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THE PLIGHT OF THE RURAL POPULATION IN LESOTHO - A CASE STUDY

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Introduction

This study was carried out in the Thaba Bosiu rural development area. It involved an area of about 36 650 ha with a population of about 30 131 living in about 130 villages and 32 land allocation areas.

1 Population growth

In 1891 the recorded population of Lesotho was about 281,504. This figure increased by about 84.4 per cent to 402,919 in 1911. Using the formula (used in the U.N. demographic year books)

$$r = \left(\sqrt[t]{\frac{P_2}{P_1}} - 1 \right) \times 100$$

where P_1 = population at the beginning of the period

P_2 = population at the end of the period

t = number of years

r = growth rate

the estimated annual growth rate of the population was about three per cent compound. At this rate it took about 23 years for the population to double. From 1911 it took about 50 years for the population to double; the intercensal growth rates during this period being about 2.4 per cent between 1911 and 1921, 1.3 per cent between 1921 and 1936, 0.4 per cent between 1936 and 1946, and 1.4 per cent between 1946 and 1956. This sudden decrease in the rate of growth can be explained by referring to past relationships between Lesotho and neighbouring South Africa. Before and during the early colonial days the territory of Lesotho was conceived as part of the Republic of South Africa by both the South African and British regimes, and when the Act of Union of South Africa was passed in 1910 it contained provisions for the future incorporation of not only Lesotho but all three High Commission Territories, Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland. Indeed, it took some resistance in the form of protests and petitions, by the nationals of these

territories to retain their autonomy, The South African and British idea was to integrate these three territories into the labour market of South Africa, which was one of the reasons why the colonial administration neglected the development of Lesotho. There was thus a free flow of people between Lesotho and South Africa that resulted in a net loss of population in Lesotho.

Not only did people leave Lesotho for work in the different industries of South Africa, but some were permanently absorbed into the population of South Africa. Leistner estimated the number of Basotho that were permanently absorbed into the South African population at 100,000 between 1936 and 1946 and 40,000 between 1946 and 1956 (Leistner 1966, p. 4). One remarkable feature of the population of Lesotho during the period 1936 to 1946 is the fact that the de facto female population, as illustrated in Fig. 1 decreased by about 1.9 per cent whereas the number of female absentees increased by an unusually high figure of about 42.6 per cent. It should be noted that this high increase in the number of female absentees coincided with the exceptionally low growth rate of 0.4 per cent. While it is reasonable to conclude that this low growth rate was due to emigration, and especially the apparent emigration of families, it should be borne in mind that the period 1936 to 1946 was the World War II period (1938 - 1945) during which population growth rates of many other parts of the world were adversely affected.

When the Nationalist party took over power in South Africa in 1948 it embarked on a policy of "apartheid" (later modified

to separate development). By this policy, which was intended *inter alia* to give ostensible self-government to the "Bantu homelands", the idea of incorporating the High Commission Territories was abandoned and instead a series of laws was passed that restricted the movement of Africans in the Republic of South Africa. Mainly as a result of these laws there was, between 1956 and 1966, a remarkable decrease in the number of Lesotho's absentees. The number of Basotho emigrating to South Africa was further restricted since 1963 by the introduction of border control posts between the Republic of South Africa and the High Commission Territories. The result was an increase in the rate of growth of Lesotho's population, which is officially given as 2.2 per cent compound.

Between 1950 and 1976 the total population of the study area increased by about 86.9 per cent, yet the population of Lesotho during the same period is estimated to have increased by about 73 per cent. The higher increase in the case of the study area implied that there was net immigration into it, resulting from internal migrations, over and above the natural increase.The effect of internal migrations on population growth rates is evident also within the study area. In Fig. ,2 it can be seen that while the rate of population increase was very high in some areas there was a decrease in population in others. The spatial variation in the rate of population increase is very closely associated with that of the estimated amount of internal migration, the correlation coefficient (r) between the two variables being about 0.999 (cf. Figs. ,2, ,3, and 4).

2 Changes in the pattern of population distribution

The rural population normally lived in traditional villages that were in clusters ranging in size from three to about 160 households. The villages themselves were sparsely though generally evenly distributed throughout the study area. Hence there was an even distribution of population clusters as illustrated in Fig.5.

Settlements and cultivated land are mutually exclusive. This relationship between settlements and cultivated land partly explains the presence of patches of what appears to be unoccupied areas shown in Fig.5. This pattern of population distribution may also be explained by the fact that Basotho retained the traditional sites for their villages, on the plateau tops and hill slopes, and in many places the pattern of distribution of the population corresponded to the alignment of relief features. This was especially true of the scarp marking the boundary between the foothill and lowland zones throughout which there were villages either perched on top of the plateau or sited along the foot of the scarp. Another factor that strengthened the attachment of villages to the sites they occupied was the fact that the rural population largely depended on springs for the supply of domestic water, and these springs were usually situated near the hill slopes.

Even-ness in the distribution of population in the study area is further evidenced by the fact that the size of the

population was more or less proportional to the size of the land allocation areas, the correlation coefficient between the two variables being about 0.83 (Fig. 6).

There was, however, marked zonal differentiation in the distribution of the population. In 1976 the population of the areas situated in the lowland zone was about 40 per cent of the total population of the study area, yet the size of the lowland zone in the study area was only 27 per cent of the total area. This confirms the fact that there was a relatively high concentration of people in the lowland areas. Apart from the fact that people were attracted to the lowland areas by the relative availability of arable land, the reason why there was a higher concentration of people in this zone was ease of accessibility to social services such as schools, hospitals and transport, as well as proximity to places of paid employment.

The results of the questionnaire survey show that about 60 per cent of the respondents who were new settlers in the area of Mafefoane had come to settle there because of proximity to places of employment and social services. Many residents of the densely populated area of Mafefoane were without land for cultivation and lived mainly on paid employment. A survey on employment opportunities conducted in the area of Mafefoane revealed that there were, however, only 670 unskilled and 430 skilled jobs available in the area (Table 3).

There was also a relatively high concentration of people along the tarred road between Roma and Maseru along which there

were fairly regular bus and taxi services. The distance between Roma and Maseru is only about 35 km, and those who could afford the fares could travel daily along this route to Maseru where there were more social services and job opportunities. Two branches of the Roma-Maseru road that provided relative ease of accessibility to this main road in the study area were the Thaba Bosiu-Makhalanyane and the Mountain roads.
On fair weather conditions these roads also provided fairly regular transport to and from Maseru. People along the Thaba Bosiu-Makhalanyane road had the added advantage of being nearer to Maseru, hence the relatively high concentration of population along it.

The decision of people to settle anywhere in the study area could, however, be effective only on the consent of the chiefs and their advisers. On the other hand the chiefs' decision to accept or reject new settlers depended on the availability of land. Thus population increased at a higher rate where the chiefs were willing to accept new settlers, and at a slower rate where there were few or no new settlers accepted.

In spite of the general tendency of people to settle near areas which provided easy access to social services and employment opportunities there was, between 1950 and 1976, no significant change in the spatial pattern of population distribution in the study area. This is confirmed by the fact that the correlation coefficient between the 1950 and 1976 population distribution was about 0.93.

3 Changes in population densities

In 1976 the mean population density in the study area was about 82 per km^2 with a standard deviation of 44. In the same year the territorial mean was only about 40 per km^2, being about 70 in the lowland and foothill zones together and about 14 in the mountain zone. This shows that there were comparatively more people settled in the study area than average.

Apart from the zonal differentiation in population densities there is no significant covariation between the 1976 population densities and the differences in size of the land allocation areas, as illustrated in Fig. 7. This further emphasises the even nature of population distribution in the study area.

Table 1 shows the frequencies of areas according to density classes. Of the 13 areas with densities between ten and 70 people per km^2 about nine were accessible only with difficulty.

Table 1 Population densities in the study area, by land allocation areas.

Density class people/km^2	No.of areas	Relative frequency %	Cumulative frequency %
10 - 40	5	16	16
41 - 70	8	25	41
71 - 100	9	28	69
101 - 130	3	9	78
131 - 160	5	16	94
161 - 190	2	6	100
Total	32	100	

Data source: 1. Airphoto interpretation
2. 1976 census

These included the areas of Makotoko Makotoko, Masupha Makotoko, Makhabane Makotoko, and Rabotsoa, which were wedged between the gorges of the Phuthiatsana (Little Caledon) River in the north and Phiring River in the south, and the high Machache Mountains in the east. The areas were isolated in that the only type of wheeled transport that could reach them were four-wheel-drive vehicles, and only in fair weather conditions. Otherwise only horses and donkeys were used for transport. It stands to reason that people normally tended to shun living in them. There were also difficulties of accessibility to large parts of the areas of Mothobi, Nqheku, Ramotsoana, Ramakha and Tumahole which were also characterized by comparatively low population densities. Although lack of accessibility was associated with low densities, it does not by any means provide the complete answer to the existence of low density areas. For there were many examples of areas with difficulties of accessibility but that were nevertheless densely populated, e.g. Ntsane, Ponoane, and areas around Lebamang. There were other factors such as the availability of arable land that also influenced the pattern of population distribution; these factors had to be considered as well in order to get a full explanation to the pattern of population distribution in the study area.

The 1976 density figure of 82 people per km^2 was 86 per cent higher than the 1950 figure of 44 people per km^2. The correlation coefficient between the 1950 and the 1976 population distribution by densities was, however, only about 0.58. This was much lower than the high positive correlation coefficient of 0.93 obtained in the comparison of the numerical distribution of population for the same period. This is

because although the changes in densities covaried with the changes in population numbers, the changes in the two variables did not have the same effect on the ranks of the different land allocation areas. The existence of areas with (a) exceedingly high increases in densities, e.g. Molengoane, Mafefoane, and Makhalanyane with increases of 96, 101 and 109 people per km^2 respectively and (b) decreases in densities e.g. Nqheku, Phaloane and Mohalenyane with -12, -18 and 0 people per km^2 respectively, caused big swings in the ranks of the different areas. Hence the lower figure of the coefficient of correlation.

Having considered the nature of the changes in densities against the positive correlation coefficient of 0.58 at the 0.0003 level of significance between the spatial distribution of the 1950 and 1976 densities, it could be concluded that there has generally not been any significant change in the spatial pattern of population disiribution within the study area. The mean population density has, however, increased by about 86 per cent between 1950 and 1976. During the same period the mean density for Lesotho increased by about 82 per cent from 22 people per km^2 in 1950 to 40 in 1976. The rate of increase in population density in the study area was thus higher than territorial average, once more signifying the fact that there was net immigration into the study area.

From the correlation coefficient of 0.47 between the 1976 population densities and population change it could be seen that the spatial variation in population densities in the study area was associated with the differences in the rates of

population increase. Since there was no significant correlation between the 1950 population densities and the rates of population change, it was unlikely that the rates of increase were influenced by the existing densities. It could rather be said that the spatial variation in densities resulted from the different rates of population increase which, as already pointed out, were symptomatic of internal migrations.

Apart from the desire to be in the proximity of social services and places of employment, another factor motivating people to settle in a rural area in the lowland and foothill zones of Lesotho was the availability of arable land. Section 4 examines the implications of the changes in population densities on the availability of arable land.

4 Densities on cultivated land

In 1976 the estimated de jure population density on cultivated land in Lesotho was about 313 per km^2 or 3.13 per ha , the densities in the lowland and foothill zones being about 249 and 363 per km^2 (2.49 and 3.63 per ha) respectively. During the same year the mean density on cultivated land in the study area was about 247 people per km^2 or 2.47 per ha. This meant that, compared with other areas situated in the lowland and foothill zones, the study area had lower densities on cultivated land than average. When considering the fact that the study area had comparatively higher crude population densities than the average for the territory, it is evident that the percentage of arable land available in it was higher than average.

Although the mean population density on cultivated land in the study area was about 2.47 per ha, the majority of the areas had means of between 2.1 and 3 people per ha (Table 2). In fact the mode was 1.8 people per ha, the relatively high mean of 2.47 per ha being caused mainly by the very high mean of 6.4 obtained in the area of Mafefoane. As it has already been stated that many people in the area of Mafefoane were wage earners and not dependent on the cultivation of crops, it could be seen that the actual mean density on cultivated land in the study area was much lower than the territorial mean for the lowland and foothill zones, and many times lower than the mean for the mountain zone.

The study area was thus one of the areas in Lesotho that

had been able to absorb more new settlers between 1950 and 1976.

Table 2 Population densities on cultivated land in the study area, by land allocation areas

Density class people/ha	No.of areas	Relative frequency %	Cumulative frequency %
1 - 2	8	25.0	25.0
2.1 - 3	20	62.5	87.5
3.1 - 4	3	9.4	96.9
above 4	1	3.1	100.0
Total	32	100.0	

Data source: 1. airphoto interpretation
2. 1976 census
3. 1974 prelisting

Because of land scarcity, the acceptance of new settlers in rural Lesotho frequently necessitated the opening up of virgin land for cultivation. In the study area the hectarage of cultivated land was increased by about 4.3 per cent between 1950 and 1976 as a result of virgin land being opened up for cultivation, mainly by new settlers. There was, on the other hand, a net decrease of about 2.2 per cent in Lesotho's total area of cultivated land between 1950 and 1970. This indicates that the study area was one of the areas that had a comparatively high percentage of arable land in Lesotho.

In spite of the fact that there was a net increase in the area of cultivated land in the study area against a net decrease in the territory as a whole, changes in population densities on cultivated land were the other way round. In the study area the mean population density increased by about 79 per cent

between 1950 and 1976 against an increase of about 56 per cent in the territory's mean between 1950 and 1970. This indicates that the population growth rate in the study area was higher than the average for the territory and, as pointed out, this was because there was net immigration into the study area resulting from internal migrations.

As a result of the general increase in population densities on cultivated land there was general decrease in the per capita farm size. The average farm size in Lesotho decreased from 2.5 ha in 1950 to 2.0 ha in 1970.

It has been noted that whereas the study area had higher crude population densities it had lower densities on cultivated land than territorial average. This anomaly does not necessarily mean that there was a negative correlation, or no correlation, between the two variables. On the contrary there was a fairly strong positive correlation between them as evidenced by the correlation coefficient of 0.63 obtained in the case of the study area (cf. Figs. 8, 9 and 10). The existence of anomalous situations where areas with high crude densities had lower densities on cultivated land could be explained in terms of varying ratios of available arable land to total land area. Areas that had a low degree of ruggedness, and therefore high percentage of arable land, could have comparatively high crude population densities without necessarily having high densities on cultivated land, e.g. Molengoane, Ponoane, and Thaba Khupa. On the other hand, areas with a high degree of ruggedness, and therefore low percentages of arable land, could have low crude densities without necessarily having low

densities on cultivated land, e.g. Nqheku, Phaloane and Ramakha.

When considering the fact that between 1950 and 1976 there was a decrease in population in the areas of Nqheku and Phaloane (-47 and -23 per cent respectively) and an increase of only 12 per cent at Ramakha, it can be seen that there were signs of population pressure in these areas. On the contrary, the areas with high percentages of arable land such as Molengoane, Ponoane and Thaba Khupa had high population increases of 207, 104 and 83 per cent respectively. It can thus be stated in general that there existed push factors in areas with low percentages of arable land, and pull factors in those with high percentages of arable land. Considering the fact that high population increases were experienced even in some areas that were relatively inaccessible, where such areas had a high percentage of arable land, it can be seen that land hunger was one of the most powerful factors influencing the distribution of the rural population in Lesotho.

It is now proper to look into the position of landholdings in order to examine the distribution of land among the rural households. This is done in section 5.

5 The distribution of land for cultivation

There was a net decrease in the area of cultivated land in Lesotho between 1950 and 1970. This decrease in the area of cultivated land was associated with an increase in the size of settlements and the degree of soil erosion.

Earlier in this Paper it was revealed that there was a rapid increase in the population. The combination of an increasing rural population and a shrinking area of cultivated land (see Fig. 11) resulted in a shortage of crop land for allocation to rural households.
The result of this shortage was that fewer fields than the traditional three were allocated to recent land holders. The allocation of fewer fields has itself resulted in the decrease in the average farm size.

In a desperate attempt to overcome the problem of land shortage, virgin lands were opened up for cultivation; but many of these virgin lands were marginal and, apart from the fact that yields therefrom were low, they were sooner or later abandoned because of erosion. As a result there was an increasing number of rural households that had no land for the raising of crops.

In 1974 the mean percentage of rural households without crop land in the study area was about 13, about the same as the territorial mean of 12.7 per cent in 1970. Considering the fact that the study area was more densely populated than territorial

average, a deduction can again be made that there was more arable land available in it than average.

On comparing Fig. 12 with Fig. 2 it can be seen that there was no association between the percentage of landless households and the rate of population growth. This is confirmed by the correlation coefficient of 0.17 at the 0.17 level of significance obtained on analysing the data of the two variables. It was stated in section .1 that the spatial variation in the rates of population growth were caused mainly by internal migrations. Since these migrations were governed by a number of factors, there was no strong inter-dependence between the differences in rates of growth and landlessness. It will also be remembered that people migrated to areas where there was available arable land, and that in these areas virgin land was opened up for cultivation. Hence, immigration as such did not necessarily lead to an increase in the number of landless households.

There was, however, a negative correlation coefficient of -0.5 between population density and percentage households with fields in the study area. This showed that the incidence of landlessness covaried positively with population density. The correlation between the incidence of landlessness and density on cultivated land was even stronger, which was again symptomatic of population pressure (cf.Figs. 9, .12, and 13).

Besides the negligible number of landless households that operated small business as a means of subsist nce, the alternative means of making a living for the landless rural households in Lesotho was share-cropping and working for a wage.

6 Share-cropping as a means of subsistence

The discussion of share-cropping in this section will be confined to an examination of the relationship between it and population factors with a view of ascertaining the validity of the assumption that it was one of the alternative means of livelihood for the landless.

There was a moderate positive coefficient of correlation of about 0.53 between population density and percentage fields share-cropped, and a stronger coefficient (0.61) between density on cultivated land and percentage fields share-cropped (Fig. 14). Since it was shown earlier that population density covaried positively with incidences of landlessness, it stands to reason that the excess households in the more densely populated areas lived on share-cropping among other things.

Fig. 15 shows the correlation coefficient between the percentage fields share-cropped and the percentage households with fields to be about -0.58. This means that there were in general more fields share-cropped in areas where there was a high incidence of landlessness and vice versa (cf. Fig. 16 and Fig. 12). This association indicates that share-cropping was one of the alternative means of subsistence for the landless rural households. This was further confirmed by the fact that during the questionnaire survey about ten per cent of the respondent rural householders who reported share-cropping did not have fields of their own.

7 Employment opportunities

During fieldwork for this study a detailed study on employment opportunities was made in the area of Mafefoane. Mafefoane was the only area in the study area that had a significant number of paid employees. The employers in the area of Mafefoane consisted of a university, a hospital, three schools, a seminary, a convent, a police station, a post office, an agricultural co-operative, a small scale agricultural project, about a dozen shops, and private homes belonging to the employees of these establishments. The university provided about 65 per cent of the unskilled jobs and 85 per cent of the skilled jobs. Table 3 shows the number of people employed in the different job categories.

Table 3 Estimated number of employees in the area of Mafefoane as at June, 1976, by sex and employment category.

Category	Male	Female	Total
Unskilled			
Domestic work	-	60	60
Gardening	80	-	80
Miscellaneous	300	230	530
Sub - total	380	290	670
Skilled			
Technical	40	10	50
Clerical	50	50	100
Administrative	50	30	80
Professional *	150	50	200
Sub - total	290	140	430
Total	670	430	1100

N.B. Figures have been brought to the nearest ten.

* Includes teachers, nurses, doctors, lecturers, priests etc.

Data source: Field work among employers and employees.

Although gardening is included in Table 3 it should be borne in mind that this occupation is seasonal in demand and many gardeners employed by private individuals were in actual fact under-employed.

At the time when these figures were compiled there was an additional 100 people (70 male and 30 female) engaged in temporary jobs. These jobs were not included in Table 3 because of their temporary nature. Included in Table 3 however, are a number of jobs that were not accessible to the villagers since they were performed by nuns, priests and brotheren as part of their religious obligation. Since the professional jobs were highly competitive, attracting workers from not only elsewhere in Lesotho but also other parts of the world, they were almost equally inaccessible to the inhabitants of the study area. It is thus more appropriate to disregard these jobs in the assessment of employment opportunities for the villagers in the study area.

From 1950 to about 1970 there has been an increase in paid employment in the area of Mafefoane as a result of rapid expansion of the university, but since future expansion of the university will most likely be situated in Maseru, the chances of further increase in the number of jobs have been diminished. Outside the area of Mafefoane the number of paid jobs offered by the few schools and shops was negligible.

The centre of jobs in the area of Mafefoane is situated in the Roma valley, surrounded by almost sheer-walled scarps that obstructed the construction of direct access routes to many of the surrounding areas. Hence, there was a lack of quick and efficient

transport to many of the surrounding areas with the result that the relative distances to these areas were increased. Consequently, only about 12 per cent of the employees in the area of Mafefoane were daily commuters from the surrounding villages.

Employment opportunities in Lesotho as a whole were not bright. According to the First Five Year Development Plan the distribution of the male labour force in 1969 was such that only seven per cent were in paid employment in Lesotho; 45 per cent being employed in South Africa and 48 per cent being occupied in agriculture (Lesotho Govt. (a), 1970 p.11). At the prevailing slow rate of industrialization and comparatively high rate of population growth, this labour situation did not seem to have improved. There was thus a shortage of paid employment in Lesotho which was more felt in the rural areas. The result of the shortage of employment was that at any time of the year many land holders were absent from their holdings, working at distant centres in Lesotho or elsewhere in Southern Africa.

8 Crop raising as an occupation

It has been mentioned that about 48 per cent of the male labour force was occupied in agriculture. However, the actual operation of agricultural activities included both male and female labour, and the time that the males actually spent in the fields was very small. The results obtained from the questionnaire survey in the study area show the breakdown of man-hours worked on an average crop farm to be as per Table 4.

Table 4 Man-hours worked in raising crops on an average farm, under normal conditions.

Activity	Man	Woman	Son*	Daughter*	Total
Ploughing ** & planting	67	-	45	-	112
Hoeing	-	300	-	100	400
Harvesting	35	70	29	58	192
Total	102	370	74	158	704

* members of households below 18 years

** ox-drawn equipment

Data Source: Questionnaire survey.

Table 4 shows that only about 13 days per annum were on the average actually spent by the adult male in the raising of crops. This figure was even lower when considering the fact that about 84 per cent of the households received outside assistance in the form of helpers, share-cropping partners, or hired labour, which would reduce the amount of time worked by the household members. The time would be

further reduced by the use of tractors. Hence, it could be concluded that many of the workers in the raising of crops were, in fact, under-employed. The inadequacy of crop raising to provide full-time employment was partly responsible for the fact that many of the energetic and able-bodied rural Basotho sought work elsewhere.

9 Absenteeism as an index of population pressure in the rural areas.

Absenteeism in Lesotho started as early as the nineteenth century with the discovery of diamonds (1867) and gold (1884) in South Africa. At that time Basotho were induced to go to the mines for work by the mining companies who needed their labour. There was apparently no pressing need for them to work since money had not yet become an integral part of their economy. After some time of contact with the monetary system, Basotho assimilated wants that required cash, to which the colonial administration added a system of taxation.

The South African and British regimes intended to integrate the High Commission Territories into the labour market of South Africa. The growing needs among Basotho increased the urge to work in the mines, and during the drought periods this urge was high. With the increasing shortage of land, working in the mines has become a necessity.

The income derived from the raising of crops on a farm of average size in Lesotho, under the prevailing conditions, was inadequate. In order to illustrate this point further, reference is made to a study of poverty in Lesotho conducted by Marres and van der Wiel in 1974. According to this study the monthly costs of maintaining a rural household of five persons at a minimum subsistence standard was R67.02 (Marres and v.d.Wiel 1975 p.89). Since the calculations of farm incomes were also based on the 1974 prices, and since there was not much difference between the five persons per household estimated by Marres and v.d.Wiel and the4.4 persons per household used in

this study, a comparison could be made between the estimated income from crop raising and the poverty datum line (P.D L.) or R67.02 per month in Table 5. .

Table 5 . Net annual income from raising crops on an average farm (2 ha)*, assuming one crop per agricultural year.

Crop	Gross margin from yield Rands	P D L Rands	Deficit Rands
Maize	22.4	804.24	781.84
Sorghum	32.0	804.24	772.24
Wheat	41.4	804.24	762.84
Beans	101.6	804.24	702.64
Peas	90.0	804.24	714.24

* The actual average farm size in the study area was 1.7 ha

Data source: 1. 1970 agricultural census
2. Farm management and production economics report.
3. Marres and v. d. Wiel, p. 89

According to Table 5, there was a very wide gap between the estimated P D L and the estimated income from raising crops at the prevailing level of production. Even double cropping of any combination of the crops in Table 5 could not bring earnings from crop raising anywhere near the P D L. without a change in the rate of production.

Table 5, illustrates very vividly that many rural Basotho could not live on crop raising alone on the average farm under the prevailing rate of production. In fact only one per cent of all farm adults were regarded as deriving adequate income from agriculture (Ward 1974 p.73). It was therefore essential, in many cases, that at least one member of the household found paid employment to augment the meagre income from crop raising.

In many cases it was the household head that had to find the job; the result being a chronic incidence of absentee land holders. Finding a job was more essential among the landless households. McDowall (1973) states that among the migrants to South African mines 49.7 per cent were those who did not have land, 22.2 per cent had one piece of land, 17.6 per cent two pieces of land, and only 10.5 per cent had more than two pieces of land.

It could thus be concluded that the absence of people from their rural holdings resulted from (a) the inadequacy of agriculture to provide full-time employment (b) the inadequate income derived from the raising of crops (c) landlessness and (d) lack of paid employment in or near the rural areas themselves.

Although absenteeism itself did not significantly affect the production of crops, it was regarded by those involved in rural development as an obstruction to the implementation of some projects. Since the people left on the farm could not take certain decisions on land that did not belong to them, many plans of agricultural development were delayed and production techniques were not carried out. The most obvious result of absenteeism was the unbalanced sex ratio found in many rural areas. The de jure sex ratio in the study area was, for instance, about 92 males to 100 females (Fig. 17) as against the de facto ratio of 76 males to 100 females. The consequences of the absence of a number of male heads on the well-being of their families and the communities in which they lived need not be over emphasised. In various publications the churches, government, and individual writers expressed concern about the

migrant labour system, but there was no positive step taken either to halt or to discourage it because migration to the mines resulted from "push" factors over which there was no immediate control.

10. Summary

Although there was marked zonal variation in the distribution of population in Lesotho, it was generally evenly distributed over comparatively small rural areas, such as the study area. This was mainly because of the general principle of equity in the distribution of cultivated land held in Lesotho, which made the number of people at any place proportional to the area of available arable land. As a result of this principle of equity in the distribution of cultivated land there was on the whole no significant change in the spatial pattern of population distribution between 1950 and 1976.

There was general shortage of land in areal terms which was indicated by the high densities on arable land, the presence of rural households without land, and the high incidence of the practice of share-cropping. The shortage on land was caused mainly by a growing population that had few alternative means of livelihood besides the raising of crops. The rate of population growth in Lesotho, as reflected in the censa, appears to have fluctuated between 1891 and about 1956. This was mainly because of the unrestricted movement of people across the borders with South Africa at that time, which seems to have acted as a safety valve during periods of depression in Lesotho. Since about 1956, and associated with the introduction of tighter laws governing the influx and movement of Africans in South Africa, the rate of growth has more or less stabilized at about 2.2 per cent compound. At this rate the population will double in about 32 years time.

The population growth rate in the study area was higher than

the territorial average because of net immigration into it resulting from internal migrations. Rural households migrated from areas of distress characterized by shortage of arable land or lack of access to social services such as schools, health centres, shops and transportation means, to relief areas. While this rural to rural type of migration took place, some people found relief by either migrating to the urban areas in Lesotho or going to seek paid employment in South Africa. On the whole migrations to South Africa indicated a failure of the local resources to meet the needs of the people.

Basotho working in South Africa as migrants were forced to leave their families behind because of the regulations governing their employment contracts. This condition was unacceptable to responsible bodies in Lesotho, and only tolerated by the migrants and their kin, because of its adverse socio-economic effects on the communities from which the migrants came. The fact that the migrant labour system was continued in spite of its ill-effects shows that there was a more pressing need to find employment than to safeguard other interests. Considering the fact that about ten per cent of the population of Lesotho were absent from the territory for the purpose of finding employment, it can be seen that the soil and water resources of the country, managed as they were, were not able to support the prevailing levels of the rural population.