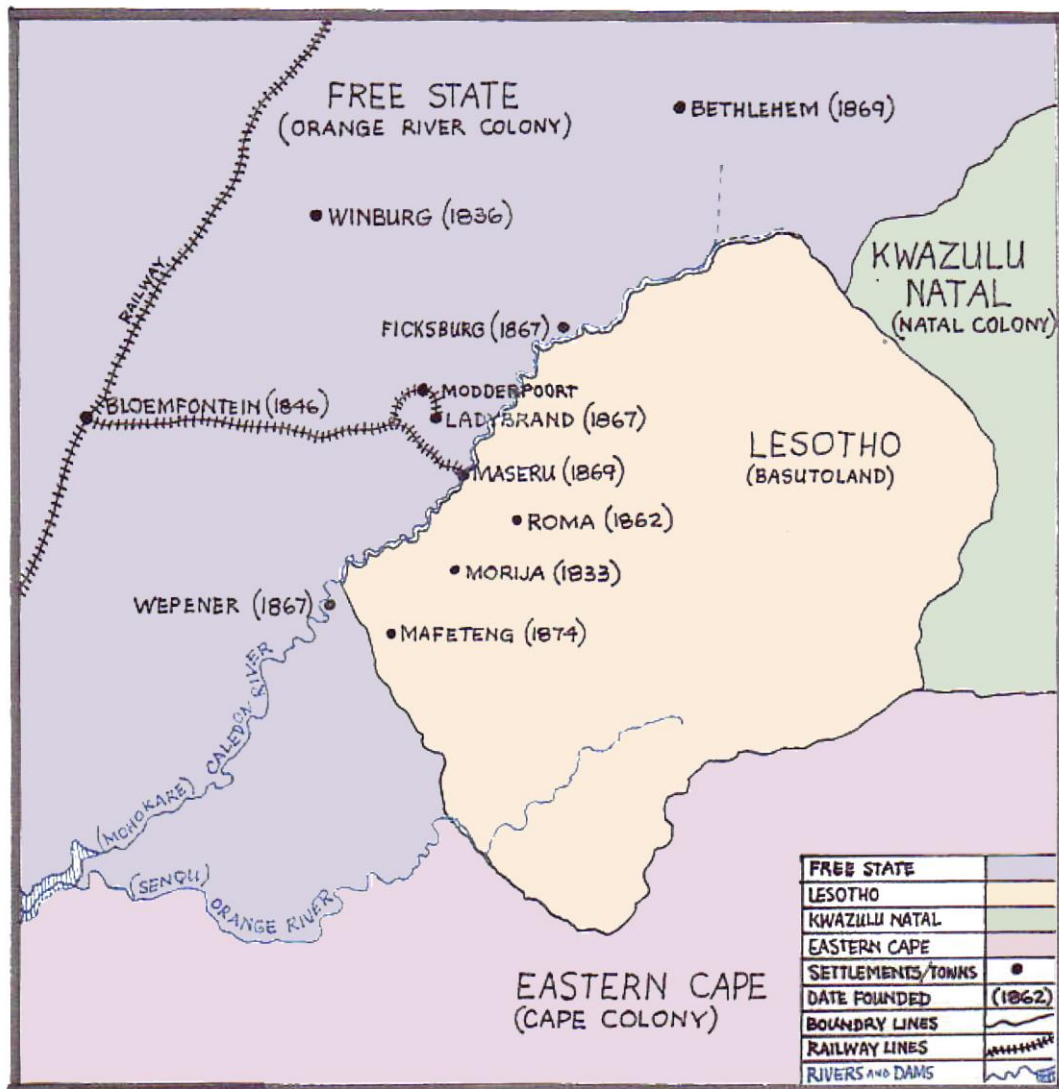


CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



Map 1: Location of Modderpoort, Ladybrand and Lesotho.
(source: *Primary Atlas for Lesotho (2001), Longmans Lesotho*)

My interest in Modderpoort, an Anglican mission station located close to the Lesotho border, 14km outside the Eastern Free State town of Ladybrand, was first piqued when I came across mention of the location on a list of properties tentatively submitted to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for consideration as World Heritage Sites¹. The location's concentration of sacred sites, bringing three sets of religious traditions into close proximity, suggested a potentially fascinating path for research.

These sites included San rock paintings, an early Anglican church and cemetery, and locations associated with an influential Mosotho prophet who rose to fame in the 19th century. According to the original submission to the South African World Heritage Committee, dated 30 June 1998, Modderpoort is "Africa's rare centre for the amalgamation of different cultures and faiths that straddles through time"².

An enquiry to Mr Ntsizi November, Deputy Director of the World Heritage Management Committee in South Africa, which operated then from the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT)³, revealed that despite its appearance on this tentative list, Modderpoort's contention for World Heritage Status was doubtful. The World Heritage Management Committee had debated Modderpoort's position on the list on two occasions, and felt the property was not of "outstanding universal value"⁴, as World Heritage Status requires. The committee was in the process of formulating a new tentative list, and Modderpoort will be withdrawn when new recommendations are made to UNESCO in 2010. November said Modderpoort was better suited to declaration as a National Heritage Site⁵.

Nevertheless, my curiosity had been well-stirred and I began my examination of Modderpoort and its unusual blend of religious traditions. It proved a timely investigation, for during my first visit to the former mission station in April 2008, I learned that just the month before the Deputy

¹ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/za>

² <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1073/>

³ Since the 2009 elections and the reorganising of government ministries, DEAT has since been split. Tourism is now a stand-alone ministry, and Environmental Affairs is overseen by the renamed Department of Water and Environment.

⁴ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/about/>

⁵ November 2009

Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Mrs Rejoice Mabudafhasi⁶, had presided over a meeting at the site to offer an amount of R15 million for its development as a tourist attraction. This meeting had been attended by members of the local municipality and the Bloemfontein Diocese of the Anglican Church. Of the opinion that there was potential for job creation in such a move, the Deputy Minister had categorised the project under the banner of social responsibility.

Religious traditions

Some scene setting is required at this point, with further explanation of Modderpoort's sacred sites and the religious traditions that live as close neighbours.

The first and oldest of these traditions is that of the San. Rock art painted on the canvas of a large shelter in the Platberg mountain at Modderpoort, once so vivid and enlightening as to warrant its declaration as a Provincial Heritage Site in 1936, depicts scenes of supernatural activity, where shamans ascend to the spirit world. Climate and vandalism have since taken their toll on this tableau, resulting in the near eradication of an unreplenishable heritage resource. Modderpoort's claim that rock art is one of its tourist attractions⁷ is thus perhaps made with a little too much optimism, but nevertheless, the art indicates the presence of an ancient culture on the property, engaging in sacred practices.

For chronological purposes, which will become obvious as issues of contest are unfolded in this report, it is necessary to point out that at some point in the late 18th century⁸ as the San presence was fading and before the arrival of the Anglican missionaries, Modderpoort was settled by the Bataung, a tribe of the Basotho, who named this piece of land, wedged between the Platberg and Viervoet mountains, Lekhalong la bo-Tau, the Pass of the Lions⁹.

The Bataung separated from the Bahurutse tribe around 1640, adopted the lion as their tribal totem, and migrated towards the Free State and Lesotho from the north-west. They mingled more than most tribes with others, intermarrying with the Barolong, Batlhaping and Lihoya Bantu

⁶ Mabudafhasi is now Deputy Minister of Water and Environment

⁷ http://saintaugustines.co.za/wp/?page_id=4

⁸ Gill 2009 – see Appendix A

⁹ Carmichael 1930

tribes, as well as the Griquas, Korannas and Bushmen. This level of mixing is believed to be the reason why the tribe subsequently underwent subdivision into four branches: the Hlalele; the Bataung of Moletsane; the Bakhuto; and the descendants of Monne who split into a number of groups such as the Batsukulu, and Baromokhele¹⁰. It was the Baromokhele who inhabited Modderpoort.

In the face of limited archival resources, I asked Stephen Gill, curator of the Morija Museum & Archives in Lesotho, if it was possible to put a date on the arrival of the Bataung at Modderpoort. He draws inferences from Ellenberger, and an article written in 1910 by Father Norton, an Anglican priest then based at Modderpoort, who interviewed an elderly lady, Maria Makelele Leiee, a Mokoena married to a Bataung Baromokhele. Leiee placed her people in the area around 1820, prior to the *lifaqane*¹¹ (1818–1828) upheavals. Gill's assessment¹² states that once the *lifaqane* was over, the Baromokhele returned to the area, along with other groups such as the Bakoena and the Bahlakoena. During the 1865-1868 Seqiti War, these groups were forced to move again, but returned once more¹³.

At some point after the 1865-1866 war fought with the Boer settlers in the Free State, Lekhalong la bo-Tau was ceded to the Free State government as victors of the battle. According to Gill, after The Peace of Sorghum (*Khotso ea Mabele*) in 1866, the 'Conquered Territory' as it came to be known, was surveyed and parcelled into farms. It is probable that Lekhalong la bo-Tau was included in this exercise. Farms were open for sale the following year at the latest¹⁴.

Two of the farms, Modderpoort and Modderpoortspruit (collectively known as Modderpoort) were offered to a man named Green, as a reward for fighting against the Basotho, but he was not keen to embark on a farming enterprise. Instead they were purchased in 1867 by Bishop Edward Twells of the Anglican Diocese of Bloemfontein, for development as a mission station. Twells established here the Missionary Brotherhood of St Augustine of Hippo (Society of St Augustine or SSA) as a self-supporting community, consisting of a brotherhood of five, led by

¹⁰ Ellenberger 1912 (55)

¹¹ Forced migrations caused by the Zulu king, Shaka, who waged war on Southern African tribes at this time.

¹² Gill 2009 – see Appendix A

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Gill, e-mail communication 2009/06/09

Canon Henry Beckett. They took up residence in 1869 and until they had completed a priory in 1871, they had no option but to live in a cave on the property. They had to deepen the floor of this cave and close off one side with a wall to make it habitable. Not only was it home for the Brothers for two years, it was consecrated as an Anglican church and used as such until a Gothic stone church was completed in 1872¹⁵. The cave remains a consecrated church to this day.

The late 19th century was marked by another arrival at Modderpoort, that of the Basotho prophet Mantsopa, a contemporary of King Moshoeshe I, who had achieved widespread renown for her accurate prediction of the outcome of battles fought by the Basotho against a range of enemies. At first a strong critic of the missionaries, she eventually converted to Christianity, practising a mix of traditional and new beliefs. Mantsopa claimed to receive messages from a higher being in visions, and was also considered a healer and rainmaker.

Living the full duration of the 19th century, Mantsopa died at Modderpoort at the estimated age of 111 and was buried in the small cemetery outside the sandstone church, somewhat unusually in the section reserved for whites, alongside the Anglican Brothers¹⁶. Revered as one of the great ancestors of the Basotho, she inspired a pilgrimage movement, and to this day her followers travel from far and wide to visit her grave, in quest of her favourable intercession in their fate and fortune.

Two other sites at Modderpoort are strongly associated with the Mantsopa legend and are included in pilgrimage visits. One is a freshwater spring, reputedly pointed out to Mantsopa as a source of “sacred” water by the ancestors¹⁷; the second is the cave where Beckett and his team of Brothers set up lodgings - according to popular belief, the prophet too lived and prayed here. Thus it is at this cave - a consecrated Anglican church and the legendary abode of a great Basotho historical figure - that Modderpoort’s religious traditions collide. Here lies the nub of the matter; the point on which much contention centres.

It is worth noting at this juncture, that over and above their association with a departed, now-ancestral spirit, natural phenomena such as springs and caves hold insinuations of the

¹⁵ Hodgson 2003; http://saintaugustines.co.za/wp/?pg_id=20

¹⁶ Ambrose 2006; Gill nd; Hodgson 2003; Ouzman 1999; Coplan 2003; St Augustines (nd-a)

¹⁷ http://saintaugustines.co.za/wp/?page_id=6t

supernatural across many African cultural groups. In the quote following, Terence Ranger, discussing holy places in 20th century Zimbabwe, indicates that African landscapes are chock-full with natural markers of religious significance and implies a certain tension with the Western practice of signing religious places with man-made monuments.

The "rocks and stones and trees" on which white settlers looked uncomprehendingly were all incorporated into an African oral historical geography. Hardly a hill or cave existed, in a landscape full of hills and caves, which did not have a religious or political historical significance¹⁸.

In the years following Mantsopa's death, the Society of the Sacred Mission (SSM) took over the work of the declining SSA, and in 1928 established a high school and training college for black teachers. A number of students of the college went on to impressive heights, such as Isabella Winkie Direko, a former premier of the Free State. Both institutions were closed, however, in 1955 following the introduction of restrictions against private education, enforced by the Bantu Education Act which was adopted by the National Party government in 1953.

Today Modderpoort, overlooking a peaceful vista of grain fields and silos, with the Maloti range up ahead, is run as an Anglican retreat and conference centre with bed and breakfast facilities.

Entitlement builds

To consolidate this background before detailing my research question, this brief history reveals a landscape to which a strata of claims was building over the years, layer for layer. Tracing their vertical path from bottom to top, we see various forms of entitlement being laid down, by the now-decimated San, through to branches of the Bataung (and possibly other Basotho groupings), to the Basotho nation at large as Moshoeshoe consolidated his kingdom, to the Free State government which won the land in a bitterly fought and ongoing conflict with the Basotho. The next layer of sediment, after a small detour where the land was offered to and rejected by Mr Green, was deposited by the Anglican Church, followed by the prophet Mantsopa with a band of followers that would still be demanding access to Modderpoort a century later.

¹⁸ Ranger 1987 (159). This connection of pilgrimage shrines to geological features is not confined to Africa, however. Write Victor and Edith Turner in *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (1978 page 112): "As Robertson-Smith observed almost a century ago (*The Religion of the Semites 1889*), pilgrimage shrines are often connected with striking natural features, such as mountains, caves, wells, river sources and mesas."

As this cauldron continues to bubble away, the South African government, represented by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), has stepped in to compound the picture. Yet further complication is the more recent news that the Bataung continue to hold an interest in the ownership of Modderpoort. The sketch below translates these layers graphically:

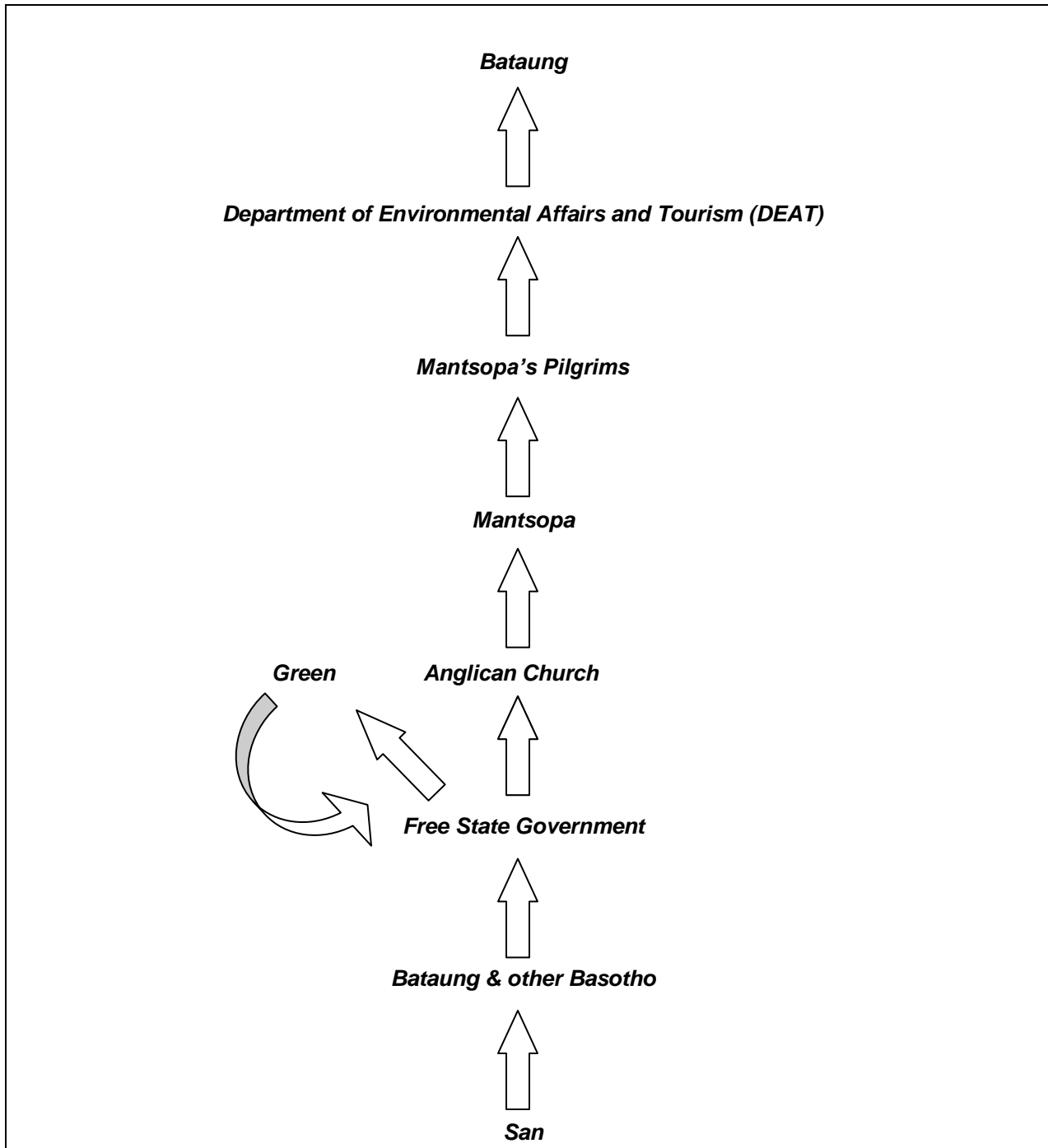


Figure 1: 'Stratification' of Modderpoort claimants

Research question

DEAT's involvement and offer of funds to develop the Modderpoort sacred sites gave direction to my research, and the following research question was formulated:

Religious Traditions, Heritage and Land: Dynamics in making a heritage site with contested claims to land a tourist attraction. A case study of Modderpoort

My initial expectations were that given the different belief systems of the main stakeholders involved – the Anglican Church and Mantsopa's followers – the study would focus on the proximity of dual religious traditions. Instead, early findings revealed that the followers of the prophet were comfortably at home in an integrated practice of Christian and traditional belief, while the church, for the most part, was seemingly tolerant of this fusion of faith (my view on the church's tolerance of Mantsopa's pilgrims is based on discussions with representatives of the church and my observance of the Cave Sunday celebrations, detailed in Chapter 3). It may be this view is too simplistic, as I understand that at times the relationship between the two parties has verged on the acrimonious).

As research progressed, another powerful dynamic overriding all others was laid blatantly clear, demanding a major re-evaluation of the organising principle of this research. That force was the emotive and deeply contested issue of land. Land, its ownership, its access and the feelings of belonging it engendered, was at the heart of the motivations of all stakeholders in the project to develop Modderpoort and raise its profile.

Thus land became the central concept for this research, and like the clichéd onion, it had multiple layers, each peeling away to reveal an interested party staking a claim on a different premise.

Differences in concepts of land ownership

Before detailing these claims, it is useful to unpack the schism between the Western concept of land ownership and the African ideology of communal land tenure. It is succinctly encapsulated by Henry Moyana, and although he writes in reference to Zimbabwe, his comments apply equally to South Africa:

In African cosmology such an important natural endowment as land does not have a marketable value. Prior to the advent of colonial rule in the country now known as Zimbabwe, the prevailing African land tenure system vested land rights in a corporate group which had overriding rights over those of the individual. The king or chief served as the Trustee who allocated land to new comers and ensured that its use was in harmony with the traditional land tenure formula. The traditional land tenure system also accepted that land rights were inalienable. Land belonged to the living and to the unborn as well as to the dead. No member of a group could sell or transfer land to an outsider as land was considered a natural endowment in the same category as rain, sunlight and the air we breathe. In this economy there could be no commodity more valuable than land and no circumstances in which it could be profitable to dispose of it. In short, land had no exchange value¹⁹.

The African model Moyana presents provokes some conjecture on Zimbabwe's well-publicised contemporary 'land grab' dispute in which the country's government has repossessed white-owned farms, and continues to do so. Does the President, Robert Mugabe, believe that all land is vested in him as head of the country, and is his to redistribute as he sees fit? Do his acts reject Western notions of land as a commodity that can be individually owned, and reflect the African belief that disposing of land for profit is a sacrilege?

That rumination aside, traditional land tenure throughout the African continent is in a process of alteration that began with colonisation and the imposition of Western ownership concepts by the European colonising powers. More recently, it is further warping under the pressures of population growth, land shortages and environmental degradation, all of which have contributed to the increasing unviability of lands cultivated under tenure systems. To take an example of a country that features in this research, Lesotho, anthropologist David Coplan comments: "By 1999...only a tiny three percent of Lesotho's 'subsistence' farmers produced enough cereals to subsist on"²⁰.

In addition, traditional land tenure has come under direct attack of funding institutions such as the World Bank and other donor agencies, which have pushed Africa towards commoditisation of land as a means of raising capital for development. Writes Catherine Boone in a paper published in 2007:

The World Bank has been a consistent advocate of land registration and titling programmes...The idea is that formalization and individualization of control and

¹⁹ Moyana 1984 (13) cited in Cheater 1990 (189)

²⁰ Coplan 2001 (111)

disposition of land will transform arable land into private property, which can then be mortgaged, bought, and sold in accordance with market incentives and dictates. Once land is a full commodity, labour will soon follow. Land will be mortgaged to secure an inflow of new investment to modernize production techniques and finance intensification. Capitalist production units and production processes will gradually emerge²¹.

Post-apartheid South Africa has embarked on a campaign of restitution, in which the return of land to those dispossessed of it, is perhaps the core form of redress. The Restitution of Land Rights Act passed in 1994 has revived the concept of communal right to land by making it possible for communities to reclaim land they once occupied. But this restitution is riddled with contradictions, which reflect the deep infusion of the Western concept of land ownership into the African notion of land tenure.

These contradictions are expanded upon in Chapter 7, but for the purposes of this introduction, I highlight this: while community, the primary tenet of African land tenure regimes, is the focus of land reform, it allows claimants the option of financial compensation as an alternative to repossession of the land, indicating the acceptance of land as a commodity in the Western sense.

As is explained below, there is such a community claim on Modderpoort land, and it is believed the claimants may accept financial compensation in settlement, further demonstrating this erosion the African land tenure model as it was in pre-colonial times.

Right to land: claims of 'belonging' and ownership

I have discerned five groups of claimants to the land represented by Modderpoort, their claims laid down at various times in the history of the site (see Figure 1 page 7), and centred on varying arguments.

There's the Anglican Church which has legal ownership and finds the property an important factor in its economic resources; there are Mantsopa's pilgrims who display a sense of belonging based on religious connection; local government, in the shape of the Mantsopa Local Municipality, seeks administrative and political control, and is backed in this by national government, in the form of DEAT, which further identifies tourism value and a source of job

²¹ Boone 2007 (572-573)

creation in Modderpoort. Lastly there is the Bataung tribe, staking its claim on historical, occupational right.

When viewed against the historical background of Modderpoort's location, namely the 19th century territorial disputes concerning the Eastern Free State-Lesotho border, and a more recent debate on the amalgamation of Lesotho into South Africa that raged in the early 1990s, the people of Lesotho may be forwarded as a sixth claimant. These claims are further explained in the paragraphs below.

The Anglican Church

The first and most obvious ownership claim comes from the holders of the title deed to Modderpoort, the Bloemfontein Diocese of the Anglican Church, which purchased the property over 130 years ago. Over and above its historical and spiritual value to Anglicans as the location of two early churches, the continued physical and legal ownership of Modderpoort has practical implications - it is beneficial to the diocese's future survival, as it generates revenue necessary to furthering the church's Ministry and sustaining its existence. This is of major concern in a climate of dwindling parish income²², a problem faced by most mission churches.

Mantsopa's pilgrims

Secondly, Mantsopa's followers claim a 'spiritual' possession of Modderpoort, which exists in a realm quite separate from, and irrespective of, physical land control or title deed. They demand unfettered access to the sacred sites – grave, cave and spring, a right they believe is divinely conferred and cannot be curbed by the Western concept of land ownership.

Writes Melville Herskovits writes on the subject of land tenure in contemporary Africa:

One factor of importance in all the continent that must be taken into account in dealing with Africans, and which certainly must enter into the discussion of the tenure problems and land-use...is the role of the supernatural...I submit that in any civilisation where a cult of ancestors, for example, dictates the reasons why people are devoted to land, this element in their belief system is crucial if proposals to introduce changes in the holding or the use of the land ...are to achieve any measure of co-operation. Certainly in Africa,

²² See Chapter 4

the relationship between a given group and the deities believed to control the land plus the ancestors who are attached to particular plots where they lived is absolutely critical²³.

It is estimated by Modderpoort management that 600-800 visits to the Mantsopa sites are made by pilgrims on a monthly basis, indicating that the numbers of Mantsopa followers are substantial²⁴. Pilgrimages can often be seen in progress on Friday afternoons or Saturday mornings, following a route that begins at the cave, continues to the grave and then treks a good length across the farm to the spring. At each of these stations on the journey, candles are lit and offerings - written appeals, food and items such as snuff boxes and lottery tickets - are left behind in quest of the prophet's blessings. (A newspaper article attached as Appendix C indicates the type of intercession the prophet is believed to offer).

Pilgrim visits increase over Christmas, New Year and Easter, and more recently the country's yearly Women's Day commemoration is emerging as a new tradition. The highlight on the annual calendar, however, is the St Augustine's Day celebration held towards the end of August, which attracts some 3 000 pilgrims. Bringing both mission church and traditional belief together, the service has undergone a number of permutations²⁵. It is seen by Anglicans as a thanksgiving for the mission's founding, but for Mantsopa's followers, this is secondary to commemorating their sacrosanct ancestor. What the Anglicans term 'Cave Sunday' is first and foremost "Mantsopa's Sunday' for these pilgrims.

Modderpoort management allows the pilgrims free reign to make their pilgrimages during daylight hours, with the exception of the cave where an entry fee applies. This year the fee was increased considerably from R10 to R25 per person, raising a rumbling or two from the pilgrims²⁶. The cave remains under lock and key at all other times.

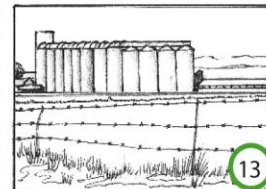
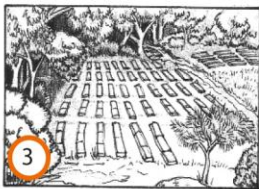
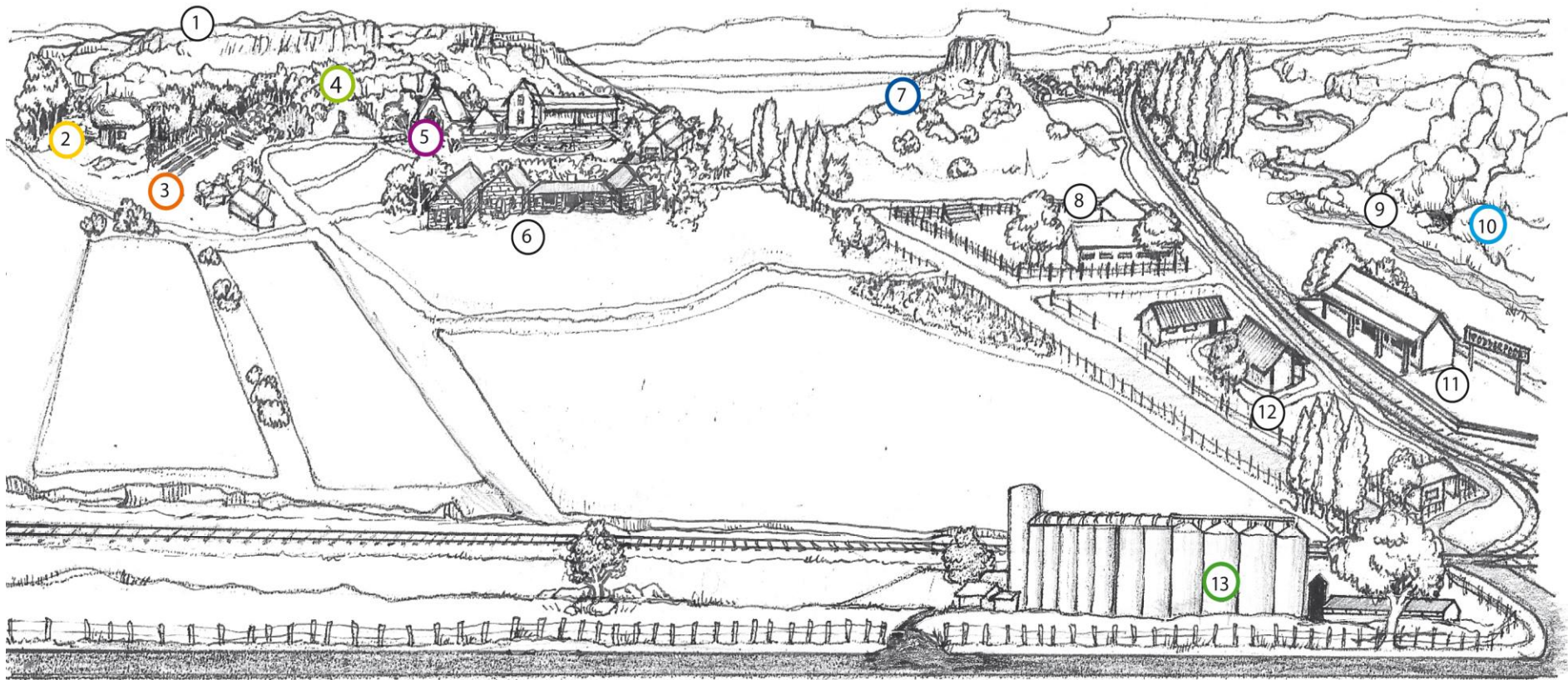
As will be explained further in Chapter 3, the pilgrims have strong views on the development of Modderpoort as a tourist attraction and deserve consultation on the matter. Traditional churches, cultural groups and faith healers will be given representation on a Project Advisory Committee (see Chapter 4) that will work in conjunction with DEAT on the project – at the time of compiling this report, DEAT was still approving the membership of this committee.

²³ Herskovits 1952 (42)

²⁴ Fritz, interview 2008/09/26

²⁵ Hodgson 2003 (228)

²⁶ See Chapter 3



KEY	
1	Platberg
2	Cave Church
3	Open Space
4	Matsopa's Grave
5	St Augustine's Priory
6	Old Training College
7	Spitskop
8	Primary School
9	Modder River
10	Spring
11	Staton
12	Post Office
13	Silos

Map 2: Layout of Modderpoort
 (artist: Dorianne van Noort)

Mantsopa Local Municipality

Yet a third quest for ownership of a sort comes from the Mantsopa Local Municipality, which supports the development of Modderpoort as a tourist attraction, an action stemming from the significance of the site to both and black and white sectors of the population, says its Chief Development Officer, Philemon Chalale²⁷. The municipality is a post-1994 entity consisting of five towns including Ladybrand, Hobhouse, Excelsior, Tweespruit and Thaba Phatshwa²⁸. It falls into the district municipality of Motheo.

While the municipality has no basis on which to claim physical ownership to Modderpoort, it has tried to muscle in on ownership and administration of DEAT's tourism project. DEAT stipulates that once the project has reached finalisation and the upgrade is complete, an 'owning agency' must be established to see to the day-to-day running of the project. It is envisaged that this will be a joint operation in which all stakeholders are involved and can be formulated according to a number of legal entities such as a Trust or Section 21 company. The vigorous tone of discussions between the stakeholders on the subject so far reveals competition for the strongest influence²⁹.

This potential conflict points to another dynamic - the tussle for control and management of the relics and links to Mantsopa, a Basotho symbol with the promise for a wider, more national recognition than she currently enjoys. It may also carry undertones related to profit.

National government

The fourth player in the game is national government in the shape of DEAT, claiming Modderpoort for the South African nation as a whole by increasing its profile as a national tourist attraction. A complication, and admitted as such by Teboho Moepi of the department's Bloemfontein office, is that for the first time the department is instituting a social responsibility project on privately-owned land³⁰. The department thus cannot act without restriction and is obliged to consult the landowners, namely the Anglican Church.

²⁷ Chalale, telephone interview 2008/08/08

²⁸ Motheo District Municipality (nd)

²⁹ See Chapter 4

³⁰ Minutes 2008/06/30; See Chapter 4

But both national and local government's involvement could be tinged with shades of power play. There are indications from the local government and the church that motivation for the developments at Modderpoort originate in an incident some years ago when the then-management of the farm denied the ANC Women's League usage for a Women's Day celebration. Deprived of access to Mantsopa on that occasion, one wonders if the current negotiations are not an attempt to reclaim symbolic power of all that the prophet stands for, as well as signify a political victory and a settling of scores³¹.

This is denied by a government spokesman, who, however, confirms that strong, historical female figures such as Mantsopa are valuable to government's widely-known policy of empowering women³² (see Chapter 6).

Bataung descendants

Some five months into negotiations on the Modderpoort upgrade, a new iron was thrown into the fire, dramatically highlighting the contestation for land. A land claim for Modderpoort and neighbouring farms, lodged by a member of the Bataung, surfaced. Under the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994, it had been lodged with the Land Claims Court, a body formulated to hear cases of land dispossession post-1913. Although Modderpoort was acquired by the Anglican Church way before 1913, the Act makes provision for a right in land based on "beneficial occupational rights"³³. The Land Claims Commission for the Free State and Northern Cape has established the existence of such rights, as well as subsequent dispossession as a result of race-discriminatory legislation (in this instance the Bantu Education Act of 1953)³⁴.

The Bataung claim makes no reference to Mantsopa or religious links to Modderpoort, and it has been reported that the claimants would be willing to accept financial compensation for the land, rather than the land itself³⁵. Their claim may well be rooted in opportunism rather than in a genuine desire for ownership, and indeed there is suspicion on the part of the church and other

³¹ See Chapter 4

³² Matsila, telephone interview 2009/05/18

³³ Restitution of Land Rights Act 22

³⁴ See Chapter 7

³⁵ Harrison, telephone interview 2009/01/30

affected landholders regarding the manner in which it was lodged - two days before submission deadline (31 December 1998), and in the fact that it was only made known once government had publicised its intentions for Modderpoort. All the same it brings a fifth dimension to the overall dispute.

Basotho of Lesotho

One cannot help but view these modern-day contestations against the historical background of the Eastern Free State and the neighbouring Kingdom of Lesotho, which since the 19th century have been embroiled in land disputes. The Kingdom has come off second best in these challenges, losing territory (the Conquered Territory) with every border change. So perhaps here we have a sixth group of claimants, the Basotho of Lesotho, who in fact see the Basotho in South Africa and Basotho of their own country as one, largely dismissing the political border that divides them.

David Coplan hypothesises that the “re-occupation” of Mantsopa’s cave, one of a few caves in the Free State to be ‘repossessed’ by Basotho pilgrims, is an internalised effort at the re-appropriation of land³⁶. He writes:

Many religious shrines in the Conquered Territory...continue as active sites for worship today. Having lost the Conquered Territory politically, the Basotho remain rooted there and seek to reclaim it spiritually. For all these sorts of reasons people have retained a strong identification with Lesotho as a cross-border place and with the ideas of the *Basotho ba Moshoeshoe* (Moshoeshoe’s Basotho) as *sechaba se le seng, mafatše a mabeli* (one nation, two countries)³⁷.

This ‘one nation, two countries’ notion has inspired much talk in Lesotho (but curiously, not in South Africa) about the integration of the two groupings and the possible incorporation of Lesotho into South Africa. According to Coplan, this question was keenly debated in the run-up to South Africa’s first democratic elections of 1994 and “has since then assumed a central place in local political discourse, albeit outside government.” To quote:

...the majority of workers/peasants straightforwardly desire the abolition of the border and an end to formal independence, which they see as an obstacle to local development and their own economic survival. Such people do not identify the Basotho nation with

³⁶ Coplan 2003 (980)

³⁷ Coplan 2001 (87)

Lesotho as a nation state. On the contrary, they regard the Lesotho government, the senior aristocracy, and the army as existing only to serve their own interests.³⁸

Supporting this view is a point of information put forward by Gill:

Terror [Mosiuoa] Lekota [then Free State Premier], during a Moshoeshoe's Day celebration at Ficksburg in about 1995 or 1996, made the statement that one way of solving the historical injustice done to the Basotho people would be for South Africa to give the Conquered Territories back to Lesotho, and for Lesotho to then join South Africa as a 10th province. These comments probably did not make the headlines in Johannesburg, but Basotho in the Free State know this, and it has been a matter of discussion³⁹.

Furthermore, in a survey conducted in Lesotho in 2008 by Afrobarometer, an "independent, research project that measures the social, political, and economic atmosphere in Africa", respondents were questioned on the country's links to South Africa. A third indicated they favoured dual citizenship of both countries, a third favoured the status quo (no dual citizenship), and a third supported the incorporation of Lesotho into South Africa⁴⁰.

Perhaps the case of Modderpoort, and no doubt other disputed pieces of land in the Eastern Free State, is just the next chapter in this 150-year-old land feud. Then again, one might question whether such ownership really matters – the scorned Free State-Lesotho border is notorious for its porous nature and is frequently and easily transgressed, just as it is doubtful that Modderpoort keeps pilgrims off its territory, or out of its contested cave, after hours.

In this section on the Basotho of Lesotho, I place another set of potential claimants, which probably deserves to be seen as a separate group all together. It belongs to the Lesotho-based descendants of Mantsopa. In the minutes of the Deputy Minister's first meeting with the Mantsopa and Motheo District municipalities, held 10 March 2008, this statement is made:

She [Deputy Minister Mabudafhasi] also urge that Mantsopa Family should be visited and be requested to take part in the development of the area since the[y] will also be looking at the upgrading of Mantsopa Grave. The deputy Minister stated that she has been liaising with the Minister of Lesotho around the issue and indicated that it will also enhance the relation between Mantsopa Local Municipality (SA) and Lesotho [sic]⁴¹.

³⁸ Coplan 2001 (110)

³⁹ Gill, e-mail communication 2009/04/20

⁴⁰ http://www.afrobarometer.org/Summary%20of%20Results/Round%204/les_R4SOR_10apr09_final.pdf

⁴¹ Minutes 2008/03/10, Ladybrand

Whether any approaches have been made to the family are unsure. At the time of writing, the Deputy Minister's Chief of Staff, Mr Livhuwani Matsila, was under the impression that the Mantsopa Local Municipality had sent a delegation to Lesotho to meet with the family and had invited them to attend forthcoming stakeholder meetings, while the Mantsopa Local Municipality's Chief Development Officer, Mr Philemon Chalale, said he understood this was being undertaken by the Deputy Minister⁴².

Why a tourism attraction?

Modderpoort, over and above the San rock art which has received official heritage site status, fits numerous criteria for credit as a heritage resource as stipulated in the National Heritage Resources Act, No 25 of 1999. It's a place to which oral traditions are attached; it's associated with living heritage; it's an historical settlement; it's the location of ancestral graves and an historical cemetery; and it's strongly associated with more than one cultural group for spiritual reasons. It has the capacity to "contribute to the development of a unifying South African identity" as well as to "research, education and tourism"⁴³. Furthermore, Modderpoort can claim qualities stated as desirable in the preamble to the act – it affirms the country's "diverse cultures", "shape[s] our national character", and most importantly in post-apartheid South Africa, can redress "past inequities" and "facilitate healing and material and symbolic restitution"⁴⁴.

Heritage, states this piece of legislation, "helps us define our cultural identity and therefore lies at the heart of our spiritual well-being and has the power to build a nation". That heritage is a significant element in the composite of national identity, is accepted by countries the world over. Australia, whose Burra Charter⁴⁵ served as a strong reference in the formulation of South Africa's heritage legislation, defines its national heritage as "exceptional natural and cultural places that contribute to Australia's national identity". It expands: "National heritage defines the critical moments in our development as a nation and reflects achievements, joys and sorrows in the lives of Australians"⁴⁶.

⁴² Matsila, telephone interview 2009/05/18; Chalale, telephone interview 2009/05/22

⁴³ National Heritage Resources Act 1999 (chapter 1)

⁴⁴ National Heritage Resources Act 1999 (preamble)

⁴⁵ http://www.icomos.org/australia/images/pdf/BURRA_CHARTER.pdf. The Burra Charter defines the principles for conservation of Australian heritage

⁴⁶ <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/about/national/index.html>

It begs the question, then, why Modderpoort, fitting all the above heritage criteria, is being developed as a tourist attraction by the Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, rather than being given the national heritage status its rich tapestry clearly deserves. But in view of the snail-like pace of the resource-strapped South African Heritage Resources Agency's (SAHRA), it is perhaps fortunate that Modderpoort is receiving any attention at all. Since the Heritage Resources Act's adoption a decade ago, the agency has succeeded in declaring only eight National Heritage Sites, most of them already declared World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. Furthermore, SAHRA's priorities thus far appear to be centred on sites of relevance to the country's recent liberation struggle.

The force of myth

In framing this study of Modderpoort, attention must be drawn to the power of myth, which shaped by the malleability of the oral tradition, has the ability to grow to a strength that can successfully resist competing claims of truth or reality (I explore oral tradition a little further in Chapters 2 and 3).

Of the three Modderpoort sites linked with Mantsopa – her grave, the cave and the spring – only the grave can be proved conclusively to be connected to the prophet. Firm evidence of Mantsopa having resided in the cave is lacking – Ambrose calls the notion “mistaken”⁴⁷. Verification of her use of the spring is also sketchy. In the light of such thin evidence, it becomes obvious that the Mantsopa pilgrimage has strong elements of myth – myth that may be further bolstered by the site's elevation to a more widely-known tourist attraction.

Is this problematic? It would seem not - the world has no shortage of religious sites that have tenuous links with reality. In many instances the religion itself buys into the fantasy, as the popularity of the fictional bestselling novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, reveals. *The National Catholic Reporter* recently detailed how sites associated with the book are making capital from the tourist trade it stimulated. The medieval Scottish chapel, Rosslyn, was given a state-funded \$14 million overhaul following an increase in tourists from 30 000 a year in 2001 ahead of the book's publication, to 120 000 in 2007⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ Ambrose 2006 (5); Coplan 2003 (989)

⁴⁸ *National Catholic Reporter* 6/4/07 (10)

On the subject of nationalism, an issue the new South Africa in its infancy is grappling with, myth is a contributory factor to the development of a national identity, particularly so in a diverse society. Anthony D Smith indicates that among the components that go to make up a collective identity, are “shared myths and memories”, particularly of a “golden age”. Coupled with “sentiments of belonging to ancestral homelands, especially sacred territories” a new nation has the foundations for a modern and durable nationalism⁴⁹.

Mantsopa, as indicated above, is indeed a symbol of a golden age when Moshoeshoe I was consolidating a multitude of clans into a unified, proud Basotho nation⁵⁰. Her healing powers and ability to transcend the normal to communicate directly with a higher being, endowed her with sanctity that has transmitted itself to the places she frequented. Modderpoort as the location to which the shared memories of Mantsopa’s pilgrims are attached, represents the “territorialisation of memory”⁵¹. Through the DEAT subsidy, Modderpoort may be further enshrined as ancestral ground and historical homeland⁵².

The mythologizing of the legend of Mantsopa, then, has the ability to feed into the future of the South African nation, defining an ideal to be emulated and recreated. It suggests the possibility of a glorious destiny⁵³ rooted in a glorious past, and the promise of salvation or rewards if a particular path is followed. Chapter 6 reveals that government is, in fact, tapping into elements of this ideal, specifically in attempts to empower women.

Allied to this endorsement of myth, is the deliberate process of inventing tradition. Eric Hobsbawm, in the introduction to *The Invention of Tradition*, expresses the notion that the formation of tradition is not all organic, and an element of manufacture may be clearly detected. Furthermore (and in keeping with Smith’s view), traditions are vehicles for manipulation:

‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with

⁴⁹ Smith 1996a (581; 590)

⁵⁰ Thompson 1975

⁵¹ Smith 1996b (453)

⁵² Smith 1996a (589)

⁵³ Smith 1996a (584)

the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past⁵⁴.

However insofar that there is such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of 'invented' traditions is that the continuity with it is largely factitious. In short, they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition⁵⁵.

Perhaps reflections of this manufacturing of tradition can be seen in the African National Congress (ANC) Women's League's recent penchant for holding annual Women's Day commemorations at Modderpoort. This public holiday anchors on the 1956 Women's Campaign and the march by 20 000 women to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest the extension of the pass laws to the South African black female population. The implied continuity between modern-day heroism and a courageous, historical figure is obvious, but making a direct connection is somewhat far-fetched.

Hobsbawm also states that the invention of tradition occurs more frequently

...when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which the 'old' traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable, or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, or are otherwise eliminated...⁵⁶.

Mantsopa came to prominence during a period of rapid transformation – the turbulence of the 19th century. She is being re-energised and reinvented in yet another period of transformation, as post-apartheid South Africa finds its feet as a new, democratic society. She personifies Hobsbawm's "response to a novel situation", referenced in an "old situation".

Structure of the research report

The chapters following attempt to flesh out the contentions introduced thus far. Chapter 2 sets the scene with a background to Mantsopa and Modderpoort, followed by examinations of the motives, actions, ideologies or philosophies of the various stakeholders in the project in Chapters 3 to 7. These stakeholders encompass Mantsopa's pilgrims; the Anglican Church; the

⁵⁴ Hobsbawm 1983 (1)

⁵⁵ Hobsbawm 1983 (2)

⁵⁶ Hobsbawm 1983 (4-5)

Mantsopa Local Municipality; the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) and the Bataung. The study is brought to a conclusion in Chapter 8.

Information was gathered from official and working documents, archival material and published texts, as well as through the recording of visual and verbal data. Face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted with members of the Anglican Diocese of Bloemfontein, management at Modderpoort, the implementer of the DEAT programme, representatives of the Mantsopa Local Municipality and DEAT, archivist Stephen Gill and Seutloali Makhetha, a descendant of Mantsopa. Two visits were made to Modderpoort, one timed to include the annual Cave Sunday. On this occasion, random interviews were held with Mantsopa pilgrims.

Unfortunately, despite much effort and many requests, my attempts to secure a meeting with Deputy Minister Mabudafhasi over the period of a year were unsuccessful. Ten questions were then posed to the Deputy Minister by e-mail, and these were not answered. As time ran out, a telephone discussion with her Chief of Staff, Mr Livhuwani Matsila, was conducted. The Mantsopa Local Municipality representative was also guarded in his participation in the research, and thus was forthcoming with limited information.

To convey the richness and colour of personally observed events, such as the Cave Sunday celebration, I have switched from third person reporting to first person narrative (indicated in italics). Further, I have not corrected grammatical and spelling errors gleaned from interviews or written communication so as not to change the manner in which they may be interpreted by readers.

CHAPTER 2

MANTSOPA AND MODDERPOORT

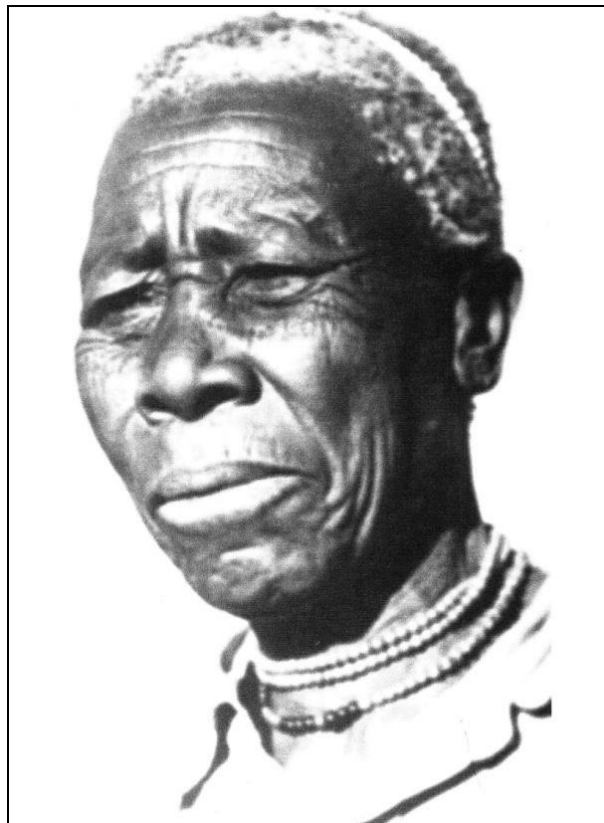


Figure 2: Mantsopa
(photographer: James Francis Goring, ±1897
source: Morija Museum & Archives)

The purpose of this chapter is to set the scene for this research report, by examining the historical background of the leading actors in this scenario – the prophet Mantsopa and Modderpoort itself. In exploring the central narratives on Mantsopa, along with the intersecting history of Modderpoort, this chapter uncovers the root of the claims to land by Mantsopa’s pilgrims and the Anglican Church.

A definitive account of the prophet’s story is prevented by the limited, yet varied versions of her life story. There are, however, common threads. These accounts reveal how deeply her history was tied to political events of her time. Modderpoort’s fortunes, too, are shown to have waxed and waned in synthesis with the political context. The events described show the origins of both parties’ connections to Modderpoort, physical and spiritual.

History of Anna Mantsopa Makhetha Selatile

There are not many sources of information on the prophet Mantsopa, and those that exist reveal a number of discrepancies – the result of multiple versions of oral history, their limitations of selective memory and contaminations by social and historical influences as they were channelled down the generations. DW Cohen, an Africanist historian, notes that in oral transmission “the general processes of historical information in society...are not orderly, are not predictable, and are not reconstructable”⁵⁷.

The information in this section is gleaned from writings by Ambrose, Casalis, Coplan, Gill, Hodgson, Ouzman, Setiloane and Thompson. It has been reviewed and commented upon by Seutloali Makhetha, a descendant of Mantsopa’s husband and his fourth wife. Makhetha, currently resident in the Eastern Cape, began researching his family tree some years back, while older family members were still alive to tell their stories. His initial interest was not Mantsopa specifically, although he developed a curiosity in the prophet as his investigations went on.

I have attempted to show how the variations in these sources make it difficult to definitively pin down dates and important events. As the information may be confusing, I include a timeline at

⁵⁷ Cohen (1980) cited in Tonkin (1986)

the end of the chapter to show these discrepancies. I have not attempted an evaluation of the accuracy of the different versions, as this is not the purpose of this report.

Sometimes referred to as Manchupa, Mantsopa's birth name was Koena-li-fule, which translates to "the crocodiles are feeding"⁵⁸. According to Ouzman she was born 1793⁵⁹; Hodgson puts her birth date at "around 1800"⁶⁰, and Reverend Father Norton who wrote about the prophet in the early 1900s when they were both resident at Modderpoort (Mantsopa was "about 103 years old" at the time), stated: "As she was about 16 in 1822, she must have been born in about 1806..."⁶¹.

Gill places her birth in what is today the Eastern Free State, but this area was part of Moshoeshoe's kingdom during much of Mantsopa's adult life. Hodgson is a little more specific, claiming it occurred near Maseru at a mountain called Likotsi or Ramakhetheng. Hodgson says she was the daughter of Nkopane (elder brother of Makhetha) and his wife Sesilane⁶²; Ambrose says she was the daughter of Ramakhetheng and the granddaughter of Nkopane⁶³.

Seutloali Makhetha intercedes at this point, at the same time adding to the multi-layered mantle of myth which swathes so many aspects of the Mantsopa story:

I agree with the version that Mantsopa (Koena-li-fule) was born at Likotsi Ha Ramakhetheng Village just outside Maseru. She was one of four children born to Ntate Tshephe and M'e Matshenki Ramakhetheng. At the village, the house in which she apparently started her prayers is still there and strange things still happen. In one corner of this rondavel, there is forever some loose soil produced by some insects. There is also a rock near the house where it is alleged that she used to go to sit on during her prayers⁶⁴.

Mantsopa's life was affected by the *lifaqane* and the clashes these forced migrations caused among the tribes of Southern Africa, which occurred around the time of her initiation in 1822⁶⁵. Hodgson claims that as a child Mantsopa was taken captive for six months by the Zulu group, the Mankoane. A time of famine followed, in which some elements of both the Zulu and Basotho nations resorted to cannibalism, and Mantsopa lost her father in this fashion. When

⁵⁸ Ambrose 1994 (2)

⁵⁹ Ouzman in *Heritage Sites of the Free State* (2)

⁶⁰ Hodgson 2003 (212)

⁶¹ Norton 1910

⁶² Hodgson 2003 (212)

⁶³ Ambrose nd (1)

⁶⁴ Makhetha, e-mail communication 2008/11/18

⁶⁵ Hodgson 2003 (212)

some of her kin came to trade with the Mankoane for corn, Mantsopa's 'master' overcame his wife's objections to her meeting them, saying: "Let a Mosuto visit Basuto". She fled with her relatives on their second visit. Her earlobes, extended from the wearing of Zulu earrings, remained forever a sign of her captivity⁶⁶.

She was destined to marry her cousin Lekote, son of Makhetha, but he died following the payment of *bohali* (bride price). Mantsopa married his elder brother, Selatile, instead. According to Seutloali Makhetha she was Selatile's sixth wife⁶⁷. Hodgson states they lived west of the Caledon River on property at Lekhalong la Bataung, now Modderpoort, a point Seutloali Makhetha corroborates⁶⁸. Mantsopa bore three daughters and a son: Ntsopa, Motsielehi, Ts'iu and Sesilane. According to Hodgson, after the birth of her eldest, she took the name Mantsopa, meaning mother of Ntsopa⁶⁹. Ambrose writes, however, that her name was derived much earlier in her childhood, from an elderly neighbour called Ntsopa, so named for her skill at making pots (the word *letsopa* means clay), story-telling and singing of traditional songs. Because the prophet could spellbind an audience with her dreams as Ntsopa could with her songs, she was named Mantsopa – mother of Ntsopa, because her talent outshone the older woman's gifts⁷⁰.

Mantsopa's powers as healer, rainmaker and diviner were inherited, it was said, from her uncle Mohlomi, an influential and revered prophet who lived from 1720 – 1816, and foresaw the *lifaqane* as he lay on his deathbed (Mohlomi famously prophesied that "a cloud of red dust will come out of the east and consume our tribes")⁷¹. After the *lifaqane* the Basotho went on to suffer the incursions of the Boers as they moved north in search of land and independence from the British, as well as the British themselves, furthering their imperialist ambitions.

⁶⁶ Hodgson 2003 (213)

⁶⁷ Makhetha, e-mail communication 2008/11/18

⁶⁸ Ibid. Makhetha comments: "Selatile was residing at Lekhalong la bo-Tau (Modderport) while this area was still part of Lesotho. When Major Warden came up with the new boundary – Caledon, the then chiefs of Lesotho appealed to him to cross over to Lesotho rather than stay in RSA. He obliged and settled in Mokhethoaneng which is fairly close to Modderpoort but on the Lesotho side. He founded a village called Makhetheng there and was a chief till his death. His grave is still there in Mokhethoaneng but it is only known to the family since it is not marked and is not in a cemetery. There are a lot of Selatile's offspring still residing in Mokhethoaneng to this day."

⁶⁹ Hodgson 2003 (215); Norton 1910

⁷⁰ Ambrose 2004 (3)

⁷¹ Hodgson 2003 (215)

Mantsopa's prophecies reached prominence in 1851, when she accurately predicted the outcome of the Battle of Viervoet between a British force of 1 330 led by Major Warden and the Basotho. Her prophecy is described by the French Protestant missionary Eugene Casalis, writing in the 1860s, as follows:

Manchupa, a woman till then unknown, informed the chief [Moshoeshoe] that she had fallen into a trance, and that a being who she designated in no other way than by the words *He, Him*, had charged her to tell the whole tribe to stand upon the defensive, that the enemy would come, and would be almost destroyed in a contest so sharp, and of such short duration, that it would be called the Battle of Hail, and that after that there would be a long interval or repose, the rains would be abundant, and that the seed might be sown and the harvest gathered in without fear. We were informed of this message at the time it was sent, and three weeks after the predicted combat took place. The enemy made the assault; but not being acquainted with the localities, they suffered themselves to be driven towards frightful precipices, from the top of which hundreds of men fell pell-mell, so that a few moments sufficed to decide the battle.⁷²

Subsequently, the expected retribution from Warden failed to materialise and the Basotho "enjoyed respite long enough to permit them to sow their fields and gather in their harvest. The rains were very regular, and the crops abundant"⁷³.

According to Hodgson, Mantsopa further successfully predicted the outcome of the Battle of Berea in which the Basotho defeated the British in 1852, and did so again in 1853 when they overcame the Tlokoa under Sekonyela. She then foretold of an extended period of peace⁷⁴. But later in her life her prophecies failed to materialise and she clashed with some of the Basotho chiefs. According to Gill, one story holds that she was declared a charlatan by Chief Letsie, son of Moshoeshoe, and stripped of her wealth when she failed to make rain⁷⁵.

There are a number of versions of her movements during and after the Basotho-Boer War of 1865-1868, a conflict with devastating consequences for the Basotho, resulting in major loss of arable territory and Moshoeshoe's subsequent request to the British to annex Basotholand.

Gill states Moshoeshoe continued to seek her counsel and during the war she toured his lands drumming up national feeling. After the war, he locates her as a refugee in Thaba Bosiu where

⁷² Casalis 1861 (286-287)

⁷³ Casalis 1861 (287)

⁷⁴ Hodgson 2003 (216;217)

⁷⁵ Gill in *Anna Makhetha Mantsopa: The legend* (nd)

she took instruction to convert to Christianity, together with Moshoeshoe and “good number of other Basotho”. Her baptism under the name Anna, he states, took place on 13 March 1870. At first she followed the French Protestants at Mabilela and later changed affiliation to the Anglicans at Modderpoort. Her move to what was now the Free State took place in 1874⁷⁶.

Coplan states Mantsopa correctly predicted the defeat of the Basotho in the Basotho-Boer War, and as a result was exiled by an unhappy Moshoeshoe back to Modderpoort, which subsequently became an Anglican mission station in 1869. Here she was converted to Christianity by the Anglican missionaries on 13 March 1870, which happened to be the day after the death of Moshoeshoe⁷⁷. Hodgson states a breakdown between Mantsopa and Moshoeshoe occurred because Mantsopa confidently foresaw victory, which proved to be false, and her position as his advisor ended with the British takeover of Basotholand in 1868. Mantsopa’s baptism took place the same year under the French Protestant missionary Theophile Jousse, who gave her the name Anna⁷⁸. Lastly Ouzman’s version sees Mantsopa exiled to Modderpoort in the 1860s by Moshoeshoe, who was threatened by her growing influence. He positions her conversion at Modderpoort, co-incidentally on the same day Moshoeshoe chose for his baptism, but unrealised as the chief died two days prior⁷⁹.

Seutloali Makhetha comments at this juncture:

I am not sure about the accuracy of the fact that Mantsopa was banished to Modderpoort. The explanation that I was given by the old people was that due to her religious work (prophecy) she obtained permission from Selatile to be allowed to remain at Modderpoort to be close to her place of worship - the cave as well as the spring!⁸⁰

The conversion was somewhat surprising, as Mantsopa’s early relationship with the missionaries was ambivalent. She concurred with their notion of one God – as seen from Casalis’ description above, acknowledging a “*He*” or “*Him*”. But she claimed she didn’t need a book (Bible) to reach him, as she had direct contact through her visions. She also disputed the missionary contention that the fabled road to reach God was narrow – this path in her view was wide to accommodate the great number of people trying to get to him. She was critical of what

⁷⁶ Gill in *Anna Makhetha Mantsopa: The legend* (nd)

⁷⁷ Coplan 2003 (988).

⁷⁸ Hodgson 2001 (217;219)

⁷⁹ Ouzman in *Heritage Sites of the Free State* (nd)

⁸⁰ Makhetha, e-mail communication 2008/11/18

she perceived as an anti-Basotho note in their teachings⁸¹ and, says Ambrose, provided strong opposition to them⁸². According to Joseph Orpen, an advisor to Moshoeshe quoted in an 1862 volume of *Basutoland Records* (and cited by Hodgson), Mantsopa claimed that:

...polygamy is not forbidden, but lawful and practiced by God himself, Jesus being his child by one wife, and the Holy Spirit by another! – that the way to heaven is not a narrow road, that the missionaries are ridiculously mistaken in saying so, but that God is really the Supreme Chief, and that of course the road to his town is very broad indeed and constantly full of crowds of people going to court⁸³.

The circumstances of her residence in Modderpoort are also under debate. Popular legend is that she lived in the same cave the first Anglican missionaries lived in and consecrated as the Cave Church. There is little evidence to support this, although some commentators claim she prayed and administered healing there⁸⁴. Others claim that her home was more likely quite a distance from the cave, on the slopes of the Spitskop Mountain⁸⁵.

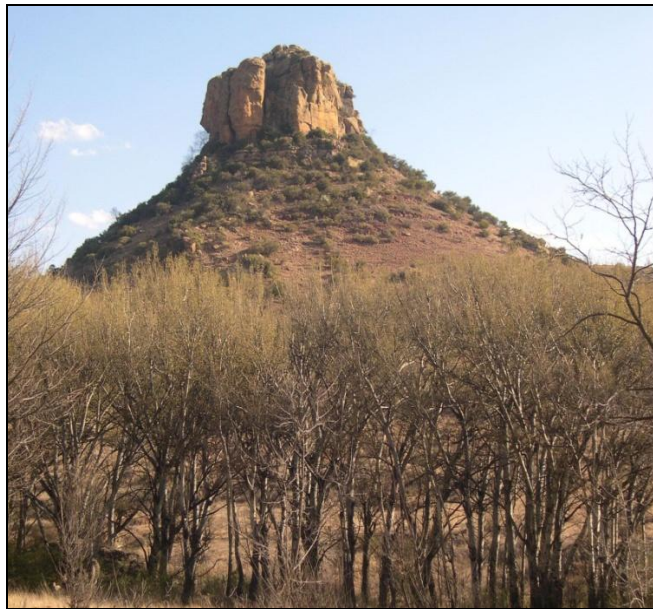


Figure 3: Spitskop Mountain

(source: M. Colman)

⁸¹ Coplan 2003 (988)

⁸² Ambrose 2006 (4)

⁸³ Hodgson 2001 (217; 218). Orpen to Burnet, September 1862: G McTheal (ed), *Basutoland Records*, vol 3 (Cape Town, 1883) (181)

⁸⁴ Coplan 2003 (989)

⁸⁵ Ambrose 2006 (5)

Also popularly believed is that Mantsopa bathed at a spring, from which she also drew water for healing and rainmaking purposes. Once again, evidence of her association with this spring - some distance from the Cave Church although closer to Spitskop Mountain – is sketchy. This quote from Gabriel Setiloane gives clue to the legend connecting Mantsopa to this underground spring and its ‘holy’ water:

She was more of a rain-maker than anything, but not of the classical traditional type. Little girls, of pre-puberty age, used to be sent to go and beg her to pray for rain. She would fill their pots with water from a creek nearby, and send them off home with an injunction not to look behind them, but to hurry to cross the Caledon to the side on which their home was (in the present Lesotho) because then “rain would be following hard on their footsteps”, and, if they tarried, the river would fill up and be uncrossable. Sure enough, as they arrived at the river the first drops of heavy rain would begin to fall, and by the time they reached home at Mokgethwaneng [Mokhethoaneng] near the site of the present Berea, they would be soaking wet with rain⁸⁶.

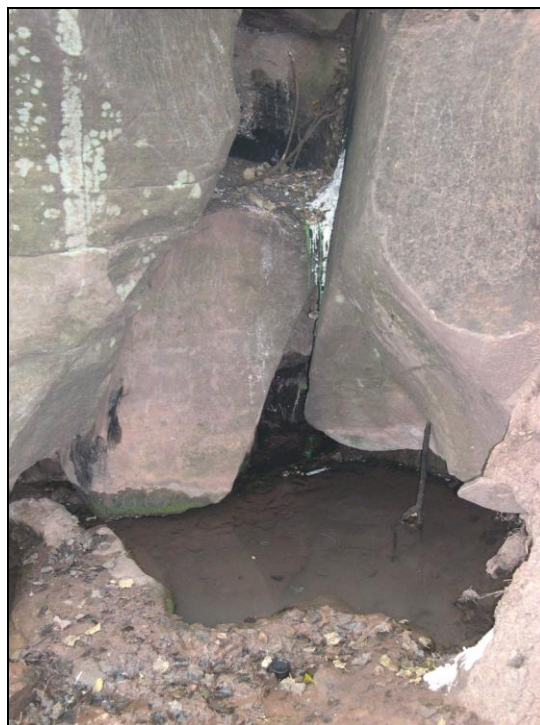


Figure 4: Mantsopa's spring

(source: M Colman)

Setiloane states Mantsopa also predicted World War I, recommending that Africans refrain from any involvement in it. “Her warning was not heeded: and the wreck of the Mendi, a troop carrier

⁸⁶ Setiloane 1976 (208)

– 1915 – off the Cape coast in which many African men of all ethnic origins being carried to the ‘front’ in France, perished, is attributed to disobedience of her warning”⁸⁷.

She is attributed with having predicted the rinderpest epidemic of the 1890s, the invention of the motor car (people would travel sitting down) and the aeroplane (birds would fly between the earth and sky)⁸⁸. It would appear the myths concerning the prophet continue to be embellished: this comment was made by a pilgrim attending Cave Sunday celebrations at Modderpoort in September 2008:

So Mantsopa told the people that at that time that one day in 20 or 30 or 100 years to come, there would be black tar roads. In South Africa there were no tar roads at that time. And those tar roads were going to kill people. People are going to die. And another thing, there’s going to be a sickness, which is not going to be healed by professional doctors and people are dying⁸⁹.

These predictions are additionally interesting as they point to the dynamic and fluid nature of oral tradition that surrounds Mantsopa, as first raised in Chapter 1. New legends to fit contemporary situations arise, way beyond the prophet’s death. This development of popular myth is typical of powerless groupings of people. Certainly it was a defence against colonialism – myth was one sphere that could withstand the colonising force that drowned out so many areas of African tradition. The Great Xhosa Cattle Killing spurred by the teenage prophet Nongqawuse in 1856-57 is a classic example. The ability of myth and orality to remodel themselves as changing situations dictate makes it difficult to discredit them.

At an estimated age of 111 years Mantsopa died in the early 1900s (1904/5 according to Ouzman⁹⁰; 1906 according to Gill⁹¹; registered as 11 November 1906 in the burial records of the Bloemfontein Diocese of the Anglican Church which names Father Norton as having performed the funeral ceremony⁹²) and was buried with Christian rites in the Modderpoort cemetery, alongside the Brothers of the Society of St Augustine and the white residents of Modderpoort.

A limited amount of unconfirmed history can be gleaned on Mantsopa’s four children. Seutloali Makhetha says of the youngest daughter, Sesilane:

⁸⁷ Setiloane 1976 (208-209)

⁸⁸ Hodgson 2003 (220)

⁸⁹ Mosala/Phangisa, interview 2008

⁹⁰ Ouzman 1999 (2); Ouzman in *Heritage Sites of the Free State* (nd) (2)

⁹¹ Gill in *Anna Makhetha Mantsopa: The legend* (nd)

⁹² Proposed Diocesan Development Plan (2); Burial register 1907 (56)

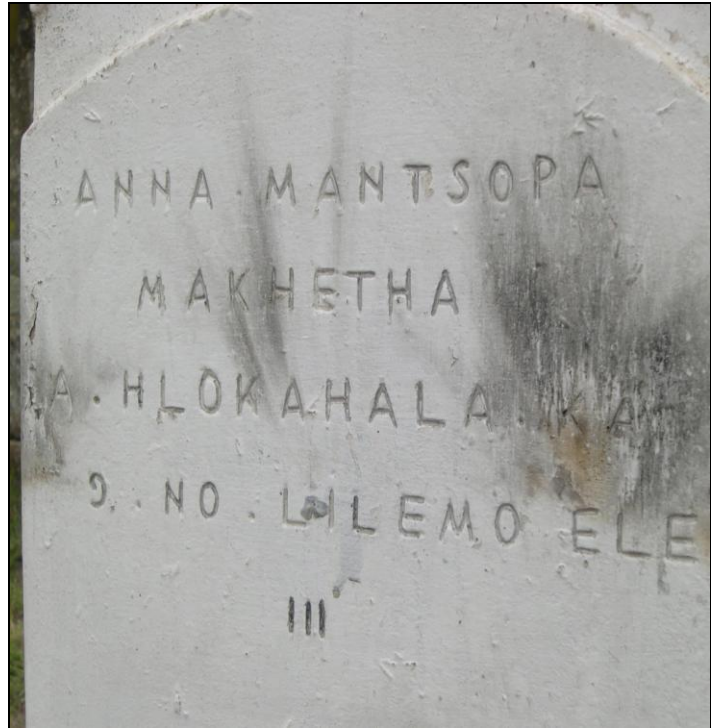
BURIALS in the Parish of <i>St. Augustine's, Modderpoort</i> in the County of <i>Proenfontein</i> in the Year 18 <i>97</i>				
Name.	Abode.	When buried.	Age.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
No. 441 <i>Wastha Hobelo</i>	<i>Modderpoort</i>	<i>18th Jan 1907</i>		<i>Robert M. Wilder</i>
No. 442 <i>Christina Leballo</i>	<i>Modderpoort</i>	<i>27 January</i>	<i>11 months</i>	<i>W A Norton</i>
No. 443 <i>Barone Kholaloune</i>	<i>Blaauwgunboom</i>			<i>Albert Meting</i>
No. 444 <i>John Adam Grobler</i>	<i>Rangoshoek</i>	<i>20 November</i>		<i>W A Norton</i>
No. 445 <i>Sylvia Tsui</i>	<i>Modderpoort</i>	<i>26 Feb.</i>	<i>2 years</i>	<i>W A Norton</i>
No. 446 <i>Rantsoane</i>	<i>Nijburg</i>	<i>17 March</i>		<i>Stephen Meting (reader)</i>
No. 447 <i>Maria Matsise</i>	<i>Orange Springs</i>	<i>20 March</i>		<i>Nathan Leballo (deacon)</i>
No. 448 <i>Anna (Mantsopa) Selabile</i>	<i>Modderpoort</i>	<i>11 November 1906</i>	<i>101</i>	<i>W A Norton</i>

Figure 5: Mantsopa's death recorded in the Modderpoort Burial Register of 1906 (last entry on page).
(source: Anglican Parish Registers (DVD), Wits Historical Papers)

Sesilane or Sophia was married to Tlali Moshoeshoe in Matatiele Ha Tlali and to this day the name of Sophia is still being given to the children in remembrance of Sophia the daughter of Selatile and Mantsopa. Apparently Sophia did not have children and based on the custom of the day, Chief Tlali took Sesilane's sister as another wife to bear children on behalf of Sesilane [sic]. It is possible that this sister was Motsielehi⁹³.

Mantsopa's direct descendants, he states further, are found mostly within South Africa and go by the surname of Ts'iu, after Mantsopa's only son⁹⁴.

Yet another, very different, version of Mantsopa's life is told in a recent article in the Lesotho publication, *The Voice of Free Democrats*. The article is based on a story told by Lesotho-based and has been described by Gill as "fantastic"⁹⁵. It is transcribed in Appendix B.



Figures 6 (left) & 7 (right): Mantsopa's grave with inscription
(photographs: M. Colman)

⁹³ Makhetha, e-mail communication 2008/11/18

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Gill, interview 2009/04/17

History of Modderpoort

The Anglican Church marks the beginning of its history in the location between the gap of the Platberg and Viervoet mountains, Lekhalong la bo-Tau, in 1867, when the first Bishop of the Bloemfontein Diocese, Edward Twells, purchased two farms from the Free State government, Modderpoort and Modderpoortspruit, amounting to a total of 3 057 morgen or 2 601 hectares.

The title deeds for the two farms were only signed (by President Brand of the Oranjevrijstaat) in 1877, however, a delay caused by the Free State-Basotholand border wars. Twells was eager to establish a missionary brotherhood at Modderpoort, a task given to Canon Henry Beckett and six others, who set up the St Augustine's Brotherhood in 1869.

Some background to the purchase is given in a recent publication by Andrew Colley based on Beckett's diary of the time. He writes:

A burger by the name of Green had been granted the farms as he had fought in the Basuto wars, but did not want to farm. The farms were therefore sold to the Brotherhood through the Bishop⁹⁶.

This statement, and the fact that Twells was under pressure from the government to settle the farms with haste, is an early hint at the contest that enshrouds the land – then and now. Colley gives further indication of the disputed nature of the land, pointing out that Beckett's brotherhood was kept off the farms for a period.

Although the farms at Modderpoort were on territory allegedly ceded by Moshoeshoe, there was continual strife in the area which eventually lead [sic] to outright war. The "war" consisted mainly of skirmishes and cattle claims by both Basotho and Boer who controlled the Free State, and it was felt that the Brothers should not take up residence on their farms until the disputes could be settled. In fact the Free State army was for some time encamped on the farms. A farm at Springfield, about 15km from Bloemfontein, was therefore hired as a temporary residence⁹⁷.

During a visit to Modderpoort prior to relocating, Beckett discovered a hole in a large rock at the foot of the Platberg mountain and slept there, "proposing to make it his bedroom when they

⁹⁶ Colley (nd) (11)

⁹⁷ Colley (nd) (16)

came to occupy while huts were prepared”⁹⁸. This hole was the very cave around which much of the religious contest of Modderpoort came to be centred. Indeed when the rest of the Brotherhood took up occupation on the farm, the cave was their abode while they completed a priory house and chapel⁹⁹ (the chapel was completed in 1872).

In the Quarterly Paper of the Orange Free State Mission, Beckett described how the cave was enlarged with the addition of a wall of stones, the lowering of the floor and enclosure of an exposed side. The cave also doubled as a house of prayer, and was consecrated as a church¹⁰⁰. He wrote:

By building up a wall of stones we have contrived to enlarge the area, so as to get a room twelve feet by fourteen, for a chapel, besides a small sleeping room, screened off by a large, detached stone. Both rooms we have much improved by digging away the floors, so that I can now stand upright in the chapel, and sit upright in the bedroom¹⁰¹.

The logbook of Archdeacon Crisp, who visited Modderpoort from his base in Thaba ‘Nchu, contains these quotes dated 1870 and 1871 respectively: “The miserable cave, which has cost as much as a house would have done, leaks in many ways...” and “...glad to find the good people had got out of their cave, which romantic though it may have been, was never better than a rat-trap”¹⁰².

Despite its status as a consecrated church, at times in its history the cave was used as a dairy, pumpkin store, and during the South African War (second Anglo-Boer War) as a stable for horses¹⁰³. This extract from a 1902 letter by Father J W Barrow, one of the early Modderpoort Brothers who had returned to England, to Brother William, then-resident at Modderpoort, refers to the changes in the cave, at the same time describing how its accommodations had once been set up.

⁹⁸ Colley (nd) (24)

⁹⁹ Some sources report that there was a damaged farmhouse on the property, which the Brothers renovated while using the cave as temporary accommodation. Others claim Twells laid the foundations of a building prior to the Brothers’ arrival, but it was not ready for habitation.

¹⁰⁰ Fowler 1903; Carmichael 1930; Hodgson 2003 (222) citing *Bloemfontein Quarterly* 1:291

¹⁰¹ Colley (nd) (33)

¹⁰² Crisp 26/05/1870; 07/01/1871

¹⁰³ Fowler 1903

I can tell you exactly where the cave chapel was, if the structure has not been much changed to meet the arrangements of the military. From your sketch, it is evident that one of the doors has been made into a window. I cannot remember exactly how the rocks were placed, inside the cave. I mean, their natural positions. Of course, when furnished these were partly covered, and there were curtains marking the divisions of the rooms. On the side against the mountain there was a large wall of rock out of which shelves were cut to hold our plates and cups, all of iron: and between the chapel and the Superiors room (in which Bro. John Williams also slept), and which was on a lower level than the chapel, there was a large intervening stone. Outwardly the appearance was a huge mass of stone, or rock, of great size, with grass and vegetation in clefts near the top, and above all – the bell! This great mass looked as if supported by the wall of unburnt brick, which was built round the lower side, facing the veldt...The Altar was a small portable one, such as is sometimes used in sick rooms, the space being very limited...¹⁰⁴.

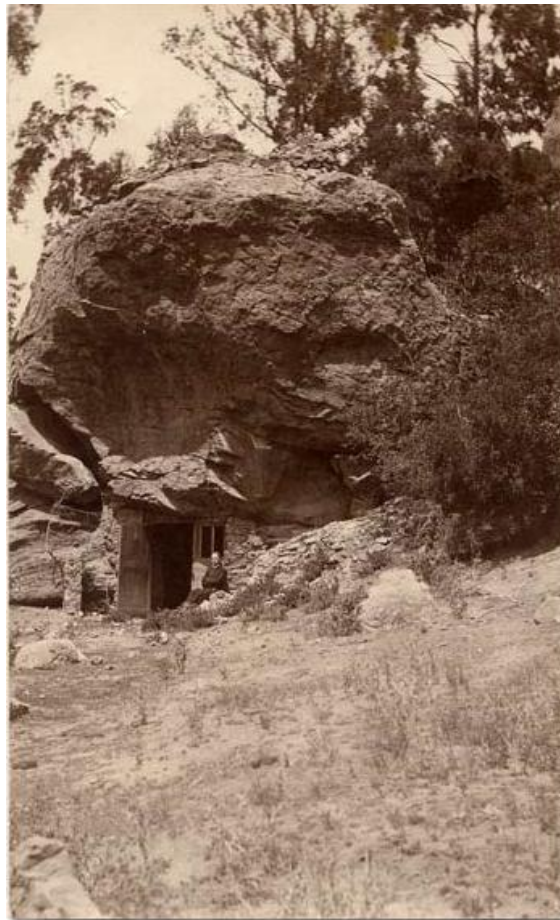


Figure 8: This old photograph of the cave at Modderpoort was found in a collection of papers of Rev. Father James Thomas Carmichael, 1852-1947.
(source: *Archives of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, Wits Historical Papers*)

¹⁰⁴ Colley nd (85)

In 1902 the Society of the Sacred Mission (SSM) took over the work of the dwindling Society of St Augustine. A convent, inhabited by the sisters of the Community of St. Michael and All Angels (CSM & AA) was also set up at Modderpoort, from which a medical clinic was operated. By 1928 the SSM had realised one of its principal aims, the opening of a high school and training college for black teachers. A number of students of the college became well-known, such as Isabella Winkie Direko, a former premier of the Free State. Other well-known politicians, professionals, Anglican and non-Anglican clergy are counted among former students. Both institutions were closed, however, in 1955 following restrictions on private education enforced by the Bantu Education Act of 1953¹⁰⁵.

The reminiscences of Sister Mary Ruth of the Community of St. Michael and All Angels, who served at Modderpoort from 1925 – 1955, portray the devastating effect of the legislation:

The blow fell. In 1953 the apartheid government passed the Bantu Education Act – education for subservience. Mission schools and colleges, teaching and training in the Faith, could only survive on condition that they submitted to the provisions of this misbegotten piece of legislation. The Modderpoort educational establishment decided to close down and the students departed. Other concerns used the plant for a short time but eventually the buildings were used as a Conference and Retreat Centre. It was sad to see the derelict structures scattered about in spite of this. The spiritual and pastoral work of the Mission continued from the Priory and the farms tended, often with difficulty”¹⁰⁶.

The “other concerns” the Sister refers to were a Test School for Black Ordinands and the Adams United Theological School, both housed at Modderpoort during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Both facilities had to vacate the property as they were operating in a ‘European’ area¹⁰⁷.

A brief history of Modderpoort, prefacing a draft plan with regards to the DEAT subsidy, presented by the Bloemfontein Diocese of the Anglican Church at a meeting on May 10, 2008, contains this statement, somewhat ironic when events concerning the land claim (see Chapter 7) unfolded a few weeks later:

In the dark days of apartheid when Black people had no land of their own, Modderpoort was an important asset to the people of this diocese where they could for once in their

¹⁰⁵ Proposed Diocesan Development Plan nd (2)

¹⁰⁶ Mary Ruth 2004

¹⁰⁷ Anon, St Augustine’s Priory Conference Centre & Guest House nd.

lives “own” land by virtue of being Anglicans. The importance is still displayed in the pride with which Anglicans wear their “Anglicans love Modderpoort” t-shirts. People have come and gone, governments have changed and yet this land remains, for the people of God to withdraw and reflect on His wonders¹⁰⁸.

The establishment then assumed a new guise as a conference and retreat centre and bed and breakfast facility. It is marketed under the slogan “Modderpoort – discover your soul’ and ascribes to the following four-focus vision:

- to be a place of holiness and healing
- to be a place of pilgrimage
- to be a place of meeting and hospitality
- to be a place of training and education.

As far as the last of these goals is concerned, the site continues to have an educational slant. Post-ordination training and courses for clergy schools continue to be conducted at Modderpoort, as well as skills development in the agricultural and hospitality trades. On the other side of the retreat’s access road on property still owned by the church, a school operates under contract with the Department of Education, where 200 pupils from neighbouring farms and the local community are taught¹⁰⁹.

Since 2007, the church has embarked on a series of renovations and improvements to enhance Modderpoort’s profitability, investing R3.5 million¹¹⁰. More on this is detailed in Chapter 4.

Conclusion

This background sketches a rich and colourful history of Mantsopa and Modderpoort. It also highlights other aspects worth noting at this point.

Firstly, Mantsopa’s journey from rejection of the mission church to Christian baptism is representative of the gradual infusion of Christian practice into traditional African belief. Once she completes this transition, Mantsopa becomes a symbol of the synthesis of both influences.

¹⁰⁸ Proposed Diocesan Development Plan nd (2).

¹⁰⁹ Proposed Diocesan Development Plan nd (5)

¹¹⁰ Proposed Diocesan Development Plan nd (8)

As this blend of belief remains the dominant religious tradition in the country today, Mantsopa retains her relevance over a century later.

Secondly, this background indicates the density of myth that envelopes the prophet, myth that is still in the making. In their eagerness to believe and further embellish this myth, Mantsopa's followers perpetuate a force of social and religious cohesion and identity. The next chapter describes the annual Cave Sunday event at Modderpoort, where this identity reaches a climax.

<i>Event</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Source</i>
San era	±1500		According to Ouzman, the paintings are 300 to 500 years old, but presumably the San were in the area much earlier. By 1900 they had largely disappeared, absorbed into Bantu-speaking groups.
Arrival and settlement of the Bataung	± late 18 th Century		Gill (based on limited archival sources).
Mantsopa's birth	1793 1795 ±1800 ±1806		Ouzman; Coplan Ambrose Hodgson Reverend Father Norton
Mantsopa achieves fame	1851 1852 1853	Battle of Viervoet Battle of Berea Defeat of Sekonyela	Casalis Hodgson Hodgson
Basotho lose Seqiti war; Modderpoort ceded to Free State	1865		
Bishop Twells buys Modderpoort	1867		
Henry Beckett and brotherhood arrive Priory Church consecrated	1869 1873		
Mantsopa arrives at Modderpoort	On her marriage to Selatile 1860s Before 1869 After 1874		Hodgson Ouzman Coplan Gill
Mantsopa's baptism	1868 13 March 1870 13 March 1870	Thaba Bosiu Modderpoort	Hodgson Gill Coplan/Ouzman
Modderpoort title deeds registered	1877		
Mantsopa's death	1904/05 1906		Ouzman; Coplan Gill; Modderpoort Burial Records
Opening of school and training college	1928		
Mantsopa pilgrimages begin	1950s		Hodgson
Passing of Bantu Education Act	1953		
Closure of school and training college; Modderpoort continues as retreat & conference centre	1955		
Mantsopa Local Municipality proposes Modderpoort project to DEAT	2007		DEAT Application form
DEAT announces R15 million grant	2008		
Bataung land claim comes to light	2009		

Table 1: Modderpoort Timeline and Origin of Claims to Land

CHAPTER 3

MANTSOPA'S PILGRIMS

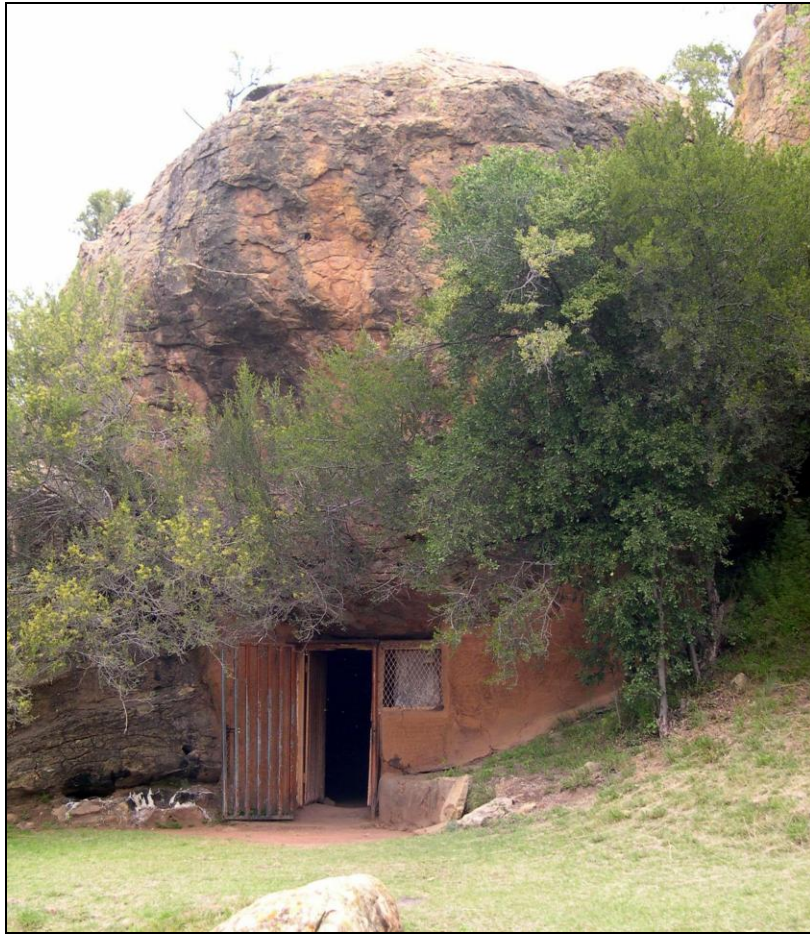


Figure 9: The Cave Church
(photograph: M. Colman)

This chapter deals with the claim of Mantsopa's pilgrims to Modderpoort, based on a sense of spiritual ownership and a demand for unregulated access to the three sites associated with the prophet. Before examining this claim, some explanation on the characteristics of pilgrimage and pilgrims is offered.

Richard Barber describes religious pilgrimage as "a journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding"¹¹¹. These characteristics of pilgrimage are clearly demonstrated by the pilgrims who visit Modderpoort in quest of Mantsopa's intervention in their lives.

While many Mantsopa pilgrims visit Modderpoort individually, the majority participate in church groups where communal transport is provided. These pilgrimages display characteristics common to history's great pilgrimages - a religious founder, visions, legends, myth, oral traditions, supernatural elements, ordeal, festivities, dedicated commemoration days, and remedial benefits.

These groups, the largest of which is seen at the annual Cave Sunday event, also exhibit a quality that Victor Turner has observed in his studies of group pilgrimages across the globe, namely a heightened solidarity or a "commonness of feeling", which he terms "communitas"¹¹². Communitas, he claims, binds diversities together and is anti-hierarchical¹¹³. He identifies three forms of communitas in the religious pilgrimage: existential – the spontaneous communitas that arises when a group is first formed; normative – the result of organisation within a group for the purposes of social control; and ideological, the utopian models or blueprints offering optimal conditions for existential communitas¹¹⁴.

Normative communitas, the dominant form in pilgrim groups, is an equalising force, stripping individuals of external symbols of status by placing them on the same journey and mission, faced with the same hardships, which may include fasting, penitence, physical discomfort and other afflictions. Yet in spite of this austerity there is some form of 'Chaucerian' enjoyment to be derived from the shared experience, which distances individual pilgrims from their daily

¹¹¹ Barber 1993 (1)

¹¹² Turner 1974 (chap 5)

¹¹³ Turner 1974 (206); Turner & Turner 1978 (13)

¹¹⁴ Turner & Turner 1978 (135); Turner 1974 (169)

problems, allows them to participate in a shared identity, and in following a set a programme of activities, offers a “feeling of control over the environment” or of “meeting the challenges of life”¹¹⁵.

While Mantsopa offers a link to a higher power, she also offers an empowering sense of community to a group of followers who are mostly disempowered through poverty and lowly social status. As interviews with Mantsopa followers in this chapter reveal, this empowerment is confidently expressed in a spiritual entitlement to Modderpoort’s Mantsopa sites.

The relevance of Mantsopa today and the recent past

Mantsopa came to fame in the chaotic late 19th century. Her prophecies a beacon of hope to the Basotho then, she has remained a spiritual force in the century since her death, spurring a pilgrimage movement from the 1950s. Writes Hodgson:

From the 1950s onwards, a growing confidence among black people in trying to integrate their Christian faith with African consciousness and express such an incarnated spirituality corporately in order to meet their immediate needs, led to the development of an informal Mantsopa pilgrimage movement¹¹⁶.

Her flame continued to burn brightly in apartheid times, when spirituality, an internal and intensely personal domain, was one of the few realms whites could not penetrate and control, and blacks could still own. Hodgson points out that Mantsopa’s popularity in apartheid times may be viewed as a cry for freedom:

The cultic practices associated with Mantsopa offered them [her followers] direct access to, and control of, spiritual power as they sought a healing that embraced the whole of their lives. For many this was integral to their ongoing struggle for political liberation, a strategy for survival that incorporated the realisation of an African spirituality beyond white control. Symbolic power was intimately connected with political power¹¹⁷.

Interestingly, Hodgson finds Mantsopa’s following to be greater in South Africa than in Lesotho, where she is perhaps eclipsed by her uncle, the prophet Mohlomi. Hodgson surmises that

¹¹⁵ Turner & Turner 1978 (13, 136-138)

¹¹⁶ Hodgson 2003 (211)

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Christians in Lesotho “have not had the same need for a saintly black figure to bridge the African-Christian divide within the historic church as in apartheid South Africa”¹¹⁸.

This viewpoint reflects a close relationship between pilgrimage and martyrdom. When a sense of martyrdom is prevalent, it appears to enhance the practice of pilgrimage, heightening its emotional element, deepening its meaning for pilgrims and entrenching its observance. This pattern is evident in countless pilgrimage rituals, one example being St Patrick’s Purgatory in Lough Derg in Ireland’s County Donegal. Religiously significant to the Irish as a place of penance since the 6th century, its relevance assumed nationalistic shades as oppression by the English developed and continued on over an extended period of time¹¹⁹.

Mantsopa’s pilgrims mimic the Irish experience on both religious and political levels, and even though apartheid, a tyrannical political ideology that could often only be opposed by paying the ultimate price of martyrdom, has been removed, Mantsopa’s followers by and large remain victims to poverty, poor education, unemployment and a myriad of social ills.

Cave Sunday: the pilgrim perspective

St Augustine’s Day is celebrated at Modderpoort annually on a Sunday in August, commemorating St Augustine of Hippo. The practice of holding the service outside the cave church has earned it the moniker Cave Sunday. But with the centrality of the cave in the Mantsopa mythology, the prophet has ‘usurped’ St Augustine’s leading role in the commemoration, and to the vast majority of worshippers at this event, the day is known as Mantsopa’s Sunday. In 2008, the celebration was held a month later than usual, on 28 September, as a result of conference bookings the church did not wish to lose. The following italicised narrative relates my personal observance of Cave Sunday.

The visitor driving through the gates of Modderpoort on Cave Sunday, 28 September 2008, would have been greeted with the sight of groups of people walking in the opposite direction, all carrying an assortment of empty plastic containers. They were on their way across the railway

¹¹⁸ Hodgson 2003 (226)

¹¹⁹ Turner & Turner 1978 (Chap 3)

line to Mantsopa's spring, where they would fill these bottles and jugs with water flowing from below the surface of the earth. This they would take home for its physical and spiritual benefits.

Nearing the retreat, the visitor could not fail to notice the fleet of buses parked to the right, from which crowds of pilgrims spilled, along with baskets of food, chairs and blankets. Some were dressed in apostolic church uniform, some in the colours of their Anglican guilds or church groups, a few in Sunday best, others more informally.



Figure 10 (above): Servers and priests lead the procession of clergy; Figure 11 (below): Senior priests (photographs: M. Colman)

Outside the main buildings on the path leading to the cave, the procession of worshippers was already lined up and singing harmoniously – servers in red and white cassock and surplus in the lead, followed by priests in white alb and blue stole, then the congregants and the finally Bishop Patrick Glover of the Bloemfontein Diocese surrounded by senior priests, robed in white.

The 3000-or-so-strong crowd entered the fenced off Cave Church area where a canopy had been erected for shade. Those who could not find seating there, found a place on the sandstone blocks on the grass, or laid blankets down in the shade. The bright cyan blue jacket of the Women’s Union was a prominent thread in the crowd. Despite pomp and ceremony, there was a casualness about the service – children playing on the grass, and pilgrims coming and going to the spring and grave as they wished.



Figure 12: The attentive congregation
(photograph: M. Colman)



Figure 13: The blue of the jacket of the Women's Union is dotted throughout the crowd.

(photograph: M Colman)

The clergy were sheltered under a thatched roof over a small cemented floor. All sermons were related in English and translated into Sesotho (apparently with a few liberties in the retelling). A ladies' choir alongside sang impressively.



Figure 14 (left) & 15 (right): Choirs

(photographs: M. Colman)

At Mantsopa's grave, which had been cleaned of all candle wax and mementos previously left by pilgrims, there was a steady stream of followers in small groups. Most knelt, genuflected, prayed a short while, then left a coin or added a stone to those already on the grave. Some attempted to light a candle - somewhat futile in the wind. Others spent a long time in prayer. As soon as there was a gap in these visits, three men waiting patiently a little way off, approached, collected the coins and put them into a First National Bank cloth bag. They said they had been employed for this purpose and the money collected was going to the church.



Figure 16 (above); 17 & 18 (below): Prayers at Mantsopa's Grave
(photograph: M Colman)



Back at the cave, the lengthy service of about two hours or so was winding down with communion. The mjikelo (tithing) then began. Different churches and guilds – the Mothers' Union, the Youth Group – came forward to present their donations. The choir singing throughout, they were well supported at this point by dancing lay ministers in orange t-shirts. A speaker announced the amount of each donation and exhorted worshippers to up their contributions. At the end of the mjikelo, he expressed disappointment with the tally.

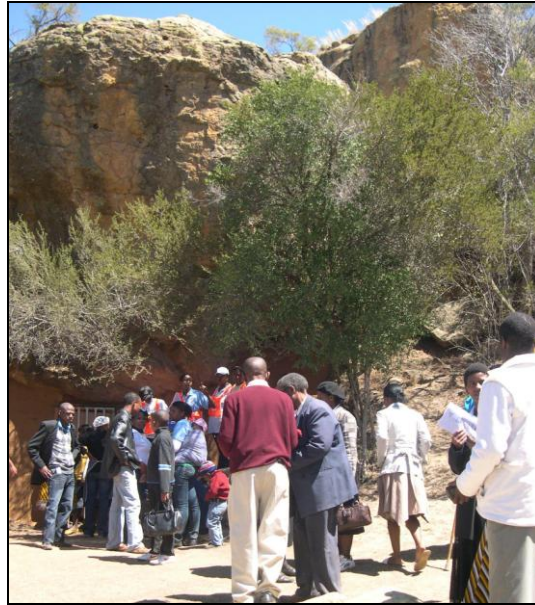


Figure 19: The crowd building at the cave
(photograph: M. Colman)

At this point a queue was building outside the cave, also cleaned of its graffiti but for some stubborn bits. Its gate had remained firmly padlocked throughout the service, and was guarded by some youthful marshals. A priest was also given the duty of preventing worshippers from slipping around to the back of the cave to dig for sacred soil, also intended to be taken home for divine protection. He wasn't relishing the task, grumbling that he didn't enjoy having to say 'no' to the worshippers. Some pilgrims managed to duck around, however, climbing through a hole in the fence to dig around the roots of a tree. A pilgrim made the comment that had the cave been open, attendance at the service would have dwindled.



Figure 20 (above) & 21 (below): Digging for sacred soil at the back of the cave
(photographs: M. Colman)

The speaker then advised that the donations had fallen short of the previous year. This may be connected to the fact that the event had drawn a smaller crowd than in previous years, possibly because of the date change. The speaker's next announcement, that the R10 fee normally charged for entrance to the cave would apply, thus carried an implication that the charge was being levied to make up for the diminished donation amount¹²⁰. There was much huffing and

¹²⁰ This entry fee to the cave has since been increased to R25 per person and includes a bottle of Mantsopa's water, normally sold at R5.

puffing about this and some pilgrims fell out of the queue. Nevertheless, many paid and surged into the cave, almost defeating the marshals' attempts at control.

The press of the crowd in the cave did not really allow for any praying to take place, although some did genuflect over a bowl of water at the entrance. A photographer stationed himself near the only shaft of light into the space, taking 'souvenir' pictures of people for R15. I asked a few pilgrims who'd managed to push to the front what they'd done there as it was difficult to see in the gloom, expecting to hear they had left request notes and other items. Most said they'd just wanted to see what was there.

In the meanwhile, the Bishop had climbed a path up the Platberg mountain to bless the congregation from that elevated point. This signalled the end of the morning's service, and the congregants went off to picnic in the grounds.



Figure 22: Taking water from the spring
(*photograph: M Colman*)



Figure 23: Drinking sacred water from the spring
(photograph: M. Colman)

In the late afternoon, the crowds at the spring were long gone, but a few small groups still made their way over. Among them were three Anglican lay ministers and an Anglican nun. This was in noticeable contrast to a brief conversation I had had at the service with a lay minister, who said he knew about Mantsopa but strictly followed the Christian way.

At the spring, the usually clear water was cloudy. Two youngsters lurking about in the trees said the water had been disturbed by a group of boys who had retrieved the coins left there – once again by the pilgrims in quest of good luck. Conversations with a few stragglers revealed the existence of another ‘cave’ nearby as yet another Mantsopa site – where the prophet would pray after collecting water. More of a large rock than a cave, candle wax dribbled over the ground was evidence of more homage paid to the ancestral ‘grandmother’, as the pilgrims referred to her.



Figure 24: The second Mantsopa 'cave' or rock, nearby the spring
(*photograph: M. Colman*)

“Modderpoort, our Moria”¹²¹

The centrality of Mantsopa and Modderpoort to this community of pilgrims is driven home at an event the scope of Cave Sunday. It draws a wide variety of worshippers from both mission and independent churches, from all corners of the Free State province¹²². In on-the-spot interviews conducted at the grave, spring and cave for the purposes of this report, pilgrims from Koppies, Theunissen, Virginia, Bloemfontein, Parys and Botshabelo were encountered.

The question - “why is Mantsopa relevant today?” - drew a universal response on the lines of the prophet’s role as an ancestor interceding between God and the living. Mpho Mosala from Bloemfontein stated:

We are going to ask for [assistance from] our ancestor, for through our ancestors we believe that God is next to them, then we send a message through our ancestors, then our ancestors will come to us – that is our belief¹²³.

Sandile Faku’s comment coupled Mantsopa’s qualities as ancestor and believer in God together, in accordance with the integrated version of ancestor worship and Christianity practised by the pilgrims:

¹²¹ Theunissen group, interview 2008/09/28

¹²² While Mantsopa’s followers are to be found all over South Africa, the worshippers at the Cave Sunday event on 28/09/09 were largely from the Free State.

¹²³ Mosala/Phangisa, interview 2008/09/28; no attempt has been made to correct the English spoken here.

...we believe she was a woman of God since she used to pray and pray and pray and pray, hence we believe when we come here maybe luck will be on our side. And we respect her also, hence we also when we enter the cave we used to take off our shoes and give respect to her. But actually we pray God, but whenever we pray God we believe she is one of the great ancestors because she believe in God¹²⁴.

A member of a group of ladies from Theunissen who attend the St Barnabas Church in that town, made this succinct statement, putting her finger on the significance of the prophet and her place of rest: "As you see some churches like ZCC [Zionist Christian Church] go to ZCC Moria. Now here it's our place where we have that belief that God will answer all our prayers"¹²⁵.

Asked what they requested through Mantsopa's mediation, the pilgrims' answers included a better future, peace in the world, relief from poverty, riches, forgiving of sins, guidance, advice and good luck. Some said they gave thanks for past achievements and prayed for more. The water and soil collected from the spring and cave, they reported, would extend the ancestor's protection long after they returned home. This would be added to bath water, sprinkled around the house to deter evil spirits, rubbed on the body with some of the soil, drunk, or used to treat ailments¹²⁶.

Rejection of modernisation

In discussions with Cave Sunday pilgrims, an important factor emerged: plans to improve the Mantsopa sites do not meet with the pilgrims' views that there should be no interference in the landscape. The location must remain as close as possible to its appearance in Mantsopa's time, they declared. Furthermore, a religious pilgrimage is meant to involve physical effort and difficulty, they stated, rejecting arguments that upgrades and the introduction of facilities could improve access and convenience.

Asked whether she thought the upgrade of facilities at Modderpoort was a good thing, Mpho Mosala replied:

According to me, that one is not good, because this place is natural...I like the way that it is...it is a history... and one other thing, when we are here we must dig for the gold, we

¹²⁴ Faku, interview 2008/09/28; no attempt has been made to correct the English spoken here.

¹²⁵ Theunissen group, interview 2008/09/28; no attempt has been made to correct the English spoken here.

¹²⁶ Theunissen group, interview 2008/09/28; Mosala & Phangisa, interview 2008/09/28

have to sweat. .. we are not interested with the renovations or what. We are okay. Because what amazing me, there are also grandmothers and they are there, and they enjoy it. And it is very hard to get the water, and that spring is so deep¹²⁷.

A second respondent echoed other views similarly expressed:

We don't want something that is modernised, because we have to tell our children that this is happening [what happened in the past], and it must stay like that. If it is modernised it means we've been lying to our children. We want it to stay like that. If we say it is like that – no toilets, no lunch, no everything, no chairs, no tables, it should stay like that. When we bring our children here they must see that. They must not see something different from what we saw earlier¹²⁸.

Modderpoort General Manager: Conference Centre (Sales, Administration & Marketing), Johan Fritz, makes an observation of the monthly pilgrim visits that concurs with this view. He says they “travel here in civilian clothes, if I can put it like that, and then change into their traditional clothing, and then walk up to the cave – they don't want to drive up there, they want to walk up there as that's part of their pilgrimage to go and see¹²⁹”.

Seutloali Makhetha, a descendant of Mantsopa's, makes this observation:

I do not have anything against the development of Modderpoort as a tourist attraction place per se. My only concern is that the historical items, cave, spring and grave, should be preserved as they are. There is a tendency by developers to try to modernise the things they work on and think that by so doing they make them more appealing. What they fail to understand is that people are drawn to these ancient historical items due to their nature as being historical. Just try to imagine having developments around the Egyptian pyramids to make them more appealing to tourists! The developers or planners whoever they are need to consult extensively with all the stakeholders before proceeding¹³⁰.

A younger participant in the day's celebrations, Morena Tolokwanye, expressed caution about physical changes, implying they altered the perception of a site. He referred to Thaba Bosiu in Lesotho, burial place of Basotho kings, as an example:

You see at Lesotho there is this place in Thaba Bosiu where they say King Moshoeshoe walked there, the first King Moshoeshoe walked there. You see that place has been

¹²⁷ Mosala & Phangisa, interview 2008/09/28; no attempt has been made to correct the English spoken here.

¹²⁸ Theunissen group, interview 2008/09/28; no attempt has been made to correct the English spoken here.

¹²⁹ Fritz, interview 2008/09/26

¹³⁰ Makhetha, e-mail communication 2008/11/20

renovated so nicely now, but now more tourists are going there and that place King Moshoeshoe just walked there. He didn't do anything miraculous or not, he just walk there¹³¹.

This pilgrims' disapproval of plans for upgrading the Mantsopa sites points to the danger of the other stakeholders missing the very essence of a pilgrimage of this nature, and the need for consultations with Mantsopa's devotees. There are plans to include pilgrim representatives on the Project Advisory Committee that will work closely with government on the project (see Chapter 4), but at Cave Sunday 2008, they had yet to be informed of the development.

Most interviewees, however, were positive about a possible increase in Modderpoort's profile as a tourist attraction, seeing tourism as conducive to better cultural understanding with other South Africans. Stated Tabitha Phangisa: "We don't mind [more tourists] because according to us, it is nice for other people to know about our culture, so [they] learn to respect us"¹³².

Faku expressed a caution about over-zealous profit-making from touristic traffic:

...for other people from any other country, I don't think there's any problem. The thing is because we don't want to, this area, Modderpoort, to be made a profit institution. They can make a small profit, but the department [DEAT] should not make it, because when you do for profit, you will renovate until you will renovate a natural thing, something I don't think I will be happy with¹³³.

Conclusion

From the discussions held with Mantsopa followers during the Cave Sunday event, it is clear that in post-apartheid South Africa, Mantsopa's role as spiritual prop and mainstay is undimmed. Strong opinions relating to the possible tainting of the tangible, geographical symbols of her legacy - the cave, grave and spring - by modernisation, alteration and commercialisation, point to a strong sense of territorial ownership and an explicit stake in the use of Modderpoort and its future development. Modderpoort, to which the pilgrims are doubly connected, through both traditional African and Christian theologies, assumes the shape of spiritual homeland to which the pilgrims exhibit a deep emotional connection, which translates into a physical sense of attachment.

¹³¹ Moeng & Tolokwanye, interview 2008/09/28; no attempt has been made to correct the English spoken here

¹³² Mosala & Phangisa, interview 2008/09/28; no attempt has been made to correct the English spoken here

¹³³ Faku, interview 2008/09/08; no attempt has been made to correct the English spoken here.

At present this attachment comes at a price (entry fee to the cave) and with restrictions (daylight hours only). Perhaps it is these limitations that spurred two past incidents, detailed by Coplan, where 'spiritual' claimants have indeed tried to take possession of the Modderpoort sites. One, Adelina Lesia, a traditional diviner, claimed in 1994 to be a descendant of the prophet sent to claim the farm as her own.

Reluctant to evict her at this sensitive time for the 'New South Africa', the fathers allowed her a one-month permit for prayer and ritual, a document she has used to claim permanent right of occupation ever since. Soon she had set up shop 'curing' supplicants for hefty fees and even charging admission to the shrine over and above the nominal R2 [then] asked by the mission... Evicted from the site by local white police (the black officers did not wish to risk bewitchment), she returned several times, breaking the door to the cave, shouting imprecations and threatening to bewitch the farm workers¹³⁴.

Another past claimant was the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), which expressed anger in a television documentary broadcast on the SABC in 1996 that Mantsopa's cave had been claimed by the Anglican Church, when it really belonged to them¹³⁵.

These actions serve to highlight the importance of including the pilgrims in negotiations so that a sense of shared possession is fostered.

¹³⁴ Coplan 2003 (989)

¹³⁵ Ibid

CHAPTER 4

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH



Figure 25: St Augustine's Priory, Modderpoort
(photograph: M. Colman)

This research report contends that land is the primary dynamic in the upgrading of Modderpoort as a tourist attraction, while differences in belief are less significant. Both issues, however – land and belief - do converge at one site at the retreat, namely the cave. This meeting, as already described, is not without discord, as both Anglican Church and Mantsopa’s pilgrims claim its spiritual centrality to their religious traditions.

The Anglican Church’s claim to Modderpoort is based on title deed and religious ties. An examination of the Anglican Church’s attitudes, views and approach to the proposed DEAT project reveal additional dynamics concerned with economics, ownership of the project once completed, and operational practicalities.

The Cave: The Anglican perspective

The ‘battle’ for ownership of the cave is rooted in historical fact, or perhaps lack of it. As far as the Anglican Church is concerned, the cave was consecrated as a church by Canon Henry Beckett, the first missionary to arrive at Modderpoort, who used the cave for shelter and worship. It supports the contention of a number of academics that Mantsopa never lived in the cave¹³⁶, although she may have prayed there.

This view is backed by Bishop Glover of the Bloemfontein Diocese, who made a point of mentioning in Cave Sunday sermon that Mantsopa may have worshipped in the cave, but did not live there¹³⁷. In this, he gave voice to what Hodgson describes as “overt competition for the legitimate ownership and interpretation of a shared set of symbols” which are “invested with quite different patterns of meaning by the religious aggregations involved”¹³⁸.

Judging by the events of the Cave Sunday celebration, the cave is the only one of the three Mantsopa sites on which the church is particularly sensitive. Mostly, it tolerates the homage paid to Mantsopa by the majority of its congregants. As the three-hour service progressed, no effort was made to stop the casual coming and going of worshippers as they visited the prophet’s grave, or straggled in from collecting water at the spring. But, as stated in Chapter 3, attempts at controlling entry to the cave were much in evidence.

¹³⁶ Gill in *Anna Makhetha Mantsopa: The legend* (nd) nd; Ambrose 2006

¹³⁷ Glover, sermon 2008/09/28

¹³⁸ Hodgson 2003 (211)



Figure 26: A cemetery plaque commemorates the first SSM Brothers
(photographs: M. Colman)

The church's standpoint, however, finds itself up against popular legend, which thrives irrespective of its fictional value. Its hold exists for reasons explained in Chapter 3, such as its empowering of those with a muted voice.

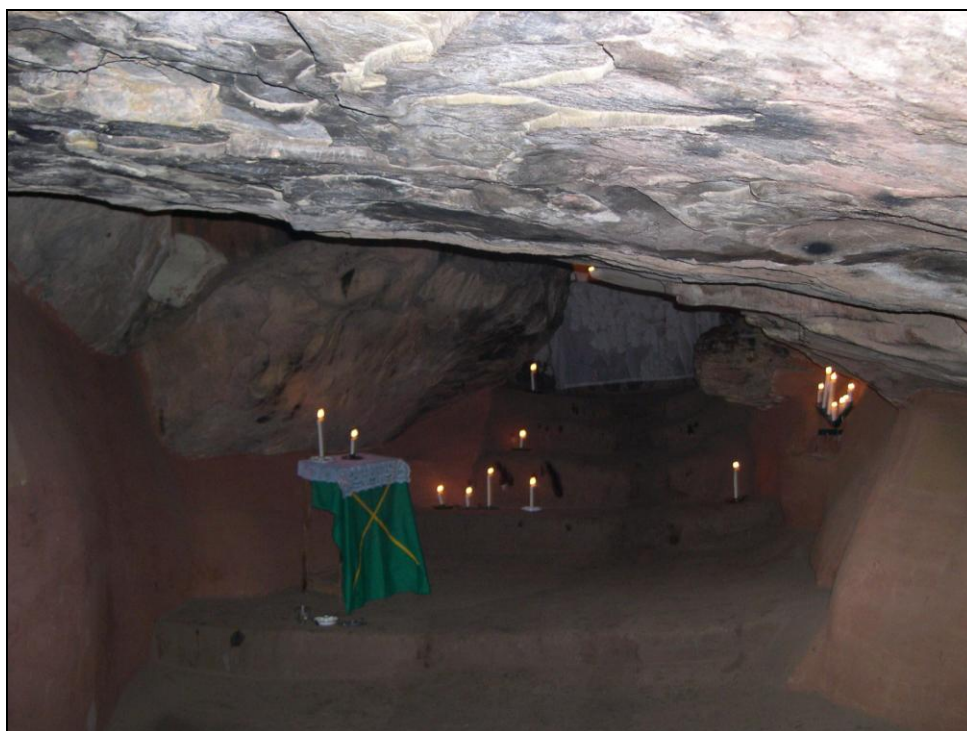


Figure 27: An interior view of the Cave Church
(photograph: M Colman)

Further negation of Mantsopa's significance to the church's members is evidenced in the periodic removal of written messages left on the inner and outer walls of the cave, carried out by management at Modderpoort. Possibly a valuable archive of Basotho belief and practice, the church sees this graffiti as vandalism and cleans it as best it can. Prior to Cave Sunday, the cave had undergone such a clean-up.



Figures 28 & 29 (above) and 30 & 31 (below): Graffiti is scratched, painted and engraved on the cave walls, which also show evidence of sacrifice and candles used in prayer.
(photographs: M. Colman)

Yet additional refutation of the prophet's centrality to this congregation can be seen in the church's haste to remove coins left on Mantsopa's grave in quest of good fortune during the

Cave Sunday proceedings, an action which could in the interests of diplomacy, be left until the departure of worshippers.

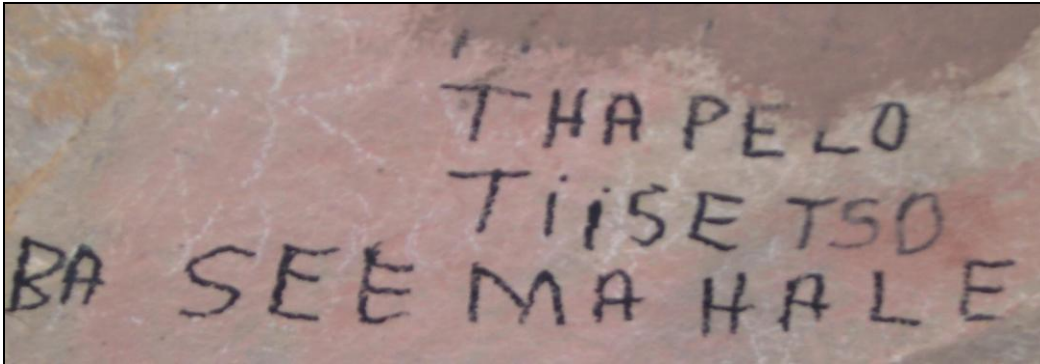


Figure 32: This partially cleaned graffiti in the Cave Church translates to:
Prayer
Strengthening/Confirmation/Perseverance
Those of the monument
(photograph: M. Colman)

One cannot help but wonder if Modderpoort's path towards a wider-known tourist attraction would not be smoother if the church reduced the tenacity of its claim to this contentious cave, or its level of intolerance of the pilgrims' claim. If any weight is given to a somewhat off-handed statement made by Bruce Harrison, the Administrator of the Bloemfontein Diocese of the Anglican Church, in reference to visitors who may attempt to enter the cave without paying the entrance fee, deconsecration has been considered:

Well, they can't get in, because it's [the cave] padlocked. Unfortunately we had to do that because it is being vandalised. People forget it is a consecrated Anglican Church. Until we deconsecrate it, it is a church, and people don't understand this¹³⁹.

I raised the question of deconsecration with Harrison again, some months later. He responded that the church saw no reason to deconsecrate the cave as there was no merit in the history regarding Mantsopa's connection. He pointed out that pilgrims were still entitled to worship there, but only with permission (involving payment of a fee). He insisted that they would not be allowed to slaughter (for sacrificial purposes) there, as it was, after all, an Anglican Church¹⁴⁰. One may note some irony in the fact that in its history, this church has been used for non-religious purposes, such as a food store and horse stable.

¹³⁹ Harrison, interview 2008/09/26

¹⁴⁰ Harrison, telephone interview 2009/03/09

The Church's plan

This misreading of Mantsopa's fundamental position in the practised faith of the church's congregants is demonstrated once again in the church's initial proposal for the allocation of the DEAT subsidy. Already engaged in its own expansion programme for Modderpoort, the church simply slotted the budget of R15 million into augmenting its own plans, taking little cognisance of the Deputy Minister's stipulation that the money was intended to upgrade those features associated with Mantsopa, namely the cave, grave, well and their access¹⁴¹. A document entitled 'Proposed Diocesan Development Plan' states:

By expanding and improving the conference centre facilities, the Government can deliver to its people a place of beauty and retreat, where faith can grow whilst minds are expanded. Modderpoort weaves its special spiritual magic on delegates at conferences, in a way that no other place can be compared. This is the place where we can re-instil morals and virtues in the hearts and souls of young and old¹⁴².

The plan was devised without information as to how DEAT had come to the budget of R15 million, and without a project profile, although the church did attempt to obtain further detail. Based on allocations stipulated in a DEAT document entitled the 'Norms and Standards for Social Responsibility Projects', it was able to deduce a breakdown of how the grant would be spent¹⁴³, which was close enough to the allocation (over page) detailed some months later by the implementer of the project (more about the implementer on page 68)¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴¹ Minutes: Visit of Deputy Minister of DEAT- Ladybrand 2008/03/10

¹⁴² Proposed Diocesan Development Plan (nd) (2)

¹⁴³ Norms and Standards for Social Responsibility Projects (nd). Training cost refers to a training provision to ensure skills are transferred; professional fee is set aside for professional services during planning; the balance presumably must be used for materials, transport and equipment.

¹⁴⁴ Proposed Diocesan Development plan (nd); Khalushi, e-mail communication 2009/03/27

ALLOCATION	AMOUNT
Administration (by implementer) – 6%	R 900 000-00
Implementer's fee – 7%	R1 050 000-00
Training cost – 7% (5% accredited; 2% non-accredited)	R1 050 000-00
Planning - 8%	R1 200 000-00
Wages - 33% (30% SPWP; 3% non-SPWP)	R4 950 000-00
Materials and Infrastructure- 39%	R5 850 000-00
<i>SPWP=Special Public Works Programme</i>	
Total	R15 000 000-00

Table 2: Allocation of R15m DEAT budget for Modderpoort project

The proposal explains that the diocese had already invested a sum of R3 million on the property, and is in the process of spending a further R500 000 on a kitchen upgrade and construction of a laundry and reception office. It requires further funding to extend the accommodation facilities by a further 24 en-suite double rooms, enlarge the dining room, renovate the conference centre and breakaway rooms where walls, floors, ceilings and roofs need repair, establish a craft and curio shop, construct two new ablution blocks to serve the public areas, erect fencing to secure holy sites and protect the property at large, install a swimming pool, pave existing roads and establish paved walkways on the property, as well as purchase necessary furniture and equipment. It also refers to some railway houses for sale nearby at the old station, which are well priced and could be renovated for possible use as an old age home.

An abbreviation of the necessary budget for these alterations and additions by the church is reprinted over page:

ITEM	AMOUNT
Accommodation (24 rooms)	R3 800 000-00
Dining hall extension	R 400 000-00
Conference centre renovation	R 800 000-00
Craft centre and shop	R 650 000-00
Ablution blocks, fencing, railway houses, paving, swimming pool, furniture	R3 485 000-00
Total including labour	R9 135 000-00

Table 3: Church's draft budget
(source: Proposed Diocesan Development Plan¹⁴⁵)

The value of these enhancements, the plan implies, would be an increased marketability, thus growing business and resulting in additional employment opportunities, from the current 17 permanent positions and one casual post, to 33 permanent positions. An envisaged seven-month construction period would also involve temporary labour positions.

The plan points out that Modderpoort already enjoys a well-situated location on the Eastern Free State tourist route, and its proximity to Ladybrand offers access to a scenic golf course. The farm has hiking trails, and activities to be introduced to increase its appeal are horse riding, fly fishing and a 4x4 off-road trail.

It further makes mention of a recent independent evaluation on the bed & breakfast and conference centre, which determined a replaceable value of R12.6 million. Official grading of accommodation (presumably by the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa) will be sought when all renovations are completed.

When the first working copy of the proposal was presented to members of the Bloemfontein Diocese at a planning meeting in May 2008 with little reference to the Mantsopa locations, it was significantly suggested by some of the members that the proposal be extended to include the church's ideas for improving the three sites, and that the history of Mantsopa be included as

¹⁴⁵ Proposed Diocesan Development Plan (nd) (10)

an integral and chronological part of the stated history presented in the document, rather than appearing as “an add on”¹⁴⁶. Changes were suggested but a revision had yet to be drafted when negotiations were overtaken by the land claim issue (see Chapter 7).

In June 2008, when the diocese was given an opportunity at a stakeholders’ meeting called by DEAT to view details of the Mantsopa Local Municipality’s proposal contained in an Project Application Form (see Chapter 5), the church changed tack. Alarmed at “irregularities” in the document (in which the municipality indicated its designs on aspects of Modderpoort not related to Mantsopa), the church gave its negotiating team permission to discuss only changes related to the three holy sites, and withdrew the farm, priory, conference centre and bed and breakfast from the table¹⁴⁷. This was more in keeping with what DEAT had in mind anyway.

In the meanwhile, relationships between the stakeholders began to sour. Just a month after the Deputy Minister’s Modderpoort visit, church minutes suggested an awareness that all was not as it seemed. Harrison noted that “some sort of underground movement [was] in place...”¹⁴⁸. He remarked on a lack of communication between the diocese and the Mantsopa Local Municipality, while the municipality for its part complained that the church was uncooperative¹⁴⁹.

Church minutes express concern at the reluctance to talk, and that information was discovered “by accident”. The formation of a strategy was urged in the face of a possible threat of expropriation¹⁵⁰. This threat proved fact when the Bataung land claim was learned of in July, resulting in an acrimonious breakdown in negotiations. The nature of the land claim is detailed in Chapter 7.

Since then talks have stammered and stuttered. At the beginning of 2009, Deputy Minister Mabudafhasi visited Modderpoort to calm the waters, reassuring all stakeholders and urging that the project go ahead, irrespective of the claim. In January, Harrison advised that the frostiness of the last months of 2008 had melted somewhat and the other stakeholders had made overtures to the church. It had become known that instead of the physical return of the 58 farms, the land claimants would accept compensation (paid by a government fund). He further

¹⁴⁶ Minutes: Planning Meeting 2008/05/10.

¹⁴⁷ Modderpoort Board of Control Meeting 2008/06/20

¹⁴⁸ Diocesan Special Caucus: 2008/04/05

¹⁴⁹ Minutes of Report-Back Caucus Meeting 2008/04/26

¹⁵⁰ Diocesan Caucus Meeting Bloemfontein: 2008/04/26

believed there was a chance of total retraction of the land claim. He felt the change may have been the result of a whispering in the ear of the Archbishop of the Anglican Church, and although he was unaware of any action taken at that level, he felt something must have happened for “everyone now want to talk to us”¹⁵¹.

By mid-February, the situation had undergone another about-turn, as the Regional Land Claims Commissioner of the Free State and Northern Cape, Mr S J Hlongwane, advised that the Bataung claim had been validated. Harrison stated the church was determined to fight the claim to the highest court. Negotiations with other stakeholders continued, revolving around the formation of a Trust as owning agency once the renovations were complete, and the formation of a Project Advisory Committee (PAC – explained further on page 70)¹⁵².

Then in March the church made a new proposal which it hoped would erase much of the conflict, if accepted. It offered DEAT a gift of 20ha of land at Mantsopa’s spring to develop as they wished, in return for keeping off the rest of Modderpoort property, thereby withdrawing the cave and grave from the equation. The church would see to the rezoning and subdivision of the land which is designated for agricultural use, and if this was not successful, would make it available to the future owning agency on a 99-year lease. The church would further assist with the formation of the Trust in terms of owning agency (see page 70), but would not be represented on it and would withdraw from the project¹⁵³.

In May, Harrison advised that the offer of land at the spring had been greeted with much enthusiasm, but the minutes of the relevant meeting in which the offer was made, reflected that the offer included all three Mantsopa stations. The church had requested an amendment, and a final decision from the stakeholders was being awaited¹⁵⁴.

My last conversation with Harrison took place in mid-June¹⁵⁵. At this point the church and other landowners affected by the land claim had applied for a court date and were waiting for notice¹⁵⁶. No further word had been received from the Deputy Minister, who following the April

¹⁵¹ Harrison, telephone interview 2009/01/30

¹⁵² Harrison, telephone interview 2009/02/16

¹⁵³ Harrison, telephone interview 2009/03/09

¹⁵⁴ Harrison, telephone interview 2009/05/12

¹⁵⁵ Harrison, telephone interview 2009/06/19

¹⁵⁶ Some landowners have removed themselves from the group and are fighting the claim individually.

general elections, was involved in a ministry reorganisation. According to Harrison, “everything had gone dead.”

The implementer

The Bloemfontein Diocese of the Anglican Church first got wind of national government’s plans regarding Modderpoort at an unofficial meeting with DEAT Deputy Minister Mabudafhasi, facilitated in Cape town on 22 August 2007 by former Anglican Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane. Minutes were not recorded, but Bruce Harrison, who attended the meeting along with Diocese Bishop Paddy Glover, commented in a summary document that from the start “it was pointed out by the Free State representatives that the Church owned the property and as such should be the main stakeholder”¹⁵⁷.

Seven months later, the Deputy Minister followed up with a visit to Modderpoort, holding two meetings on the morning of 10 March 2008, the first one at 10h00 in Ladybrand with the Mantsopa Local and Motheo District Municipalities. This meeting, chaired by the former Mayor of Ladybrand, Councillor Mathee, was attended by Rudzani Khalushi of Mukumba Resources and Project Management, where he was introduced as the implementer of the project¹⁵⁸.

The second meeting that morning took place at Modderpoort and was chaired by Bishop Paddy Glover. Here, in response to a query on funding and administration, the meeting was told that such duties would fall to an appointed project implementer. It was not revealed that an implementer had already been appointed, leaving the gathering with the impression that the position was still to be filled¹⁵⁹. As the weeks went on, the issue of the implementer proved to be a thorny one.

The task of the implementer is to oversee the day-to-day running of the project, as well as serve as a secretariat of sorts, co-ordinating and facilitating all meetings, reporting to DEAT and consenting to all recommendations before they can be adopted¹⁶⁰. In order for an implementer’s nomination to be endorsed by DEAT, he must have a tax clearance certificate, be

¹⁵⁷ Initial meeting 2007/08/22

¹⁵⁸ Visit of Deputy Minister of DEAT, Ladybrand 2008/03/10

¹⁵⁹ Meeting with DM and key stakeholders, Modderpoort 2008/03/10

¹⁶⁰ Terms of Reference for Social Responsibility Project’s (nd)

financially sound, have the required expertise and infrastructure, and must have worked on two projects of a similar size¹⁶¹. A DEAT document entitled 'Norms and Standards for Social Responsibility Projects', sets the implementer's fee at a considerable 7% of total project cost¹⁶². In this instance, it amounts to R1 050 million with a further fee of R900 000 for administration expenses.

At first the church believed the recommendation of Mukumba Resource and Project Management was made by the Mantsopa Local Municipality, and cast doubt that Khalushi's appointment was pre-empted by a transparent process of advertising for applications, as government procedure often requires. The church believed that as owner of the property, it should act as a co-implementer, and duly proposed this to the Bloemfontein office of DEAT. The suggestion was greeted with little enthusiasm¹⁶³.

According to Rudzani Khalushi, he was in fact nominated by DEAT and his company is listed on a database of businesses vetted and approved by the department for such tasks. He has worked on other projects for government bodies (though not as big as the Modderpoort assignment) and is currently involved in research studies and projects related to mining and health in Polokwane. He has offices in Midrand and Polokwane¹⁶⁴.

As 2008 drew to a close with little communication taking place between the stakeholders, Khalushi's appointment was confirmed, his contract valid until 2011¹⁶⁵. Then in January 2009, following a visit by the Deputy Minister to Modderpoort to ease the situation between stakeholders, Khalushi met with the church. Exhibiting more of a conciliatory attitude at that point, the church found Khalushi to be a person they could work with, and their antipathy to his appointment fortunately dissolved¹⁶⁶.

¹⁶¹ Minutes of Report-Back Caucus Meeting 26/04/08

¹⁶² Norms and Standards for Social Responsibility Projects (nd)

¹⁶³ Minutes of Report-Back Caucus Meeting 26/04/08

¹⁶⁴ Khalushi, interview 2009/01/21

¹⁶⁵ Khalushi, telephone interview 2008/12/02

¹⁶⁶ Harrison, telephone interview 2009/01/30

In May 2009 Khalushi reported that he had prepared his business plan and budget for submission to DEAT, and was awaiting notice from the department for a presentation date¹⁶⁷.

The Project Advisory Committee

According to DEAT's 'Terms of Reference for Social Responsibility Projects', it is a condition of such projects that a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) be established, consisting of all relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries. Its role is to work closely with a project implementer, sharing information, contributing to periodic reporting, identifying bottlenecks and their applicable remedial mechanisms. The committee must also determine selection criteria for employment (labourers) for the duration of the project¹⁶⁸.

The appointment of the PAC was one aspect of the process that seemed to proceed relatively smoothly. It was decided by all parties that it would be constituted by representatives of all stakeholder groupings, including the Anglican Church; DEAT head office; DEAT Free State office; the Mantsopa Local Municipality; the Motheo District Municipality; faith healers; traditional church members and cultural groups, the Bataung claimants and the Land Claims Commission. With the relationship between the church and the Land Claims Commission having deteriorated by February 2009 (see Chapter 7), and a court case imminent, the church objected to the participation of the Land Claims Commission on the PAC, but was overridden by the other participants¹⁶⁹. The proposed members of the PAC are currently being approved by Deputy Minister Mabudafhasi, and will amount to 20 – 21 people.

Ownership of the project

Once the Modderpoort upgrade is completed, it is envisaged that responsibility for its daily operation will fall to an owning agency. Ideally made up of representatives of all stakeholders, this could take a number of forms, such as a Trust, a Section 21 company or an association not for gain.

¹⁶⁷ Khalushi, telephone interview 2009/05/12

¹⁶⁸ Terms of reference for Social Responsibility Projects nd.

¹⁶⁹ Harrison, telephone interview 2009/02/16

The matter of owner agency was debated in depth at a meeting in Modderpoort on 30 June 2008, chaired by Teboho Moepe of DEAT's Bloemfontein office. He noted the unusual nature of the project, in that for the first time DEAT was implementing such a venture on privately-owned land. While he confirmed that the church would be the ultimate owner of the development, he appealed to it not to isolate the local community, and allocate a percentage of the owner agency to them¹⁷⁰.

But efforts to dominate ownership have been evident on the part of the Mantsopa Local Municipality and the church. On its Project Application Form to DEAT, completed in April 2007 (before DEAT has made any overtures to the Anglican Church), the municipality listed itself and its Chief Development Officer, Mr RP Chalale, as owner of the project assets on its completion¹⁷¹.

The church made its attempt a few months later. By March 2009 it seemed all parties were in favour of the formation of a Trust as the owning agency format, but its composition was under question. The church, as owner of Modderpoort, was insisting on being the majority member of the Trust with seven serving members, as opposed to one to three representatives from the other stakeholders. Further, Bishop Glover was proposed as chairperson with the casting vote. The other parties represented would include the Deputy Minister or her appointee, the Bloemfontein DEAT office, the Bataung community and the local municipality¹⁷².

It was also undecided who would take responsibility for registering the Trust, and the church believed the task would fall to them, as other stakeholders had not done anything about it¹⁷³. As this research wraps up, no further movement has been made on this point.

Modderpoort as a revenue stream

In an interview preceding Cave Sunday, Bruce Harrison disclosed another important dynamic affecting the church's attitude towards the development of property - that of economics. Modderpoort is a significant source of revenue to the church, generating funds that are ploughed into Ministry – “paying our priests, appointing more priests, building churches in the

¹⁷⁰ Meeting between Anglican Diocese and Mantsopa Local Municipality 2008/06/30

¹⁷¹ Application Form 23247 2007/04/17

¹⁷² Harrison, telephone interview 2009/01/30

¹⁷³ Harrison, telephone interview 2009/02/16

undeveloped areas in informal settlements”¹⁷⁴. An “almighty amount of money” - R3 million - had already been invested in Modderpoort as a conference and retreat centre, stated Harrison, pointing out that the loss of Modderpoort could be detrimental to the future of the church, a future which he implies is somewhat fragile:

Now if this [Modderpoort] is taken away from us, the Anglican Church doesn't have access to that money and all that planning, all that Ministry comes to grinding halt. Because we are not getting enough – I think that all churches are suffering the same – we are simply not getting enough [money] from our parishes to sustain the church, to keep the church running. At the moment we are living on investments, luckily that our forefathers saw fit to invest in the stock exchange¹⁷⁵.

Modderpoort is also engaged in the commercial bottling of water from the spring, under two brand names – Cathedral Spring Water (sold through a nationwide chain of liquor stores called Ultra Liquors) and, curiously, Mantsopa Spring Water. The label on the bottle of the Mantsopa brand (repeated on the St Augustine's website) is indicative of the sense of fiction the church attempts to purvey in relation to the prophet. It reads:

The Legend

A long, long time ago in a land not so far from here a powerful prophetess was born, named Mantsopa. She was believed to hold the gift to see into the future and to communicate with the ancestors.

Over the years her power grew, but she was to pay a high price for her calling. The king of this land came to learn of the prophetess's powers, and of the many people who believed and followed her vision. He became concerned that she would one day overthrow his rule, for a woman with such great power was a sure threat to his leadership. The king exiled Mantsopa from his kingdom never to return again.

Mantsopa fled and in a time of loneliness and sorrow found refuge in the valley of Modderpoort.

It was here, in this valley that she was to discover a spring of fresh water. The ancestors told her that this spring was sacred; she later came to believe that the water of this sacred spring held healing qualities.

¹⁷⁴ Harrison, interview 2008/09/26

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

To this day Pilgrims from all over Southern Africa, travel many miles to Modderpoort Mission to pay respects to the memory of their prophetess and to collect water from the sacred spring¹⁷⁶.

By skirting historical fact (King Moshoeshoe is termed only “the king” and Lesotho is “a land not so far from here”) and adopting the style of a fairytale, this ‘legend’ shirks reality. Nevertheless, the fantasy indicates that to some degree, the church has ‘bought in’ to the Mantsopa myth, albeit for profit. A bottle sells for the retail price of R5. Harrison has indicated that the bottling of Cathedral Spring Water can be reconsidered, so that more attention can be placed on the bottling of Mantsopa Spring Water, should DEAT and the local municipality deem that necessary in terms of the current negotiations¹⁷⁷. More recently, with the offer to DEAT of a parcel of land at the spring, he has stated that the church would be happy to hand the whole bottling operation over to the future owning agency¹⁷⁸

Modderpoort also generates funds from a successful cattle farming operation, and leases land to other farmers.



Figure 33: Mantsopa Spring Water, bottled from Mantsopa's spring
(*photograph: M. Colman*)

¹⁷⁶ http://saintaugustines.co.za/wp/?page_id=6

¹⁷⁷ Harrison, interview 2008/09/26

¹⁷⁸ Harrison, telephone interview 2009/03/09

Practicalities

A difficulty in effecting upgrading of the Mantsopa sites on Modderpoort property, is that two of them, cave and grave, are located in close proximity to the conference and religious facilities at the retreat. Had they been positioned on a piece of land that could be sliced off from the rest of the farm and given over to DEAT or the local municipality's control, the project would have been far less complicated. Mantsopa's grave is just 200m from the Priory Church and chapel, and 300m from the conference centre.



Figure 34: The old school buildings at Modderpoort have been converted into conference space
(photograph: M Colman)

According to Johan Fritz, 600-800 pilgrims visit Modderpoort monthly. Some do so in large groups of 80 – 90 people, arriving by coach. Often they announce their arrival with much noise and fanfare, dancing and singing. They are even, on occasion, accompanied by their own musical bands. They spend the better part of the day at Modderpoort, and this can present distractions to seminars and workshops in progress. Peak time for visits is over weekends, when the church holds lay ministers' training. "We need to strike a balance between what is for the church and what is for the public," remarks Fritz highlighting the dynamic of physical location. "I'm grateful that the Department of Tourism wants to develop the facilities, but it has

to be carefully managed. You can't just throw it open to the wide public and say: 'Ok, this is now the golden goose', because it's not going to be like that"¹⁷⁹.

Fortunately, Mantsopa's grave - the only one belonging to a black person in the small cemetery, has sufficient empty ground behind it to allow for the erection of a monument. The church has stipulated though, that such a monument must not interfere in any way with the graves alongside, and that the architecture should match the sandstone construction and period of the other Modderpoort buildings.

Conclusion

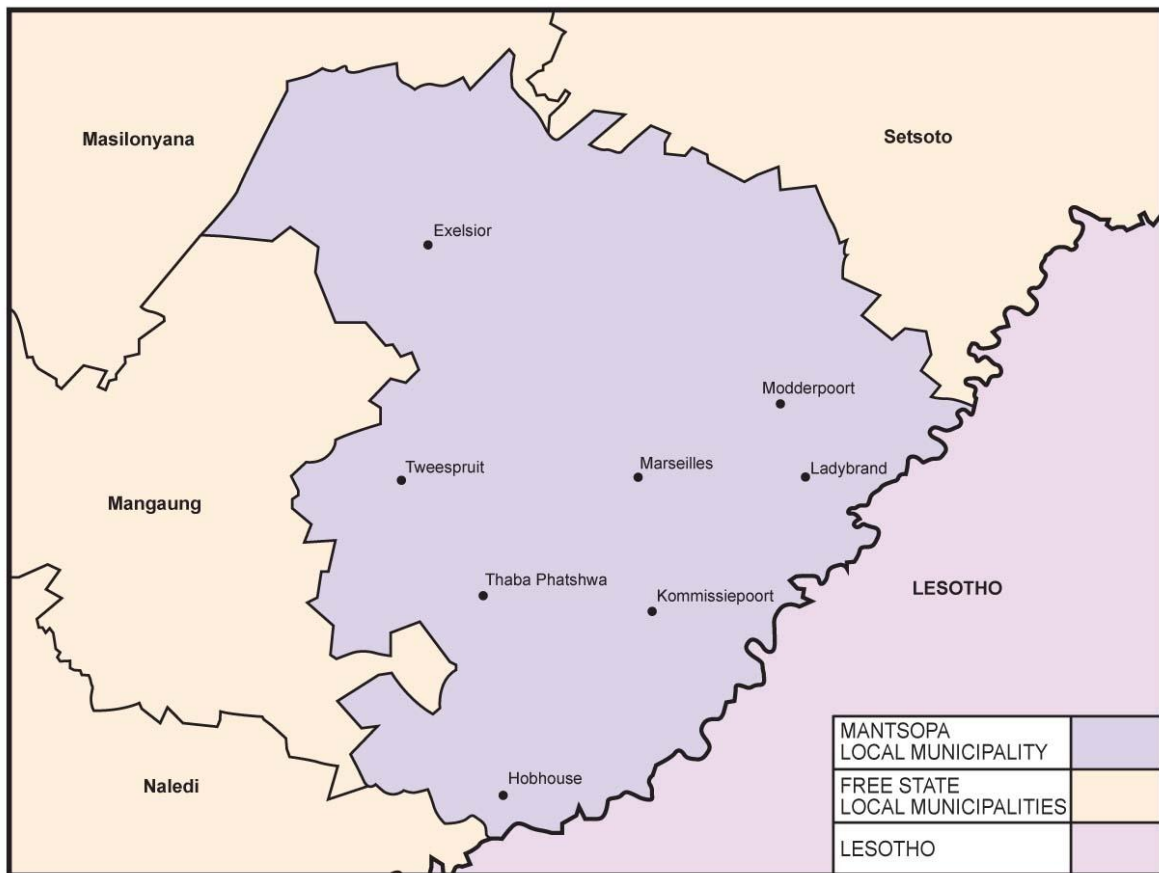
The Anglican Church is engaged in a show of strength on a number of fronts as it seeks to exert its control on Modderpoort and its religious sites, influence the process of the DEAT project in its favour and stave off the land claim.

While there are very real concerns behind its struggle, relating to financial survival and practicalities, the Anglican Church's deep religious link to the land is clearly apparent is its fierce determination to control the cave, to the extent that it will give the spring away to keep this church within its authority. It is further witnessed in the church's unyielding resolve to ward off the threat of expropriation contained within the land claim, which could render its legal ownership – its trump card – null and void.

¹⁷⁹ Fritz, interview 2008/09/26

CHAPTER 5

THE MANTSOPA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY



Map 3: Mantsopa Local Municipality
(source: www.mantsopa.com)

The Mantsopa Local Municipality, which falls into the Motheo District Municipality, is engaged in a power struggle with the Anglican Church at Modderpoort. There are political reasons for this, as this chapter will show. But the municipality's attempts to influence developments on the property are hampered by the disadvantage of not having legal ownership. The proposal of Modderpoort to DEAT for development as a tourist attraction is perhaps a means of stamping the property with a national government imprint, thereby giving local government – as the representative of national government - a firmer stake in its future. The municipality is hoping for a degree of control through inclusion in the body that will ultimately administer the Mantsopa sites.

Amongst the stakeholders, the municipality's relationship with the church is rockiest, with the church accusing the municipality of manipulation, and the municipality blaming Modderpoort management for lack of co-operation.

Municipality's plans for Modderpoort

According to the municipality's Chief Development Officer, Philemon Chalale, who made the original application to DEAT for the consideration of Modderpoort as a development project, his motivation is rooted in the significance of the site to both black and white communities¹⁸⁰. In her first official meeting with the Mantsopa Local and Motheo District Municipalities on 10 March 2008 in Ladybrand, Deputy Minister Mabudafhasi thanked the Mantsopa Local Municipality for identifying Lekhalong la Mantsopa (an interesting adaptation of the original name of the valley – Lekhalong la bo-Tau) as a project that could grow tourism in the Eastern Free State¹⁸¹.

Chalale's application, as detailed in an official Project Application Form dated 17/04/2007, was made a year ahead of the Deputy Minister's visit to Modderpoort in March 2008¹⁸². Its stated plans are notable in comparison to the church's initial plans (Chapter 4), revealing the wide divergence of the two parties' ideas. They also uncover the level of control the municipality envisages – successful achievement of these plans would involve considerable treading on the church's toes, and could perhaps only be effected through legal ownership of the property.

¹⁸⁰ Chalale, telephone interview 2008/08/08

¹⁸¹ Minutes: Visit of the Deputy Minister of DEAT, Modderpoort 2008/03/10

¹⁸² Application Form 23247 2008/04/17

The following extract from the application form lists the project 'deliverables'¹⁸³:

1. Matinopa [sic] cave church with surrounding that need to be rehabilitated due to digging around for the sacred soil during pilgrimage.
2. Cleaning of rocks in and outside the cave that have been graffitted and cement.
3. Fencing of the cave church.
4. Building mini out door stage.
5. Greetling the surrounding of the church cave and spring.
6. Prophet Mantinopa memorial stone.
7. Packaging sacred soil.
8. Waste management (organic vegetable garden).
9. Rehabilitation and proper protection control of the spring.
10. Access roads.

In estimating the cost of the changes, additional elements are mentioned, namely an "Info Centre", "Bottling", "Accommodation" and "Restaurant". An even wider scope of ambitions is implied by the listed possible sources of sustainability¹⁸⁴:

1. There will always be pilgrims especially in August who will need spring water secrate soil and candles.
2. There will always be tourists locally and internationally who will visit the place.
3. Running of conference facilities will generate income for the project.
4. Accommodation will also be used by those proceding to Lesotho for 2010.
5. Recycling will sustain itself through selling of waste from crafts and composting including organically grown vegetables, that will be used by the centre and general public.
6. Candles will be used mostly by pilgrimages and individuals.
7. Bottling of spring water and sacred soil will generate income for the project.

The budget requested from DEAT is R25 million, with a recommended annual post-project budget of R1 million. The bodies responsible for these "after-care" costs are "Lekgalong la Mantsopa and the municipality".

The application supports its motivation with the fact that Mantsopa Local Municipality falls on the Maloti Tourist Route launched by the DEAT, and is a gateway to Lesotho. It also mentions that the project fights "poverty through empowering communities skills development", offers job opportunities and contributes to the economic growth of the municipality¹⁸⁵. The number of temporary and permanent jobs created is estimated is 200 and 50 respectively¹⁸⁶.

¹⁸³ Application Form 23247 2008/04/17. No attempt has been made to correct spelling or grammatical errors.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

In answer to a question on the form reading: “Is the land available for this project?”, the word “yes” has been typed. The form instructs the writer to attach permission from the owner – it is not known how this was tackled, bearing in mind a full year would pass until the church was first notified of the project by DEAT. Bruce Harrison, in ‘summary notes’ following a stakeholders’ meeting on 5 June 2008 called by DEAT at which the application was discussed, comments: “Written permission to use the land was never sought nor given by the Trustees of the Diocese”¹⁸⁷.

In response to the application form query: “Who will own the project assets once implementation is complete?”, the response given is “Lekgalong la Mantsopa Project”, with the contact person named as Mr RP Chalale. This points to the municipality’s aspiration for a role in the administrative control of the development. Here Harrison has noted: “Mr Chalale cannot own assets situated on Church property”¹⁸⁸.

By the time negotiations began, plans were limited to the three Mantsopa sites, but this original proposal is revealing of a stronger form of entitlement held by the Mantsopa Local Municipality.

Settling of scores

Where does this sense of entitlement come from? Ironically the indication comes from the church itself. Bruce Harrison, Administrator of the church’s Bloemfontein Diocese, related this incident which he implies is at the root of the entire matter:

We did have - unfortunately it was a very bad appointment - we appointed two priests as the warden here [Modderpoort]. Well we always did have a priest and he was very good, and then we appointed another guy who wanted to make this into a monastery. He had magnificent Christian ideals, but impractical. The ANC Women’s League wanted...one year to come here for their Women’s Day, and he refused point blank. He wouldn’t let them on [the property] because he said he’s not having any political party, it’s a religious property – without consulting us...all the furore that we are now faced with today, is because of that one action. The very next year...they asked for the same thing, we let them come, there were 500 people – we made R60 000 out of it for one day. It was a win-win situation for them and us. But because of that one incident, the fact that we made it [up] the next year, doesn’t seem to have counted¹⁸⁹.

¹⁸⁷ Lekhalong la Mantsopa stakeholder meeting 2008/06/05

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Harrison, interview 2008/09/26

A notion of settling of scores enters the picture, bolstered by the minutes of the first official meeting on Modderpoort held between DEAT and the municipalities of Mantsopa Local and Motheo District in Ladybrand on 10 March 2001. These minutes state:

The deputy Minister also indicated that during the last women's day function held in Modderpoort she was requested by Woman Ministers to look at the development of the area¹⁹⁰.

While the Deputy Minister's Chief of Staff, Mr Livhuwani Matsila strongly denies any political intervention by the ANC Women's League and believes the minutes should show that the Deputy Minister had discussions with other cabinet ministers and not specifically female ones¹⁹¹, in my telephonic interview with Philemon Chalale, he immediately raised the matter of the past rejection of the ANC Women's League function, indicating that this slight is still keenly felt.

He said the refusal to host a political party, in this case the ruling party, amounted to a refusal to host government, which represented the nation at large in a non-partisan manner. This, he believed, was cause for offence. He also mentioned a difficult relationship with the current management at Modderpoort, a relationship which had improved since the Deputy Minister had held a meeting with all stakeholders at the beginning of 2009, following a near-breakdown in negotiations¹⁹².

Conclusion

It would seem that the ANC Women's League incident has cut deeply and sharply, and that the motivation behind the Mantsopa Local Municipality's promotion of Modderpoort as a DEAT project is an attempt to level out what the municipality sees as an uneven balance of power, in which the church is the dominant force through its legal ownership of the land.

Its proposal to DEAT is an attempt at a type of repossession – if not physically then administratively and certainly symbolically, signalling a reversal of the losses inflicted by colonialism and apartheid.

¹⁹⁰ Visit of the Deputy Minister of DEAT, Ladybrand 2008/03/08

¹⁹¹ Matsila, telephone interview 2009/05/18

¹⁹² Chalale, telephone interview 2009/05/22

CHAPTER 6

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT



The involvement of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in the Modderpoort development points to national government's confidence in the site's value as a tourist attraction. DEAT further puts its motivation of the Modderpoort project down to social responsibility and its commitment to alleviating poverty through job creation.

In discussions with a representative of DEAT, however, it emerges that Modderpoort has yet another role to play, as it holds symbolic value to the ruling party's policies regarding the empowerment of women. This chapter explores these motives.

Social Responsibility

Government's official incentive for the Modderpoort project is premised on social responsibility. At her first official meeting with the Bloemfontein Diocese, Deputy Minister Mabudafhasi fixed her reasons for awarding the Modderpoort development grant on tourism, indicating that the R15 million would enhance the site's value as a tourist attraction, thereby improving the lives of people staying in the area through the creation of jobs¹⁹³. The project would thus be considered a social responsibility project.

A document on the DEAT website, headed 'Social Responsibility', defines the major objectives of the programme as "the creation of job opportunities and the provision of training of beneficiaries"¹⁹⁴.

Just how many jobs will the Modderpoort project create? In its 2007 Project Application Form, the Mantsopa Local Municipality estimated the number of temporary and permanent jobs to be created at 200 and 50 respectively¹⁹⁵. These numbers appear to be overly inflated when compared with those put forward by the Anglican Church and the project implementer. The Bloemfontein Diocese, in its initial 'off-the-mark' Development Plan Proposal (as seen in Chapter 4, this proposal did not emphasise the Mantsopa sites) estimated the creation of an additional 15 permanent positions, over and above the 16 permanent and one casual post it currently offers¹⁹⁶. In May 2009, as implementer Rudzani Khalushi awaited an appointment

¹⁹³ Visit of the Deputy Minister of DEAT, Ladybrand 2008/03/10

¹⁹⁴ <http://www.environment.gov.za/ProjProg/SRPP/index.html>

¹⁹⁵ Application form 23247 2008/04/17

¹⁹⁶ Proposed Diocesan Development Plan nd (11)

date to present his business plan to DEAT, he advised that he had budgeted on 90 labourers working 22 days a month for 24 months¹⁹⁷. He was at that point unable to estimate a number of post-construction, permanent employees.

This question arises - is it worth expending R15 million on such a limited amount of job creation, most of it temporary? Unfortunately a definitive answer is precluded by the lack of research on the cost of job creation in South Africa. In studies on unemployment undertaken by the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) in 2006 and 2007, it was found that the average cost of creating a job was R39 000 and R20 750 respectively, but samples in each instance were extremely small (9 and 17 responding organisations)¹⁹⁸. If these averages are in any way representative, the number of jobs created on a budget of R15 million should be substantially higher than the amounts mentioned by the Mantsopa Local Municipality, the Anglican Church or the project implementer.

While it is accepted that jobs alone are not the only benefits, that labourers will receive on-the-job skills training and that there will be economic spin-off from tourism down the line, an assessment of return on investment appears to be lacking.

A number of other objectives are spelt out on the DEAT website for social responsibility projects:

- Creating conditions for sustainable tourism development, growth and access to markets
- Developing the tourism product base in order to attract both domestic and international tourists
- Improving infrastructure to support an expansion in the flow of tourists, particularly to previously disadvantaged areas and emerging tourism growth points
- Implementing projects for the conservation and sustainable development of natural resources
- Improving the broader management of the quality of the environment and particularly the management of pollution and waste in South Africa
- Implementing a poverty alleviation programme that demonstrates the inter-relationship between conservation, tourism growth and community empowerment and ensuring that

¹⁹⁷ Khalushi, telephone interview 2009/05/12

¹⁹⁸ http://www.cde.org.za/article.php?a_id=313

at least 40% of the available fund is directed to the Nodes [Presidential poverty nodes]¹⁹⁹.

The first two goals – access to markets and the creation of domestic and international tourism - require considerable marketing efforts, but there has been no mention of a post-construction marketing budget, or studies to gauge potential tourism numbers. This raises the important issue of sustainability – will Modderpoort be yet another well-intentioned project sporting state-of-the-art facilities, but under-utilised? Further, it is interesting to note that Modderpoort does not fall within any of the identified Presidential poverty nodes.

Lastly, domestic and international tourists will require more than just paved walkways – they will need ablution and refreshment facilities. According to the Khalushi, such amenities are not included in the budget. In addition, taking into account the feelings of Mantsopa's followers expressed in Chapter 3, modernisations of this type may be rejected by the pilgrims.

Empowerment of women

The ruling political party, the African National Congress (ANC), has adopted well-publicised and widely-known policies for the empowerment of women. Rule 3.6 of the ANC's constitution states:

The ANC shall support the emancipation of women, combat sexism and ensure that the voice of women is fully heard in the organisation and that women are properly represented at all levels²⁰⁰.

The aims and objectives of its dedicated Women's League are stated as follows in that constitution (rule 6.3):

Its objectives will be to defend and advance the rights of women, both inside and outside the ANC, against all forms of national, social and gender oppression and to ensure that women play a full role in the life of the organisation, in the people's struggle and in national life²⁰¹.

¹⁹⁹ <http://www.environment.gov.za/ProjProg/SRPP/index.html>. Presidential Poverty Nodes include 15 rural and seven urban areas of the country inhabited by the poorest of the poor and are incapable of self-generated growth.

²⁰⁰ <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/history/const/constitution98.html>

²⁰¹ *ibid*

Further in rule 14.1:

In an endeavour to ensure that women are adequately represented in all decision-making structures, the ANC shall implement a programme of affirmative action, including the provision of a quota of at least one-third (1/3) in all its structures to enable such effective participation²⁰².

Following general elections in April of this year, the ANC, returned to power in a landslide victory, named five female Provincial Premiers among a total of nine, a clear attempt at empowering the female gender. In addition, 14 of the country's 34 government ministries are now headed by women. In his announcement of the new cabinet on 10 May 2009, which happened to be Mothers' Day, State President Jacob Zuma took the opportunity to end his statement on this note: "Mothers are the backbones of our families, communities and our nation. We truly appreciate their role in our society, in both the public sphere and within families"²⁰³.

It is no surprise then, that in a conversation with Mr Livhuwani Matsila, Deputy Minister Mabudafhasi's Chief of Staff, he pointed to the need for strong historical female figures, Mantsopa being an example, in the effort to give power to women. "Women who were prominent religious and traditional figures are important in empowering women today," he stated²⁰⁴.

A month ahead of my discussion with Matsila, Deputy Minister Mabudafhasi opened the Queen Modjadji V Lodge in Modjadjiskloof (formerly Duiwelskloof) in Limpopo, a DEAT-funded project into which the department had at that point pumped R13 million. Like Modderpoort, it was cited as a social responsibility programme. The lodge is described as a community-based accommodation facility that will contribute to local economic development once fully operational²⁰⁵. Modjadjiskloof is home to the Balobedu people, ruled since the 19th century by a dynasty of Queens called Modjadji who were renowned for their ability as rainmakers. The excerpt below, taken from the Deputy Minister's hand-over speech, indicates the importance with which she regards admirable female personalities in history.

²⁰² <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/history/const/constitution98.html>

²⁰³ http://www.info.gov.za/events/2009/new_cabinet.htm

²⁰⁴ Matsila, telephone interview 2009/05/18

²⁰⁵ http://www.environment.gov.za/newsmedia/medstat/2009apr8_1/medinvite08042009.html

It is on record that even renowned warriors such as king Shaka and Muzilikazi paid tribute to Queen Modjadji at a time it was a taboo for a woman to command political respect she had.

King Shaka showed his respect for the queen by sending black cattle to pay tribute to Queen Modjadji the 1st and called her the rainmaker of rainmakers which reinforced the great supernatural ability the queen possessed. Other kingdoms such as Lesotho led by Moshoeshoe, the Swazis, and others in Southern Africa also paid tribute.

I have no doubt that today we are honouring a unique legacy which existed since the pre-colonial days. While other men-led dynasties collapsed, the woman-led dynasty still lives on to this day. This speaks volumes of the capacity of women to rule²⁰⁶.

Additional extracts from the speech indicate the confidence she holds in this matrilineal line to better the economy and profile of the region:

This area will benefit a great deal from the renaming of the town after Modjadji. Tourists will also be eager to see the dense forest of cycad trees which are the highest in the world in the Royal Modjadji Nature Reserve.

Modjadji is a powerful name that is known across the world. For many, however, the main attraction of this area is not so much its natural beauty which is in abundance but rather the historical and legendary figure of Modjadji, the Rain Queen.

By allowing us to use her dynasty name which is set to continue with the successive Rain Queens, the Rain Queen will be putting this area on the tourist map and will be helping create jobs and eradicate poverty²⁰⁷.

The Mantsopa and Modjadji legacies have in common commanding women endowed with supernatural powers and mystical abilities to make rain, who uphold traditional practices now fused with Christian belief. Their examples are indeed empowering to the large population of South African women who are marginalised through a society which, though changing, remains stubbornly patriarchal. Their lot is often compounded by poverty and inferior education, leaving them on the lowest rungs of the social scale.

Chapter 3 of this report explored Mantsopa's empowering function through the act of pilgrimage and the *communitas* or solidarity it stimulates. It would make sense for national government to attempt to harness this function to support their own objectives of developing a generation of assertive South African women, bolstered by practised gender equality. The attempt to

²⁰⁶ dm hand over speech 17042009.doc

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

memorialise historical, heroic figures such as Mantsopa, making them part of a broader, national heritage, may perhaps be interpreted as an effort to wrest for its nationalising effort the resources raised by Anthony Smith in his exploration of nationalism, covered in Chapter 1 (page 20)²⁰⁸.

Pilgrimage and national causes

According to Turner & Turner, it is not unknown that aspects of pilgrimage are 'commandeered' in quest of national causes, as the two quotes below indicate:

...a pilgrimage is very much more than its theology. It is a field of social relations and cultural contents of the most diverse types, formal and informal, orthodox and heterodox, dogmatic and mythical, often juxtaposed rather than fused, interrelated, or systematized. Attempts to revive a national or regional culture and language may select elements of the otherwise 'receding' structural and ideological orders for renewed emphasis in pilgrimage beliefs, behaviour, and symbolism. There may be a deliberate 'arrest' of the syncretic process, in which unassimilated elements of form and meaning may retain political significance²⁰⁹.

Pilgrimage... is like a vertical shaft driven into the past, disclosing deep strata of ancient symbols, potent signifiers which reinforce nationalistic sentiments²¹⁰.

The Irish example posited in Chapter 3, St Patrick's Purgatory in Lough Derg, in which political resistance to English rule at one time came to be fused with the penitential nature of the pilgrimage, holds true of this.

In its amplification of the legend of Mantsopa through the upgrading of Modderpoort, national government may, in weaving a new set of values and norms into her story, influence the image of women in pursuit of a nationalistic goal. But whether it succeeds in such lofty ideals or not, it will, however, be seen to be recognising the right of South Africans to practise their religion and culture as they wish. States Matsila: "If those things help you and that's how you identify, government must be seen to be supporting that"²¹¹.

²⁰⁸ Smith 1996a (581; 590)

²⁰⁹ Turner & Turner 1978 (106)

²¹⁰ Ibid

²¹¹ Matsila, telephone interview 2009/05/18

There is another level on which Mantsopa could claim national relevance. The prophet is one link in a long chain of prophets that have time and again occupied centre stage in South African history. Often a response to crises, the increasing poverty and intentional undermining of black South Africans during the colonial era proved fertile ground for the emergence of millenarian prophets preaching thaumaturgical messages – “an attempt to expel whites by a cathartic apocalypse”²¹². Perhaps the best-known example is one already mentioned in this study (Chapter 2), that of the teenage seer Nongqawuse, whose visions resulted in the Cattle Killing of 1856-57²¹³. The rebellious nature of their visions and preaching cast these prophets in the role of revolutionaries, yesteryear’s soldiers of liberation or freedom fighters, putting them on an equal footing with the Mandelas, Sisulus and Tutus of today.

Rehabilitation of land

A less significant government motivation²¹⁴ in the upgrade of the Mantsopa sites, voiced by Matsila, answers to the pilgrims’ concern at site modernisation and alteration, explained in Chapter 3. It also relates to land – its physical condition and preservation.

Matsila says the changes envisaged to the Mantsopa sites should not upset pilgrims, as they are largely aimed at conservation. Erosion at the spring has to be stopped, and the slope behind the cave is collapsing due to the excessive digging for sacred soil. The area around the grave has to be paved and neatened, and consideration must be given to fencing off the sites for their protection. “It’s tricky,” states Matsila, “these places are meaningful to people, but if we don’t take steps to conserve them they may not be there in future”²¹⁵.

Reluctant to discuss the merits of the land claim, Matsila did, however, point out that the land needed to be rehabilitated, no matter to whom it belonged. Further, with the separation of Tourism and Environmental Affairs in line with the new Zuma cabinet, he expected the Modderpoort project to remain under the wing of Environmental Affairs (now part of the Department of Water and Environment), because of this land rehabilitation aspect. He said it

²¹² De Kock 1996 (64)

²¹³ Peires 1989

²¹⁴ I view the rehabilitation of land as a ‘less significant’ motivation, because it seems to have arisen on investigation of the site after the government’s announcement of the grant, and did not exist ahead of their decision to launch the Modderpoort project.

²¹⁵ Matsila, telephone interview 2009/05/18

fell within the responsibility of Environmental Affairs to safeguard natural heritage, and he could foresee the Modderpoort upgrade as a springboard to declaration of the location as a National Heritage Site²¹⁶.

Conclusion

The government's motivation of the Modderpoort upgrade appears to be heavily based on sentiment, with little in the way of research or number calculations to back its merits either as a tourism destination or a social responsibility project with shelf life. There have been no studies to support its effects on tourism numbers or job creation in the Eastern Free State. This oversight tips the scales in favour of Bruce Harrison's suspicion and Philemon Chalale's admission that a political incentive is at the heart of the matter, despite an adamant denial by Livhuwani Matsila in Deputy Minister Mabudafhasi's office²¹⁷.

²¹⁶ Matsila, telephone interview 2009/05/18

²¹⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER 7

THE BATAUNG



Figure 35: The view from the Platberg mountain encompasses other properties included in the Bataung claim of 58 farms.
(photograph: M Colman)

This chapter explores the Bataung claim to Modderpoort, in this instance a claim based on occupational right. The Anglican Church's impassioned reaction to this claim shows it to be potentially explosive, and reveals the strength of the church's ties to Modderpoort. It also reveals the blending of Western and African land concepts, first raised in Chapter 1.

The land claim

One of the endeavours at redress taken by the post-1994 government was the restoration of land and/or compensation to those who had been dispossessed of it during the apartheid years, under laws such as the Native Land Act 27 of 1913 and the Development Trust and Land Act 18 of 1936. The Restitution of Land Rights Act No 22 was adopted in 1994, facilitating the establishment of a Commission for the Restitution of Land Rights, along with a court - the Land Claims Court - to hear disputes arising from this action.

The Modderpoort Land Claim was lodged by Tseko Ishmael Motsetse of Mabopane (outside Pretoria) as a descendant of the Bataung, a tribe of the Basotho. The claim targets 58 farms in the hands of 36 individual landowners all falling within the Mantsopa Local Municipality, which in turn falls under the Motheo District. Among them are Modderpoort and Modderpoortspruit²¹⁸.

Motsetse signed the claim on 29 December 1998, and the receipt date stamped on it by the Commission on Restoration of Land Rights is 30 December 1998, a day before the cut-off for the submission of all land claims, 31 December 1998. It has taken 10 years to surface, and was first published in the *Government Gazette* on 13 June 2008²¹⁹, two months after the DEAT negotiations began. The Anglican Church's Bloemfontein Diocese claims to have become aware of it only in July 2008 when the Modderpoort Farm Manager, Rodney Flanagan, was called to a meeting of affected farmers, held in the nearby town of Marseilles.

Among his reasons for lodging the claim, Motsetse states that members of the Bataung community had "suffered a substantial prejudice and loss of property"; were not awarded compensation; and that its descendants continue to live in poverty as a result of the

²¹⁸ Land Claim Form 1998

²¹⁹ Notice 738 of 2008, Government Gazette

dispossession. He also states that “a large percentage of the community and their descendants were transformed from their African way of life to cheap oppressed labourers” and that reinstated rights to the land are necessary for the restoration of their African culture, tradition and dignity. Improving the living standards of the community, the need for equity and justice and healing of the “virus of unemployment” are also listed²²⁰.

‘Community’ – the term Motsetse uses – is not defined in any terms, lineage, chieftainship or neighbourhood. He does not say whether this community are descendants of the Baromokhele branch of the Bataung, or whether he is a recognised senior person in any lineage. Stephen Gill of the Morija Archives in Morija, Lesotho, who is currently researching the life of Mantsopa with the intention of publishing a book, says:

I understand that Motsetse's people are from the immediate area of the mission, probably to the west of the mission on the Modderpoort farm. In the records of the church that I have copies of, a woman with the same name was an elder of the church in 1904. But the three headmen that I was able to identify are from the families of Leiee, Tsiu and Lehlokoanyane. Motsetse, however, may be related to the Leiee's and Lehlokoanyane's as they are all Bataung, but I still am not in a position to say if they are Baromokhele²²¹.

In order to prove a right in land, the Restitution of Land Right Act states:

...right in land means any right in land whether registered or unregistered, and may include the interest of a labour tenant and sharecropper, a customary law interest, the interest of a beneficiary under a trust arrangement and beneficial occupation for a continuous period of not less than 10 years prior to the dispossession in question²²².

The claimant in the instance of the Modderpoort Farms has attributed the community's ‘right in land’ on unregistered beneficial occupational rights held prior to dispossession. The Land Claims Commission has upheld this, finding evidence of occupation of “most of the people from Modderpoort and others from neighbouring farms” at a milk factory in Modderpoort²²³.

To establish whether a land claim has merit, the Land Claims Commission investigates whether the dispossession occurred after 19 June 1913 (the date of the introduction of the infamous

²²⁰ Land Claim Form 1998

²²¹ Gill 2009 – see Appendix A

²²² Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994

²²³ Rule 3 Report on the Modderpoort Farms

Land Act) and whether it was a result of race-discriminatory practice or legislation. As mentioned in Chapters 1 and 4 of this report, the Anglican Church established a teachers' training college and high school at Modderpoort. With the introduction of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, private education for blacks was no longer legal, and both facilities were closed down. The commission has found that this legislation, clearly discriminatory on the basis of race, led to the removal of blacks from the farms, and that subsequently there was further dispossession of labour tenants by farmers. No compensation of any kind was offered to the dispossessed, who were forced to relocate to Manyatseng and QwaQwa, some even leaving for Lesotho. Overall, the Commission has found that the "claim is neither frivolous nor vexatious [sic]"²²⁴.

Reactions to the land claim

A provision of the Restitution of Land Rights Act is that once notice of claim has been published and until such time as it is resolved, further development on that land can only proceed with permission from the Regional Land Claims Commissioner²²⁵. This appeared to hamper DEAT's plans for Modderpoort's Mantsopa sites, as well as the church's ongoing renovations of its accommodation and conference facilities.

At an ensuing meeting between the diocese and municipality in July, it was decided that both parties would write to Deputy Minister Mabudafhasi, requesting that the funds allocated to Modderpoort be put on hold until the issue was finalised. While the diocese did so²²⁶, the municipality requested permission from the Regional Land Claims Commission to proceed with the implementation of the DEAT project, stating that the Bataung Community would be part of the implementation committee and would benefit upon settlement of the claim²²⁷. Permission was granted by the commission, perhaps a strong indication that the claim will be decided in favour of the community²²⁸. On discovery of this, the Bloemfontein Diocese lodged an objection with the Commissioner.

²²⁴ Rule 3 Report on the Modderpoort Farms

²²⁵ Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994, Section 11 Paragraph (7)

²²⁶ Letter from Diocesan Registrar to Deputy Minister 2008/07/15

²²⁷ Letter from Acting Municipal Manager to Regional Land Claims Commission 2008/08/14

²²⁸ Letter from Regional Land Claims Commissioner to Mantsopa Local Municipality 2008/09/10

By the end of 2008, the two parties were engaged in what the Diocese Administrator Bruce Harrison, referred to as an “outright conflict”²²⁹. The diocese was of the opinion that the claim has been engineered with the complicity of the Mantsopa Local Municipality to wrest Modderpoort from them. Believing that there was also no justification for a claim on the other 56 farms listed and that their inclusion was merely a smokescreen, the diocese instructed its legal representation to request splitting of the claim (this came to naught). The diocese also hoped to enlist the assistance of the Church’s prominent and influential Archbishop in the matter. According to Harrison, it would take the matter to the Constitutional Court if need be²³⁰.

January 2009 seemed to issue in a more conciliatory tone all round. Deputy Minister Mabudafhasi went down to Modderpoort to try and pacify the stakeholders – apparently indicating that irrespective of who won the land claim, she was keen to go ahead with the project. According to Johan Fritz, she undertook to use her influence to accelerate a resolution to the land claim²³¹.

In a conversation with Bruce Harrison on 30 January, I was told it seemed the Bataung now wanted a compensation rather than physical ownership of the land. Harrison further believed there was a chance of total retraction of the land claim²³². But a conversation with Harrison two weeks later on 16 February revealed that the church had perhaps been a little too optimistic, and a serious dance of ‘one-step-forward; two-steps-backward’ had begun. Harrison reported that at a heated meeting with the Land Claims Commission on 11 February, the Regional Commissioner (Free State and Northern Cape) advised that the Bataung claim had been validated by his office and the church’s contest would not succeed in court. The Commissioner further suggested the church drop their attorney as he was obstructive. Bishop Patrick Glover, walked out of the meeting at one point, and the Commissioner threatened to invoke a clause which would halt all development at Modderpoort²³³.

Harrison stated that documentation supporting the claimants’ position, such as research on the history of Modderpoort, was filled with fabrications. The diocese had subsequently written to Deputy Minister Mabudafhasi advising that they would continue negotiation on her project, but

²²⁹ Harrison, interview 2008/09/26

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Fritz, telephone interview 2009/01/30

²³² Harrison, telephone interview 2009/01/30

²³³ Harrison, telephone interview 2009/02/16

wanted nothing to do with the Land Claims Commission. The church remained determined to fight the claim to the highest court²³⁴.

Contradictions emerging from the land claim

Some contradictions emerge in recounting the events related to this land claim. The first is the Bataung's readiness to accept compensation, which not only belies Motsetse's claim that reinstated rights to the land are necessary for the restoration of the Bataung's African culture, tradition and dignity, but also reflects the infusion of Western concepts of land commoditisation into African land tenure systems, as sketched in the introductory chapter of this report.

The Bataung claim, based on community, is indeed reminiscent of the African model. The tribe's willingness to accept monetary compensation, and the provision the Land Restitution Act makes for such compensation, points however, to an acceptance of land as a commodity, in the sense of Western land ownership, at both community and government level.

There is, however, a wider ambiguity which goes to the very heart of the process of land restitution in general. In his assessment of the settlement of Modderpoort (Appendix A), Stephen Gill hypothesises that the Bataung Baromokhele were not the only people living in the Modderpoort area in the pre- and post-*lifaqane* period (1818-1828) until the Seqiti War. He poses a leading question:

...if almost all of the land was parcelled out to white farmers (including the Anglicans) in the immediate post-Seqiti War period (1868 and afterwards), how can any claim be evaluated without opening the door to a hundred other claims of a similar nature? My own personal opinion, based upon my limited knowledge, is that the Baromokhele possess certain valid information, within certain limits, but that it is probably not possible to validate such a claim within the current parameters of the Land Claims taking place in SA today²³⁵.

With the deadline for land claims long gone, there is little chance of additional claims coming out of the woodwork, but indeed, if a flood of claims to Modderpoort had been lodged prior to the 1998 deadline, one wonders on what basis the Commission would have judged and prioritised them. The possibility, however, highlights this: offering entitlement to one group has

²³⁴ Harrison, telephone interview 2009/02/16

²³⁵ Gill 2009 – see Appendix A

implications for social and political identity on a localised level, encouraging “sub-national citizenship rights”²³⁶. By giving legal access to one group, others are deprived of it and marginalised. It may prove contrary to the exercise of developing nationhood. Catherine Boone expresses the argument:

Institutionalisation of local citizenship thus competes with the project of developing truly national citizenship. It means that, in practice, no single and unique set of property rights, no uniform set of rules of access to resources, and no uniform set of citizenship rights applies to all the citizen subjects of the central state, or prevails throughout the national space. Institutionalisation of a communal land tenure regime thus imposes a kind of discrimination (or system of reserved rights) based on birthplace.

Dilemmas that communal or community-based property rights regimes pose for the modern, central state have been made very concrete in South Africa, where the secularisation of land administration has already gone very far indeed, by African standards.²³⁷

Boone’s words call South Africa’s near-complete land restitution effort into question, leaving one to wonder if in future it may not prove self-defeating. She implies that it has no place in the modern, democratic African state, challenged as most of them are, by the considerable problems of diverse groupings.

Legal ownership

As touched on in Chapter 1, the Modderpoort land claim is but a recent twist in a larger and long-running territorial dispute that harks back to the 19th century when Basotho, Boer and Brit found themselves scrambling for the same terrain. Southern Africans of all races were on the move at the time as local tribes were caught up in the *lifaqane*; as the Dutch-speaking *voortrekkers* fled British rule in the Cape; as the British imperialists sought to extend their empire.

Interminable disputes over the border between the Eastern Free State and the Kingdom of Lesotho, now denoted by the Caledon/Mohokare River, resulted in a constant resetting of the boundary line, with accumulative loss in land (the Conquered Territory) for the Basotho. The outcome is a border that to this day commands scant regard and is meaningless as a social

²³⁶ Boone 2007 (578)

²³⁷ Boone 2007 (579)

division²³⁸. The Basotho have largely ignored its political implications – many continue to cross it in pursuit of their daily activities, much as they always did. Coplan reports that Basotho children from Lesotho border towns commute daily to Free State schools, traders set up shop as easily on one side of the border as the other, and there is a widespread opinion among the Basotho that they should enjoy unreserved access to both countries and their labour markets, partly in return for the land stolen from them²³⁹. There are even those who support an integration of Lesotho into South Africa²⁴⁰.

Both the case of the Free State-Lesotho border and Modderpoort demonstrate the limited relevance of physical ownership and historical fact, in the face of long-established religious belief. As Coplan suggests, through the veneration of locales such as Mantsopa's Modderpoort sites, there is a spiritual re-appropriation of the land that is stronger than a deed of ownership. He writes: "Having lost the Conquered Territory politically, the Basotho remain rooted there and seek to claim it spiritually"²⁴¹.

Conclusion

Speculating on the outcome of the land claim, there are a few possibilities.

- The land claim is decided in favour of the claimants, who are awarded compensation. As the compensation will be paid from a government fund, this will have little effect on the future of the DEAT project, as it removes the Bataung from the situation, leaving the church, pilgrims and government as the main stakeholders.
- The land claim is decided in favour of the claimants, who are awarded ownership of the Modderpoort. The Anglican Church is unlikely to accept this finding without a protracted fight. It must also be borne in mind that the church is just one of 36 landowners targeted by the claim, who may also put up resistance.

²³⁸ Coplan 2001 (103)

²³⁹ Coplan 2001 (108)

²⁴⁰ Coplan 2001 (110)

²⁴¹ Coplan 2001 (87); Coplan 2003 (980)

- Should the church ultimately be taken out of the picture, the government will find itself dealing with a new landowner, namely the Bataung. It will remain, however, in the position of negotiating a project on land it does not own.

Of all the claims discussed in this study thus far, it is the Bataung claim which pinpoints land most precisely as being at the root of the matter, revealing itself in questions of identity, community and rights.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION



Figure 36: Intersecting interests, heritage and land at Modderpoort.
(Top left – right): Mantsopa’s pilgrims; the Priory Church; plaque explaining the fast-disappearing San rock art, all found under the shadow of the Platberg (below).

(photographs: M Colman)

Heritage is a juncture of incongruent, often diametrically opposed, interests with the inevitable result of vigorous debate and contention. Highlighting the challenging nature of the field, Christine Mullen Kreamer in an essay entitled *Shared Heritage, Contested Terrain*, writes: "...because heritage tends to be claimed by multiple partners, it is essentially contested"²⁴².

Modderpoort is an excellent example of such contested interests. In documenting the complexities, conflict and power struggles at Modderpoort, the research detailed in the foregoing chapters reveals how a government grant has stirred a tangle of tensions and a level of competition between stakeholders that is proving difficult to resolve. As this research comes to an end, two of the protagonists - the Anglican Church and the Bataung community - are readying for a court battle, one that will be keenly monitored by the Mantsopa Local Municipality and national government. It may well be some time until the DEAT upgrade is realised.

Clearly the contest between the stakeholders has existed for some time, but national government's move to raise the profile of Modderpoort has fuelled the fire. The attention of government on the property - be its motivation social responsibility, tourism or heritage - is a legitimating act. But, whose heritage or what history is being legitimated? The stakeholders are clearly jostling for position to secure the loudest voice.

Such contest is to be expected in a 'new' country where the processes of nation building and transformation are important concerns. Spotlighting the frictions that are part of the course of museology, Kratz and Karp write that memorialising efforts are:

...part of the checklist for being a nation, a means for disparate groups to present and claim their histories and values in the public sphere, and simultaneously an arena and means for constituting community identities. ...museums and heritage organisations...have become a portable social technology, a set of museological processes through which such statements and claims are represented, embodied and debated²⁴³.

Referring specifically to South Africa, they comment:

²⁴² Kreamer 2006 (439)

²⁴³ Kratz & Karp 2006 (3-4)

Museums and heritage resources have been vital in shaping, interpreting, and contributing to transformations in public culture in South Africa over the past fifteen years, caught up in intricate interplays between forceful national (and regional) imperatives, local interests, and globalising processes²⁴⁴.

But community identity, which has indeed emerged as a strong thread in this research and is evident in Mantsopa's pilgrims, the Anglicans and the Bataung, is perhaps overshadowing the development of wider, shared nationalism. Fifteen years into democracy, the moulding of a new South African nation appears no less complex than it did in 1994. The violent reign of xenophobia in 2008 was a sign of the instability of the South African nation-building exercise, while in the recent power struggle that ultimately ushered in a new presidency, the leading contender, Jacob Zuma, left no doubt as to his cultural affiliations, portraying himself as a favourite son of the Zulu.

The field of heritage suffers this same deficiency of shared legacy. While South African heritage's profile has benefitted from a spate of post-apartheid sites and institutions that have gone some way to offer a more balanced picture of South African society, its roots and narratives, identifying South African sites of shared heritage is challenging. A case can be perhaps be made for the Herbert Baker-designed Union Buildings, once the exclusive domain of white governments and now, as the April inauguration demonstrated, a platform for showcasing all cultures. Freedom Park in Pretoria, another heritage project also intended to cover a wide span of narratives, has already encountered its first accusations of partiality, even before its completion and official opening.

Modderpoort, reaching back into the San era, is indeed a site of shared heritage and cultural interchange. The San, the arrival of Bantu-speaking groups, the *lifaqane*, the founding of the Basotho nation, the missionary era, the advancement of the Boers and the imperialism of the British, are all strands in its landscape. But they are not unique to Modderpoort. More exceptional is Modderpoort's position as the meeting place of two major religious conventions – traditional belief emanating from the indigenous black population, and Anglicanism, a contribution of white settlers. They are fused in one, fascinating personality, Mantsopa, a Mosotho prophet who also happened to be an early convert to Christianity.

²⁴⁴ Kratz & Karp 2006 (18)

The Mantsopa Local Municipality has, in fact, motivated the project on the basis of its relevance to both black and white South Africans. Yet, to date there has been no dialogue among the stakeholders on accommodating all perspectives. A change of approach – for example, optimising the Modderpoort project as a celebration of cultural intersection - may work in favour of all the parties. The church could consider ‘piggy-backing’ on the upgrading of the Mantsopa sites by producing its own exhibition on the colourful history of Modderpoort and its extensive work in the Eastern Free State. The Mantsopa Local Municipality, too, could make use of this platform to expose its achievements and objectives.

There are ways of enhancing the tourist experience at Modderpoort without altering the site unrecognisably, or disturbing the natural conditions required for pilgrimage, as raised in Chapter 3. They come additionally, with the possibilities of expanding revenue, without over-commercialising. Hopefully it will not be an opportunity missed.

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APPENDIX A

The Settlement of the Modderpoort area:

A provisional assessment based upon limited archival sources

By Stephen Gill, Curator, Morija Museum & Archives (01 April 2009)

As with many places in South Africa, there will be contestation as to land claims depending on when a certain group took possession, how it took possession, who succeeded the group etc. Oftentimes there are no straightforward answers, particularly for the 19th century.

Regarding Modderpoort, there are only a few accounts from archival sources that I am aware of. Indeed, there may be others. The most important account is probably that of Maria Makelele Leiee, a very elderly person (born c.1805) interviewed by Fr WA Norton, the Anglican priest and a dedicated scholar of linguistics and oral history, who was based at Modderpoort at the beginning of the 20th century, in his 1910 article "A Description of the Modderpoort Neighbourhood One Hundred Years Ago".²⁴⁵ His interview gives some texture to this question regarding who was settled where before the beginning of the Lifaqane. "She [Maria] lived at Mekoatleng, at Rahlaoli's, son of Nkopane, son of Monaheng. Nkopane was still living."²⁴⁶ Norton goes on to record her memory of the people who lived in the vicinity as follows: Batšoeneng of Ma-Khamali at Bela-Bela, below Mekoatleng, on the far side; Bahlakoana of Teele at Mabilela; Bataung of Leroa; Bataung of Ramokhele from Lekhalong [Modderpoort] to Khunonyana (Liheleng); Maphuthing, on the other side of the river [which river??]. Norton summarized the settlement pattern as follows: the "Ba-Taung of Ramokhele... formerly held the land from Modderpoort.... to Liheleng [Tihela], or the place of throwing down...." If one can trust that Maria still remembered correctly the people of her youth, that is, before the Lifaqane completely upset the order of the day, then we may be able to draw a few inferences. Maria, herself a Mokoena but married to the Bataung ba Ramokhele, places her people in the area immediately around Modderpoort in the early 1820s. Although almost everyone had to flee the area because of the upheaval caused by the invasion of the Hlubi of Mpangazita (and later the Amangwane of Matookane), it is probably correct to say that the Baramokhele are the immediate occupiers of the area in the pre-Lifaqane period.

²⁴⁵ W.A. Norton Papers, (c.1910) I-18, pp. 1-2, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand (Copy in Morija Archives).

²⁴⁶ Fr. W.A. Norton, "Account by Maria, an old woman at Modderpoort, born about 1805, (died 1910), daughter of Mokhali, son of Mokheseng, a chief of the Bakoena (interviewed Aug. 14, '07)", Miscellaneous papers (No. 11), and "A Description of the Modderpoort Neighbourhood One Hundred Years Ago", 4 page booklet (?). William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, c. 1909, copies in Morija Archives.

Her statement may indeed be correct. Ellenberger also adds that the Baramokhele lived a bit to the north of Modderpoort at Khunoanyane [Tihela] and goes on to say concerning Ramokhele that “his villages extended as far south as Makulukameng (Platberg)”.²⁴⁷ This statement was similar to that of AM Sekese, another prominent historian of the 19th century. This therefore corroborates Fr Norton’s assertion, and even extends the settlement of the Baramokhele further to the south.²⁴⁸ Nearby to the east and northeast, Ellenberger places the Bahlakoana of Tseele at Hlohloane (Clocolan) and Maboela.²⁴⁹

It would appear from the records of the Anglican church for Modderpoort held at Bloemfontein in the basement of the Cathedral, as well as those of the PEMS for Maboela held at Morija, that once the upheaval was over, many people returned to settle the area, including the Baramokhele, certain groups of Bakoena, Bahlakoana, etc. Their lives were again upset during the Seqiti War (1865-1868) when Free State forces occupied the area. But again many returned.

The question then occurs: are the Baramokhele correct in asserting that they are the sole and legitimate claimants for the land around Modderpoort based upon their apparent priority of settlement in the immediate pre-Lifaqane period? That my friend is a very difficult question, particularly in the context of the law in SA which places the question in terms of the 1912 Land Act. One would have to see if the Baramokhele were recognised as chiefs of the area at that time (1912). Moreover, one would need to verify that the other peoples (Bakoena, Bahlakoana etc) recognised them as chiefs of the area. A more difficult question again would be this: if almost all of the land was parcelled out to white farmers (including the Anglicans) in the immediate post-Seqiti War period (1868 and afterwards), how can any claim be evaluated without opening the door to a hundred other claims of a similar nature? My own personal opinion, based upon my limited knowledge, is that the Baramokhele possess certain valid information, within certain limits, but that it is probably not possible to validate such a claim within the current parameters of the Land Claims taking place in SA today.

²⁴⁷ Ellenberger & MacGregor, *History of the Basuto: Ancient & Modern*, p. 83. Ellenberger probably based himself on A.M. Sekese, “Buka ea Litaba tsa Basotho”, *Leselinyana*, 01 February 1892, p. 2.

²⁴⁸ Ellenberger, *ibid.* p. 67.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 121

APPENDIX B

Transcription: *The Voice of Free Democrats* (4-10 March 2009)

Voice celebrates the life of 'Mantsopa

The Voice was part of the crew which took turn and vowed to celebrate the intended week of the late Prophetess Anna 'Mantsopa Makhetha. Five years back the route to celebrate this create [great] icon of Lesotho was inaugurated. The first prophet tasked one Libuseng who was a student of her in the prophecy life to make sure that starting from the 5th March of every year, the legacy and name of 'Mantsopa the prophetess be honored.

The reason behind 'Mantsopa's anger is attributed to the fact that South African are celebrating with gigantic feast in her name, but Basotho of Lesotho have neglected the tutelage of the name and legacy of 'Mantsopa. The year 2009 is indeed part of history in the making. The Voice team visited Prophet 'Mantsopa's home in HaRamakhetheng Maseru, where the big feast was hosted. Theko Tlebere reports.

The first prophet of Lesotho, the late Anna 'Mantsopa Makhetha was born in Ha Ramakhetheng, Likotsi in the Maseru district in 1795, and died on the 9th November in 1906, and buried on the 11th of the same month in Modderpoort mission in Ladybrand, South Africa. Allow me to focus on the late life stages as narrated by one of the grand-grand children of the Makhetha prophetess, Mrs 'Makelebone Letsie. She broke the ice by telling the Voice crew that Mafatle Makhetha had a son called Makhera who married Koena-li-fule ('Mantsopa's maiden name). They moved from one place to the next, where the Makhetha's lived until they found themselves in Majoe-matšo, Quthing at the spring well of the Qomo-Qomong river. They were blessed with five children – four boys and their sister, 'Maliepetsane. Prophetess 'Mantsopa was renowned for her yellowish attire of the St. Johns Church which resembled the attire for cure of the sick. With the powers that she gained over time, she used to travel a lot to cure people in different places. Her husband Makhera himself, was a traditional healer using herbs to cure people while 'Mantsopa used water. One time when 'Mantsopa was away on her prophecy spree, her husband Makhera decided to expel 'Mantsopa and marry Mamonyane from Seapala.

One of his reasons was that there was no one who took care of her patients. Ntsopa, 'Mantsopa's first son was chased away by his mother, but his father took him back when they were on their way back to Ha Ramakhetheng. Ntsopa therefore grew up without knowing his

mother or his siblings because he lived with the second wife of his father. He even married Pulane from Phamong, but his mother did not even see her grand children. Mantsopa married for the second time in Mokhethoaneng, but they decided with the new husband to live in Leribe district and that is where she met King Moshoeshoe I and became an advisor to the chief. At the same time Chief Posholi, Moshoeshoe I's younger brother, killed a man from the Makhetha tribe. Chief Moshoeshoe I ordered that 'Mantsopa's family be taken to another land to prevent conflicts. 'Mantsopa and family then moved to Makhetheng (Modderpoort) in South Africa, where she was buried and healed many people in the caves and wells.

Some of the blessed attributes she achieved in her tenure range from those she used water to cure all kinds of sicknesses at an early age of fifteen; she used "Mohloare "as it was at abundance in the Likotsi Mountain. She also had influential and compatible powers to prophesise or predict the future. An example would be that of the second prophet of Lesotho, Walter Matita whom she prophesised that he would be born with all teeth (32) but they would disappear in three days. It happened exactly like she prophesised. History book and academic researchers like Mr Marupinyane Nkotsi can testify about that. Indeed some things are unbelievable, but one just ought to visit these places and witness the entire miracles happening even as we speak.

To secede my report, I just want to reiterate on the common agnatic evasion of Basotho of not going back and checking up on their history. Maybe Lesotho is stationed in terms of development only because the grand child of Mohlomi is angry because we are not paying homage to her anymore. Hegel once said: "History can diversify the environment." All those who are behind this event are doing a good job may God bless you all.