches' such as the N.G. Kerk in Afrika (for Africans), N.G. Kerk Sending (for coloureds) and N.G. Kerk Mission (for Indians). Masuku argues that the official apartheid policies of the National Party that came into power years later, were also indirectly influenced by this decision. He also points out that these daughter churches were silent on the condemnation of apartheid. Masuku notes that by 1982 the 'mother' church spent R12 million annually on the daughter churches. For this reason, they were unable to speak out against a system adopted by their mother.

There was a resurgence of ministers in the 1970s through to the 1980s fuelled by Black theology inspired by Black Consciousness movement. They considered BC as the birth of the new black bearing the character of negation. (Masuku, 1998, 2010).

Among them was Prof Takatso Mofokeng, incidentally my uncle, the second son of my subject. He is a Black Theologian, and a supporter of Black Consciousness philosophy who has written extensively on the subject including in his 1983 doctoral thesis where he was motivated by the question: How can faith in Jesus Christ empower black people who are involved in the struggle for their liberation? As an alumnus of Stofberg Theological Seminary, he obtained his BA degree through Unisa and was a correspondent to a Pretoria daily newspaper called 'Hoofstad'. (Masuku,1998)

The story of Prof Takatso and his peers is one of ironies. How do they belong and work in the very church that legitimised apartheid, yet their solidarity lies with the liberation movements? Some of the leading lights of this black theology were Dr Sam Buti in Alexandra famous for the Save Alexandra Campaign at the time of forced removals; and Allan Boesak in the Western Cape who birthed the new non-racial Uniting Reformed Church out of the N.G.

Kerk. Masuku (1998) quotes Boesak (1988) on the ambiguity of being black and reformed: 'The God of the Reformed Tradition was the God of slavery, fear, persecution and death. Yet for those Black Christians this was the God to whom they had to turn to for comfort, for justice, for peace.'

Prof Takatso and his peers complained that missionaries requested them to close their eyes and prayed, and thereafter they found themselves having been given the Bible and the land had been taken away from them. There was self awareness from black people who suffered oppression and humiliation from whites. (Masuku, 1998)

Mongangane's story is in the same vein. As much as he was an evangelist of the N.G.Kerk he maintained his political views and sympathy with an organisation that sought to liberate black people from the shackles of apartheid.

In his own way he restored the dignity of people that were oppressed and stripped off their dignity by a ruthless system. He invested in the wellbeing and health of the people by building a hospital, investing in education by building schools and taking care of their spiritual needs by building churches and evangelising.

This is also a story of migrant labour that broke families up, men and women who responded to a calling and deserted their kin. To borrow from the Bible – Genesis 12: 1 The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing."

As descendants of ministers of religion who end up buried where they plied their trade, in foreign lands and unfamiliar communities, how can these places truly be "home"? There are some painful memories that I endured as a child when the xenophobic locals would tell us to leave Bophuthatswana and move to Qwaqwa or Lesotho as the architects of divide-and-rule had planned. Mongangane was not keen to return to his folk, he felt that he was already accustomed to the dry and arid conditions of the area and could not stand the cold of Qwaqwa and Lesotho, so we had to endure the insults and jibes.

Colin Murray (1984) alludes to this sentiment of what he identifies as the Politics of Ethnic Nationalism. Unpacking the history of Thaba Nchu, some 600km away from Lichtenburg but sharply similar to our situation, he says the acute pressure on resources and services which resulted, together with vicious harassment by the Bophuthatswana authorities, generated an unfamiliar antagonism between Basotho and Barolong.

Today, the rest of the Mofokeng family is in the Free State, but us, the grandchildren of Mongangane find ourselves trekking to North West where our grandparents are buried, hundreds of kilometres away from where their parents (our great grandparents and the rest of the family) lay in peace. We've had to make new family and reach out to strangers who have become family.

It's a story of displacement and disconnect with what we call home, as Kenneth Tafira argued, the land is about identity and home - and we are landless.

3. Personal interest

I am the grandson of Mongangane. My father, Moses Teboho Mofokeng, is his fifth and last born son. I come from a deeply religious family. I am a practicing Christian and I belong to the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) formerly N.G. Kerk in Afrika congregation of Alexandra, Johannesburg. I'm also a clothed member of the Christian Men's Ministry (CMM) and have served in the local committee as well as Presbytery (circuit) level.

My uncle is Prof Takatso Alfred Mofokeng, a prominent Black Theologian and leading figure in the URCSA and my other surviving uncle is Evangelist Jerry Thabo Mofokeng also in the URCSA who has retired in Thokoza, Ekurhuleni. My other two late uncles Motswantweng Spanky Mofokeng and Bennet Sello Mofokeng as well as my late father were elders and deacons in the same church.

This legacy rings true to what Masuku (1998) shares: 'It is common practice that at least one son from a minister's family also joins the ministry, thus following in his father's/mother's footsteps.'

I was brought up by Mongangane after my parents left me in his and my grandmother's care while they worked in Johannesburg, as such he became my primary paternal figure. The earliest memory I have of him is how he used to make my lunchbox when I was in primary school. He would be up first and labour by the stove so that by the time I woke up the kitchen would be warm and my boiled egg sandwiches ready.

As a child I couldn't understand how people clamoured for his attention, almost mobbed, wherever he went. Some people that were not family, let alone that I vaguely recognised would call him 'father'. I soon realised that he was more than just my grandfather but a powerful man who was revered. It wasn't until I was in middle school that I fully comprehended just how much Mongangane achieved as more stories came out about his exceptional leadership skills.

Mongangane always insisted on wearing a tie as a "gentleman", and of course a tipped hat to complete the look. He was always punctual, to a fault. He loved fish and chips, almost as much as he loved taking Panado painkillers.

To this day, the smell of rub-rub ointment takes me back to his bedroom where he would be massaging a sore knee or he would ask me to rub his back.

He was generally soft spoken and quiet, and that led to him being feared. He was a disciplinarian who didn't spare the rod. He was physically strong with his veins popping in his hands. He loved my grandmother, Mahadi, wholly and saw her as a partner and not just a wife, hence you'd find him in the kitchen fixing a mean pilchards and pap dish with his secret spices. He loved salt, something he and Mahadi would clash over.

He might have found himself in Mafikeng surrounded by Setswana speakers, but he never lost his essence and identity. He spoke impeccable Sesotho and possessed a cunning and sly humour. He was one for a chuckle or roaring laughter when he hung out with his friends. He made it a point to teach us his grandchildren about the Sesotho culture and our praise poetry.

It must have been a tricky juggling act of maintaining his traditional sensibilities and being a Christian. Many times the two influences would clash and somehow he would make a judgement call depending on the situation, but most of the time Christianity would win the day.

We would have raging debates about politics especially at the dawn of democracy in South Africa that spelt the end of Bantustan states such as Bophuthatswana where he was based. He was never shy to say where he stood on the political fence. It was like freedom brought him a new sense of being and pride and reignited the fire that may have been dimmed by the oppressive forces of apartheid. He was unapologetically ANC and had no sympathy for the dominant UCDP of Lucas Mangope. He might have not been vocal about it, but he always thought it was a farce. He always waited for the day Nelson Mandela would be released from prison. He was invited to the highest of tables with powerful business tycoons and political heavyweights, and the next day he would be in a modest house sharing a humble meal with a church member during his *huis besoek* (home visit).

When I turned 16 he taught me how to drive in his Chevrolet bakkie, patient and calm, he was the perfect tutor, especially after my father had reduced me to tears a few weeks earlier when he was trying to teach me.

Above all Mongangane loved God and prayer, he was unassuming and modest. There was never a night that went by without a thanksgiving prayer, we would gather around in the living room for his blessings before we headed out to our bedrooms. His sermons on Sundays in the tiny N.G. Kerk in Lotlhakane village south of Mahikeng town where he retired were always a highlight. Mongangane knew the Bible from A to Z and would spit verses like a skilful rapper of today would their rhymes. Once on the pulpit he transformed into a powerful force, it was captivating to witness.

I feel particularly strongly about telling the story of Mongangane, not only for the benefit of my family but for the greater good of humanity. There are lessons to be learned from every life and when someone had lived such a glorious life of dedicated service and stewardship, it's only befitting to archive their life for future generations. There are important moral lessons to be gleaned from his life, pivotal decisions that he took that changed the course of his life and impacted the future of his descendants and examples of fortitude and steadfastness to ponder over.

Mongangane had no business building a hospital and schools, he could have been just a preacher man on the pulpit, but he folded the sleeves and went beyond the call of duty, such a great man cannot disappear from the pages of history.

The purpose of this research is to collect as many more vignettes of the man as possible, the myths, the tales and an overdue celebration of a life that almost went undocumented.

In many ways Mongangane shaped my world view under his Christian persuasion. As mentioned earlier on, I am a practising Christian and a clothed member of a church ministry, and for the longest time I have been trying to reconcile my family history and heritage as members of the apartheid church while holding liberal views and being pan-African.

To borrow the words of Nelson Mandela in Mandela Manuscript (2013) as he reconciles his upbringing with what he knew as an adult he writes: Those of us who have been brought up in religious homes, educated in missionary schools, prayed regularly and modelled their lives on religious principles are grieved when scientific truth forces them to abandon established beliefs and to allow new forces to channel their beliefs and aspirations in a totally different direction. They feel as St. Paul did when thrice he denied Christ... It is sufficient to say that the origin of religion is to be sought in man's ignorance of his environment and his inability to control the forces of nature on which his life depends. As scientific knowledge increases and man masters the natural forces, supernatural beliefs will be correspondingly weakened.

In his thesis, Masuku (2010) quotes De Gruchy who wrote that because the members of the N.G. Kerk were in large numbers they had access to political power and were influential in every sphere of life in South Africa and that made me wonder if Mongangane resorted to the N.G. Kerk for his family and descendants to have a better chance at life. Were there other choices he could have made? Are there any regrets that he chose to operate in a church that defended a morally corrupt ideology, or perhaps he fought the system from inside?

4. Rationale

The purpose of this research is to unearth some unknown stories, tales, vignettes and anecdotes about a man who displayed conviction and commitment to a community he didn't know, but was driven by religion and the ethos of putting others first.

It tells how one man's destiny was changed forever by one decision – to follow the calling of serving the church. The tough and challenging life in the rural Lichtenburg in the North West found a match in the doggedly determined and hardworking Mongangane. He set off not only to preach the Word but make a lasting and meaningful impact in the lives of his congregations, building a hospital, schools and a few churches. This is a social science study of how one man's influence could benefit a people's spiritual and emotional (church), physical (hospital) and educational (schools) needs.

At a time of oppression and when black people faced a constant and sustained attack on their wellbeing and meaning of life, Mongangane was there to console and comfort and provide a crutch for communities to lean on. It's an arduous task that takes a lot from anyone. It calls

for sacrifices that are felt mostly at home, with a father that is constantly away, a home filled with strangers seeking help and children with an unstable sense of belonging.

Unfortunately with the politics of erasure, people's names are forgotten and their stories are lost, in the end it's the names of those whose names are etched on memorial stones that will be remembered. But while Mongangane's name is not acknowledged in the memorial stone of the church he built and the hospital bears no memory of the work he did, it's in the hearts of the communities that his name is emblazoned.

What's to happen when this generation phases out? Will he be written off and forgotten? It is essential to tell our stories, for the future is in interplay with the present.

In his article Starting from Stofberg - A Brief Survey of Hundred Years of Missionary Theological Education in the DRC family 1908 – 2008 Prof JNJ (Klippies) Kritzinger (2008) argues for the need for further research into the legacy of the N.G. Kerk and its institutions. He says: 'When I read the documents listed at the end of this paper, I came to the realisation how much research there is that we need to do to unravel our past; to discover where we come from and how we got here. The history of these 100 years needs to be written; we need to tell our own stories, we need to listen to everyone else's stories and write them down, especially our older colleagues (ministers, evangelists, women workers, who may not be with us much longer). A series of publications could flow from this, but maybe it could also serve the interest of reconciliation if we told our stories of what happened in the 1980s and the white lecturers could tell their stories of what happened, and if we could embrace each other's stories and construct a common past – so that we may have a common future.'

This research adds towards this telling of the general N.G. Kerk story, but most significantly of how the church clergy contributed to the creation and preservation of communities such as Sam Buti did with the Save Alexandra Campaign that eventually led to the township of Alexandra rescued from the vicious bulldozers of the apartheid regime forced removals and Buti hailed as a 'messiah'. (Bonner and Nieftagodien, 2008)

Motivating for his study on Rev JRL Rammala, a missionary among the Bushmen in Botswana, Masuku (2018) shared what resonated with my rationale and motivation: 'This study is important for various reasons. Firstly, it could serve as an important source of information for the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). Through this study, this church may be able to see its contribution in mission as a Christian church and acknowledge its failures and successes in this connection. Secondly, it will serve as a document for historians, missiologists, anthropologists, researchers and other academics. Thirdly, it is an affirmation of a black missionary and a black church in a country (SA) where they were earlier denied opportunities and proper recognition.

Furthermore, Masuku argues that volumes have been written on Western missionaries and other missionaries living in other parts of the world. But very little has been written on the so-called Third World missionaries and their churches, especially of African origin. He mentions that this problem has also been noted by Crafford (1991) who wrote: 'The story of the black pioneers of the South African missionary history has never been properly told. Most often the

white missionaries received all the attention, whereas the black co-workers were relegated to the shadowy background. Their names and surnames were often not even known and they are likely to be referred to as 'old David', or the 'Black helpers'.
Masuku insists that very little has been done in writing about individual Third World missionaries, especially of African background and their churches.

Elsewhere, Masuku (2010) argues that because during the time of Beyers Naude, ministers of religion played a very important role in the South African society and influenced political events, further research could still be developed around this point. 'It is important to write about the impact of the age of the reverends in South African politics... benchmarking by Beyers Naude, one could look at the impact of the reverends in today's politics.'

In an interview on 702 radio, Professor Xolela Mangcu said that South Africans should tell their stories by writing biographies to reflect black history. "I have always wondered why we don't do biographies. There are hundreds of people that we could write about and get students started at Honours level, and the project could grow into a Masters thesis, PhD and potentially become a book. It's an interesting way of doing history. Biography can introduce you to history in ways that may surprise you. We need to institutionalise the stuff in universities. We need to teach biographies."

Mandela (2013) provides further motivation when he states: 'Until South Africa produces progressive historians who will write a true history of the country, there will always be serious discrepancies between the established tradition of the oppressed people and the written history.'

American biographer and historian Doris Kearns Goodwin urges: 'We have to use lessons of history to apply to our daily life. History can give you perspective, solace and hope. Think of what you learn from parents and people who have experience, you learn from generations that lived before us, and that makes you feel like you're a part of a continuum and that you're not here alone, so that makes you a deeper person and maybe gives you that great thing called wisdom.'

5. Journalistic aim

Telling our stories as Black Africans, our family histories and achievements is often overlooked. The purpose of this long form research is to contribute to the undocumented, uncelebrated and soon-to-be forgotten historical figures. This research helps in understanding my own history, roots and identity beyond what has been told by oral history.

There are many figures that fought epic battles on the bigger political stage in the liberation of South Africa and those are well documented. Then there are those who were on smaller stages, no less important, where black people waged their push back against a system that set out to denigrate them and take away their humanity.

In documenting this story I have applied the fundamental rules of journalism such as investigation, double checking, fact checking and the mandatory copy editing. I engaged primary sources of information who are the people that knew and worked with my grandfather. They are members of the immediate Mofokeng family and extended family, as well as the community and church members who had a first-hand encounter and experience with Mongangane.

I also engaged experts who worked at the hospital and academics who have studied the area. Church academics have also be consulted in understanding the dynamics of the N.G. Kerk at that time and how they impacted the present and most likely the future.

I have looked into published literature about the places where the subject lived and worked in present day Free State, Gauteng and North West to understand the political, social and economy context of that time.

I have used my proximity to Mongangane as a window into a time and a world gone by. I brought my own perspective and experiences, some hazy in memory and others vivid. Subjectivity and truth are the strength of the project.

6. Narrative journalism

I have employed the tools of narrative journalism or long form journalism which is different from straight news stories that offer only the basic who, what, where, when and why of a story. Narrative pieces are longer and allow the writer to employ more elements of prose writing.

It's an immersive style of storytelling that captivates the reader with greater detail. It is a challenging form of journalism that requires practice and attention to detail. While it can be easy for writers to become overly descriptive in their storytelling, they must relate the facts and avoid embellishment because the key to narrative journalism is the truth.

The narrative story needs to adhere to accuracy and facts as a credible piece of journalism. Writers have been called out for exaggerations and have been cautioned that just because one reaches into the realm of storytelling does not mean the truth should be fabricated. Narratives include the character of a person, place or thing and use descriptive prose often with the intent of provoking a feeling.

The point of a narrative is to give readers a story they can relate to, raise questions that may not be easy to answer or is thought-provoking.

Explaining narrative journalism further, The Balance Careers states: Narrative journalists immerse themselves in their subject, spending a month on the streets doing a story or wander the back roads connecting historical places that have long been forgotten. In a nutshell, narrative journalism gets at the real heart of the story without being self-indulgent.

Cultura Colectiva notes: Narrative journalists let us peer into a timeless window to witness not only the events, but the people who took part in them and how they were affected. It also gives the writer the freedom of exploring storytelling as a craft, to bend the rules of journalism and tell the truth in a way that borrows its beat from fiction and its ability to engage the reader.

Professor Walt Harrington, a journalist, advocates for "intimate journalism". He compares writing a profile to being a cook who has to selectively add the right ingredients. He achieves this by spending weeks living with their subjects looking for the "extraordinary in the ordinary". At its best, this intimate journalism brings the reader into the life of the subject, to start to understand what it's like to be them – much like the experience of reading a good novel. He offers the following tips in practicing intimate journalism:

a) Describe and look at how people live and what they value.
b) Intimate journalism relies heavily on the reporter's observation skills. Reporters must use all five senses to tell the complete story and force the reader to feel. "The goal is to understand other people's worlds inside out, not portray people as they think they see themselves," Harrington said.
c) Narrative form and scene writings are good techniques to use when writing intimate journalism.
d) Gathering real life dialogue creates a sense of action happening before the reader's eyes. Think of people as characters.
e) Harrington believes reporters must be invisible and invasive when reporting on journalism of every day. "You can't be just a fly on the wall, you have to be assertive and aggressive about asking questions," he said.

In writing the narrative piece, I have looked at other authors and writers who have gone on a similar path to retrace the steps of their forebears and embarked on a journey of self discovery both in fiction and non-fiction. Others have produced acclaimed works of history and biography that my project fits in.

Frank McCourt masterfully tells the story of his Irish family in Angela's Ashes from the first person present perspective that results in an immersive quality. He is descriptive and one gets a vivid picture of what he is talking about.

Reviewing the Pulitzer Prize winning Angela's Ashes for The New York Times, Michiko Kakutani says about McCourt's writing: 'Writing in prose that's pictorial and tactile, lyrical but streetwise... he conjures the place for us with such intimacy that we feel we've walked its streets and crawled its pubs. He introduces us to the schoolmasters who terrorised (and occasionally inspired) their pupils, the shopkeepers who extended credit to the poor and the priests who listened to the confessions of young boys preoccupied with sex and sin and shame.

Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon is another inspiration in narrative style. As The Guardian reviewer Robert McCrum asserts, Morrison weaves a great narrative evoking the black American experience in the 20th century. She expresses a complex literary surface in a musical and often poetic language infused with the rhythms of African-American speech and song, he writes.

McCrum says Morrison acknowledged that Song of Solomon liberated her from traditional models in her writing. Morrison conjures her tale from many voices and stories. The overall effect is a kaleidoscope of many gorgeous colours and patterns, evocative of memory and history, and actualised through the compelling figure of Macon Dead or Milkman, one of the great characters of contemporary American fiction.

The meticulously written The Seed Is Mine by Professor Charles van Onselen traces one man, Kas Maine's life journey as a sharecropper in the southern Transvaal. Van Onselen manages to wade through the family history without lose pace or interest of the reader, even when he presents the mundane information or figures he remains accessible and never boring. The Seed Is Mine is particularly close to me because the majority of the story of Maine is set some 120km from where mine is set. Both subjects are Bafokeng and are in the maize triangle of Western Transvaal. Mongangane was an evangelist who ended up farming, not as a sharecropper though, but the similarities are striking. It's also interesting that both Maine and Mongangane lived in the Bantustan of Bophuthatswana and died in their 90s, Maine at 91 and Mofokeng at 95.

In his review of The Seed Is Mine published in The Smithsonian Magazine, Paul Trachtman calls it a great work of devotion to a man's life and to the discipline of history. While van Onselen dedicated over a decade and a half to researching the book and interviews with his subject, mine is just under a year, but I have also interviewed my subject over the years and will also have to rely on memory for some of the anecdotes and vignettes from this long life.

Trachtman observes that Van Onselen presents with exactitude an account of Maine's marriages, births and deaths that shaped his growing family (his labour pool) from season to season, decade to decade. And he described precisely his off-season work as a diamond digger, water carrier, teamster, cobbler, leatherworker, blacksmith, horseshoer, tailor and traditional healer. This is also my aim, to present the different hues and shades of the man as he goes through life in an increasingly racist world.

Trachtman points out that Van Onselen evokes the relentless, seasonal rhythms of Kas Maine's life like a Homer relating the wanderings of a black Odysseus. The book reveals a hero, but it does not spare us the ironies and cruelties of the patriarchal culture that defines this hero.

Parcel of Death, the biography of the late Onkgopotse Abram Tiro authored by his nephew Gaongalelwe Tiro is probably the closest match to this project. It tells a compelling story of a family member who became a national icon in the struggle against apartheid, from the point of view of an insider. Gaongalelwe penned the first and only biography of his uncle who was the first South African freedom fighter killed with a parcel bomb outside the borders of the country by the oppressive regime. He was exiled in Botswana. The book comes over 40 years

since Onkgopotse's death and is based mostly on interviews with people who knew Onkgopotse at different levels.

Through my narrative style I aim for my project to be of value to historians and educators interested in learning more about South Africa and the effects of colonialism and apartheid on the economy, traditions and customs of Africans, like The Harvard Educational Review says of The Seed Is Mine. Much like the Parcel of Death, I have also employed historical methodology, biography and qualitative research melding interviews and historical documents to tell a unique South African story.

I also drew some influence from the writings of Sol Plaatje especially in Native Life in South Africa. His keen eye for detail and conduct of the language is accessible. His evocative writing stirs up emotion while it entertains elsewhere. I dedicated time to immerse myself in the places Mongangane lived and worked in, much like Plaatje did when he documented the immediate effects of the Land Act of 1913.

7. Methodology

The purpose of the study is to tell the story of the subject for the first time. It is of a personal nature and presented in a long form narrative style. It required numerous personal interviews, field trips and site visits. The research design and strategy was therefore qualitative, employing the instrument of face-to-face interviews as a primary source of information.

Sampling process: The interviews were targeted. I embarked on the initial investigations into who were the best suited participants in the communities Mongangane worked in. I identified senior family members. The participants knew him either since his youth or when he arrived in Gelukspan and during his missionary work. Considering that this study covers a life story between 1914 and 2009, the participants had to be of sound health and good memory.

A – Family: to provide a detailed account of the man far away from the crowds and the pressures of public scrutiny. They were also critical in the portrait of his life before he became a community leader. This provided a solid foundation, background and context of his origins as well as his other roles as a son, husband, father, uncle and grandfather.

1. His first born son, Jerry Mofokeng in Thokoza.
2. His second born son Prof Takatso Mofokeng in Devon.
3. His sister-in-law (his wife's younger sister) Susan Sefatsa in Kroonstad.
4. His nephew Tsietsi Chapatso in Lindley.
5. His adopted daughter Tshidiso Mofokeng in Pretoria.
6. Distant relative Manosi Matona in Katlehong.

B – Community: to paint a picture of a leader in the community. These are people who were the neighbours and who knew the family in a different setting. They have spent a lot more

time with him more than the church folk, and at times even Mongangane's own extended family.

1. Mantlaletseng Morobe in Bapong.
2. Dorcas Morobe in Bapong.
3. Maki Tshabalala in Springbokpan.
4. Mampho Ntebele in Springbokpan.
5. Ezekiel Lebotse in Uitkyk.
6. Dr Marthinus Bac in Pretoria.

C – Church: this collection of voices will represent the institution that catapulted Mongangane to his esteemed position in the community. This is the clergy that worked with him or under him.

1. Rev Boikanyo Modiboa in Pretoria.
2. Elder Seetso Moremong in Mahikeng.

In addition I looked at available records and documented history and yielded little to no results. The church has lost its records, so has the hospital.

Data collection and analysis: The interviews were semi-structured following an Interview Guideline. The participants were encouraged to tell their stories, memories and encounters in a relaxed and casual environment, mostly in the comfort of their homes in the Free State, Gauteng and North West. The interviews were conducted in vernacular languages of the participants and translated into English by the researcher.

I took photographs of the willing participants for use in the long form presentation, and recorded the interviews. I source photographs from the family album.

Furthermore, I embarked on a journey to retrace the life of Mongangane with site visits and field trips in the three provinces under the study.

Sample of Interview Guideline

For the community

1. How did you relate to Mongangane Mofokeng?
2. What made Mongangane Mofokeng different from other ministers?
3. What was his attitude towards community building and justice?
4. What was his attitude to ministers of other churches?
5. What was the reaction of the congregation to his ministry in 1952 until 1984 when he retired?
6. Did the ministry of Mongangane Mofokeng bring you a better understanding of Christianity?
7. What does the community of Gelukspan remember him for?

8. How do you define his legacy?
9. How do you describe the spirituality of Mongangane Mofokeng?
10. What is it that you loved or hated about Mongangane Mofokeng?
11. What were his strong points and weak points?
12. What was the impact of his ministry on members of other faiths?

For his family

1. What type of person was Mongangane Mofokeng?
2. How different was he from other relatives?
3. What type of parental teachings did he give you?
4. How did his ministry affect your upbringing?
5. Did he enjoy the support of the whole family?
6. What was the attitude of his neighbours to him and his family?
7. What type of friends did he have over the years?
8. How often did he read the Bible?
9. How often did he pray?
10. Did you have family prayer sessions?
11. How would you like him to be remembered?

The interviews and encounters have been used to construct and illuminate a fair, honest and authentic story of the life and impact of Mongangane in the long form part of the project.

Covid-19: The protocols of Covid-19 prevention as set out by the authorities were respected in terms of wearing of masks, sanitising and social distancing during the interviews.

Distress Protocol: I made provision for free psychological counselling at Bophelong Provincial Hospital with Ms Cecilia Sibanda on 082 902 3913 for participants who may experience trauma as they reminisced about the past. The participants were informed that they may pause the interview or cancel, should they feel distressed or re-traumatised by events of the past.

8. Ethical considerations

My proximity to the subject has been the strength of this project. My physical and emotional connection to my grandfather have been most effective as I wrote the project as a grandson's journey of discovery of his grandfather, as he grapples himself with the contradictions he sees in his grandfather and in himself.

In the process I have respected the basic tenets of journalism. This dissertation is a presentation of an honest, fair, authentic and truthful account of the life of Mongangane. His achievements, successes and failings are a reminder that no one is perfect or infallible. Whatever information I came across has been included in the project.

9. Literature review

Jim comes to Germiston

By the time Mongangane reached Germiston from the Free State in the mid 1930s, the culture of Marabi on the East Rand was en vogue.

In Ekurhuleni: The Making of an urban region, authors Philip Bonner, Noor Nieftagodien and Sello Mathabatha chart a history of the area. They note: The Ekurhuleni locations became ethnically mixed and also house growing populations of African women – who not only raised children a much more unconditionally settled black urban population – but who were also found to be increasingly impossible to control.

Ekurhuleni had become attractive to Africans due to the rise in gold mining, with numbers rising from 5 000 in 1890 to 69 127 in 1912.

By the 1930s when South Africa abandoned the Gold Standard and delinked its currency from a fixed quantity of gold, the price of gold doubled. The demand for the new gold mines for products and services and the expanded private and government revenues accruing from gold, sparked a surge of secondary industrial development from 1935 onwards which was concentrated mainly in Germiston and Benoni. Germiston attracted light industry such as the chemical factory NCP.

A quickening in the tempo of economic activity occurred during and after World War II with new industries flooding Germiston such as South African General Electric; Oxygen and Thermal Welding Products; and Robert Hudson and Sons. Elsewhere in the East Rand, Plamietfontein Airport and then Jan Smuts Airport were constructed. As a result of these multiple transformations, Ekurhuleni's rate of growth between 1921 and 1960 exceeded that of Johannesburg. By the end of the 1940s, Ekurhuleni employed one-third of the industrial employees of the Witwatersrand.

The area of interest of this paper shifts to the far west of Ekurhuleni to Orlando East, Soweto where Nieftagodien and Gaule trace its origins. The city's non-mining African people lived in the inner city slums and municipal locations. Three pivotal and pre-apartheid historic moments have to be taken into consideration: the 1904 plague, the establishment of Orlando in 1930 and James Mpanza's squatter movement of the mid-1940s.

Nieftagodien and Gaule (2012) provide a snapshot of the history of Johannesburg that is inextricably linked to that of Orlando and Soweto. Established in 1886 after the discovery of gold, Johannesburg grew rapidly over the next couple of decades to become South Africa's main economic centre and its most populous city. In 1887, the mining town set up to accommodate early mine diggers, a mere 3000 but as the gold rush gathered momentum the population exploded with immigrants from the region and all over the world. By 1899 there

were 100 000 in Johannesburg. By 1911 the number jumped to 240 000. The rate of Johannesburg's growth was exceeded only by New York's.

Johannesburg would have to be properly segregated for the benefit of its white population. The committee wanted to secure the existence and future of Johannesburg as a white man's town in a white man's country.

With the outbreak of the 1904 plague in 'Coolie Location', Indian and African residents were blamed and in a matter of days, the authorities moved swiftly to relocate residents to a quarantine site and then the slum was demolished by fire. Klipspruit was declared a permanent settlement for the city's African population. Keeping the races apart was supposedly desirable for everyone, but especially for poor whites who tended to live and mix with poor blacks in urban slums.

After the First World War the population of Africans in the city shot up to over 105 000, nearly half of them working in mines and living in compounds.

The promulgation of the Native (Urban) Areas Act of 1923 espoused the principles enunciated by the Stallard Commission of 1922 which infamously declared that 'an African should only be allowed into the urban areas, which are essentially the white man's creation, when he is willing to enter and minister to the needs of the white man, and should depart therefrom when he ceases so to minister.'

The growing demand for housing and the desire to eliminate slums led to the establishment of Orlando in 1931, named after Edwin Orlando Leake, the chairman of the Native Affairs Committee. It was described by urban geographer Keith Beavon as a large, sprawling urbanised area without true urban amenities. It was threaded through by dusty, unpaved roads along which were erected monotonous ranks of identical, small, temporary single storey matchbox houses lit by candles and oil lamps, where cooking was done on paraffin and coal stoves. All but the barest of daily necessities had to be bought in Johannesburg and carted back on the inadequate public transport system from the white city.

Orlando had become a sought after location for Johannesburg's growing African urban population. The scale of the housing crisis exploded. The official housing waiting list increased from 143 in 1939 to 4 500 in 1941. Overcrowding led to an eruption of a squatter movement and enter the charismatic James Mpanza and his Sofasonke Movement.

Frustrated by the lack of response from authorities, Mpanza with his slogan 'Housing and Shelter for All' on 20 March 1944 led a group of sub-tenants to occupy space on the periphery of Orlando East. Some 250 shacks were erected and within weeks they ballooned to 4 000. The place was known as Masakeng, a place of sacks because the 'homes' were made out of hessian sacks. A temporary camp was set up by the Council next to Mpanza's shantytown. By October 1945 over 4 000 rooms to accommodate 20 000 people were built and the shantytown was demolished.

Mandela (2013) says the population of South Africa was over 11.4 million consisting of over 7.8 million Africans, over 928 000 coloureds, over 285 000 Asians and over 2.3 million

whites. And in 1944 the average African male made £3.11.1d a month while white men made £35.6.4d per month, while in manufacturing Africans earned £81 per year, Asians took home £129, coloureds £136 and whites £322.

In his dissertation James Mpanza And The Sofasonke Party in the Development of Local Politics in Soweto (1983), Kevin John French traces the life of Mpanza, in particular since he became involved in local politics in Orlando in 1935.

Richard Maguire's research project titled The People's Club: A social and institutional history of Orlando Pirates Football Club 1937 – 1973 (1991) gives a context of the time when the club was founded and how the community of Orlando was structured. It also explains the importance and role that soccer played in the lives of men at that time.

Mofokeng was further politicised when he bought into the fire power politics of Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo and attended their rallies and heard their speeches across the Reef.

The South Africa Reader (2014) shares: 'A new generation infused the African National Congress (ANC) with youthful energy in the 1940s. Future leaders of the organisation, such as Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela, came to the fore as a result of the changing social and political conditions of the 1940s. These included the rise of dynamic black urban communities like Sophiatown and a spirit of protest from boycotts of buses over fare increases to a huge black mine-workers' strike in 1946 which was crushed by the mines and government. The ANC Youth League (ANCYL), formed in 1944, began to challenge the tradition of the ANC as an elite body that politely petitioned white authorities and was left with nothing to show for it.'

Mandela (2013) says the ANCYL was headed by Anton Lembede who was a highly qualified man who studied privately and was one of only four lawyers in the country. 'His marathon addresses were always full of learning and he stressed repeatedly that, wherever the African had been given the opportunity he was capable of developing to the same extent as the white man.'

Writers like Miriam Tlali in Footprints in the Quag (1989) while they share a glimpse of the ruthlessness of that time also celebrate the vibrancy of life in the face of adversity.

I also turned to Frantz Fanon for a universal context on life in colonial times. As Mandela (2013) noted, the problems of each country (under colonial rule) differed from the others, and, in some cases, materially, but there were also remarkable similarities and the experience of the national movements in Africa and Asia contained vital lessons.

Looking at passages from Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth (1963) which were about life in Algeria, the similarities with the South African experience are overwhelming. Fanon writes: 'All that the native has seen in his country is that they can freely arrest him, beat him, starve him and no professor of ethics, no priest has ever come to be beaten in his place, nor to share their bread with him.

‘The colonial world is a world divided into compartments... The colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by the barracks and police stations... The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity.

‘It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs. The look that the native turns on the settlers’ town is a look of lust, a look of envy, it expresses his dreams of possession – all manner of possession: to sit at the settler’s table, to sleep in the settler’s bed, with his wife if possible. The colonised man is an envious man. And this the settler knows very well: when their glances meet he ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive, ‘They want to take our place’. It is true, for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler’s place.’

Stofberg and the N.G. Kerk

Landau (2010) says Christianity commenced in South Africa’s heartlands in the second decade of the 19th century. From the perspective of Highveld people, the faith began as a novel way of using the language of mobilisation, brotherhood and settlement. In the midst of the violent displacements of the 1820s – the Difaqane – small numbers began to rework their basic political vocabulary in its remit. Among the pioneers were metis men from the Cape and the borderlands. Establishment missions insisted on the apolitical nature of metis and African mobilisation, argued with them, and translated and retranslated them. In this back and forth process, Christianity came to be.

Landau focuses on the contribution by Robert Moffat whom he describes as ‘the pioneering missionary and translator’ and that ‘Moffat contributed more than anyone else to Christianity’s written cannon. Only by understanding his interactions with junior chiefs and lords, in the crises marking the 1820s, can we grasp how Africans, metis, and Europeans together made Christianity in South Africa.

The N.G. Kerk

The new Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa came into being on 14 April 1994, through the unification of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa. The DRMC was established by the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) as a separate church for ‘indigenous’ Christians in 1881 in terms of DRC mission policy. As the DRC mission policy and practice unfolded, the indigenous ‘Bantu’ congregations were later separated from the ‘Coloured’ congregations to form the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Bantoekerk* in 1951. Its name was changed to *Dutch Reformed Church in Africa* in 1963, when a General Synod was established to unite the four regionally constituted synods. (Kritzinger, 2008)

The mission policy of the DRC aimed at creating “autonomous, indigenous churches” as conceived in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European-American missiology. After an initial period of informal training of ‘evangelists’ by individual missionaries, the

DRC set up the Stofberg Gedenkskool (Stofberg Memorial School) in 1908 as a separate training institution for the 'mission church'. In the first phase of the existence of Stofberg (1908–1959), the DRC was in full control, but as the 'daughter church' grew in maturity (in the judgement of the DRC), the DRC co-opted black ministers into joint commissions to oversee the training.

The physical size of South Africa, coupled with the way in which cultural differences were politicised under Dutch and British colonialism – and taken to illogical extremes under apartheid – created racialised identities in the broader black community that started living a life of their own, creating serious problems for a credible Christian witness in the South African context. The fact that the DRC established separate daughter churches for 'Coloured' and 'Bantu' communities, with separate centres for ministerial formation, created vested cultural and 'racial' interests that have proven difficult to undo.

In her paper Podium and/or Pulpit? Lindie Korf explores the apartheid legacy of the N.G. Kerk through the life story of DF Malan, an N.G. Kerk minister who ended up a National Party leader and president of South Africa when apartheid was ushered in 1948. Korf notes that the N.G. Kerk has had to apologise for providing apartheid-ideology with a theological justification and has attempted to shed the image of 'the National Party at prayer'.

She quotes a newspaper article by theologian George Hofmeyr who wrote that the problem for the N.G. Kerk is that in the early days of apartheid the church and the National Party moved dangerously close to one another and the pulpit was too often exchanged for parliamentary benches.

The common perception was that ministers of the church did not respect the division between church and state, which made it easy for many of them to enter politics. Korf says according to this view, the church to which the majority of Afrikaners belonged, colluded with the National Party to strengthen both its own position and the domination of the Afrikaners in South Africa. The church's mission policy in the 19th century was the origin of segregated worship. It campaigned for issues such as the banning of mixed marriages and the elimination of racially mixed residential areas.

Stofberg

Stofberg Gedenkskool (SGS) in Viljoensdrif in northern Free State, occupies a place of reverence in the hearts of the clergy of the N.G. Kerk (now Uniting Reformed Church).

In his article Starting from Stofberg - A Brief Survey of Hundred Years of Missionary Theological Education in the DRC family 1908 – 2008 Prof JNJ (Klippies) Kritzinger (2008) looks back over a hundred years of theological training in the northern provinces of South Africa since 1908. It was presented during the session of the General Synod of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa in Hammanskraal and was commissioned by the management committee of the Northern Theological Seminary.

Kritzinger speaks of "missionary theological education" and argues that from the outset, the NGK set up institutions and structures for training (white) missionaries as well as black

ministers and evangelists that were rigidly separate from the training of their own NGK ministers. He further demonstrates the difference between the two saying that in 2009, the Theological Faculty at Stellenbosch University celebrated 150 years of existence and of training fully equipped “dominees” (reverends) with Greek and Hebrew and everything else required to be a “proper” Reformed minister for the white congregations of the NGK. It was only since 1999 that the Cape Curatorium took URCSA students to Stellenbosch for training.

In 1959, after 50 years of service, the SGS had 319 pupils in the “oefenskool”, 357 in the Normal School and high school, 54 in the evangelists’ programme, and 30 in the minister’s class. In those first 50 years it had produced 625 evangelists and catechists, 65 ministers and 993 fully qualified teachers.

Gelukspan

In his doctoral thesis Progress Towards Health For All In The Gelukspan Health Ward (1985) Prof Martinus Bac explains that says the trust villages were established around 1940. The land of white farmers was purchased by the South African government as part of its homeland policy under the Bantu Trust and Land Act, Act 18 of 1936.

Groups of Black people were settled on these farms, hence names such as Goedgevonden, Naauwpoort, Nooitgedacht, Schoongezicht and Weltevreden. The population in most villages by 1985 did not exceed 2 000 per village. Land was more readily available and most families hire a piece of land to cultivate, but it remains in possession of the government.

Each village elected its own headman and a number of villages together have a chief and tribal authority to rule the area. Usually trust villages are well organised in straight streets and each plot was fenced off.

The area would grow some more with resettlements on the southern border of the district in when new villages were established by people removed from ‘black spots’ and others came from black townships and farms in South Africa. In this way about 17 000 people were resettled. Some were given compensation for their houses and land that they left behind to build a new life in the resettlement.

The government absurdly turned the black population into ‘settlers’ in the land of their birth. Some of the ‘settlers’ found a home in a new township called Atamelang where small four roomed houses could be rented or bought. A superintendent was in charge of the township, while a chief or tribal authority rules in other resettlement villages.

Prof Charles van Onselen writes about these resettlements in The Seed Is Mine (1996) referring to his subject Cas Maine who at 86 insisted on buying that last tractor: "He was living in a resettlement slum surrounded by the neglected fields of a dying peasantry, whose labouring lifeblood had long since drained away to the cities."

Van Onselen's writings give context to the southwestern Transvaal in which Mofokeng found himself. While his story is about Kas Maine,a sharecropper and a Mofokeng, the social chameleon-like characteristics to navigate the complex inter-racial skills applied to all men who raised above the system of oppression that sought to reduce them to nothing ones, like Mofokeng.

He notes: 'A bifurcated existence in a colonial order calls for great social dexterity, formidable inter-personal skills and a positive mastery of the codes and practices of patriarchy and paternalism. Between the orbits of two planets, the one 'black', the other 'white', lies the greatest challenge for those wishing to understand the inner complexities of a black sharecropper's life.'

In his piece about the Gelukspan Wheelchair Basketball Team, Damaris Helwig describes Gelukspan as 'a little place in the middle of nowhere', roughly 50km outside of Mafikeng in the North West province. "It is situated in a very flat area, where is seems like the hills are hiding behind the horizon. Here, where small villages appear out of nowhere, donkey carriages are a common method of transport..."

The only recent official report found online is authored by Gareth Coleman dated 1990 at the time of the Bantustan of Bophuthatswana. This was after the end of Mofokeng's formal employment as he retired in 1984, but it provides a picture of what the area was like. Again, his name is missing in the records, only the church gets a mention.

Prof Paul Landau presents a history of the politics of South Africa in his book Popular Politics in the History of South Africa, 1400 – 1948 (2010). The book looks at the early settlements in the elevated heartlands, through the colonial era, to the dawn of apartheid. He has an increased concentration on the southern Highveld where this research project is located.

In The Diary of Dr. Andrew Smith the writer talks about Lotlhakane of the 1830s as a place of bounty. He refers to a Bushman lark that he met on the grass flats near Lotlhakane. Then he describes a Takhaitsi that he saw in the village as a roan antelope or bastard gemsbok that when approached closely immediately lies down in the grass and remains there till nearly approached. It then stands up and shows a determination to give fight. Smith also documents a blue wildebeest with logwood coloured belly that he first found in Lotlhakane. Today the village is a typical Tswana village in the North West stripped of any signs of resilient wildlife that roamed its plains at the end of the 19th century. Typical of the Kalahari weather with scorching summers and freezing winters, it has become our family home where the bones of our patriarch and matriarch lay among the Barolong.

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Dorcas Morobe – Bapong village, North West – 2 November 2019

Ezekiel Lebotse – Uitkyk village, North West – 2 November 2019

Dr Marthinus Bac – Pretoria, Gauteng – 4 December 2019

Susan Sefatsa – Kroonstad, Free State – 5 December 2019

Tsietsi Chapatso – Lindley, Free State – 6 December 2019

Seetso Moremong – Setlopo village, North West – 17 December 2019

Mmantlaletseng Morobe – Bapong village, North West – 18 December 2019

Maki Tshabalala – Springbokpan village, North West – 18 December 2019

Mampho Ntebele – Springbokpan village, North West – 18 December 2019

Prof Takatso Mofokeng – Devon, Mpumalanga – 6 June 2020

Tshidiso Mofokeng – Lotus Gardens, Gauteng – 8 October 2020

Jerry Mofokeng – Thokoza, Gauteng – 12 October 2020

Manosi Matona – Katlehong, Gauteng – 17 October 2020