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Abstract

In the 1960s, the concept of development became increasingly intertwined with conceptions of independence amongst Basotho. Politicians and administrators before and after independence wanted to use development to legitimize their rule and consolidate power for a fairly weak central government. Their inability to procure funding for large projects meant that they were forced to rely on smaller, self-help projects. These small-scale projects became the primary way that people in Lesotho interacted with their first independent government, which indelibly shaped how people conceived of independence. These projects became intensely politicized, however, as government leaders relied on them to build political support. Basotho in youth and community organizations both worked with government-run projects and created their own small projects to bring about some of the changes they hoped to see from independence. The coup of 1970 closed down many of the spaces that had opened in the late colonial and early independence periods, leaving the period 1966-1970 as a moment where the prospect of an independent Lesotho bringing about development seemed most possible.

Keywords: Lesotho, Development, Decolonization, Self-Help, Nationalism, Independence
Self-Help Development Projects and Conceptions of Independence in Lesotho, 1950s-1970s*

Chaka Ntsane was a student-leader in the Lesotho Workcamps Association (LWA) at the University of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland in the late 1960s.¹ The group organized projects where high school and university students went to communities across the country for a week to construct a variety of small-scale infrastructure projects that fell loosely into the category of self-help. In 1968, Ntsane and a group of volunteers went to the village of Qomoqomong in the Quthing District to erect a windmill and dig pit latrines. In a second week they went to Morija in the Maseru District where they constructed a school classroom.² Building small-scale infrastructure was important to Ntsane and the other Basotho student participants since the members of the LWA were “always talking about the future of the country, we were talking about development, talking about responsibility...[and we] began to say that we needed to contribute to the situation in our own land.”³ This linkage of infrastructure and development initiatives to independence and responsibility was common among Basotho youth in the late 1960s, as many internalized the connection between political independence and economic development. Voluntary groups like the LWA allowed youth to actively participate in the building of the new state of Lesotho through small self-help projects. Ntsane found the work

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¹ Basotho refers to those who reside in Lesotho. The singular is Mosotho. Lesotho translates as the land of the Basotho and the article will follow this naming convention in referring to the land. The colonial name of the territory was Basutoland, and will only be used when directly referencing the colonial administration.

² “Voluntary Service in Quthing,” Moeletsi oa Basotho (Mazenod), 36, 1686, 10 Aug 1968.

³ Interview Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 24 Feb 2009.
important because he felt that “if we didn’t start when we were young, we would have to do things in our middle age that we should have done in our youth.”

In the years around Lesotho’s 1966 independence, the number and type of self-help projects grew rapidly. Basotho youth and community groups like the LWA, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Student Christian Movement, and Homemakers initiated and participated in a variety of small development projects. These complemented government efforts that also used the official name of “self-help.” In these programs government used donated food aid as “payment” to people from local communities for their labor in constructing new gravel roads, village water supply projects, dams, and tree planting, among others. With no large-scale development projects in operation in Lesotho during the first years of independence (1966-1970), these projects took on outsized political and symbolic importance in relation to the overall amount of change they brought to the country.

That such projects were generally accepted as a marker of independence, and contested in a manner befitting the intensely politicized post-independence period in Lesotho, was a testament to the power that development rhetoric held in independence-era Lesotho. Colonial administrators had worked hard in the post-World War II period to push the idea of development, and Basotho politicians picked up this theme, proceeding to link development with nationalism and independence. Through this confluence Basotho of all political persuasions increasingly came to see political independence without economic development as

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6 The Thaba Bosiu Rural Development Project, an area-based agriculture project jointly funded by the World Bank’s International Development Association (IDA) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), was the first large development project. It started operation in 1973 with over $8 million in external funding.
an incomplete process by the mid-1960s. There was plenty of disagreement, however, on how best to bring about either development or independence. These disagreements revolved around competing visions for what role development should play in shaping the balance of power in newly independent Lesotho. Leaders of the ruling Basotho National Party (BNP), including Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan, wanted to utilize development projects to centralize power and build political legitimacy, while opposition figures like Basotho Congress Party (BCP) leader Ntsu Mokhehle hoped to undermine the BNP government by urging non-participation in projects and denying the government development successes.⁷ At the grassroots, the Basotho population largely split along partisan lines on the question of whether to support or oppose particular projects because of the heavy politicization. Still, many found ways in the early years of independence to participate in government-run projects or to be a part of projects they ran on their own initiative that were designed to bring about the economic changes and physical infrastructure that these individuals wanted to see from independence.

Development and self-help, thus, were at the center of debates over what independence could and should look like in Lesotho. Despite its political importance, there was a paucity of development funding in Lesotho from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, so self-help and other grassroots programs with similar goals and practices were the primary ways through which individuals and the government enacted development. Ultimately, after 1970 the Lesotho government started to garner more funding from abroad, which tilted the balance of power toward development as a force for centralization, but the late colonial period and the

first years of independence opened space for Basotho in youth and community organizations to formulate and work for visions of independence through development efforts that brought about small-scale change to communities across the country.

Small-Scale Development Projects and Nationalist Reimagining of Independence

The literature on the history of development in Africa has rapidly burgeoned since pioneering works appeared examining how the idea of development was contested and has changed over time.\textsuperscript{8} Many of the seminal works have focused on large-scale, high modernist development efforts by the state to remake and reshape societies at the macro-scale.\textsuperscript{9} Much of this literature has also focused on whether development projects have succeeded at fulfilling their own stated aims, or on how state projects have impacted local communities.\textsuperscript{10} With the lens trained on the state, development agencies, and bureaucratic processes, however, these studies often glossed over how local communities and individuals experienced and understood the changes inherent in development. This was rectified, to some extent, in literature on South


African Betterment Schemes because of how they intertwined with protests against the apartheid regime.\textsuperscript{11}

More recent work examining the impact of the TARZARA railway in Tanzania and Zambia, and the building of the Cahora Bassa Dam in Mozambique have started to examine the intersection of top-down stories of state interventions and geopolitics with bottom-up perspectives to better reconstruct how local populations understood and helped shape such projects.\textsuperscript{12} Similarly, work on Tanzania has reframed discussions of development around how rural communities helped shape \textit{Ujamaa}, looking at how the local and global intersected in the lives of individuals and communities.\textsuperscript{13} This reconceptualization of development as a process that needs to be examined on the local level in as much detail as previous studies did with state planning is doing important work in foregrounding the experiences and understandings of rural Africans with the state. Most people in Lesotho and around the continent, however, did not interact with capital-intensive, highly centralized projects. Their experiences with development, particularly in the late colonial and early independence-eras, were with smaller, grassroots development efforts like self-help.

For Lesotho specifically, development literature has mainly focused on the massive Lesotho Highlands Water Project, and on soil erosion control programs and integrated area-
based agricultural projects.\textsuperscript{14} This article moves away from these major projects to examine how Basotho in rural communities interacted with, helped design and carry out, and internalized the messaging of development on a much smaller scale.\textsuperscript{15} Epprecht’s work on Basotho women’s groups operating in rural areas during the colonial period suggests that small-scale development projects and self-help efforts were accessible to and desired by individuals in rural communities.\textsuperscript{16} Ferguson’s work, on the other hand, notes that from the mid-1970s development in Lesotho was increasingly dominated by big-money projects that not only gave local people little input into how projects were run, but effectively removed the ability of local political processes to change these projects in any significant way.\textsuperscript{17} This article not only fills a chronological gap between where Epprecht leaves off in the early 1960s and when Ferguson picks up the story of development in the mid-1970s, but does so by utilizing the strengths of both works in taking a bottom-up approach to perceptions of independence and examining how self-help projects within development became integral to nationalist reimagining in Lesotho.

Seeing volunteer labor and projects run by youth and community organizations as being performative of individual and group nationalisms is key to recovering a deeper understanding


\textsuperscript{16} Marc Epprecht, ‘This Matter of Women is Getting Very Bad’: Gender, Development and Politics in Colonial Lesotho (Pietermaritzburg, 2000).

\textsuperscript{17} Ferguson, Anti-Politics Machine.
of popular conceptions of development and nationalism in the independence era. Kelly Askew analyzed similar practices to unearth popular nationalisms amongst Tanzanian dance groups, whose performances were part of independence-era reimagining of the state, as well as places for local people to claim some say in independence as “power...require[d] performance.”18 Similarly, Marissa Moorman found residents of Luanda’s musseques using the consumption and performance of music as a way to understand and work for particular visions of a national community and Straker found young Guineans in community theater groups “eager to pursue personal and collective improvement either in collaboration with, or in opposition to, national and transnational political and commercial projects.”19

The practice of self-help fell firmly within a number of already existent traditions of public efforts that played dual symbolic and practical roles within Basotho society. Within Lesotho there was a long tradition of the public performance and critique of power through governmental institutions like the pitso (public meeting), as well as more-grassroots practices like lithoko (praise poems) and lifela (spoken-word poetry of migrants). The pitso, in its most idealized formulation was a great Basotho democratic institution where any male could air opinions and grievances “with the greatest freedom and plainness of speech,” and the chief must “bear the most cutting remarks without a frown.”20 Wallman, however, suggests that by the 1960s the pitso was more a “social, rhetorical and political exercise” where the

performance of power was more important than the democratic spaces it supposedly opened.\textsuperscript{21}

Chiefs and colonial officials often called \textit{pitsos} as a way of having a public meeting where they could disseminate information to the population in a top-down format. Conversation and consultation were undertaken in a token way, if at all. \textit{Lithoko}, commonly constructed in honor of chiefs and, in the twentieth century, politicians, consisted of public recitations of the bravery, valor, and other noble qualities of rulers.\textsuperscript{22} In broader society, praise poems and \textit{lifela} were well known, and provided opportunities for people to perform and place themselves within the context of “southern African forces, structures, processes, and events” including independence.\textsuperscript{23} The public performance of politics and power was, thus, well known and an established part of Basotho society.

\textbf{Historical Small-Scale and Self-Help Development Efforts in Colonial Lesotho}

For Lesotho, the 1930s saw the first widespread use of the term development and the first projects implemented under its aegis. The Great Depression brought about a crash in commodity prices, which threw Lesotho’s already precarious rural economy into full-blown crisis. This was magnified by a particularly harsh drought in 1932-33 that killed as much as fifty percent of the territory’s livestock.\textsuperscript{24} In response the colonial government hastily convened a panel of experts to analyze the territory’s economy. This group, led by Sir Alan Pim, proposed a series of deep political and economic reforms designed, in theory, to assist rural farmers and


\textsuperscript{22} Z.D. Mangoela, \textit{Lithoko ts'a Marena a Basotho} (Morija, Lesotho, 1975); Mosebi Damane and Peter Sanders, \textit{Lithoko: Sotho Praise Poems} (Oxford, 1974).


\textsuperscript{24} Showers, \textit{Imperial Gullies}, 36.
increase their income. In reality the efforts aimed primarily to break the power of the chieftaincy and to initiate countrywide anti-erosion efforts that would solidify colonial control over rural areas.

The package of “development” that Pim put forward would become the framework for all subsequent development efforts through the 1970s. It included terracing farmland to combat erosion, constructing and upgrading roads and bridle paths, expanding the health care system, building big reservoir dams in the mountains, improving breeding stock, setting up wool cooperatives, and increasing the number of agricultural demonstrators.  

Embedded in the recommendations was the high modernist assumption that Lesotho’s economic problems could be overcome simply and quickly by educating farmers on how to “properly” farm their own land. Pim called rural Basotho farmers an “ignorant and casual population” that had “no knowledge” of “modern” agricultural practices or how to combat erosion. As with the specific recommendations, the worldview embedded in the report would have an afterlife in development planning and implementation into the 1960s and 1970s. A UNDP consultant wrote in 1966 that rural Basotho had a “pathetic contentment” that impeded participation in development projects. These types of mistaken assumptions misread Basotho grievances with specific projects as an overall aversion to the idea of development.

Rural efforts to control land use generated the most pushback from Basotho farmers. The anti-erosion efforts set up after the Pim Report in the 1930s and 1940s generated a lot of

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26 Pim Report, 137.
animosity because implementation was autocratic and did not allow for any local feedback into how the project operated. Basotho generally distrusted colonially-run programs because they did not trust the government to make decisions in their best interests, especially ones like the soil erosion programs that seemed like thinly-veiled efforts to allow for greater South African control in the territory. Suspicions of government motivations were further fostered by concurrent efforts to curb the power of the chieftaincy, as Basotho correctly suspected that interventions in rural areas were designed as a cloaked colonial power grab. Finally, rural resistance to the project also came from the fact that some of the anti-erosion works did not work as planned, and in places made the problem of soil loss worse.

The 1930s also saw the first explicit efforts at development sponsored by organizations other than the government. The Catholic Church was the primary driver of these efforts as a way of helping their members survive the Great Depression. The Church had previously invested heavily in educational efforts throughout rural Lesotho, but under the leadership of *Quebecois* Canadian priests, they also organized parishioners in volunteer efforts to construct roads and irrigation dams in their communities, to teach sewing and handicrafts, and to set up cooperatives for wool marketing and the purchasing of household goods. In a deeply impoverished countryside, Catholic missions stood out as “hives of construction and relative, visible prosperity.” The range of programs attempted presaged the community development efforts of the 1950s and the self-help programs and cooperatives of the independence era.

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30 Showers, *Imperial Gullies*, 175.
They proved popular with rural Catholics because they provided tangible, material benefits to participants, but also because Catholic lay groups had extensive control over how projects operated. Basotho women constituted the majority of project participants because so many men were away as migrant laborers in South Africa. In many of the rural areas, the small-scale development efforts of the Catholic Church laid the groundwork for the widespread acceptance of the idea of development as being synonymous with independence. These programs “brought direct material benefit to the predominantly female rural population” and “generated new opportunities for women to assert meaningful autonomy from traditional and colonial structures which sought to inhibit them.”

Colonial administrators noted the strong support from Catholic women and other rural Basotho for development, but they were still dismissive of these populations because of how they wanted development to play a key role in centralizing colonial authority. In a 1959 conference of the district commissioners (DC) that focused on development, an unnamed DC noted that conflicts over development were not about whether Basotho supported the idea, but about whether they were willing to go along uncritically with government development efforts: “Basuto (sic) have shown an ability to develop in certain spheres of activity but not necessarily in those spheres in which Government thought it should develop.” The DCs decided, however, to ignore their own insights into rural Basotho interest in development in

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34 Epprecht, *Matter of Women*, 188.
35 Report from the District Commissioner Conference, 1959, DO 35/7384 Community Development in the HCT 1957-60, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (hereafter TNA).
favor of centralization. They wanted “government to be clear on what sort of community should develop,” and thus dictate the types of projects that would be supported.\textsuperscript{36}

Dismissive statements about rural Basotho attitudes toward development did not end with decolonization, however, as Basotho politicians also hoped to use development to centralize political authority in the Maseru administration. What changed was that these attacks targeted specific groups of Basotho as development became intensely politicized during the independence era. BCP leader Ntsu Mokhehle, for instance, ridiculed the effective small-scale development work of women-run organizations like the Homemakers Association and Catholic lay associations as the actions of a “gaggle of geese being herded.”\textsuperscript{37} Mokhehle expressed this sentiment in the context of attempting to argue against the franchise for women in the pre-independence elections of 1965, fearing that the women would vote overwhelmingly for the BNP, which was aligned with the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{38} Similarly, BNP Prime Minister Jonathan gave a bombastic speech in Parliament in March 1968 where he accused opposition supporters of non-participation and worse in the development efforts of the government: “This is not party-politics...this is a situation of war...if anyone deliberately ruins our soil or stands by unconcerned when he sees the deliberate destruction of the land, I have only one word for him...traitor.”\textsuperscript{39} These rhetorical assertions of Basotho gullibility and intransigence in the face of development tell much more about how politicians viewed development as a possible force for

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\textsuperscript{36} Report from the District Commissioner Conference, 1959, DO 35/7384 Community Development in the HCT 1957-60, TNA.
\textsuperscript{38} Epprecht, “Politics of Gender,” 49-51.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Speech by the Honourable Prime Minister of Lesotho Moving the 1968/69 Development Fund Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure in the House of Assembly on Wednesday, 20\textsuperscript{th}, March, 1968} (Maseru, 1970) 11.
\end{footnotes}
centralizing authority and gaining partisan advantage than they do about how ordinary Basotho viewed and reacted to development projects.

As for how many rural Basotho viewed development efforts, the case of James J. Machobane is illuminative. He pioneered an intercropping system for agriculture that helped Basotho farmers hedge their risk against bad weather, drought, and low crop prices. Machobane’s system attempted to solve problems of food insecurity, soil erosion, and a lack of employment opportunities by intercropping plants that provided a diverse mix of carbohydrates and proteins, and mixed subsistence crops with those that could be sold, while never leaving soil unplanted and exposed to erosion-causing rains. By making legumes a central component, the project provided a protein-rich food that also acted as a nitrogen-fixer to keep overtaxed soils healthy and productive.\(^{40}\) The goal of the program, in Machobane’s words, was to make the system simple in order that it be “so self-regulating that the general necessities of life remain in the development and intelligent control of the masses.”\(^{41}\) This system proved popular, as did Machobane’s agricultural demonstration school that he set up in his home village of Nqechane, which he called “\textit{Mants’a Tlala}” (stamp out hunger). According to Robertson, the college, which started in 1957 with twelve students learning from Machobane himself, had two hundred instructors and a waiting list of fifteen thousand by 1960.\(^{42}\)

The success of Machobane’s scheme caused both the colonial regime and the independent Lesotho government to worry that he was building an independent power base

\(^{42}\) A.F. Robertson, “Popular Scientist: James Jacob Machobane and ‘Mantsa Tlala,’” \textit{African Affairs} 93, 370 (1994), 108.
through development. What had been curiosity from colonial agricultural officials who briefly supported his experiments in the mid-1950s, turned into increasing hostility toward the scheme and the college by the 1960s. The harassment worsened under the independent regime, which was even more threatened by independent power bases in the rural areas as it worked to consolidate governmental control. The government in 1965 closed the college, and Machobane fled his rural homestead in 1966. He spent a decade living in semi-hiding in Maseru because he feared for his personal safety.43 Perhaps the ultimate indignity of the demise of Machobane’s teaching system was when Prime Minister Jonathan co-opted the name of Machobane’s College, Mants’a Tlala, as the name of the portion of the official government self-help program that subsidized seeds and fertilizer inputs for grain mono-cropping. This co-optation of the name signaled that top BNP officials understood how this popular program captured the rural imagination, a success they hoped to emulate with the self-help program. Put another way by his biographer, “the agents of modernizing states are anxious to monopolize development transactions” because they need to be able to control programs run with donor money, but also because they can gain political legitimacy through project patronage in the form of direct employment and agricultural inputs.44

Contestations over development highlighted the importance the colonial and independent Lesotho governments placed in the idea as a way to legitimize their own rule. While colonial authorities desired large projects that could promise mass employment, it was clear by the late 1950s that no such projects were immanent in Lesotho. Still, there was a

44 Robertson, “Popular Scientist,” 115.
mandate from London to increase the pace and scope of development efforts so the administration moved to implement community development schemes. This was partly a decision taken expediently since there was no alternative, but it was also part of the political experimentation then taking place in Lesotho as the territory moved toward self-rule. The first constitution went into effect in 1959 and created directly elected district councils. It vested these councils with the power to run the same package of local development initiatives the Pim Report recommended in the 1930s: road and bridle paths, irrigation dams, and other similar small projects. Colonial officials, however, never fully acceded to the idea of Basotho running their own affairs, especially in the realm of development. This hindered the ability of the councils to effectively operate such programs.

A cooperative tractor-plowing venture started by the Mafeteng District Council in 1961, called FARMECH, illustrates the resistance from the colonial government, as well as the issues that the politicization of development posed for development projects. The scheme should have received ready support from the central government because its goal of increasing farm revenues and improving agriculture aligned with government development priorities, but it instead met with resistance. The Department of Agriculture warned the District Council that such work “should not be undertaken by a local government council” because it was the “prerogative” of the Department. The Council, however, noted that the new constitution

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made them “the first real instrument of African local government” and they wanted to move forward with the project.47

This political infighting between the local council and the Department of Agriculture was not the only political conflict over FARMECH. Within the project area, people described the project “as a Congress [Party] scheme and its tractors said to belong to Congress.”48 This caused the scheme to struggle financially because it could not convince BNP supporters to participate in the scheme, so the project failed to meets its revenue projections for the tractor-hire service. BNP supporters worried that their participation would be read as support for the BCP-dominated council. Still, despite the political pressure from within government bureaucracy and resistance from segments of the population living within the project area, FARMECH managed to limp into the mid-1960s, despite rapidly losing money.

Acting on the recommendation of the Mafeteng district commissioner, the central government agreed in 1964 to extend more loans to the scheme, primarily because “there is no doubt that the scheme itself is of tremendous agricultural value to the district.”49 This was not a decision made without controversy, however, as the Permanent Secretary for Local Government decried the scheme for “being run like a welfare scheme” where the charges for tractor use did not “make the scheme viable.” He argued that if the government were to support FARMECH with more cash, the program would have to be reformed to “run strictly on

47 Wallman, Take Out Hunger, 119.
48 Wallman, Take Out Hunger, 132.
49 Letter Permanent Secretary for Local Government to Government Secretary Maseru, 5 May 1964, FCO 141-795 Mafeteng District Council Tractor Scheme, TNA.
business lines.  The politicized conflict around development projects like FARMECH served to harden the desire of colonial administrators and Basotho politicians at independence to centralize control of development so they would not face as many messy administrative battles around project financing. If politicians in Maseru had to pay for projects, they wanted to be in control of the schemes from the start, which led to BNP efforts to strip the District Councils of their authority over development projects, a plan that came to fruition in 1968 when they abolished the councils altogether.  

**Self-Help in the Independence Period**

By the mid-1960s, development projects were firmly established as a key part of the political process, and many Basotho saw them as a co-requisite for bringing about independence for Lesotho. The Lesotho government, however, was unable to procure significant amounts of foreign assistance for development, outside of food aid from the World Food Programme (WFP) in the mid to late 1960s. So they were forced to rely on small projects like self-help to achieve development objectives. These financial constraints meant that official government self-help projects usually required local communities to contribute with volunteer labor and sometimes a financial contribution in order to bring projects to fruition. Community and youth organizations also undertook projects that could be classified as self-help, sometimes in conjunction with the government, while at other times running such projects independently.

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50 Letter Permanent Secretary for Local Government to Government Secretary Maseru, 5 May 1964, FCO 141-795 Mafeteng District Council Tractor Scheme, TNA.
Thus, self-help became an established part of the national political fabric and a key component of politics and national imagining by the late 1960s.

The BNP government, which led Lesotho to formal independence in October 1966, used self-help projects in an attempt to bolster their electoral support. They had only won the 1965 pre-independence elections with about forty percent of the vote in a three-way race. Their electoral promises of development were dependent on self-help projects because of the lack of foreign funding for bigger projects. Setho Letsie, the Minister of Works, Posts and Telegraphs and Communications, announced the start of government-run self-help in March 1966 during a speech where he argued that the program would help “transform” food aid into a “capital asset” to allow for infrastructure creation and improved agricultural productivity on the cheap. Minister Letsie, however, implied that many Basotho were not ready and willing to engage with government development programs, as he argued that the model of self-help was necessary to ensure that people “feel that the projects are theirs and not the government’s. In this way they will be ready to maintain works initiated by themselves” as a way of helping bring about a “full independence and growth to nationhood.” It is instructive that Minister Letsie linked the development initiatives with “full independence,” since, as will be seen shortly, this was a connection that most Basotho working through youth and community organizations had already internalized. It suggests that BNP officials knew they had to work hard to frame the narrative about development initiatives in such a way that political credit could accrue to the government, even if the projects had little to no connection with government programs.

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The self-help programs started in 1966 consisted of two separate but related schemes to bring food, water, and agricultural assistance to villages and villagers. One was the food-for-work scheme that redistributed food aid given by the United States’ government and the WFP to Basotho who worked fifteen days a month on road and school-building projects. This was the program Minister Letsie referred to when he talked about transforming food aid into a capital asset. It allowed the government to more cheaply construct rural infrastructure. The program utilized Catholic Relief Services to coordinate and distribute $3.4 million worth of food aid from 1965-1968, and it continued on a similar scale into the 1970s.\textsuperscript{55} The second part of self-help was assistance to farmers for purchasing hybrid seeds and fertilizers, subsidizing tractor plowing of fields, and constructing village water supply projects.

These projects bolstered the services available in villages, and they relied on funding that came from sources like the United States Embassy’s special self-help fund, small local contributions, and the government of Lesotho, whose contribution often consisting of transporting materials to the project site. In village water projects constructed in 1968, for instance, local communities put in thousands of volunteer labor hours on each project and contributed funds that averaged around ten cents per person in the community, while contributions from the American embassy and the Lesotho government averaged around $300 each per project.\textsuperscript{56} These projects were, in developmental terms, tiny, but they brought a safe,
regular water supply to villages through a communal tap where previously residents had to carry water by hand.

The politicization of development projects was overt and increasing in the late 1960s. Having the Basotho population see the government as a provider of significant aid from abroad was central to this strategy. Late arriving rains in 1966 caused the BNP government to request a supplemental supply of food from the WFP to stave off a potential famine. The food would have gone into self-help programs, but then the rains arrived just in time to allow for planting. Despite this, government ministers refused to reduce their requests. A British official noted that Lesotho ministers were “embarrassed” by the promises they made about “outside aid and are reluctant to reduce demands on account of the improved situation.”

British administrators also noted the nakedly political aims of the government’s development programs in February 1967 when the BNP government asked Britain to frontload the aid for development that it promised at independence. In the British analysis, this request came about because the BNP “government must show as early as possible (and definitely before the next election in 1970) that they are bringing some advantageous results to the people of Lesotho following independence.” The general poverty in Lesotho and a very tight budget meant that even development—a top priority—lacked much funding from domestic sources. For instance, the Lesotho government in February 1967 spent R15,000, or less than R2000 per district, on self-help agricultural programs.

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57 British Government Representative, Maseru, to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 8 March 1966, FCO 141-976 Famine Relief, TNA.
58 Conversation between Prime Minister Jonathan and British High Commissioner, Maseru, 9 Feb 1967, FCO 141-169 Post Independence Aid to Lesotho, TNA
The BNP government was never under the illusion that the limited self-help programs would bring widespread development, but that did not stop them from making lofty claims in an effort to make the case for increased centralization of government powers. To do this, in 1968 Prime Minister Jonathan called for Basotho to redouble their efforts at self-help and “self-reliance” so that Basotho could realize “greater independence in [the] running [of] our state affairs.”

This lofty rhetoric was mainly for public consumption as behind the scenes Jonathan’s advisors showed that the government’s view of self-help did not include a decentralized vision where Basotho would have significant inputs into how projects were selected or run. Jonathan’s economic advisors, South African professors D.V. Cowen and Owen Horwood, wrote in 1967 that self-help “should not be haphazard...[it] should be coordinated into a proper plan, District by District” so that the “electorate can see something actually happening on the development front and be given faith in their own country and its Government.”

This memo neatly encapsulates the dual purposes development, and in particular, self-help, was supposed to play for the BNP government. It would be the primary vehicle through which the population saw the BNP government working on their behalf for independence, and the funding for the projects coming from abroad would force the BNP government to serve as the centralized repository for funds, thereby increasing its power at the expense of local bodies.

The campaign for the January 1970 elections confirmed the central role that self-help and development in general played in the BNP’s attempt to legitimize and popularize their rule. BNP leaders explicitly linked the provisions of development projects to constituencies that

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60 Speech by the Honourable Prime Minister of Lesotho Moving the 1968/69 Development Fund Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure in the House of Assembly on Wednesday, 20th, March 1968 (Maseru, 1968), 3.
supported the government in the campaign. At an early December 1969 stop in the Berea village of Sebitia, Jonathan “pointed at several completed village water schemes at Peete’s and Ntoso’s and mentioned those under construction at Mokabo’s and Nkutu’s” and noted that the government would “bring further development to the constituencies which would vote it back into power” at the elections.\(^6^2\) Notable here is that the projects Jonathan mentioned were exclusively self-help projects that required community inputs of labor and money, so he was not even pointing to projects that improved access to jobs, but rather just ones where government had partnered with local communities. Additionally, the number of cabinet ministers appearing at the inauguration of self-help projects increased markedly as elections drew near, and the amount upon which this was reported by the pro-government newspaper Lesotho News, increased in tandem.\(^6^3\) This all suggests that the BNP government understood only too well that its electoral fortunes were dependent on whether Basotho saw self-help development projects as successful at fulfilling enough of their ambitions for independence.

Therefore, it was not surprising that the opposition focused on undercutting the rhetoric of success around development that the BNP government promulgated, and undermining projects that were underway in the early independence period. In Parliament, opposition BCP leaders accused the government of running thinly disguised patronage efforts and coercing people to participate in self-help programs by dint of threats and compulsion, all under the rhetoric of nation-building and national unity. In April 1967 Shakhane Mokhehle

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mocked government plans to attract industry to Lesotho, asking if the industrial jobs would pay people similarly to self-help programs on an “in-kind basis.” Similar public attacks on BNP development efforts would continue up to 1970, and were an integral part of BCP efforts to undermine the legitimacy of the BNP government. In addition to speeches in Parliament, the BCP also encouraged passive non-participation in some government development efforts and active resistance to others. In 1968, for instance, opposition supporters tore down trees planted as part of National Tree Planting Day as a way of signaling the illegitimacy of the government and because they claimed tree distribution was politicized.

The BCP also politicized the food-for-work scheme that was part of self-help by encouraging local communities not to participate since they were not receiving wages in cash. In February 1967 opposition Member of Parliament Charles Mofeli railed against what he called discrimination by the BNP government against communities in his constituency. He claimed the government had “neglected” them since they had built miles of self-help roads, but had never been made part of the national self-help program despite “national funds being used for various public interests in villages” the country over. In response, a government MP accused Mofeli and the villagers of making a political statement by going it alone on road construction, and then expecting government to fund work retroactively. He claimed they had started building before receiving permission to join the self-help programs, and he blamed “certain persons who discourage villagers from undertaking road construction under the self-help

66 Interview Michael Mateka, Sacred Heart High School, 26 Nov 2008.
campaign,” implying that the BCP was advocating for policies designed to consign development projects to failure.68 In this sort of environment it was hard for many Basotho to keep the idea of independence-through-development alive, as political connections often determined who could participate in or benefit from development projects.

Outside of the direct glare of politics there were sometimes opportunities for Basotho at the grassroots to shape projects in ways that more directly reflected how they wanted the benefits of development to accrue more broadly. Village cooperative industries (kopanos) were designed to help communities start income-generating activities in rural areas, and they often had roots in prior Catholic and colonial government projects. Cooperative industries, like the one in the village of Ha Paki at Mazenod, about fifteen kilometers outside of Maseru, typically set up weaving ventures or other small-scale craft production, aimed at attracting the burgeoning tourist market. While these type of efforts often became enmeshed with the intense politicization that characterized Mofeli’s road-building schemes, this end was not guaranteed, as the relative success of the kopano at Ha Paki showed. The organization there ran weaving and spinning operations, with many of the local villagers supplying wool for the project and working as spinners and carders. Arriving in late 1967, Peace Corps Volunteer Ted Hochstadt reported that the kopano operated on non-partisan lines with BCP and BNP party members working well together. This was surprising because Ha Paki was certainly no rural idyll immune to the politicization of development, as Hochstadt also remembered the destruction of trees there, planted as part of the contested National Tree Planting Day of 1968.69

68 MP Api quoted, Hansard, 3rd February 1967.
69 Interview Ted Hochstadt, email, July 2012.
The *kopano*, for a time at least, ended up with a different result because there was a sincere dedication from those in key positions of the organization to maintaining structures that operated in a relatively non-partisan manner. Hochstadt, who served as the primary financial manager for the project from 1967-69 and as an advisor in the weaving shop, thought the *kopano* succeeded for multiple reasons. “The local headman was the president,” and he was a BNP supporter, while the weaving managers were BCP members who had “good relations with BCP supporters in Maseru.” They were, however, committed to hiring “spinners and weavers without regard to their political affiliation.”70 This cooperation in management across political lines ensured that the *kopano* surmounted the politicization evident in other projects across the country. It also ensured that the wealth the organization created was spread widely across the network of lowland villages that helped supply the material and labor for the weaving operation. This commitment to widespread prosperity and the willingness of local communities to participate on a broad scale suggests that particular projects could overcome the politicization to run successfully, both from an economic standpoint as well as in the eyes of locals. The period between independence in 1966 and the BNP coup of 1970 marked an important time in which political contestation dominated development projects, but the small-scale nature of most of the projects in operation and the inability of the BNP government to centralize authority opened up spaces, like the one in Ha Paki, for Basotho to bring forth visions of development in their own communities that differed from that of the government.

Conceptions of Self-Help in Youth and Community Groups, late 1950s-1970s

70 All quotations in this paragraph from interview Ted Hochstadt, email, July 2012.
Despite the broadly politicized nature of development efforts in late colonial and early independence era Lesotho, a broad cross-section of Basotho eagerly participated in small-scale development projects in the hopes of realizing some of their visions for independence. Many of the groups in which Basotho worked for their own visions of development and independence were based in schools. The education system in Lesotho had been long popular, with its roots in missionary competition for adherents from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Lesotho had one of the highest literacy rates in colonial Africa, with at least sixty percent of the population having basic literacy in Sesotho and/or English by 1950. The three main Christian missions built and operated most schools in the territory, receiving a government subsidy to help pay teacher salaries. In the 1950s, as part of the global imperative to “develop” the territories of the empire to justify keeping them, Britain funded a rapid expansion of secondary schooling in the territory. Using funds from the Colonial Development and Welfare fund, the expansion increased the number of Basotho students in secondary schools from just over 800 in 1951 to almost 12,000 by 1972.

These new and expanded schools did not just increase the number of seats available, but also increased the number and variety of youth organizations. The colonial government encouraged youth groups with small subsidies that helped increase the number of chapters of the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Student Christian Movement, and Junior Red Cross, among others. They also funded community-based organizations like the Young Farmers and the Homemakers

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72 For more on late colonial development initiatives across the continent, see Joseph Hodge, Gerald Hödl & Martina Kopf, editors, Developing Africa: Concepts and Practices in Twentieth-Century Colonialism (Manchester, 2014).
Association, in the hope of encouraging development-oriented thinking amongst Basotho who were not currently in school. Membership in all these types of groups increased precipitously. The Scouts and Guides, the biggest groups in the territory, mustered about 2500 members combined in 1951, but by 1967 the first National Youth Day rally handily drew 10,000 young Basotho from all groups to Maseru.74

With such a rapid expansion in the number of groups and participants, adult leadership was often stretched thin in the 1960s. This allowed young Basotho to take on leadership roles within groups. Gabriel Tlaba recalled that his high school Scout troop was “self-supporting” financially, as the members raised funds for their trips and projects.75 This self-sufficiency led those like Tlaba who ended up in leadership positions within the troop to gain experience making decisions and figuring out how to carry them through. Tlaba noted that the groups were excellent places to meet a wide range of people because the twice-yearly scout camps meant he had “contact with all the schools in Lesotho.”76 While they did the outdoor activities and merit badge projects common to Boy Scouts across the globe, Tlaba also remembered the Scouts as a place where he could have discussions about independence: “That [independence] was talked about openly…at the Boy Scouts we were not members of a particular party. We challenged them all. We talked about them all.” The fact that the Scouts had a diffuse leadership structure that gave a lot of power to older boys in leadership positions made this an organization that allowed some young Basotho to have free and open discussions about politics in the run up to and immediately following independence. This was, of course, no utopian

74 “Youth Rally a Success,” Lesotho Times (Ladybrand) 21 Apr 1967.
76 All quotations in this paragraph from interview Gabriel Tlaba, Lesotho College of Education, 28 Oct 2008.
environment, as Tlaba himself tacitly admitted when he said that all the parties “rushed to get as much as they can get a share out of us,” and he also noted that many of the elite security forces in the first BNP government came from the ranks of Catholic Boy Scout troops. However, the point made by Tlaba who was a Scout until he finished high school in 1966, about the group being a site where young Basotho could talk about and experiment with ideas of community and independence remained salient.

For many young Basotho, their vision for independence revolved around the idea of being able to find decent employment in Lesotho without having to resort to migrant labor that would expose them to the full horrors of the apartheid system. No doubt the allures of South African employment remained for many young Basotho, as South African cities offered significant cultural and social opportunities not available even in the capital, Maseru. Tlaba, training to be a priest, did not have to worry about finding a job, but he remembered most of his peers from school were “looking for better [opportunities].” His peers who stayed in school had to find a job in the civil service, as that was the only avenue available for employment in Lesotho since “there was no industry at this time.” It was not just Tlaba who reported this either. Mohlalefi Moteane also graduated in 1966, but from the Protestant Peka High School. He expressed his own dream, and the dreams of his peers, for independence as having more access to training opportunities abroad so that they could be “doctors and engineers” who would “come back [to Lesotho] and run their own affairs.” This vision of independence

79 Interview Mohlalefi Moteane, Maseru, 27 May 2009.
incorporated individual economic opportunity, but it was also rooted in the language of nation and community with participation in governance as a key component.

Most young Basotho were not going abroad for training like Moteane eventually did, but they were staying and working within their own communities on a variety of projects. Young Basotho, in some cases, explicitly disavowed any connection to politics or independence, but they were still working to bring about changes in communities congruent with the broad vision of independence-through-development. Armelina Tsiki was a Girl Guide at St. Rodrigue Secondary School where she was working toward becoming a Catholic nun. The Girl Guides were quite active in the community. The old people liked them “very much...because sometimes you would go visit them, get some water for them or do the cleaning, smear the houses...even sewing, we would do the sewing if they had some clothes that needed repair.” She went on to recount how they knitted winter hats for community members and even helped at times “hoeing in the fields.” Unlike Tlaba and the Boy Scouts, these Girl Guides did not explicitly discuss politics. In part this was likely due to gendered expectations around politics and political involvement, but it was more than just that. Tsiki remembered feeling “a very negative attitude toward the parties” because of the harsh rhetoric she heard about in the newspapers and from word-of-mouth, and this caused her to not like “this issue of politics and independence.” The disavowal of political interest, however, did not stop Tsiki and the St. Rodrigue Girl Guides from actions that were, by their very nature, religious and political at the same time.

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80 All quotations in this paragraph from interview Armelina Tsiki, St. Rodrigue High School, 7 May 2009.
The Girl Guides were working to alleviate the most pressing material and social needs of local residents, and they were helping to build physically and metaphorically more sustainable, comfortable, and livable communities. This larger purpose was clear when Tsiki noted that two of the biggest draws of the Guides for her were the opportunities to learn and practice “leadership skills,” and to work with “girls who had responsibility and at the same time who were always the first to give the helping hand whenever there was need.” As an aspiring nun and someone who would work her way up to eventually be the principal at St. Rodrigue High School for over a decade, Tsiki was laying the groundwork for the kind of life she wanted to live in independent Lesotho. Even before she attended secondary school, she “had that desire of joining” the sisterhood to serve others through religious devotion and dedication. The urge to disavow any political motivation for her work reflected not a lack of desire to engage with ideas of independence, but rather a rejection of the idea that political parties represented the only vehicle through which people could bring about changes in their local communities. The development projects the Guides undertook were micro in scale, but they were still representative of how these young Catholic Basotho wanted the new Lesotho to operate.

There were other groups that disavowed partisan politics in Lesotho, but where Basotho youth were also engaging with political ideas and the idea of independence. The University Christian Movement (UCM) and Student Christian Movement (SCM) were inter-denominational school-based discussion groups that brought together youth to discuss contemporary religious, social, political, and economic issues. Simply coming together across denominational lines was, in itself, a political act in independence-era Lesotho where the Catholic Church

81 All quotations in this paragraph from interview Armelina Tsiki, St. Rodrigue High School, 7 May 2009.
was the strongest institutional ally of the ruling BNP, and adherents of the main Protestant denominations tended to support the opposition. The Lesotho chapter of the UCM was based at the university at Roma, but most chapters of the UCM were based in South Africa. The Black Consciousness Movement, in part, grew out of South African chapters and continued to have a close relationship with the UCM. The group was highly decentralized, but the Lesotho UCM frequently met in South Africa and Lesotho with counterpart chapters from South African universities.

Even for SCM chapters, whose members did not leave Lesotho as frequently, the combination of faith and dialogue on political issues helped clarify for young Basotho how to blend their religious, social, and political interests. At an Easter retreat in 1964, seventy SCM members met in Morija to discuss how “independence and politics” could intersect with their desire for a “deeper understanding of their Christian faith.” The expatriate missionary author of the report damned with faint praise the members of the SCM, as she did not conceal her disappointment that they blended a political and religious emphasis instead of being solely focused on the spiritual: “There was, amongst some of the students at least, a very real desire to have a deeper understanding of their Christian faith.” By drawing a sharp contrast between religion and politics, the missionary showed that she did not understand how young Basotho understood these concepts. Just as the actions of Tsiki and the Girl Guides were fundamentally political and religious at the same time, UCM member Gabriel Tlaba noted that there was

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82 Weisfelder, Political Contention, 65-7.
certainly no dichotomy between religion and politics in the minds of participants. The concepts were so intertwined as to be inseparable, and the ability to freely express and combine their interests in religion, political action, and economics was, in fact, what drew most Basotho to these groups. According to Tlaba, the ability of the groups to foster a sense among participants about how to “live our Christian lives amongst the political situation and struggles that we were in at the time” was their strength.86

School-based groups were not the only place for small-scale projects, the building and strengthening of community, and discussions about self-help and independence. The Homemakers Association offered an important space for these types of activities for rural Basotho women. The organization in Lesotho dated back to the mid-1930s, and leader Bernice Mohapeloa noted that its goals were to help members “improve the homes” and “keep alive indigenous crafts such as pottery, grass work and wall decorations,” but it was primarily a Christian improvement club that focused on raising the “social standard of the community as a whole by keeping alive the interest of club members in movements of progressive development.”87 According to Mohapeloa by the early 1950s there were over 160 chapters active across the territory. While the organization had its roots in the churches, especially the Protestant missions, by the 1960s many chapters were acting independently of churches and also participating in the political education of rural Basotho.88 ‘Maleseko Kena was in one of these, located in the rural Qacha’s Nek District village of Tsoelike Auplas. The mother of seven children whose husband was active politically and often gone, Kena farmed and sold

agricultural products, made dresses that she sold locally and through the post to South Africa, and owned a small grain mill.89

For all that she could and did do on her own, however, it was membership and participation in the Homemakers Association that made her eyes light up when asked about the independence era. Kena recalled that the group in Auplas “had power,” but this was not based on explicit political involvement or even agreement. It was a power that came from being members in a group that taught solidarity and practical skills. Kena recalled learning how to “cook, prepare foods, sew, can fruits and all sorts of things,” and how to generally “get things done” in the domestic sphere, but also in terms of village organizing. Food preservation and sewing were tangible development projects in Tsoelike Auplas, as they were in most places in Lesotho, because of the absolute poverty of households. Subsistence farming and mine remittances undergirded the local economy, and learning how to stretch household budgets by better preserving clothing and food allowed the women of Auplas to utilize more of their scarce cash to keep children in schools and invest in small-scale economic activities.90

The Homemakers are, perhaps, best thought of not as an organization of domesticity, but as a grassroots cooperative. What they lacked in terms of government support, they made up for by pooling knowledge and resources to allow Basotho women to remake their community through action and fellowship in a resource-scarce environment.

89 All biographical details and quotations in this and the next paragraph from interview ‘Maleseko Kena, Tsoelike Auplas, 17 Mar 2009.
90 The women of Auplas were just as divided politically as any other place in Lesotho, as Kena found in her work with South African political refugees. John Aerni-Flessner, “Homemakers, Communists, and Refugees: Smuggling Anti-Apartheid Refugees in Rural Lesotho in the 1960s and 1970s,” Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women’s and Gender Studies 13 (2015): 183-209.
The cooperative focus of the Homemakers nicely complemented the government’s focus on similar structures like *kopanos*, but there were other areas of overlap between government development priorities and grassroots’ conceptions of independence. Infrastructure creation was one of these areas as many young Basotho articulated their independence visions in terms of infrastructure. Raphael Leseli expressed his dreams for independence as seeing “roads and schools...hospitals and clinics...development” and Motsapi Moorosi wanted “infrastructure, the roads, farms, agriculture, you name it.”

Meanwhile the government was focusing heavily on the food-for-work schemes that built 340 small dams, helped build 26 communal irrigated gardens, constructed 400 miles of new roads in the mountains, 800 miles of new roads in the lowlands, and improved 200 further miles of mountain roads by 1971.

Thus, it comes as little surprise that Chaka Ntsane’s Lesotho Workcamps Association (LWA)—detailed in the introduction—received some government assistance for its small infrastructure creation program. Ntsane was more explicit about linking the creation of clinics, schools, and windmills to a vision for independence, and this was, in part, because he was also in the BNP Youth Wing. The leadership of the LWA overlapped to a considerable degree with those in government. The funding that came to the group through the Department of Community Development, which was part of the Ministry of the Interior, came about because of the BNP government’s need to bring any and all development projects to fruition. For Ntsane and the leaders just as significant in terms of how they viewed the projects was the fact that

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93 All LWA information comes from interview Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 24 Feb 2009.
funds also came from the United States Embassy in Maseru. The construction of infrastructure was a “contribution to the situation in our own land,” but the ability to “go right into the office [US Embassy]...and get what we wanted” in terms of tools and financial support was a real revelation.\textsuperscript{94} It symbolized a new found freedom that gave Basotho as individuals and the state the ability to look beyond the United Kingdom when they needed to garner funds for projects, and Ntsane and others equated that with independence.

The LWA was not the only group to focus on infrastructure or to work in conjunction with government development efforts as a way of bringing about changes that would embody independence in local communities. Alexander Sekoli, a Boy Scout troop leader at St. David’s Primary School in the Berea district, recounted how he led his scouts in projects that ranged from planting trees, to helping older community members in the fields, and assisting with self-help village water supply projects. In the late 1960s Sekoli had his Scouts assist with the transport of needed supplies, like the piping for water supply projects, from district headquarters. These projects provided service opportunities for his Scouts, but they were also meaningful in terms of raising awareness of independence in local villages. Sekoli saw his role as “personally going around telling people” about the projects, and acting as a link between government administrators at the district headquarters and local communities, while getting his Scouts to perform the volunteer labor necessary to bring the projects to fruition.\textsuperscript{95}

While Sekoli was a Catholic schoolteacher who supported the BNP and clearly had good connections with the BNP officials at district headquarters in Teyateyaneng, he deliberately and consciously did not officially join the party. He understood the politicization of development

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\textsuperscript{94} Interview Chaka Ntsane, Maseru, 24 Feb 2009.

\textsuperscript{95} Interview Alexander Sekoli, St. David’s Mission, 13 Nov 2008.
work taking place and while he was “so active that [BNP leaders] had asked me to join the party but I was afraid because I was loved by all the parties, BCP and BNP, but I said I was staying out because I was afraid of [offending].”96 This commitment to keeping politics out of the water supply projects was partly rooted in Boy Scout ideology, specifically the Fourth Scout Law that declared Scouts “brothers to every other Scout,” but also his own views that independence should involve a “widening of opportunities” in education and in terms of services available in villages like the piped water.97 Had he joined the BNP, his troop would have faced more difficulties assisting with water projects in opposition-supporting villages.

While Sekoli might have been able to keep village water supply projects free from some of the worst politicization of the self-help programs, this was not the case everywhere in the country. Sekoli’s inclination to stay free from politics was prescient as partisanship and the perception of it impeded participation in self-help projects. American Peace Corps Volunteer Tom Carroll, working on water projects in the Mafeteng District in the late 1960s, reported that “there was always politics involved with which villages got picked” and that the first projects completed were in places where “the chief was pretty close to the BNP leadership or to the King.”98 This led to some fairly intense skepticism of the projects. Similar to how BNP supporters resisted the FARMECH project in Mafeteng in the early 1960s because of the possibility for it to reflect well on the BCP, in the late 1960s the tables were reversed and it was BCP supporters who were leery of buttressing BNP support by participating in the water projects.

98 Interview Tom Carroll, phone, 30 July 2012.
Scott Brumbaugh, another volunteer who worked on similar projects in the BCP-supporting Matelile area, noted this resistance from a political standpoint, but also characterized the people he met in villages as “curious and [they] wanted things to happen” like the water projects. He was not able to convince them to participate in the projects, however, until he met a local schoolteacher named Benedict Makoakoa who “had a passion for these projects” and who would serve as “spokesman/translator” for Brumbaugh. Thus, in the first four months on the job, Brumbaugh completed just one project, but he managed to help twenty-nine other villages complete projects in his last fifteen months on the job with the assistance of Makoakoa. This vastly increased completion rate on projects suggests a strong support for the outcomes of self-help projects, even if there were hesitations based on the politicization of projects.

Conclusion

The period between 1966 and January 1970, when the BNP government suspended the announcement of voting tallies from a countrywide general election and held onto power illegally by suspending the constitution, marked an era of hope and optimism in Lesotho. During this short period, the promises of independence seemed most real to many Basotho, especially youth who had spent time in schools and organizations talking about independence and thinking about what the concept might mean in practice for their lives and for the lives of those in their communities. For the BNP government, it was a frustrating era because Prime Minister Jonathan and the Cabinet had ambitions to centralize power through development, but they

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99 Interview Scott Brumbaugh, phone, 6 Aug 2012.
were not able to do so because of the limited international funding they had. The situation of
the mid-1970s, documented by Ferguson, whereby aid and development projects operated on
their own logic to solidify the power of international institutions and the central government at
the expense of local input, had not yet arrived.\textsuperscript{100} Development was still something that local
people could hope to shape in ways that might bring about changes they wanted to see with
independence, and they participated in projects that helped further this vision with eagerness
and an earnestness befitting the newness of the concept of the state of Lesotho.

\textsuperscript{100} Ferguson, \textit{Anti-Politics Machine}. 