

The Tati Training Institute and Self-Determination in the BuKalanga Borderlands (1932-1941)

Late in the day in the first week of 1938, at Nyewele, in the Tati area, near Mosojane and Tshesebe, in the Bechuanaland Protectorate (now Botswana), the temperature was about 90° F (33° C) and the air teemed with the sounds of the school day. The Tati Training Institute, Botswana's first secondary school founded in 1932, was in its most prosperous period. It had sixty-one male and thirty-two female students.¹ In his one room principal's cottage, thirty-nine-year-old Kgalemang Tumediso (K.T.) Motsete sat at his desk typing "Native Self-Respect Enhanced," a part of the school's seventh annual report.

Thus, a sense of racial self-respect is engendered by the achievement of 'doing,' faith is strengthened in the cooperative effort among the natives themselves, with their government, missionaries and other European friends. This cooperation might, with advantage, be applied to other communal interests to the enrichment of native life and the moral, social, economic, and educational benefits of the Bechuanaland Protectorate until the native, too, contributes his peculiar but no less fitting and valuable contribution to the common good.²

Framed in the African liberal principles of "cooperation" and "the common good," this passage is an example of Motsete articulating to a European audience his plans to work in concert with supportive Europeans to use European-style education as a model for state sponsored development. However, interwoven into the liberal discourse are "the achievement of 'doing'" and "contributes his peculiar but no less fitting and valuable contribution," phrases which allude

¹ Botswana Notes and Records Services (BNARS), Gaborone, Botswana, BNARS, S.243/19, Inspector G.H. Franz, "Report on Visit to Tati Training Institute to Consider Proposals for Reorganization of Work," 1938.

² BNARS, S.243/19, K.T. Motsete, "The Report of the Tati Training Institute for the Year, 1936/7," January 8, 1938.

to Motsete's political and socio-economic agenda to promote self-determination for African individuals and communities.

Motsete and Kalanga leaders founded the Tati Training Institute out of a complex mixture of Africans' pursuit of education, resistance to colonialism, ethnic struggles, and the uncertain promises of development on the margins of the British Empire. The Kalanga were colonial outliers who embraced Motsete and European-style education as a means to retain cultural continuity, face the challenges presented by colonialism and the politically dominant Africans and Europeans in the region, and unmake their political isolation and socio-economic marginality by preserving their self-determination.

Developments in Southern African historiography indicate that historians overly applied the collaboration / resistance paradigm and neglected to analyze the complex rationale underpinning Motsete and other historically significant intellectuals of his generation. Using the collaboration / resistance paradigm, Historians of Botswana have aptly deemed Motsete and his colleagues as early nationalists based on resisting colonialism and developing a formidable critique of British imperialism in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.³ However, this study follows African historians in and after the 1990s who highlighted culture and self-fashioning to demonstrate ambiguous African agency in complex and challenging historical contexts.⁴ They

³ Barry Morton, "Moana R. Segolodi and the Slow March of Nationalism in Botswana," paper presented at the African Studies Association, San Diego, November 19, 2015. Academia.edu, <https://www.academia.edu/18338440/>. Neil Parsons, "Shots for a Black Republic?: Simon Ratshosa and Botswana Nationalism." *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*. 73, 293 (1974): 449-458.

⁴ Timothy Burke. *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Collins, *Historical Problems of Imperial Africa*, 58; Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff. *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in Southern Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Frederick Cooper, Ann Laura Stoler, eds. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1997); Philip D. Curtin and James W. Fernandez, eds., *Africa & the West: Intellectual Responses to European Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972); T.O. Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men? The Samkange Family and African Politics in Zimbabwe, 1920-64* (Oxford: James Currey, 1995).

de-emphasized the ever-present structures of power and highlighted the complexities of human motivations. They argued that instead of predestined actions stemming from analytical structures of power or overly idealistic sentiments such as nationalism, historical actors like Motsete made rational calculations based assessing their material interests and the probable outcomes of their decisions.

Historians of Southern Africa have for the most part all together neglected the notion that although African intellectuals in the interwar period were shrouded in complexities and ideological and relational equivocality, nearly all of them were motivated first and foremost by an earnest commitment to promote African self-determination at numerous levels.⁵ A deeper reading of the archive related to the socio-economic and political disposition of Motsete and his colleagues shows that their desire to encourage African self-determination drove them to developed a complex strategy of collaboration, accommodation, criticism, and resistance. While they advocated for forms of British protection and imperial rule as a refuge from the threat of settler colonial expropriation, they formed a robust challenge to certain aspects of the political system of indirect rule.

Political uncertainty and fierce debates over the future of the Bechuanaland Protectorate emerged because of the ambiguities of British protection and the inadequacies of indirect rule.⁶ This politically charged context required a politically minded reading of the archive related to Motsete and the Tati Training Institute. Motsete constructed strategic socio-political commentary in much of his writings, including the education related materials. He crafted rhetoric infused with pairings of overt political discourses and purposeful subtexts. Since he wrote primarily for

⁵ Here, “self-determination” has no association with the principle of self-determination in international law.

⁶ John Comaroff, “Bourgeois Biography and Colonial Historiography.” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16,3 (1990): 553; William Malcolm Hailey, *An African Survey*, 194; Henderson Mpakati Tapela, “The Tati District of Botswana, 1866-1969” (Ph.D. diss. University of Sussex, 1976): ii-v.

an audience of Europeans and British officials, he layered his texts with multiple meanings and concealed his plans to prioritize African self-determination in language that highlighted his enthusiasm for his audience's aspirations for African socio-economic development.

This was necessary because Europeans and British officials were generally the audience for Motsete's writings and consequently he presented his schemes for encouraging African self-determination in a language attractive to an audience that had a different agenda.

The focus of this study is to unpack the social and political ideas that Motsete represented in his writings, including those about the school, instead of focusing on the considerable practical challenges he faced implementing a curriculum or managing the institution. It is my contention that as was the case elsewhere, Motsete composed education related materials including school reports primarily as a means to appease officials or to procure resources. Therefore, they possess limited information about what actually happened at the school. I read the Tati Training Institute related reports, records, education treatises, and correspondence as a collection of multilayered politically charged documents, not as an authentic record of the curriculum that Motsete instituted.⁷ As is the case with the archive related Motsete's political confrontation with the British and BaNgwato government, the Tati Training materials are full of examples of Motsete forging clandestine ideas with colonial discourses.

The BuKalanga Borderlands: Cultural Division and Convoluting Identity

The vast majority of TjiKalanga speaking communities inhabited an area cutting across the colonial border separating the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Southern Rhodesia referred to

⁷ Botswana Notes and Records Services (BNARS), Gaborone, Botswana, BNARS, DCS 38/1; DCS. 1/19; DCS.14/8; S.163/17; DCS15/3; UCCSA Private Archives Collection, Box 1; S.79/2; S.359/8; S.100/7; S.100/8/1; S.243/11-19; S.443/1/2.

here as the “BuKalanga borderlands.” State power in the BuKalanga borderlands was restricted and unstable as the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Southern Rhodesian states were far too weak to simply impose their intentions. From the mid 19th century until the 1960s, the BuKalanga borderlands consisted more of Kalanga peripheries than of territory under European power. The region was the site of a unique confluence of social, economic, and political transformation. It was a place of European and imperial contestation, colonization campaigns, rapidly transforming economies, technological innovation, cultural ascendancy, variegated ethnic formation, and complex identity formation.

BuKalanga spanned the Matabeleland area in western Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and the area under the control of the Tati Company (now the Tati area or the North-East District) and part of the BaNgwato Reserve (now the Central District) in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. The Protectorate government subjected the Kalanga living in the Tati and BaNgwato areas to considerably different tax and social regulations. The Tati Company held complete control over the Tati area. They levied taxes and controlled the use and occupation of land. The BaNgwato collected taxes from the BaKalanga living in the BaNgwato reserve and exercised authority over politics and resources such as land.⁸ In the first decades of the 20th century, governments in the Protectorate and Southern Rhodesia actualized the colonial barrier separating the two territories. This interrupted the flow of people and materials and threatened regional cultural continuity.

⁸ Changu Edith Mannathoko, “Kalanga Politics in the Context of Nationalism in Botswana: A Historical Perspective” (History and Archeology Dissertations, University of Botswana, 1978); Catrien Van Waarden, *Kalanga: Retrospect and Prospect* (Gaborone, Botswana: The Botswana Society for the Supa-Ngwao Museum and the Kalanga Bible Translation Project, 1991), 38.

By the 1930s, Kalanga communities had struggled for decades to preserve their political and socio-economic self-determination in the face of colonial and imperial impositions, especially the expropriation of their lands. Although the BaKalanga continued to make use of preexisting social and territorial boundaries long after the British established the colonial border (1895) and fixed the boundaries of the Tati Company land (1911), the border intensified challenges to BaKalanga socio-economic and cultural salience and challenged regionally sustained institutions such as schools and Kalanga religious shrines.

Geographically, the BuKalanga borderlands is one of the many cultural zones in Africa irreconcilable with the colonial partition of the



Figure 1; the Bukalanga Borderlands

continent. As an analytical category, the BuKalanga borderlands disrupts the historiographical tendency to over-apply the concept of nation and construct conceptual analysis around colonial boundaries. Because the colonial boundary severed precolonial trade routes, cultural complexes, and political sovereignties, inhabitants of the BuKalanga borderland assumed complex and convoluted identities. Politically beyond state controls, power dynamics in the BuKalanga borderlands emerged differently from the neighboring regions dominated by the more politically powerful Tswana or Ndebele. Hämäläinen and Truett argue that the central insight of the borderlands field

is that history pivoted on turning points beyond the succession of state centered polities and that the foundering agendas of empires and nations resulted in a climate of uncertain futures.⁹

Certainly this study highlights how the socio-political critique that emerged from the borderlands context significantly shaped the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Botswana. Nonetheless, applying the BuKalanga borderlands as an analytical category requires moving beyond the categories of European colonists, Ndebele, or Tswana, and sketching the story of Motsete and Kalanga communities in an open-ended narrative that emphasizes the unstable and uncertain quality of regional ethnic, political, and social intersections.

Reconstructing Motsete's life story and the significance of the Tati Training Institute required merging borderlands and biographical methodology, emphasizing the ambiguous and equivocal character of interwar African intellectuals, and exploring how Motsete and his colleagues maintained agency in complex and precarious historical contexts. John Lonsdale aptly deemed the phrase "agency in tight corners," because historical agency is always practiced within a certain context.¹⁰ Certainly, Motsete operated within the structural constraints of colonialism, imperialism, the capitalist world system, and underdevelopment.¹¹ However, according to Frederick Cooper, agency cannot be assessed by merely measuring existing constraints and possibilities. It requires evaluating the creative or innovative ways one planned to respond to circumstances.¹² So, although Motsete experienced frustrations comparable to others of his generation, the focus here is on how he navigated the borderlands terrain and how that terrain shaped his outlook for the future.

⁹ Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, "On Borderlands." *Journal of American History* 98,2 (2011): 338.

¹⁰ John Lonsdale, "Agency in Tight Corners: Narrative and Initiative in African History," *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 13,1 (2000): 5-16, 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Frederick Cooper, *Africa in the World: Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 7-9.

Socially and politically, Toyin Falola's category of "middle roader" or "reformer" (the term preferred here) appropriately describes Motsete. Motsete the "reformer" accepted much of the European construction of Africa and worked within the limits of colonial and imperial discourses. He embraced certain aspects of European civilization (like European-style education) while retaining many aspects of African culture. Reformers favored sustaining British imperial rule over political independence and promoted a policy of gradualism through constitutional or legal reforms.¹³ Far from a total surrender to European values, reformers like Motsete sought to understand foreign ideas and discern what was valuable for Africans. They applied European cultural forms in Africa, such as European-style education and English, as a means to combat European political domination, racism, and claims of European universalism.¹⁴

Lisa Lindsay and John Sweet noted that inserting names and faces into broad processes highlights the ways individuals and communities experienced and at times reshaped the meanings of political structures like protection and indirect rule. This biographical study of Motsete coincides with what Lindsay and Sweet characterized as "a surge of studies of the 'Black Atlantic' organized around particular life stories." Motsete projected a self-asserted version of the transnational hybrid cultures of the Black Atlantic and embodied an answer to racism.¹⁵ According to Stuart Hall, modernity and Blackness were ambiguous, frequently multilayered, and seemingly conflicted.¹⁶ This was well articulated by W.E.B. Du Bois's concept of the "double consciousness" or what Richard Wright deemed as the "psychological fracture" in

¹³ Toyin Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2001), 89.

¹⁴ Philip D. Curtin and James W. Fernandez, eds., *Africa and the West*, 232. *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁵ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993). Lisa A. Lindsay and John Wood Sweet, eds. *Biography and the Black Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 1.

¹⁶ Kuan-Hsing Chen, ed., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (Comedia. London: Routledge, 1996).

Native Son.¹⁷ Jean and John Comaroff endorsed this concept by asserting that Africans “on the road to modernity” were compelled to fashion themselves paradoxically as “right bearing secular citizens of the civilized world and Black ethnic subjects of various African polities.”¹⁸ Motsete racially and culturally self-styled himself as standing “between” Africans and Europeans.¹⁹ He denied that he was principally a subject of the Bechuanaland Protectorate or of Southern Rhodesia as a way to reject colonial spatial and temporal constructs. Ethnically, he claimed to be a Kalanga BaTalaote, descended from the precolonial Banyai kingdom who ruled the BuKalanga borderlands area from their capital in what is today western Zimbabwe.

Motsete’s construction of Kalanga ethnicity follows the same trajectory as the well documented young generation of cultural nationalists of the 1920s such as members of the West African Students’ Union (WASU) who attended school in England at the same time as Motsete. As Hakim Adi showed, far from advocating national independence, WASU members tried to cooperate with Britain to develop African nations culturally, politically, and socio-economically.²⁰ Although they accepted the merit of universal ideas, they did not abandon African culture. According to Falola, in Nigeria, the 1930s marked the peak of the writing of cultural nationalists and local intellectuals who sought to “defend African cultural heritage in the face of Western stereotypes” and “document the past for prosperity.”²¹ Motsete’s construction of Kalanga ethnicity follows this pattern. He championed a regionally based formulation of

¹⁷ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1903); Richard Wright, *Native Son* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940).

¹⁸ Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff. *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier, Volume 2* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 400.

¹⁹ Botswana Notes and Records Services (BNARS), Gaborone, Botswana, BNARS, S.96/7, K.T. Motsete to the Resident Commissioner Charles Rey, December 5, 1930.

²⁰ Hakim Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and Communism* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998), 35-37.

²¹ Toyin Falola and Saheed Aderinto, eds., *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2010), x.

Kalanga culture and a historical depiction that transcended and therefore resisted colonial and imperial mapping of the region.

The history of of cultural nationalists blending ideas of progress with racial pride and dignity dates back to at least Edward Wilmot Blyden in the 1850s who is commonly regarded as the father of Black or African cultural nationalism.²² Blyden rejected institutional models of Europe and white America because he deemed them unsuitable for African realities. He advocated pride in African history, culture, and its unique contribution to global civilization.²³ Falola deemed Blyden “the first African philosopher to embrace the ambiguities and complexities of modernization and tradition and to carefully reflect on how Africa could borrow European ideas while retaining its pride and identity.”²⁴ It is not explicitly stated but when these scholars say that Blyden deemed European institutions “unsuitable for African realities” or that he sought to “retain Africa’s pride and identity,” they are conveying his concerns about Africans’ desire to maintain self-determination because self-determination is the vital “African reality” and the crucial factor in “retaining Africa’s pride and identity.”

Acting as a mediator of history and culture qualified Motsete as a leader of Kalanga communities. Like other African cultural nationalists in the 1930s, Motsete was both a conveyor and a creator of culture who also had to invent a future for Africa. His role was to reclaim African cultures, present cultural constructs to Africans and Europeans, and envision a new African future. He planned to retain the benefits of European-style education while shedding its adverse components and called for a hybrid theory of the old and new ways of life. Motsete’s

²² Toyin Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*, 35.

²³ Gloria Chuku, *The Igbo Intellectual Tradition: Creative Conflict in African and African Diasporic Thought*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 10; Robert W. July, “Nineteenth-Century Negritude: Edward W. Blyden.” *Journal of African History*, 5, 1, (1964): 73-86; Hollis Ralph Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1912* (London: Oxford U.P, 1967).

²⁴ Toyin Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*, 35.

plans paralleled intellectuals like Negritude writer Aimé Césaire. Employing W.E.B. Du Bois's concept of the "double consciousness," Césaire attempted to inspire colonized Blacks to adopt a version of Alan Locke's concept of the "new negro." This meant accepting the charge to promote dignity within themselves and their communities and refusing to submit to racist dehumanization.²⁵ Motsete derived his socio-political scheme from these types of influences in part because he came from an intellectual vantage similar to Césaire and Locke.²⁶ In a manner similar to Césaire and Locke, Motsete projected an optimistic vision of the African future as a direct affront on the negative stereotypes propagated by Europeans and whites about Blacks and Africans.

In the 1930s, colonial officials and most Africans agreed that it was advantageous to promote cultural fusion over Europeanizing Africans. This made demand skyrocket for African cultural brokers capable of amalgamating African and European culture. However, Africans capable of amalgamating African and European culture generally had a high degree of European-style education and therefore embodied an inherent critique of European supremacy and power. Consequently, interwar colonial governments rigorously limited the opportunities for Africans to obtain education. It was out of the paradoxical colonial mindset to produce Africans capable of amalgamating African and European culture and promote African development "on the cheap" that produced the context for Motsete to establish the Tati Training Institute. Because of the dearth of education in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, the imperial government had an especially pressing need for schools and teachers, especially schools run for and by Africans capable of balancing the educational parameters set forth by the administration with the array of African

²⁵ Aimé Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land: Bilingual Edition* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University, 2013), xiv.

²⁶ Robin G. Kelly, "The Poetics of Anti-Colonialism" in Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism; A Poetics of Anticolonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000).

agendas. Motsete accepted the opportunity to promote his own form of cultural synthesis in the form of his school.

Motsete's use of Tswana and Kalanga proverbs and his Kalanga centric interpretation of the history of the BuKalanga borderlands is evidence that he conceived his program at the Tati Training Institute based on fusing his sense of African cultural heritage with European cultural patterns. Although he articulated his assertions of Africanity through European cultural patterns such as European-style education, the English language, Christianity, and European dress, Motsete maintained a significant African cultural and ethnic identity rooted in a well thought out articulation of regional heritage. His historical and cultural disposition was a direct affront to the territorial and ethnically oversimplified pattern underpinning the system of indirect rule. Stemming from this historical and cultural disposition, he formed a second layer of socio-economic criticism of the state based on advocating legal protections for individuals and minority communities throughout the region. These ideas underpinned his educational philosophy designed to empower individuals and promote self-determination among ethnic minority Kalanga communities throughout the region.

In 1930, shortly after returning from nearly a decade of schooling in England, Motsete and politically disgruntled educated colleagues in the Bechuanaland Protectorate followed Simon Ratshosa's criticism of the lack of clarity in British protection and the socio-political disjunction and African ethnic and social differentiation produced by the system of indirect rule. These critics were the first to advocate for diffusing power away from the BaNgwato into the hands of ethnic minorities and the educated class. They deemed this "democratizing" the system of indirect rule. Inspired by the geography of the BuKalanga borderlands, Motsete and his colleagues took "democratization" a step further. They reformulated British protection to mean

that Africans possessed certain rights as subjects of the British Empire and that those rights superseded imperial or colonial demarcations.²⁷ They proposed “democratization” as the remedy for the struggling political system. This meant extending political power and legal protections to all African individuals and to minority non BaNgwato ethnic groups.

Motsete wielded his loyalty to the British Empire as a weapon to prop up the Kalanga struggle against differential status of Africans throughout the region. Prioritizing continuity throughout the BuKalanga borderlands, he claimed African individuals living in the Bechuanaland Protectorate or in colonial Southern Rhodesia (which had declared itself self-governing in 1923) were British subjects who warranted British justice.²⁸ Highlighting the inconsistency of British governmental policies throughout BuKalanga challenged the idea that British justice underpinned imperial rule in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.



Figure 2; K.T. Motsete

By suggesting that the Kalanga were entitled to British justice regardless of their imperial or colonial local, Motsete contested the political and ideological border separating the imperial from the colonial, the legal authority of the settler government in Southern Rhodesia, and the unequal system of indirect rule that ensured that individuals and ethnic minorities did not possess the socio-economic advantages of the BaNgwato ruling class.

Just as Motsete weaponized his interpretation of “British justice” against the political system, he deployed “self-help” and “racial uplift” as ammunition against the British empire’s

²⁷ BNARS, S.243/11, Motsete to Resident Commissioner Rey, January 13, 1932, “I Beg to Lodge a Complaint and Appeal for Protection.”

²⁸ *Ibid.*

power network. Definitions of these terms were subjective and took on substantially different meanings at various geographic and temporal points. Therefore, using these terms does not imply that Motsete simply mimicked discourses of power or accepted other people's interpretations. Instead, discourses were entry points into debates, and a strategic means to challenge existing modes and to present alternative interpretations. In Motsete's case, a means to engage with and speak to imperial power, to embrace and critique the imperial status quo, and to connect Africans to the ideological and financially supportive networks of the Black Atlantic and the British empire.

Michael West argued that for Africans in interwar Southern Rhodesia, the Tuskegee model associated with the discourse of self-help meant promoting independent African controlled schools and Black run business ventures. In this context, self-help did not mean accepting inferior forms of education or Booker T. Washington's position of political accommodation.²⁹ Kevin Gaines argued that American Blacks used the self-help ideology of racial uplift as a response to racism and segregation.³⁰ Thus, according to the context established by West and Gaines, Motsete undoubtedly used "cooperation," "racial uplift," and "self-help" as a technique to incorporate Africans into racialized categories of colonial progress and civilization, and then transcended those very categories by connecting Africans to alternative models for progress. More specifically, Motsete used the terms "self-help" and "racial uplift" to connect Africans to existing educational structures. Then, he connected "racial uplift," African controlled education, and self-determination as an alternative modality to the prevalent racist and segregationist structures defining African education.

²⁹ Michael O. West, "The Tuskegee Model of Development in Africa: Another Dimension of the African/African-American Connection," *Diplomatic History*, 16,3, (1992): 371-388: 371.

³⁰ Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), xiv.

The Tati Training Institute stood for Africa under the control of Africans and thus formed a powerful statement about race relations in Southern Africa. As Terence Ranger argued, European-style schools designed and run by Africans were an expression of an African future that ran counter to colonial racism.³¹ Motsete's school was one of only a handful in Southern Africa under African auspices. The vast majority of mission, government, or tribal schools employed European instructors. Therefore, not only did African run schools symbolized African self-determination, they inherently embodied and a significant critique of the history of European paternalism in Africa.

The dearth of schools persisted despite the intense African demand for European-style education in Southern Africa in the 1930s. There were no government schools in the Bechuanaland Protectorate in the 1930s and the network of missionary schools did not offer the secondary schooling Africans desired.³² Scholars showed that for decades Africans demanded schools and were keen on learning English.³³ Africans were not willing to accept modified or adapted versions of European-style education and insisted on curricula on a par with that being offered in Europe and elsewhere.

Socio-economic underdevelopment of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, including the education system, can be traced to the first decades of the 20th century when the British systematically destroyed the economic system developed by Khama III.³⁴ Africans wanted social mobility and to prepare themselves to compete with Europeans in the emerging commercial

³¹ T.O. Ranger, *African Attempts to Control Education in East and Central Africa, 1900-1939* (Oxford, England: Past and Present Society, 1965), 74.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ J. Mutero Chirenje, *A History of Northern Botswana, 1850-1910* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1977); Küster, *Neither Cultural Imperialism*; Summers, *Colonial Lessons*.

³⁴ Neil Parsons. *The Economic History of Khama's Country in Southern Africa* (Lusaka: University of Zambia, 1974).

economy. Africans in large numbers sought the advantages of European-style education, especially reading and writing English and training for practical purposes.³⁵

Motsete returned to Africa at a time when there was an enormous African demand to expand education and relieve the mounting socio-economic pressures stemming from the educational bottleneck. He designed the Tati Training Institute as an alternative to the beleaguered mission and government education programs and equipped the school with a diverse offering of academic subjects suited to prepare graduates for further education at African colleges such as Fort Hare and Tiger Kloof Institute in South Africa.

Managing the state regulated curriculum was problematic because academic and community programs at the school required funding. Nevertheless, Motsete resolved any tensions between what the community wanted as a program of study and those mandated by the government. It is my contention that because the school was built in the BuKalanga borderlands on the fringes of state power, there was very little official oversight over the school. For the most part, Motsete determined his own curriculum. In particular, he geared the school towards academics and away from the vocational training outlined in Dumbrell's state mandated version of adapted education. There are numerous places in the archive where education officials criticize Motsete for not maintaining agricultural plots in the manner they required. Motsete's lack of attention to agriculture is an example of his lack of concern for certain regulations. This shows that measuring the school's curriculum against the demands of the state is at best problematic. It is also largely irrelevant for this study because the focus here is on the context out of which the school emerged and the ideas underpinning Motsete's educational philosophies

³⁵ BNARS, RC 6/1, Sargant, *Report on Education in Basutoland, 1905-6*; Chirenje, *History of Northern Botswana*, 184; Part Themba Mgadla, "Missionary and Colonial Education among the Bangwato, 1862-1948" (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1986); E.B. Sargant, *Report on Native Education in South Africa. Pt. 3, Education in the Protectorates*. Cd, 4119 (London: H.M.S.O, 1908).

instead of an account of if or how much Motsete resisted state authority. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that Motsete successfully designed a mixed academic and vocational primary and secondary school curriculum that transcended the limitations of the existing missionary and government schools in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.

Kalanga Ethnicity, Political Economy, and the TjiKalanga Language

In the case of the BaKalanga, extensive interaction with Europeans began in 1864 when the British found gold in the Tati area, in the heart of the BuKalanga borderlands. In the following decades, BaKalanga traders developed flourishing economic relationships with the mining industry. However, the BaKalanga lacked the political aptitude of their Tswana and Ndebele neighbors who developed stronger political ties to the European company. By the mid 19th century, the Tswana to the West and the Ndebele to the East both considered the BaKalanga their subjects. Enocent Msindo shows that in the 1890s Kalanga chiefs developed strong ethnic patriotism as a means to consolidate political power and counteract the advancements of their African neighbors and European settlers.³⁶ By 1900, Kalanga leaders in Botswana began to resist taxation and used the border as a refuge or escape.³⁷ In the 1920s, The British South Africa Company placed ceremonial Ndebele chiefs in Matabeleland on the Southern Rhodesian side of BuKalanga. The Ndebele chiefs lost further power and cultural legitimacy when the Southern Rhodesian 1927 Native Affairs Act passed. Without legitimate political claims to land and resources, the Ndebele chiefs became the target of a new form of Kalanga ethnic nationalism that justified Kalanga self-determination based on regional historical narratives. Terence Ranger and Steven Feierman showed that peasant consciousness was revolutionary and that peasant

³⁶ Enocent Msindo, *Ethnicity in Zimbabwe*, 65.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 76.

intellectuals produced a radical critique of the state by the 1930s.³⁸ As was the case elsewhere in Africa according to Ranger and Feierman, Kalanga ethnic nationalism was fully formed by the early 1930s. Kalanga leaders leaned harder on the benefits of European-style education as a form of resistance to the colonial intrusion.

European-style education flourished in the BuKalanga borderlands in the first decades of the twentieth-century setting the pattern for Motsete's school. Reverend Motiki opened an L.M.S. school in Nswazwi in 1899.³⁹ Motiki's school coincided with the opening of schools in Mapoka and Masunga in the Tati area.⁴⁰ Primary schools in the Tati area taught in TjiKalanga until the 1950s and used TjiKalanga textbooks from Southern Rhodesia.⁴¹ Reverend M. Reed of the L.M.S developed the TjiKalanga orthography. Kalanga teachers trained at the teaching training institute at Dombodema Mission in Southern Rhodesia.⁴²

In 1931, Clement M. Doke published, *The Unification of Shona Dialects*, as part of a movement to unify the dialects of what later became ChiShona into a literary form for official and educational purposes.⁴³ This included the standardization of orthography for the entire area known as Mashonaland (now Zimbabwe). Doke considered TjiKalanga a dialect of the newly invented ChiShona language and suggested that ChiShona and SiNdebele become the only

³⁸ Steven Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe: A Comparative Study* (London: James Currey; Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

³⁹ Catrien Van Waarden, *Kalanga Retrospect and Prospect*, 38.

⁴⁰ M.M. Madikwe, "Western Education Among the Kalanga of Northern Ngwato District, 109-1966" (History and Archeology Dissertations, University of Botswana, 1983); Changu Edith Mannathoko, "Kalanga Politics in the Context of Nationalism in Botswana: A Historical Perspective" (History and Archeology Dissertations, University of Botswana, 1978), chapter three; M.D.K. Mongwa, "The Political Struggle Between Baka-Nswazwi" (History and Archeology Dissertations, University of Botswana, 1977), 16; Kutlwano Mulale, "The Development of Primary Education in the Tati, 1900-1966" (History and Archeology Dissertations, University of Botswana, 1991), 6.

⁴¹ M.M. Madikwe, "Western Education Among the Kalanga."

⁴² *Ibid.* Catrien Van Waarden, *Kalanga, Retrospect and Prospect*, 39.

⁴³ Clement M. Doke, *Report on the Unification of the Shona Dialects: Carried Out Under the Auspices of the Government of Southern Rhodesia and the Carnegie Corporation: Presented to the Legislative Assembly, 1931* (Hertford, England: Printed for the Government of Southern Rhodesia by S. Austin and Sons. 1931).

nationally recognized African languages in Southern Rhodesia. Doke's downgrading of TjiKalanga incited an ethnically based struggle throughout BuKalanga to preserve the language.⁴⁴ Msindo argued that the "TjiKalanga language debates thus came to be an essential part of the self-critiquing Kalanga ethnic community to which Kalanga chiefs owed their legitimacy and to which Kalanga commoners appealed in their resistance to government policies."⁴⁵ In other words, in the early 1930s, the perpetuation of the TjiKalanga language became the central focus of the Kalanga ethnic national movement and intensified the demands for Kalanga directed schools that taught in TjiKalanga.

In 1929, Whiteside and Dombodema missionaries produced the first translation of the Bible and other Christian texts into TjiKalanga. This sparked the emergence of a number of literary works in TjiKalanga, including the TjiKalanga hymnal book Whiteside published in 1935.⁴⁶ According to Terence Ranger, the Christian Bible translation into TjiKalanga was a watershed moment for the BaKalanga because it acted as a tool for the Kalanga to create a history that differentiated the group linguistically and culturally from the Tswana and Ndebele. The Dombodema Mission offered powerful assistance against the imposition of the SiNdebele language in primarily TjiKalanga speaking communities.⁴⁷

In the 1930s, some of the Kalanga teachers trained at Dombodema came back to the Bechuanaland Protectorate to teach in Kalanga schools. However, the government mandated that they teach in SeTswana and English – not in TjiKalanga. Kalanga ethnic nationalist considered this an affront to Kalanga culture and intensified the struggle to use TjiKalanga in the schools,

⁴⁴ Enocent Msindo, *Ethnicity in Zimbabwe*, 117.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 120

⁴⁶ Catrien Van Waarden, *Kalanga, Retrospect and Prospect*, 46; Thembani Dube, *A History of the Kalanga in Bulilima and Mangewe Districts, 1850-2008* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2010), 41; Kultwano Mulale, "The Development of Primary Education in the Tati [district], 1900-1966."

⁴⁷ Terence Ranger, "African Local Historiographies: A Negative Case," in *A Place in the World: New Local Historiographies from Africa and South Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

especially in the Tati area allegedly outside of BaNgwato jurisdiction. The struggle to perpetuate the language in classrooms and elsewhere became the centerpiece in the Kalanga ethnic nationalists' struggle to resist Ndebele and Tswana cultural domination.⁴⁸

TjiKalanga speaking communities became frustrated by the state sponsored repression of their language, the lack of return on their taxes, the land shortage inhibiting their growth, and the lack of education and health facilities. Because of the growing consensus that socio-economic advancement was inextricably linked to European-style education, they tried to increase the number of schools in their communities. They considered education a means to bolster their socio-economic situation and propagating the TjiKalanga language vital to self-determination.

Kalanga leaders employed romanticized versions of a prosperous Kalanga past along with highlighting the deteriorating political economy to bolster support for their political struggle against the imposition of the colonial border and the marginalization of their communities. Motsete's historical account of his own descendants is an example of Kalanga ethnic nationalists remaking of Kalanga ethnicity in the 1930s. Motsete claimed that initially the BaKalanga were a subject people under his royal Banyai (Mashona) descendants. However, the Ndebele defeated the Banyai and subjugated the BaKalanga. Then, in the 1890s, the British defeated the Ndebele and divided the Bakalanga between Southern Rhodesia, the Tati area, and the BaNgwato country.⁴⁹ This history operationalized three ideas. First, that as a descendant of the royal Banyai, Motsete held a legitimate claim to be responsible for leading and protecting Kalanga communities. Next, Motsete connecting the BaKalanga to Zimbabwean cultures (now referred to as Shona speakers) and differentiated the BaKalanga culturally and politically from their more

⁴⁸ Catrien Van Waarden, *Kalanga, Retrospect and Prospect*, 39.

⁴⁹ BNARS, S.243/11, Motsete to Resident Commissioner Rey, January 13, 1932, "I Beg to Lodge a Complaint and Appeal for Protection."

politically powerful Tswana or Ndebele neighbors. Lastly, Motsete implied that BaNgwato rule over the BaKalanga communities in the Bechuanaland Protectorate was only decades old and undermined the BaNgwato claim to authority.

By the late 1920s, regional historical and cultural formulations of Kalanga ethnic nationalism justified a political push for self-determination. *She* (chief) John Madawo Nswazwi (1875-1960) led a movement against what he deemed repressive BaNgwato overrule. Left politically disadvantaged, to deal with the consequences of the colonial border, without sufficient return on their taxes, and short of schools, Nswazwi and Kalanga leaders mounted a campaign to resist BaNgwato subjugation and retain cultural continuity despite the encroachments of politically dominant Africans on both sides of the border.⁵⁰ Striving to unmake their political isolation and socio-economic marginality, European-style education afforded a promising means to promote gainful employment and facilitate upward social mobility. In 1932, Kalanga communities pooled their resources and partnered with Motsete to establish a Kalanga centric primary and secondary school in the Tati region.

The Nswazwi Struggle against Tshekedi Khama and the BaNgwato flew in the face

The Nswazwi lived in the BaNgwato Reserve relatively peacefully for over a decade during *kgosi* (chief) Khama III's rule (1872–1873, 1875–1923). In 1926, Tshekedi Khama took over as BaNgwato regent and from that point forward Khama and *she* (chief) John Nswazwi underwent a decades-long period of continuous conflict. Nswazwi fought relentlessly against Khama's authority until Khama's death in 1960.

⁵⁰ M.M. Madikwe, "Western Education Among the Kalanga of Northern Ngwato District, 109-1966" (History and Archeology Dissertations, University of Botswana, 1983).

In 1929, Nswazwi detailed his complaints in an appeal to the Earl of Athlone, the British High Commissioner in Cape Town.⁵¹ This prompted the first of three British led commissions to investigate Nswazwi's grievances. Marred by their strong relationship to Khama and anti Nswazwi bias, the 1930 Nettleton and the 1932 Potts commissions dismissed Nswazwi's complaints as insignificant. The third inquiry, the Ellenberger Commission in 1945, resulted in Nswazwi's official exile to Southern Rhodesia. In Botswana, Nswazwi is still remembered as a symbol of freedom from oppression and equality for ethnic minorities.⁵²

John Nswazwi's 1929 letter to the High Commissioner titled, "Complaint of the Nswazwi Tribe (BaKalanga)," detailed the Nswazwi people's grievances.⁵³ The primary issues were land and access to European-style education in the TjiKalanga language. Nswazwi claimed that the BaNgwato restricted access to land Khama III had already granted the community and exacerbated the existing pressures emanating from the lack of land. Nswazwi argued that his people received no return on state taxes collected by the BaNgwato and that the lack of financial support made it impossible to pay for schoolteachers.⁵⁴ At the 1930 commission, Motsete correctly argued that the hut tax required the government to provide schooling. However, there were no government funded schools outside of the BaNgwato capital Serowe and no qualified teachers available for assignment in the BuKalanga region.⁵⁵ A 1930 government report confirmed that even though "the Kalanga people [were] thirsting for education and progress and something should be done for them," Kalanga schools suffered from unfit and unqualified teachers.⁵⁶

⁵¹ BNARS, S.77/5 "The Complaints of the Nswazwi (BaKalanga) Tribe," November 27, 1929."

⁵² Albert G.T.K. Malikongwa, *History of the BaKalanga BakaNswazwi (1932-1945)* (Francistown: Mukani Action Campaign, 2002).

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ BNARS, S.77/5, Resident Magistrate G.E. Nettleton, "Report on the Nswazwi Inquiry."

⁵⁶ BNARS, DCS.12/11, G.E. Nettleton, "Visit to Schools in BuKalanga District," November 12, 1930.

The language question existed alongside the financial issues. Schools in the BuKalanga areas of Southern Rhodesia taught in TjiKalanga but influenced by BaNgwato political power and the desire to develop national cultural continuity, the Protectorate government mandated that schools throughout the country use SeTswana or English as the language of instruction. Although their legal authority to dictate the language of instruction in Tati area schools was at best suspect, the BaNgwato employed a number of political and economic mechanisms to enforce their language mandate among TjiKalanga speakers. This battle over language played a significant role in the formation of the Tati Training Institute. Kalanga ethnic nationalists, incensed by what they considered an overreach of BaNgwato authority, looked to Motsete's to establish TjiKalanga at his school. While the heated battle over language and cultural domination underpinned the BaNgwato campaign to put a stop to Motsete's school.

Therefore, as tensions between the BaKalanga and the BaNgwato were boiling over, Nswazwi resisted Khama's instruction to assemble unpaid Kalanga laborers to bolster the border fence separating the Bechuanaland Protectorate from Southern Rhodesia. This sparked a long period of outward hostility between the two leaders. The fence represented a threat to the Kalanga movement to preserve unity among BuKalanga communities and unpaid labor (essentially a form of taxation) exacerbated Nswazwi's notion that despite paying a significant amount in taxes, the BaNgwato as agents of the government shortchanged the Kalanga people by neglecting to fund education. Ultimately, these grievances led Nswazwi to spearhead a movement backed by a significant number of the communities in BuKalanga to challenge BaNgwato overrule entirely by way of a petition to the High Commissioner asking for self-rule under the British government.

The Tati Training Institute was at the center of the struggle between the BaKalanga and BaNgwato by the time the 1932 commission, held at the main *kgotla* (administrative center or African court) in Serowe, assessed the relevance of Nswazwi's grievances.⁵⁷ Although the government ruled against Nswazwi and for Khama on almost every point, they stood behind Resident Commissioner Rey's prior approval of the plan to establish Motsete's school outside of BaNgwato jurisdiction in the Tati Reserve. The result was that Khama continued his campaign against TjiKalanga and intensified his attack on Nswazwi and the other Kalanga communities that lived in the BaNgwato reserve and supported Motsete's school.⁵⁸

The Tati Training Institute in BuKalanga

In the politically charged context of the BuKalanga borderlands in the early 1930s, Motsete not only saw himself as a potential liberator of the Kalanga rural masses, he attempted to reshape British ideas of trusteeship by appealing to the idea of using European-style education to develop a just citizenry under the legal protection of the British crown. His racial and cultural assertiveness was the crucial factor connecting the aspirations of Kalanga communities for education and socio-economic self-determination, the financial backing of European liberal philanthropists, and the imperial government's precarious goals for African development thorough education.

Motsete tactfully struck a balance between accommodation and self-determination so that he positioned the Tati Training Institute to attract the financial support the school received from the Phelps Stokes Fund and American philanthropic Carnegie Corporation in the middle 1930s.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ BNARS, S.78/3, "Report of Inquiry Held by Captain Potts."

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ BNARS, S.243/16-17.

For example, Motsete constructed his educational scheme to reflect government guidelines. From its inception, higher ups in the British administration, especially Resident Commissioner Rey and Education Director Dumbrell, embraced the Tati Training Institute as the most promising educational venture in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. They applauded the school as a model of “self-help” and professed the school to possess great value for little investment.⁶⁰

Rey’s radiant description of the Tati Training Institute shows his penchant for the school’s potential as a political and developmental asset.

Maybe the most important development in education effort in the territory. ... It is a most valuable example of what can be done by native effort with encouragement and a minimum of financial assistance and I would urge strongly that this effort should be encouraged. It is far and away the most economical form of assistance we could give the actual work done and the moral example in the territory is of great value.⁶¹

Rey’s conspicuous enthusiasm was not a measure of the quality of the education rendered at the school. Nor was it based on a genuine commitment to addressing Kalanga socio-economic problems or Nswazwi’s appeal for self-determination under British imperial rule. However, Motsete presented his British and philanthropic allies with a promising model for African education in an African socio-economic development context fraught with peril.

For the British administration, philanthropists, and educationists connected to the British Empire, Motsete’s school promised to be a means for operationalizing their own agendas.

Locally, the school served the British authorities as a means to break the L.M.S.’s chokehold on

⁶⁰ BNARS, S.243/12, Resident Commissioner Rey to High Commissioner, March 15, 1932.

BNARS, S.243/13, Dumbrell, “School Report, Bakalanga Central School [later renamed The Tati Training Institute], Visited on September 26th, 1932,” October 6, 1932.

BNARS, S.148/2, Dumbrell “Report on Education in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, January 1929 to June 1930.”

BNARS, S.243/12, Resident Commissioner Rey to High Commissioner, March 15, 1932.

BNARS, BNB177, “Correspondence (1930-1931) Relating to the Territories Administered by the High Commissioner of South Africa,” 263.

BNARS, S.243/12, Rey to High Commissioner, March 15, 1932.

⁶¹ BNARS, S.243/15, Rey to the High Commissioner, May 18, 1933.

schooling, curtail Khama's political power, and extend state authority in the BuKalanga borderlands. Dumbrell imagined the school as a vehicle to actualize a form of adapted education (institutionalized shortly thereafter in the 1934 Bechuanaland Protectorate school syllabus), the doctrine that captured the hearts of European educationists worldwide.⁶²

In the Bechuanaland Protectorate, and especially in the BuKalanga borderlands, the lack of centralized authority meant that individuals running schools had considerable latitude to shape operations at their schools. Prior to Dumbrell taking over in 1930, there was no consistency in education facilities and no definite curriculum, school code, salary scale, or uniformity regarding textbooks in Protectorate schools. However, in the 1930s, the state attempted to tighten its control over education. In 1931, the Board of Advice on Native Education formed to institute uniformity in all of the Protectorate's African schools. That same year, Dumbrell abandoned the fairly widespread Cape Province education code that pinned African education to European standards and introduced a new temporary school code based on a variant of adapted education implemented by education officials in Southern Rhodesia.⁶³

Although the state asserted itself behind Dumbrell's regulations, great disparity remained between various schools. At the Tati Training Institute, Motsete had significant latitude to forge the program he desired. As the principal of an independent African run school, he was among the few Africans who held the power to be self-determinant and apply his own interpretation of government regulations. Although he at least superficially accommodated the crux of the state's mandates, he designed the pedagogical map of the school to be of maximum support of the aspiration of the students and communities he served.

⁶² BNARS, BNB.148, Dumbrell, "Primary School Syllabus for Native Schools in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1934."

⁶³ BNARS, BNB.177, "Correspondence [1930-1931] Relating to the Territories Administered by the High Commissioner of South Africa, Dumbrell "Report of the Inspector of Education for the year 1929."

It was out of this political context that Motsete composed his treatise on education, “The Educational Revolution in the Bechuanaland Protectorate,” which detailed the philosophies underpinning the Tati Training Institute.⁶⁴ He employed discourse such as “co-operation” and “self-help” to draw the approval of British officials and influential educationists in the Black Atlantic. He echoed the development goals of local British officials who hoped to operationalize the school as a vehicle to actualize a Bechuanaland Protectorate specific education program and usher in an era whereby the country could prevent South Africa and Southern Rhodesia from dictating the education direction of the country. Even though Motsete constantly pandered to the regulations set forth by the administration and positioned his school as an indispensable asset for African development, underpinning his education philosophy lay the notion that education cultivated racial equality and that educating Africans in a manner equal to Europeans produced Africans who embodied a direct challenge the dogma of European supremacy and were capable of competing with anyone on an equal playing field.

Motsete’s primary aim to empower the students is evident in his discourse. He attested that the aim of education was to “prepare the young student for what Herbert Spencer called ‘complete living’” and that he aim[ed] at developing the character and the intelligence of the boy so that he may adjust himself to and exploit his social and economic environment with the view of enriching not only his own personality, but also the life of the community and country in which he lives. That is, to produce good, industrious and intelligent citizens.”⁶⁵ Although Motsete lifted the phrase, “good, industrious and intelligent citizens” directly from Dumbrell’s

⁶⁴ BNARS, S.243/16, K.T. Motsete, “The Educational Revolution in the Bechuanaland Protectorate: Tati Training Institute,” November 20, 1933.

⁶⁵ BNARS, S.243/13, K.T. Motsete, “Proposed Scheme for the Bakalanga Central School,” 1932. BNARS, S.243/16, K.T. Motsete, “The Educational Revolution in the Bechuanaland Protectorate: Tati Training Institute,” November 20, 1933.

education ordinance, he paired the phrase and his entire education philosophy with subtext.⁶⁶ In this case, Motsete pandered to the adapted education principle that educating individuals was part of the larger scheme to promote development of segregated African areas. Nonetheless, by weaving together the idea of community development with an individual's "complete living" and professing that education is a means whereby individuals may "adjust [themselves] to and exploit [their] social and economic environment," it is evident that despite operating in a paternalistic and segregationist context, he maintained an underlying strategy to promote individual self-determination.

The circumstances required that Motsete persistently appeal to paternalistic sympathies in order to attract European favor. He urged, "the natives alone, even in their united effort, are not yet equal to the task of making such an enterprise a success, because apart from the meager resources at their disposal, they are as yet like infants, needing sympathetic guidance by those who know better."⁶⁷ Infantilizing Africans played on 19th century images of the white man's burden and paternalistic racism. However, Motsete pandered to European paternalists, who were racist to some extent or another and doubted the idea that Africans could run their own affairs, as a strategy to assert himself as understanding and even accepting paternalism which put him in a position to supervise a school. This was the dance Motsete had to perform to open an African operated secondary school in Southern Africa in the 1930s. No Africans held a head position in a mission or government school until the 1950s. In total in Southern Africa, there were a small handful of African run schools (all primary) and a couple of African-run secondary or technical

⁶⁶ BNARS, S.148/2. Dumbrell "Report on Education in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, January 1929 to June 1930."

⁶⁷ BNARS, S.243/16, K.T. Motsete, "The Educational Revolution in the Bechuanaland Protectorate: Tati Training Institute," November 20, 1933; K.T. Motsete, "An Educational Experiment in the Bechuanaland Protectorate," *Oversea Education: A Journal of Educational Experiment and Research in Tropical and Subtropical Areas*, 5,2 (January 1943): 58-64.

schools located in South Africa.

Motsete employed the rhetoric of “shared reliance,” “the common good,” and “mutual dependence” to transcend racial and ethnic categories.⁶⁸ His rhetoric spoke to the liberal principle of multi-racial cooperation and to the idea of unity between various African ethnic groups and social classes. Motsete declared, “Such co-operation is desirable to the harmonious unification of the citizens, who, while belonging to different tribes, races and cultural levels, have, by providence, been brought together to share a common destiny.”⁶⁹ Motsete’s subtle and well-designed approach fused much of his political and educational philosophy. Clearly, Motsete’s approach to education paralleled his political aspirations: to reshape racial, ethnic, and class dynamics in order to move beyond the political and social hierarchy sustained by the system of indirect rule. Motsete skillfully deployed the rhetoric of “common good” that underpinned African liberalism to promote a vision of the African future based on unity of purpose.

The Tati Training Institute], when established, will be a lasting monument in this territory of the friendly relationship that exists between white and black, being the visible sign and the embodiment of the truth of the universality of noble ideas; that the *Sommum Bonnum* (the highest good) which is social in the widest sense of the word, transcends tribal or racial limitations; that all that is beautiful, true and good is good not for one race only but for all of the races of mankind.⁷⁰

For Motsete, human partnership was the universal truth and the highest good was something beyond racial and class hierarchies.

⁶⁸ BNARS, S.243/13, K.T. Motsete Proposed Scheme for the Bakalanga Central School, 1932; BNARS, S.243/16, K.T. Motsete, “The Educational Revolution in the Bechuanaland Protectorate: Tati Training Institute,” November 20, 1933; K.T. Motsete, “An Educational Experiment in the Bechuanaland Protectorate,” *Oversea Education: A Journal of Educational Experiment and Research in Tropical and Subtropical Areas*, 5,2 (January 1943): 58-64.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

In an eloquent and empowered manner, Motsete navigated the precarious path of continually putting the Tati Training Institute in a position to garner European favor while he challenged the existing racial, social, and political order. Tati Training Institute was an experiment in education, a challenge to the structures of race relations, and a critique of the regional social and political state of affairs. Motsete embodied the axiom that racial inequality was a farce and built his school on the African liberal principle that education and other forms of socio-economic development would lead to a multi-racial society of equals.

Whether addressing the realities of the 1930s or illustrating his vision of the future, Motsete prioritized African self-determination. This is well articulated by a proverb Motsete's used in his education treatise, "The Educational Revolution in the Bechuanaland Protectorate." He declared, "While we are grateful indeed for the good that the missionaries and government have done for us and are still doing, we the natives know too well the truth expressed in our proverb, *Mafuta o kumbila a to liga vudzi* (The fat which is always begged for does not make the hair pretty)."⁷¹ In this proverb, the person using hair treatment symbolizes African communities and fat symbolizes resources. Thus, Motsete meant that a communities' ability to assert control over resources is directly proportional to their ability to be self-determinant. He wrote, "*Ndzidziwa a na nunga*" (One who always receives assistance while he does hardly anything for himself can have no strength).⁷² Motsete's point is that not only is it demoralizing to always be spoon fed, but that African self-help and self-discipline foster

⁷¹ BNARS, S.243/16, K.T. Motsete, "The Educational Revolution in the Bechuanaland Protectorate: Tati Training Institute," November 20, 1933.

⁷² *Ibid.*

“racial self-respect, self-confidence, and a legitimate pride of race.”⁷³ Motsete’s revolution was African control over their future. He challenged paternalism, the racist notion of incompetent dependent Africans, and those who dismissed Africans’ right to determine their own leadership. These proverbs and the discourse of racial and tribal pride, self-respect, and self-confidence demonstrate Motsete’s commitment to empower self-determinant Kalanga communities managing their own endeavors.⁷⁴

The curriculum at the Tati Training Institute merged academic and religious subjects with agricultural and manual work.⁷⁵ Although Standards I-III were taught in TjiKalanga, students in



Figure 3; K.T. Motsete in front of the principal's cottage, the Tati Training Institute, circa 1934

Standard IV and beyond were taught in English. Aside from the socio-economic benefits of learning English, coursework in English served as a way to create equality at the school and unite Africans of different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds in a singleness of purpose.⁷⁶ The school offered a secondary school curriculum equivalent to those offered in South Africa. In 1936, tuition was about 5£ per year, affordable for an average family. Most of the students were from BuKalanga villages but some were from as far away as South Africa and Nyasaland. The school flourished in the 1930s and classrooms were full.⁷⁷

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ BNARS, S.243/11, “The Tati Central School (Outline of Scheme),” November 10, 1931; Thomas Tlou and Alec C. Campbell, *History of Botswana*, 205. Catrien Van Waarden, *Kalanga, Retrospect and Prospect*, 38. Kultwano Mulale, “The Development of Primary Education in the Tati [district], 1900-1966.”

⁷⁷ Fred Morton and Jeff Ramsay, *The Birth of Botswana*, 100.

Although the Tati Training Institute brimmed with promise, it faced potent forces of opposition. The school emerged out of an interwar political context full of contradictions and contention over the future direction of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Despite the multi-racial promise underpinning African liberalism, the 1930s marked a conservative political turn and an upsurge in racialization and segregation in Southern Africa. Thus, as the decade wore on, Motsete's position as an African school founder and principal became even more extraordinary.

The school survived a tough period between 1933 and 1935. The worldwide depression and the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease paralyzed commerce throughout the Southern African region. Failed crops resulted in food shortages and financial support for the school dwindled.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, after receiving a significant five-year-long grant from the philanthropic Carnegie Corporation, the school overcame these challenges and flourished from 1935 to 1940.⁷⁹ Yet, after 1940, Motsete was unable to garner sufficient external sources of funding. He lost the support of Charles Rey after Rey resigned his position as Resident Commissioner in 1937. Differences between Kalanga leaders, especially over Nswazwi's political role, affected the school.⁸⁰ Motsete failed to gain access to land for farming directly adjacent to the school.⁸¹ In an interview I conducted at the former site, Mr. Morapedi, the family elder still living directly adjacent to the school, substantiated that there were significant disputes over land.⁸² People accused Motsete of corruption and misappropriating resources.⁸³ By the end of the 1930s, enthusiasm among some locals waned.⁸⁴ Despite the objection of his supporters,

⁷⁸ BNARS, DCS.17/11, Resident Magistrate Serowe, "Annual Report Ngwato District 1931," January 19, 1932.

⁷⁹ BNARS, S.243/16-17.

⁸⁰ Dingaan Mapondo Mulale, "The Life and Career of Dr. Kgalemang Tumediso Motsete" (History and Archeology Dissertations, University of Botswana, 1977).

⁸¹ BNARS, S.243/12, "The Tati Training Institute Report for October 1932."

⁸² Interview with Mr. Morapedi, Mosojane, Botswana, August 25, 2017

⁸³ Mulale, "The Life and Career of Dr. Kgalemang Tumediso Motsete."

⁸⁴ *Ibid*; Madikwe, "Western Education Among the Kalanga of Northern Ngwato District, 109-1966."

Motsete moved the school to Francistown in 1939 and the number of attendees dropped significantly.⁸⁵⁸⁶ Motsete planned to revive the school but lost official support and the school closed in 1941.⁸⁷

322 students attended the Tati Training Institute.⁸⁸ Some became teachers in and outside the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Others found employment in many other capacities such as motor-lorry driver, storekeeper, government administrator, policeman, interpreter, and mineworker.⁸⁹ Amos Dambe, who occupied a number of government posts including serving as Ambassador to the United States of America from 1972 to 1976, is the most well-known of the school's graduates.⁹⁰ Numerous other graduates became socially and politically influential in the years between the closing of the school (1941) and independence (1966).

Even though the demand for European-style education skyrocketed in Southern Africa in the 1930s because Africans wanted to learn English and improve their socio-economic realities, governments throughout the region significantly hindered access to schooling. Based on the underdevelopment logic or the reality of the education bottleneck, historians have aptly attributed the demise of the Tati Training Institute to underfunding. Moreover, the school fell victim to the shifting political situation, especially the steady decline of the potency of the African liberal platform and the deepening paradox of cultivating European-style education for

⁸⁵ Fred Morton and Jeff Ramsay, *The Birth of Botswana*, 101; Kultwano Mulale, "The Development of Primary Education in the Tati [district], 1900-1966."

⁸⁶ BNARS, S.243/18, "The Tati Training Institute Progress, 1935-1939," June 20, 1940.

⁸⁷ Modirwa Kekwaletswe, "Botswana: Man of Song – Part I." *Mmegi*, October 5, 2006; Jeff Ramsay, "Kgalelang Tumedisho Motsete (1899-1974)," *Weekend Post*, August 20, 2016 and Facebook, August 22, 2016, https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=Ramsay%2C%20%E2%80%9CKgalelang%20Tumedisho%20Motsete&epa=SEARCH_BOX

⁸⁸ BNARS, S.243/18, "The Tati Training Institute Progress, 1935-1939," June 20, 1940.

⁸⁹ BNARS, S.243/17, "Report for the Tati Training Institute for the Year 1935"; S.243/18, "The Tati Training Institute Progress, 1935-1939," June 20, 1940.

⁹⁰ John Dickie and Alan Rake, *Who's Who in Africa: The Political, Military and Business Leaders of Africa* (London: African Development, 1973); Jeff Ramsay, "Amos Dambe (1911-1991), *Weekend Post*. November 20, 2018.

Africans in an increasingly segregationist context.

Motsete and the Tati Training Institute show that disputes over access to European-style education were intimately connected to broader socio-economic and political debates over ethnicity, individual and minority protections, nationalism, race, resource allocation, and state-making. At the center of the political and educational agenda Motsete developed for the Tati training Institute was his notion that European-style education was a means to deflect colonial depredations and imperial equivocality by encourage African self-determination. He positioned himself as the self-determined leader of education in the Bechuanaland Protectorate and actualized in his school a profound political and socio-economic strategy to protect and advance African communities.