

**“A home makes one *Motho*” – the idea of “Humanness”,
“Home” and History in Lady Selborne’s forced removals,
circa 1905 to 1977**

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Introduction

The area known as Lady Selborne was situated in the suburb now called Suiderberg, against the south slope of the Magaliesberg, some 10 kilometers northwest of the Pretoria city centre from 1905 to the 1960s. Lady Selborne was established in 1905 as a township where Africans could own land, because the area was regarded as one of the unique black areas in the white settlements where racial discrimination in terms of land ownership was not applicable at that time. It was established through a syndicate organised by a group of “coloureds” who arranged to purchase a portion of the farm *Zandfontein* through their agents, T. le Fleur and C.M. de Vries.¹ The whole farm was called Lady Selborne, named after Lady Beatrix Maud Cecil, whose husband was Lord Selborne, Governor of the Transvaal and Orange River colonies until unification in 1910 and High Commissioner of South Africa.

Lady Selborne was more than a mere geographic or residential space. The area was a *legae* (home): a place where families and neighbours lived collectively. The group of people discussed were chiefly Sotho-Tswana. They formed the majority during the period being studied here – in 1950 there were roughly a thousand who identified themselves as Northern Sotho, Tswana, and Southern Sotho, 321 as Nguni, 167 as Shangaan, 125 as coloured, 97 as white, 6 as Indian and 5 as Venda in Lady Selborne.² The concept of “home” underwent a dramatic transformation among the Sotho-Tswana between 1905 and

* Maserole Christina Kgari-Masondo of the University of Stellenbosch’s article stems from her completed doctoral thesis. She extends her grateful thanks to her supervisor, Sandra Swart.

1. Transvaal Archives (hereafter TA), Pretoria: GOV 828, PS17/65/05, Letter: W. Gilfillan (Surveyor General Department of Pretoria) – D.O. Malcolm (Private Secretary to Governor’s Office, Johannesburg), 21 November 1905; Deeds Office, Pretoria: Farm register JR20 7027/06, J. Booysen to C.M. de Vries.
2. J. Carruthers, “Urban land claims in South Africa: the case of Lady Selborne township, Pretoria, Gauteng”, *Kleio*, 32, 2000, p 2; Central Archives (hereafter CA), Pretoria: TES 4134, 19/269, Report of the Departmental Committee, 1949, p 12.

1977, when Ga-Rankuwa became part of Bophuthatswana. Displaced informants have affirmed the community in Lady Selborne lived as “a family” and that this created a sense of “belonging”. This grounded sense of identity established positive self-esteem among local residents, evinced in what they called “being human”. This article argues that land dispossession transformed this sense of identity, causing those displaced to describe themselves as “less human”. As will be shown, the residents’ understanding of what their homes meant was reflected in their lived reality and in the way they engaged closely with their environment and with each other. The article will demonstrate that the community’s management of the natural world in Lady Selborne was effected through specialised local agriculture, which served as protection against poverty, and that land was integral to religious rituals.³ The article then argues that many of those resettled in Ga-Rankuwa became alienated from their new environment.⁴ The social engineering of the Group Areas Act of 1956 both physically destroyed Lady Selborne and changed the ideological relationship of the Sotho-Tswana with their environment.

The process of forced removal did not eradicate the concept of *legae* from popular memory and this article is thus able to gather evidence through oral history. Emotions and symbolism about the relationship between the ideology of “humanness” and “home” are not documented in archival works, but are preserved in the language of the Basotho and Batswana. Thus this article relies on discourse analysis of oral interviews, which are contextualised with recourse to archival sources pertaining to Lady Selborne and Ga-Rankuwa, and secondary literature on the theological and philosophical notions upheld by the community under study.

This article tackles a controversial historiographical issue that has perhaps been approached merely tangentially in most historical analyses of forced removals, namely the almost taboo detail that some of those forcibly removed were actively pleased at this development. This article attempts to offer a class-based explanation of this phenomenon. The

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3. Interviews by author in Ga-Rankuwa: Mrs Isabel Mvula (24 June 2004); Mrs Ruth Kgari (25 June 2004); Ms Julia Motshetsahane & Mr William Kgari (27 June 2004); Mrs Tshidi Tshweni, Mr Lolo Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Violet Maphalare & Mr Andrew (28 June 2004); Mrs Elsie Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila & Mrs Matlaila (29 June 2004); Mrs Madumo & Mrs Matilda Manamela (30 June 2004).
 4. Interviews: Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari, Mr Kgari, Mrs Tshweni, Mr Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mr Andrew, Mrs Matlaila & Mrs Manamela.

former landlords of Lady Selborne certainly suffered under the changes brought about by forced removals, while there is evidence to suggest that some of the former tenants actually felt that their “humanness” had been affirmed by their relocation to Ga-Rankuwa and their subsequent leasing of houses on independent plots.

“Home” and “Humanness”, circa 1905 to 1977

This article focuses less on defining “home” than on tracing and illustrating the ways that the sense thereof contributed to a perception of what it meant to be a human being before forced removals in Lady Selborne, and how losing such “homes” due to displacement transformed the former landlords’ positive perceptions of themselves. Conversely, former tenants who continued to rent houses in Ga-Rankuwa, were initially excited at the move, but became unhappy when they realised that they could not engage in food production. This article uses Ross’ model of “home” as “affective and imaginative clusters of relationships, often but not always coded in terms of kinship and affinity, and frequently made tangible in material form such as through material investment and ritual action”, as this seems close to the discourse used by the informants.⁵ Ross maintains that cultural meanings must be emphasised when dealing with the “home”.⁶ Certainly, informants in this study described “home” as a cluster of traits – an inheritance, a site for agricultural production, a sacred space for religious rituals and a place for constructing relationships.⁷

The concept of “home” has interested academics for some time. For example, Overing and Rapport, in a standard general text, offer insights in their analysis, but fail to explain the concept in a holistic manner.⁸ They tend to separate the physical structure from the social relationship it houses and the actual physical building from the people it accommodates. Their definition of what comprises “home” does not include the mountains, stones, graves, flora, fauna and the perceived spiritual world surrounding it. They correlate “home” and “house” more than the localised, vernacular understanding discussed in this article does. The standard definition and common understanding of “home” is “a place where one lives, fixed residence of family or household, native land,

5. F.C. Ross, “Making home in the new South Africa.” Unpublished paper, 2003, p 2.

6. Ross, “Making home in the new South Africa”, p 3.

7. Interviews: Ms Motshetsane & Mrs Tshweni.

8. N. Rapport and J. Overing, *Social and Cultural Anthropology The Key Concepts* (Routledge, London, 2000).

institution for persons needing care or rest”;⁹ and a “house” as a “building for human habitation, building for special purpose or for keeping animals or goods”.¹⁰ Yet in understanding the conception of home of the community being studied here, it is of pivotal importance to understand *legae*, which assists in understanding the Basotho and Batswana way of life. The Sotho-Tswana, like the amaXhosa and AmaZulu, sharpen their differentiation between the two by using homes for ancestral rituals. For the amaXhosa, a house (*indlu*) does not carry either the same emotive appeal or social obligation as a “home” (*umuzi*).¹¹ *Indlu* (Xhosa) or *Ntlu* (Sotho-Tswana) is a place for staying temporarily, while *umuzi* or *ikhaya* (Zulu and Xhosa), *motse* or *legae* (Sotho-Tswana) is a permanent “home” where one can perform important rituals and bury the dead. A house, for most of the former Sotho-Tswana landlords of Lady Selborne who could not purchase plots in Ga-Rankuwa, was just a dwelling place – a place for *boroko* (sleeping).¹² Some residents (most tenants) who had “homes” in rural areas and houses in Ga-Rankuwa, performed weddings and funerals *ko magaeng* (at “home” in the rural areas), which indicates that the resettlement area was seen as a place for temporary accommodation only.¹³ Displacement forced such “houses” to become “homes” subtly via the performance of ancestral rituals in the resettlement area.¹⁴ Conversely, relocation actually brought some sense of “home” to many former tenants of Lady Selborne that were able to lease free-standing plots with the option to purchase.¹⁵ Yose encountered the same attitude amongst the amaXhosa in a shantytown in the Western Cape where Xhosa-speaking migrants and new residents view shacks in the light of *imizi* “homes” – which entails social relationships associated with strong links to the countryside (*emaXhoseni*).¹⁶

9. *Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984), p 350.

10. *Oxford Dictionary*, p 355.

11. E. Ngxabi, “Houses or Homes?” M Soc Sci dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2004.

12. Personal discussions with informants in Ga-Rankuwa: Ms Motshetshane (27 June 2004) & Mrs Tshweni (28 June 2004).

13. Personal discussions with informants in Ga-Rankuwa: Mrs Kgari (25 June 2004) & Mr Kgari (27 June 2004).

14. Personal discussions with informants in Ga-Rankuwa: Mrs Kgari (25 June 2004) & Mrs Tshweni (26 June 2004).

15. Interviews: Mrs Kgari, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila & Mrs Madumo. Loans for purchasing sites and erecting houses were available at R3 a month, payable for 40 years, according to M. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa* (South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1961), p 164.

16. C. Yose, “From Shacks to Houses: Space Usage and Social Change in a Western Cape Shantytown.” M Soc Sci dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1999.

As will become clear throughout this article, the difference between a “home” and a house was profoundly important to the former Sotho-Tswana residents of Lady Selborne and those resettled in Ga-Rankuwa. Forced removals and resettlement caused many people to accept the idea of mobile “homes”, whereby they altered their traditional ideology of a “home” that was tied down to a fixed physical location. Former tenants, who continued to lease houses in Ga-Rankuwa, also transformed their perceptions of what a “home” is and privacy became a major defining factor in the resettlement area. The allotment of independent plots made many former tenants consider the houses that they were leasing to be their “homes”, though poor soil quality and limited environmental resources eroded this perception.

According to informants, feelings of “home” ownership were linked to the purchase thereof and the possession of title deeds. This ideology is not traditionally “African” and reflects the impact of modern capitalism. Due to landownership, there were class divisions in Lady Selborne between landlords and tenants. Andrew Hurley maintains that class is more prominent than race in environmental history, as was the case in Lady Selborne, where class alienated people from their environment. Nancy Jacobs argues that race and power were also state means of restricting black Africans in terms of land use and ownership.¹⁷ Landlords were regarded as being superior to their tenants, who were often being exploited. Many tenants had to call their landlords *Mmastand* and *Rrastand* (Mrs and Mr Landlord) and had to supply labour to them. For example, tenants were obliged to clean up if the sewerage bucket collectors spilled in the yards. All tenants interviewed felt aggrieved by this, as Mrs Madumo expressed:

Living as a tenant in Lady Selborne was not enjoyable because one had to clean up the sewerage spilled on the floors by the collectors of the buckets. This was the most painful experience of my life. It was humiliating.¹⁸

Many former tenants who lost no property, felt ownership of “homes” in Ga-Rankuwa because of secure private living spaces and the possibility of buying such plots. In contrast, former landlords found it very difficult to adjust to the reality of Ga-Rankuwa, as they regarded Lady Selborne as their inheritance. Lady Selborne afforded many of the landlords with business, as they were able to rent out their homes or

17. N. Jacobs, *Environment Power and Injustice A South African History* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003), p 31.

18. Interview: Mrs Madumo.

rooms to tenants at more than £2.¹⁹ Consequently loosing such homes contributed to the vehement outcry about land dispossession in Lady Selborne, because in Ga-Rankuwa they could not rent out such houses. This was because many of the displaced could not purchase plots there, as they could not sell their homes in Lady Selborne. Furthermore, they were devastated by the move, as they had invested their houses and properties with cultural and religious meaning. There was thus a sense of alienation. This suggests that to former landlords, the cultural meaning of a “home” was more important in Lady Selborne than in Ga-Rankuwa, as the Sotho-Tswana “perceive the universe and everything in it as an inter-connected engine of life”.²⁰ This implies a holistic perception of life and that the natural and non-natural worlds both are part of the *legae* (home). For example, it is significant that landlords like the Motshetshanes performed rituals at their plots, while tenants had to perform rituals at their homes, which were based mainly in distantly located rural areas. Many of the tenants had simply rented rooms in Lady Selborne to be closer to their places of employment.

It is therefore suggested that a “home” can be made, because it consists of people and emotions and can be transformed into a habitable space. This implies that any place can be turned into a “home”, as long as it is able to sustain routines of daily life that affirm an individual holistically. In Ga-Rankuwa, “home” had different meanings for the former tenants and landlords. To former landlords who became tenants, it was difficult to accept Ga-Rankuwa as a “home”, because they could not own the houses they leased unless they had money to purchase the plots. It was however much easier for the former tenants and former landlords who purchased plots in the resettlement area to regard Ga-Rankuwa as “home”, though they all missed Lady Selborne. Rapport explains:

One dwells in a mobile habitat and not in a singular or fixed physical structure. Moreover, as home becomes seen as more mobile, so it also becomes more individuated and privatised, everyone chooses their own, and one’s choice might remain invisible and irrelevant to others.²¹

This implies that a “home” can be made anywhere at any time, it cannot be fixed to a particular space, but is a mobile habitat. This is illustrated by traditional African practices whereby an ancestor is symbolically moved from the grave to the home after a year to protect it,

19. Interviews: Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari & Mrs Manamela. See also: Carruthers, “Urban land claims in South Africa”, p 5.

20. G.M. Setiloane, *African Theology An Introduction*, (Skotaville, Johannesburg, 1985), pp 37-42; interviews: Mrs Kgari & Ms Motshetshane.

21. Cited in Rapport & Overing, *Social and Cultural Anthropology*, p 158.

or a branch or soil from a grave or a previous “home” is transported to a new “home” as a sign of *go buyisa badimo* (bringing back the ancestor),²² a ritual that persists today and emphasises the mobile nature of “home”.²³ This explains many resettled people’s ability to acclimatise quickly, as was demonstrated by the purchasing of new homes in Ga-Rankuwa, where many continued to attempt to communicate with their ancestors.²⁴ Chidester argues that:

A homestead was a symbol of the world, a central arena in which the symbolic relations of persons and place were negotiated. The home was the nexus of symbolic and social relations among the living and between the living and deceased relatives of the household who continued to live as ancestors or ancestor spirits. It was a place for being human.²⁵

Though Chidester’s definition excludes the environmental context of “home” in the Sotho-Tswana culture, his explanation addresses the importance of “home” as a place where history and relationships are forged and the self defined. Consequently the lack of “home” means a struggle to attain the status of a “complete human being”. The Comaroffs define a “home” as it was understood in 1820 by the Batswana, namely as “a zone sanctified in matrimony, possessed of property, recognised in law, and structured by a gendered, generational division of labour and a fixed physical space (the residence) set off from the world outside”.²⁶ The drawbacks of the analyses of Chidester, the Comaroffs, Rapport and Overing, are their failure to include the environmental aspect of their definition of “home”.²⁷ Their analyses compartmentalise the dwelling space, while the Sotho-Tswana include the world outside the physical structure – the community and the environment around the homestead – in theirs. This explains why the former residents of Lady Selborne describe their displacement as a loss of “home”, referring to the area as a whole.²⁸ The case study of Lady Selborne, which was almost unique in

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22. See: J.L. Cox, “Ancestors and God: Reflections on the Meaning of the Sacred in Zimbabwean Death Rituals”, *An International Journal of Religion*, 25, 1, 1995, pp 345-346.
 23. Personal discussions with Doctor Welile Mazamisa, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Cape Town, November 2006.
 24. Interview: Ms Motshetshane.
 25. D. Chidester, *Religions of South Africa* (Routledge, London, 1992), p 5.
 26. J. & J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness on the South African Frontier I* (Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1997), p 275.
 27. See: Chidester, *Religions of South Africa*, p 5; J. & J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p 275; Rapport & Overing, *Social and Cultural Anthropology*.
 28. Interview: Mrs Tshweni.

South Africa in that it allowed blacks to own property near whites in an inter-racial township, situated close to a metropolitan centre, casts light on local residents' distinctive definition of *batho* (humans).²⁹ Most residents felt at "home" in Lady Selborne because of its cohesive community, fertile soil, scenic beauty and the right to hold title there.³⁰ The township's role was as a sacred place to perform religious rites and a repository for relics and some of the community's umbilical cords. The umbilical cord is seen by many of the Sotho-Tswana as a thread that links a human being to the place of birth; the earth, hence when the cord falls from a new-born baby, it is buried in the yard to bond a person with that particular place forever.

Lady Selborne retained its historical, spiritual, communal, psychological and economical significance to its former residents. Mrs Sekhu, a former landlord in Lady Selborne, explains that "if a person does not have a home, he or she is not fully human. To be human one must have a home".³¹ Many informants emphasised the importance of property and wealth ownership in providing a sense of security and positive identity.³² Many Sotho-Tswana in Lady Selborne and Ga-Rankuwa saw title of a "home" as significant, because they believed that such "homes" were an inheritance from their ancestors.³³ Mrs Tshweni says:

By losing our houses in Lady Selborne during forced removals, our humanness was impacted negatively because we lost the places where we performed rituals. And we lost our homes – our inheritance from our parents.³⁴

Mr Maphalare, who was the child of a former landlord, but had to rent a house when he got married, gives more evidence of the relationship between the ownership of a "home" and humanness, and the ramifications of the loss of such properties.

A home makes a person complete, even if one is poor it does not matter, because one suffers under his or her own roof. A home makes one *motho*

29. Carruthers, "Urban land claims in South Africa", p 2; CA: TES 4134, 19/269, Report of the Departmental Committee, 1949, p 61.

30. Interviews: Ms Motshetshane, Mrs Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu & Mrs Manamela.

31. Interview: Mrs Sekhu.

32. Interviews: Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari, Ms Motshetsahane, Mr Kgari, Mrs Tshweni, Mr Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mr Andrew, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila, Mrs Madumo & Mrs Manamela.

33. Interview: Mrs Tshweni.

34. Interview: Mrs Tshweni.

(human). Though other people have a lot of material things, at least one has something, a house. Forced removals from Lady Selborne deprived people of that ownership, though it assisted those who were tenants, but to landowners it was a tragedy.³⁵

This raises the question: “When does a person separate from animals – become *motho* (a person), *batho* (people/human) or less human?” Most informants subscribe to the idea that a person becomes “less human” when he or she is barely aware of his or her humanness, or when others in the community regard him or her as being not fully human.³⁶ Lack of material possessions like a “home” can contribute to a person being perceived as less human.³⁷ According to former tenant, Mrs Maphalare, “If one does not have land and is old enough to own it, such a person is not respected in the community. I suppose she or he is seen as incomplete. Shelter under one’s head is important”.³⁸ This illustrates the effects of capitalism in the way people express themselves. Former tenant Mrs Mohlahledi raises another point:

Botho is when a person is well-mannered and has concern for humanity. It is lost through not caring for others and also if one is poverty-stricken and loses her possessions, the community sometimes does not see that person as fully human and that is painful. This implies that through forced removals many people like us tenants were happy because we got houses and those who lost their land in Lady Selborne, like the former landlords, their humanness was affected because we are now equal.³⁹

These sentiments about loss of “home” are articulated by former tenant, Mr Matlaila:

Forced removals indeed affected people’s humanness because without a house one is not human, especially to the landlords who had to come to Ga-Rankuwa and rent property. This was degrading to them. As the northern Sotho, the lazy people are always regarded as *selo* [not human] because one has not provided for himself or herself and as a result end up without material possession.⁴⁰

Ms Motshetshane, a child of a former landlord, explains how loss of land impacts on the loss of *botho*:

35. Interview: Mr Maphalare.

36. See: Setiloane, *African Theology*, p 40; Interview: Mrs Maphalare.

37. Interviews: Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari, Ms Motshetsahane, Mr Kgari, Mrs Tshweni, Mr Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mr Andrew, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila, Mrs Madumo & Mrs Manamela.

38. Interview: Mrs Maphalare.

39. Interview: Mrs Mohlahledi.

40. Interview: Mr Matlaila.

In Lady Selborne people built houses and had good relationships with the community and there was unity, and through land loss people lost such relationships and property and found themselves in solitude. This means land loss led to loss of humanness.⁴¹

Several former tenants reiterated these sentiments and maintained that “without a home, a person is not fully human, because one lacks a sense of ownership and positive self-esteem”.⁴² It is interesting that such tenants never mentioned feeling less human about the fact that they did not own plots in Lady Selborne. The only dehumanising factor mentioned by them regarding life there, was having to clean up sewerage spilled by bucket collectors.⁴³ This can perhaps be ascribed to the romantic nostalgia felt for Lady Selborne by those living in Ga-Rankuwa, and the voluntary nature of their former tenancy. Moving to Ga-Rankuwa transformed their construction of “home”. Some people found “homes” in Ga-Rankuwa, like former tenants.

As Bachelard observes, “the human imagination always builds walls of impalpable shadows, comforting itself with the illusion of protection, and so carries the ‘notion of home’ into any really inhabited space, whether cognitive or physical”.⁴⁴ Certainly, some former tenants and former landlords (who were able to buy plots) were able to inculcate the notion of a “home” when they arrived in the resettlement area. Most former landlords however could not, because the resettlement did not afford them with the same rights of property ownership.⁴⁵ Such former landlords felt a sense of insecurity and a loss of dignity.⁴⁶ This shift in property relations and the concomitant shift in power relations are remembered as a degrading experience for former landlords.

This suggests that ownership of land and identity went hand in hand, and gave people a sense of dignity (*seriti*). *Seriti* may be described as an “aura or a force behind every human being that depicts people’s perception about his or her identity or personality”.⁴⁷ *Seriti* affects everything that a person comes into contact with. This is why the Sotho-

41. Interview: Ms Motshetshane.

42. Interviews: Mrs Kgari, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila & Mrs Matlaila.

43. Interviews: Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari, Mr Kgari, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila & Mrs Madumo.

44. Gaston Bachelard, cited in: Rapport & Overing, *Social and Cultural Anthropology*, p 159.

45. Interview: Mrs Tshweni.

46. Interview: Mrs Manamela.

47. Setiloane, *African Theology*, p 13.

Tswana believe that a “home” has *seriti*, because of the ancestors who look after it and the people who live in it. Immoral acts in the “home” degrade its *seriti*.⁴⁸ Mary Douglas argues that such acts “pollute” the “home”, which requires rituals to cleanse and reinstate the *seriti*.⁴⁹ A person gets power through *seriti* and everything he or she gets into contact with, gets affected. This accounts for the perceived interconnectedness between humans and the land, animals, plants and environment as a whole; because, like humans, the plants, animals and land also have *seriti*.⁵⁰ A person becomes more dignified because of the way he or she interacts with others and the environment. Forced removals thus engendered a loss of *seriti*. The Comaroffs argue that:

Personhood was everywhere seen to be an intrinsically social construction. This in two senses: first, nobody existed or could be known except in relation with reference to, even as part of, a wide array of significant others, and, second, the identity of each and every one was forged, cumulatively, by an infinite, ongoing series of practical activities.⁵¹

It is important to note here that the Sotho-Tswana of Lady Selborne cherished the spirit of inclusion before the 1960s. For example, residents explained how they lived without racial discrimination.⁵² The spirit of inclusion was encouraged by Sotho-Tswana aphorisms like *motho gaiphetse ese naga* (a person cannot be complete like land), which means people need others to survive and identify themselves as holistic people.⁵³ This further means that the land is self-contained, but a person cannot survive without interaction with others – they need other people for validation. Destruction of social unity through disharmony, according to Ngubane, means that “it was a criticism of primordial consciousness, it was to try to invert the perpetual evolution of the cosmic order, it was a ploy for running away from facing the challenge of being human. In

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48. See J & J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p 158. They explain how the Sotho-Tswana went about establishing settlements by redrawing boundaries around the homesteads, fields and villages. This is termed *go thaya motse*, which also refers to how they protect such a settlement with herbs to avoid misfortune. If a homestead is *thailwe*, the Sotho-Tswana believe that home to have *seriti* and it has to be respected by humanity.
 49. M. Douglas, *An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1976), p 3.
 50. Setiloane, *African Theology*, p 15.
 51. J. & J. Comaroff, “On Personhood: an Anthropological Perspective from Africa”, *Social Identities*, 7, 2, 2001, p 268.
 52. Interviews: Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila & Mrs Matlaila.
 53. Interviews: Ms Motshetshane, Mrs Tshweni & Mrs Mohlahledi.

short it was the ultimate insanity”.⁵⁴ Informants saw communal unity as vital in ensuring the progress of history and life in the community, because through the community, an individual gets empowerment.⁵⁵ Unity between the community and the individual allows that individual to share life with others.⁵⁶ The unity of the community was also portrayed through community resistance against displacement from Lady Selborne, which is an illustration of black African assertiveness, politicisation and the articulation of dissatisfaction with the inequalities of Nationalist rule. It shows the cohesion that prevailed in the community in fighting segregation, though many tenants ultimately prioritised land ownership over civic solidarity. Their resistance is also an indicator of fighting against the loss of home that gave them identity. Highly politicised and sophisticated resistance (however unsuccessful) indicated the community’s rejection of environmental discrimination. Fieldwork undertaken amongst the Sotho-Tswana of Ga-Rankuwa in 2004 reveals their nostalgia for the social cohesion of Lady Selborne, their “home”.⁵⁷ This romantic vision is contradicted by informants who mention gangsters, violent bucket collectors,⁵⁸ and conflicts between landlords and tenants.⁵⁹ Some contradicted the prevailing ideology that the only time they felt “less human”, was during displacement, but former tenants in the interviews vehemently mention that they felt humiliated by the fact that landlords forced them to clean sewerage spills and the yards.⁶⁰

Informants claim that tenants were incorporated into the community as “residents of Lady Selborne” (*batho ba Selborne*). This implies that discrimination in terms of land ownership was not profound. This makes the Comaroffs’ argument about the concept of self during colonisation in 1820 relevant to Lady Selborne from 1905 to 1960. They argue that the concept of self was “a constant work-in-progress, indeed a highly complex fabrication, whose complexity was further shaded by gender, generation, class, race, ethnicity, and religious ideology among

54. J.K. Ngubane, *Conflict of Minds Changing Power Dispositions in South Africa* (Books in Focus, USA, 1979), p 81.

55. Interview: Mrs Mvula. She argues that due to forced removals, they lost community spirit which resulted in individualism. This was also confirmed during interviews with Ms Motshetshane and Mrs Tshweni.

56. A. Shutte, *Ubuntu an Ethic for a New South Africa* (Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg, 2001), p 8.

57. I term Lady Selborne their “home” as a community because they called themselves the Selborners – Personal discussion with an informant: Ms Motshetshane, in Ga-Rankuwa on 18 March 2006.

58. Interviews: Ms Motshetshane & Mrs Manamela.

59. Interviews: Ms Motshetshane & Mrs Manamela.

60. Interviews: Mrs Kgari, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila & Mrs Madumo.

other things”.⁶¹ This implies that *botho* was not a static concept, but had to transform under different historical and social influences. For example, modernity, colonisation, capitalism, and segregation changed Sotho-Tswana perceptions of what constitutes a human being. All residents before dispossession saw themselves as human in spite of the fact that some had no title over the houses they rented; but after 1960 they started developing negative perceptions about themselves, especially those who were once landlords and could not buy plots in Ga-Rankuwa. This negativity also affected the way the Sotho-Tswana related to each other, as they tended to foster the spirit of exclusion and division as they were scattered by force all over South Africa, which resulted in the loss of relatives, neighbours and friends.⁶² This negativity is also detected in the manner in which the residents were displaced, whereby people were not given a choice, but were forced to move, and also the way the sales of houses were dealt with by the community and the state, which subsequently led to disunity in the resettlement area. According to the Bantu Prohibition of Interdicts Act (Act 64 of 1956), people were prohibited from seeking interdicts to dispute or suspend removals.⁶³ Black landlords were obliged to obtain approval from the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development to sell their properties to whites.⁶⁴ The City Council of Pretoria also decided as early as 1956 that “owners in difficulty may therefore offer their properties to the Council with a view of acquisition by the Council”.⁶⁵ The Equity Building Society (Permanent) that administered property bonds for some residents was anxious about bond settlement. Permanent made it clear in its letter to the Town Clerk of Pretoria, dated 25 September 1956, that irrespective of matters pertaining to property sales in Lady Selborne, it would appreciate if black Africans could sell their properties to the City Council and pay their mortgage bonds in full. Permanent’s concern about unsold black properties stemmed from their reluctance to acquire properties in Lady Selborne.⁶⁶ This decision convinced residents that forced removals were imminent, but some landlords did not sell their houses. Instead they resisted until the government officials came to remove them from their homes.⁶⁷

Many Sotho-Tswana were thus obliged to live without the familiar communities that had assisted them to become *batho* (human). One can

61. J. & J. Comaroff, “On Personhood”, p 268.

62. Setiloane, *African Theology*, p 12.

63. *Statutes of the Union of South Africa*, 2, 48-73 p 1697.

64. CA: NTS 928/313, 25 September 1956; CA: NTS 928/313, 8 August 1956.

65. CA: NTS 928/313, 25 September 1956.

66. CA: NTS 928/313, 25 September 1956.

67. Interviews: Mrs Tshweni, Ms Motshetshane & Mrs Manamela.

then argue that forced removals degraded people's *diriti* because it made them lose contact with the people, animals, plants and sacred spaces that they interacted with in Lady Selborne, and undermined the spirit of connectedness and community encoded in myths of origin.

Some informants felt that the initial disunity and alienation experienced in Ga-Rankuwa had become diluted by the 1970s, as community formation and unity prevailed in the resettlement area.⁶⁸ Informants argue that they had managed to develop into a cooperative and united group.⁶⁹ Ms Motshetshane, child of a former landlord, states that:

Many of our friends were spread to Eastwood, Mamelodi and Atteridgeville. This destroyed the community because we had to restart new relationships. But it became easier because Africans believe that a person is who he or she is because of others, thus we cultivated new relationships.⁷⁰

Forced removals also made many of those who were resettled resilient and forged a new community, which led to the transformation of their ethics and belief system. Some informants attest that moral degeneration occurred due to resettlement in Ga-Rankuwa, as children started disrespecting adults and residents stopped loving each other as they had in Lady Selborne.⁷¹ The changes in Sotho-Tswana beliefs are also highlighted in terms of environmental apathy.⁷² Informants like Mrs Kgari and Ms Motshetshane explained that people in Lady Selborne believed in caring for their environment, but some resident members abandoned this ideal after displacement.⁷³ This led to altered perceptions of themselves, their land and environment after removals in the 1960s. The process of consolidation of the homelands in the 1970s further fragmented ethnic groups and this crippled the Sotho-Tswana culture and religion even further, as they internalised discrimination as a norm in their daily routines. That increased negative effects on community relations in Ga-Rankuwa.⁷⁴

68. Interviews: Ms Motshetshane, Mrs Tshweni, Mr Tshweni, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mr Andrew, Mrs Mohlahledi & Mrs Manamela.

69. Interviews: Ms Motshetshane, Mrs Tshweni, Mrs Mohlahledi & Mrs Manamela.

70. Interview: Ms Motshetshane.

71. Interview: Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari & Mrs Tshweni.

72. Interviews: Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari, Ms Motshetshane, Mr Kgari, Mrs Tshweni, Mr Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mr Andrew, Mrs Matlaila, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mrs Madumo & Mrs Manamela.

73. Interviews: Mrs Kgari & Ms Motshetshane.

74. Evidence stated in: CA: BAO 7818T60/2/1547, Memorandum drawn up by the Tswana Vigilance Committee Representing Tswana Interests, Opinions

This complicates the discussion of the effect of land ownership on affirmation of “humanness”. Controversially, and somewhat paradoxically, forced removals appear to have positively affirmed some former tenants’ identity at least initially. All the former tenant informants claim that forced removals made them feel both happy and “fully human”, because they now occupied their own plots, though many had no money to buy the plots.⁷⁵ It seems that occupying independent plots in Ga-Rankuwa was favoured by tenants compared to renting small rooms in cramped conditions with little privacy, as had occurred in Lady Selborne. Former tenants in Ga-Rankuwa prioritised “having roofs” over their heads on private plots over holding free title to such plots. This raises the significance of land ownership in Lady Selborne as opposed to Ga-Rankuwa, and the importance of environmental security. Unlike in Lady Selborne, tenants in Ga-Rankuwa could not be arbitrarily evicted or exploited. Their “humanness” was affirmed by their enjoyment of occupying private houses with no extra labour demands made by landlords. Tenants became “bosses” of their own “homes” in Ga-Rankuwa,⁷⁶ and saw themselves as *batho*. Some former tenants referred to Ga-Rankuwa as their “home”, and not just a residential place.⁷⁷ This is confirmed by Mrs Kgari:

I was very happy about removals because I was a tenant, so by moving to Ga-Rankuwa I was going to be a landlord myself. To me it was liberating. Landlords in Lady Selborne used to control us like children. They would ask whether we have cleaned or collected papers. It was worse with me, my landlord was not living with us. He employed someone to look after us. Now in Ga-Rankuwa I was going to be my own boss in my own house.⁷⁸

These same sentiments are echoed by other tenants:

My humanness was affirmed through getting land in Ga-Rankuwa. I have *motse*, a “home” for my children, their inheritance.⁷⁹

and Aspirations, which was presented to the Commissioner General, Tswana Territorial Authority, no date. The memorandum indicates that the Tswana in Ga-Rankuwa discriminated. They did not want other ethnic groups like the Zulu, Tsonga and Shangaan in their township, because they argued that the Government policy stipulated that the township was to be populated and ruled by the Tswana.

75. Interviews: Mrs Kgari, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila & Mrs Madumo.

76. Interview: Mrs Madumo.

77. Interviews: Mrs Kgari & Mr Matlaila.

78. Interview : Mrs Kgari.

79. Interview : Mrs Kgari.

I was excited about forced removals in Lady Selborne because in Ga-Rankuwa I became a landlord. This was liberating, as we owned our own homes.⁸⁰

I felt happy about removals from Lady Selborne because in Ga-Rankuwa my husband and I became landlords.⁸¹

I felt bad about being removed from Lady Selborne because I had to lose many friends, but I was happy because I was going to live in my own house in Ga-Rankuwa and not forced to clean sewerage spills.⁸²

Former tenants were allowed to feel at “home” in these plots and felt more in control of their lives than they had in Lady Selborne.⁸³ Resettlement in Ga-Rankuwa also instilled positive self-esteem in former tenants, because they were given an equal opportunity with former landlords to buy or lease plots. Most former landlords could not purchase plots and rented houses next to their former tenants. The sense of homelessness among former landlords is explained by Auge:

A sense of homelessness perhaps derives, paradoxically, from a reaction against movement, a refusing of fluid boundaries, hence the clamouring by the homeless for renascent “particularism” primordial places for which they are willing to kill or die.⁸⁴

The changes in perception of “home” in affirming humanness deteriorated as people adapted to the situation in Ga-Rankuwa. Some informants argued the presidency of Lucas Mangope worsened the situation in Ga-Rankuwa in the 1970s when he instituted water restrictions that crippled subsistence agriculture – economically and spiritually crucial.⁸⁵ The State failed to improve infrastructure like water supply, electricity, hospitals, clinics, schools and housing.⁸⁶ Former landlords who became tenants in the resettlement area perceived themselves to be less human: *dilo*.⁸⁷ This corroborates the Comaroffs’ argument that “contemporary Tswana personhood is not referred to a state of being, but to a state of becoming. No living self is static”.⁸⁸ Changing Sotho-Tswana perceptions after resettlement had historical

80. Interview : Mr Matlaila.

81. Interview : Mrs Matlaila.

82. Interview : Mrs Madumo.

83. Interviews: Mrs Kgari, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila & Mrs Madumo.

84. Cited in: Rapport & Overing, *Social and Cultural Anthropology*, pp 158-159.

85. Interviews: Mrs Mvula & Mrs Tshweni.

86. Interviews: Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari, Mr Tshweni, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila & Mrs Madumo.

87. Interviews: Mrs Motshetshane & Mrs Tshweni.

88. J. & J. Comaroff, “On Personhood”, p 271.

implications of illustrating continuity and change. Mrs Manamela, a former landlord, supports this argument with her comments:

Through losing our land in Lady Selborne, our *botho* got affected because we were hurt. Other people were landlords in Lady Selborne and in Ga-Rankuwa they were like the tenants. They used to rent out houses to tenants in Lady Selborne, but in Ga-Rankuwa everyone is the same. Even though those who were tenants in Lady Selborne are happy and their humanness is affirmed, those who were landlords are hit hard by the removals, their humanness is hampered tremendously.⁸⁹

Many Sotho-Tswana believe that *motho* refers to a speaking being that has the ability to negotiate the terms of his or her living conditions on earth, and thus that disputing a person's right to that means denying that individual human status. Former landlords and their children attested in interviews to their sense of losing the status of *batho* and being relegated to *dilo*.⁹⁰ The classification of people in Sesotho and Setswana falls under *mo – ba*, (*motho – batho*), while they are classified as *le – ma* if deemed less than human. For example, a white person might fall under this category with objects *lekgoa – makgoa*, because they were regarded as oppressors and oppression is contrary to the spirit of humanness, but such a *lekgoa* would be classified as *mo – ba* if he or she demonstrated traits associated with humanness and the Basotho would say *lekhoha le, ke motho* (this white person is human). Ellenberger argues the Sotho-Tswana word *motho* indicates “the power of speech, a speaking being distinct from monkeys or baboons, which have something like human shape, but cannot speak”.⁹¹ For example, a pre-vocal baby is called *ngoana*, but is termed *mothoano* after speech is learned.⁹² The belief is embedded in contemporary Sotho-Tswana culture via language. Thus denial of “speech” via disenfranchisement implies a loss of humanness. This apartheid-induced devaluation of a human being is explained by Ngubane as “a sense of translation into experience of the pessimistic and devaluative view of being human”, because it led to widespread degradation of black self-esteem.⁹³ Ngubane also emphasises the dynamic nature of self-perception and its reliance on social context.⁹⁴ This supports the notion of a loss of humanness caused by resettlement to Ga-Rankuwa and the failure to adapt thereto.

89. Interview: Mrs Manamela.

90. Interviews: Ms Motshetshane, Mrs Tshweni, Mr Tshweni, Mr Maphalare, Mr Andrew & Mrs Manamela.

91. F.D. Ellenberger, *History of the Basuto Ancient and Modern* (Negro Universities Press, New York, 1969), p xxi.

92. Ellenberger, *History of the Basuto*, p xxi.

93. Ngubane, *Conflict of Minds*, p 81.

94. Ngubane, *Conflict of Minds*, p 92.

Thus many Sotho-Tswana of Ga-Rankuwa, especially former landlords, fostered negative self-perceptions and saw those without title to land as *dilo*, including themselves. Such negative perception led to serious environmental degradation in the resettlement space that was supposed to be *legae* (“home”), but was instead often referred to as *ntlu* (house).⁹⁵ It is worth mentioning again that both former landlords and former tenants had difficulty adapting to the resettlement area and embracing it entirely as “home”, because they could not use the infertile soil for food production,⁹⁶ as is suggested by the area’s name. Mrs Sekhu, a former landlord, argues that:

Ga-Rankuwa was not habitable especially because of the quality of land that could not allow us to cultivate food. In order to plant, one had to fertilize the soil and this was expensive.⁹⁷

Land as a “home”

The pre-1830 Sotho-Tswana land ownership system generally prohibited the alienation of rights to land, especially for capitalistic gain. Land was considered to be an inheritance (*lefa*) to be held in trust for future generations.⁹⁸ Their pre-colonial concept of land was grounded in the concept of *Ubuntu/Botho*, because the landless were often helped to acquire land if capable of protecting it. Though other groups attached religious importance to land, the Sotho-Tswana view is based on the land’s perceived function as a vehicle for communication with the spirits of ancestors. Land continued to be a “home”, an “inheritance” (*lefa*) from the ancestors and part of Sotho-Tswana “religion” and culture. The ethic of land ownership changed in Lady Selborne as people had to purchase or rent land through the market system. *Botho* still encouraged civic-mindedness, but could not assist people to acquire land as credit worthiness became the key to doing so.

This explains why forced removals transformed indigenous people’s perception of land and established the notion that those without land are less human (*dilo*). Traditionally and to date, land is pivotal as is indicated in the research undertaken by Letsoalo among the Northern

95. Interview: Mrs Tshweni.

96. Interviews: Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari, Ms Motshetshane, Mrs Tshweni, Mr Tshweni, Mr Maphalare, Mr Andrew, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila & Mrs Manamela.

97. Interview: Mrs Sekhu.

98. L. Ngcongco, “*Imvo Zabantu* and Cape Native Policy 1884-1902.” MA dissertation, University of South Africa, 1974, p 100.

Sotho, which illustrates that land is crucial as a source of livelihood.⁹⁹ The association between landlessness and the loss of humanness was fuelled by pre-colonial Sotho-Tswana religious and cultural precepts which held that no one who is old enough to acquire land, should be landless, because the ancestors left inheritance for every person qualified to have land – thus by implication censuring those who do not.¹⁰⁰

Qualifications to own land were traditionally based on age, marital status, gender and generally eligibility.¹⁰¹ The father of the groom would often request land from the chief, who together with his co-workers would distribute land. This did not exclude widows or old unmarried women.¹⁰² People in Lady Selborne however had to apply for land from the City Council of Pretoria and did so with money. The philosophy of land as an inheritance continued in Lady Selborne as landlords bought land for their children and the loss of such plots through forced removals meant the loss thereof.

The case of Mrs Tshweni, a former landlord, offers a good perspective in this regard, because she was given a house in Lady Selborne by her mother and held the title thereto, planning to keep it for her descendants.¹⁰³ This is why she says, "... when I was forcibly moved from my home, I cried like a bride taken to a groom's house".¹⁰⁴ This simile is driven by the custom whereby a new bride cannot have ownership of her new residence at any time, because she is an outsider. This loss of "inheritance", "home" and spiritual belonging is also applicable to other former landlords like Mrs Sekhu and Mrs Manamela, who compare the pain of losing their homes to that of a child being cut from its mother's umbilical cord.¹⁰⁵

As has however been discussed, Lady Selborne continued to be a "home" that had spiritual connotations for former landlords. Some of the displaced left umbilical cords buried there, denoting their spiritual connection to the township.¹⁰⁶ Setiloane argues that "to remove and

99. E.M. Letsoalo, *Land Reform in South Africa* (Skotaville, Johannesburg, 1987), p 20.

100. Letsoalo, *Land Reform in South Africa*, p 20.

101. Letsoalo, *Land Reform in South Africa*, pp 19-20.

102. Letsoalo, *Land Reform in South Africa*, p 20.

103. Interview: Mrs Tshweni.

104. Interview: Mrs Tshweni.

105. Interview: Mrs Sekhu & Mrs Manamela.

106. D. Chidester, *Religions of South Africa* (Routledge, London & New York, 1992), p 5.

separate people from their ancestral land is to rupture their soul, to cut off their instrument of life support".¹⁰⁷ The pre-colonial Sotho-Tswana used chiefs and places to identify themselves and this practice continued in Lady Selborne, with its former residents calling themselves the Selborners. Those displaced to Atteridgeville still call their section Selborne, indicating the link between their former home and their construction of their identity.

Many were compelled by forced removals to "use their identity as a means of communal protection of resources and as a weapon of communal resistance to dispossession".¹⁰⁸ The Sotho-Tswana had to mobilise themselves, however covertly, and reduce in importance the identity of those without title to land as "less human" in order to passively resist the system of land dispossession. Former landlords could be seen to be protecting their former position of privilege with their outcry for their "home". Community formation took a long time to occur in Ga-Rankuwa, largely because former landlords could not adapt to the fact that they had lost their properties. The use of censorious nomenclature like "not human" was arguably a weapon of solidarity and a means of both heightening and mobilising anger amongst all residents to mobilise resistance against displacement which also manifested in apathy towards environmental issues.

Many Sotho-Tswana believe that for a human being to be complete, he or she has to participate with the dead by performing all requested rituals by the ancestors. An individual must be in cordial cooperation with the spiritual, social, economic, political and environmental world. This implies that people must look after their environment, their community and themselves. Failure to do so causes a loss of humanness. An example of the disintegration of components and the impacts thereof is explained by Temgoua, who did research among the Bamileke people of Cameroon and explains that "exclusion of peasants from land means to condemn them to death".¹⁰⁹ This emphasises the role of land as a source of life, as pre-colonial people lived, farmed, herded and performed religious rituals thereon – in much the same way that a child remains connected to its mother even after the

107. G.M. Setiloane, "Land in the negotiations Chamber – An Afro-centric approach", *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa*, 5, 2, 1991, p 33.

108. T.J. Keegan, *Facing the Storm Portraits of Black Lives in Rural South Africa* (David Philip, Cape Town & Johannesburg, 1988), p 147.

109. A.P. Temgoua, "Human rights in Pre-colonial Africa: The case of the Bamileke district in the Western Cameroon." Unpublished paper, University of Witwatersrand History Workshop, 13-15 July 1994, p 6.

umbilical cord is cut. The Sotho-Tswana myth of origin in which humanity is said to have originated with animals from the hole in the ground and the perception that the dead return thereto reinforces this connection.¹¹⁰ There has been a perceived spiritual and mystical bond between the soil and its users, around which much of their folklore, poetry, religion and language were constructed.¹¹¹ Thus alienation from land impacted on the different aspects of an individual. The loss of land in Lady Selborne meant that its residents had to migrate without the spatial, emotional, psychological and physical setting and experiences of “home”.

A pursuit for “home” in Ga-Rankuwa

Ga-Rankuwa was initially an alien environment to many of the displaced, and did not resemble their “home”.¹¹² Consequently, some of the residents’ attitude towards their environment changed there. Khan states that “fundamental to the question of African environmental perception, particularly of environmental attitudes, is relationship with land”.¹¹³ Some former landlords perceived themselves as *dintha fela*, and relegated themselves to objects as opposed to subjects.¹¹⁴ Forced removals were a betrayal of the concept of *botho*, “an ethical concept that expresses a vision of what is valuable and worthwhile in life”.¹¹⁵ Informants argue that *botho* is about humanness,¹¹⁶ about being a real person with love, care,¹¹⁷ and material possessions.¹¹⁸ Mr Kgari, the son of a former tenant, explains that “I think *botho* and land loss are related, because by losing land one loses his or her sense of ownership and feels useless”.¹¹⁹

The loss of *botho*, according to Shutte, occurred because “the morality of *botho* is intrinsically related to human happiness and fulfilment”.¹²⁰ Unhappiness results in anger, aggression and passive resistance, as “*ubuntu/botho* can take more aggressive forms such as

110. Setiloane, *African Theology*, p 5.

111. E. Mphahlele, “Foreword”, in Letsoalo, *Land reform in South Africa*.

112. Interviews: Ms Motshetshane & Mrs Tshweni.

113. F. Khan, “Contemporary South African Environmental Response: An Historical and Socio-Political Evaluations with particular Reference to Blacks.” MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1990, p 15.

114. Interviews: Ms Motshetshane, Mrs Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu & Mrs Manamela.

115. Shutte, *Ubuntu*, p 2.

116. Interview: Mrs Mvula.

117. Interview: Mr Mohlahledi.

118. Interview: Mr Tshweni.

119. Interview: Mr Kgari.

120. Shutte, *Ubuntu*, p 132.

anger and defiance in face of injustice”.¹²¹ Some informants thus ceased caring for the environment in Ga-Rankuwa and degraded the land. Informants cite many reasons for environmental degradation in the resettlement area. Mrs Mvula, a former tenant, claims that “the quality of the soil which is red and sandy, made them not to plant anything in the soil”,¹²² a claim echoed by Mrs Kgari and Mrs Sekhu.¹²³ Others blame the absence of coercion in Ga-Rankuwa in contrast to the role of landlords in Lady Selborne.¹²⁴ Ellis, who did her research on Durban during the period 1845-1870, indicates that the absence of effective conservation enforcers leads to environmental disaster.¹²⁵ She also maintains that “the government promulgated laws to protect timber, fish and game, but neglected to appoint officials to enforce the laws. And this led to the alteration of the environment of Durban by 1870”.¹²⁶ This was the case in Ga-Rankuwa, as is attested by Mr Andrew, a son of a former landlord:

I suppose if there could be officials allocated to ensure cleanliness and people given materials to clean the locations things will change. Forced removals affected people’s attitude towards their environment, they became apathetic towards it.¹²⁷

Another informant blames environmental degradation in Ga-Rankuwa on the fact that water in the resettlement area was expensive, which prevented some people from even attempting cultivation.¹²⁸ Mr Andrew argues that “losing land indeed makes people to feel less human hence they do not care about the environment”.¹²⁹ This article argues that environmental apathy stemmed from the sense of “homelessness” after resettlement. Silverstone explains:

Being at home and being homeless, in short, are not as such matters of movement of physical space, or of the fluidity of social-cultural times and spaces. One is at home when one inhabits a cognitive environment in which one can undertake the routines of daily life and through which

121. Shutte, *Ubuntu*, p 132.

122. Interview: Mrs Mvula.

123. Interviews: Mrs Kgari & Mrs Sekhu.

124. Interviews: Mrs Mvula, Ms Motshetshane & Mr Andrew.

125. See: B. Ellis, “White settler impact on the environment of Durban 1845-1870”, in S. Dovers (ed), *South Africa’s Environmental History Cases & Comparisons* (Ohio University Press & David Philip, Athens & Cape Town, 2002).

126. Ellis, “White settler impact on the environment of Durban 1845-1870”, p 47.

127. Interview: Mr Andrew.

128. Interview: Mrs Mvula.

129. Interview: Mr Andrew.

one finds one's identity best mediated and homeless when such cognitive environment is eschewed.¹³⁰

Fieldwork indicates that Ga-Rankuwa ended up being dirty with litter. People did not plant trees or grass, and this resulted in soil erosion.¹³¹ Some residents felt the loss of *seriti* (dignity) as humans and were unable to adapt to the new settlement, resulting in contempt for it and themselves.¹³² The area's dirt can be deemed a trait of lack of *seriti*. Ngubane argues that "a philosophy of a definition of a human person succeeded or failed in proportion to the degree that it harmonized the personality".¹³³ Ngubane takes this further by arguing that African culture supports the idea that a person defines him or herself in everything he or she does.¹³⁴ This explains why resettlement fed into ideas of *dilo* (not human) and environmental apathy. Their strategy could be construed as a cry for help in terms of getting title for their houses, employment and funds to improve the soil. According to the Commonwealth Secretariat, "past policies, development trends and traditional beliefs may be partly responsible for the problems in the environment", which was why the residents of Ga-Rankuwa subconsciously felt that environmental chaos might attract state attention and assistance.¹³⁵

Hopes of returning to Lady Selborne died when Ga-Rankuwa became part of Bophuthatswana in 1977, and some people aggressively adopted a system of dominating nature, instead of negotiating with it. Informants make it clear that most of the resettled people did not plant trees, vegetables or fruits in their yards – which resulted in increased soil erosion.¹³⁶

Environmental apathy in Ga-Rankuwa was a reaction to forced removals. It also suggests that such apathy was part of a strategy of passive resistance and a means of informing the government that they were unhappy with their new area, as Mr Andrew argues.¹³⁷ This

130. Silverstone cited in: Rapport & Overing, *Social and Cultural Anthropology*, p 161.

131. Interviews: Mrs Kgari, Mrs Motshetshane, Mr Kgari, Mrs Tshweni, Mr Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu, Mr Maphlare, Mr Andrew, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila & Mr Manamela.

132. Interviews: Mrs Mvula & Mr Andrew.

133. Ngubane, *Conflict of Minds*, p 92.

134. Ngubane, *Conflict of Minds*, p 79.

135. Commonwealth Secretariat, *Women and Natural Resource Management*, (Marlborough House, London, 1996), p 8.

136. Interviews: Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari & Ms Motshetshane.

137. Interview: Mr Andrew.

demonstrates the erosion of the values implied by the Sotho-Tswana myth of origin. Traditional environmental values persist as informants are conscious that their apathy is new and acquired – and destructive.¹³⁸ Hence some residents tried corrective measures, but found themselves frustrated by poor soil quality.¹³⁹

Most residents desired a “home” in Ga-Rankuwa, which became *boroko* instead of “home”. Mrs Tshweni emphasises the difference between her residence as *lefa* in Lady Selborne and her abode as “a house” in Ga-Rankuwa, as she had no title to it.¹⁴⁰ The Sotho-Tswana connection between land and identity meant that the loss of land caused alienation from the environment,¹⁴¹ exacerbated by the paucity of enforcers of ecological laws¹⁴² and the fragmentation of community connectedness. Ga-Rankuwa lacked Lady Selborne’s health committee that dealt with matters pertaining to public health and sanitation.¹⁴³

Fieldwork indicates that Lady Selborne was kept clean and people’s identities were affirmed, but land dispossession undermined self-esteem and engendered apathy and even hostility towards the environment. Despite this uprooting, some residents tried to employ strategies to ensure that Ga-Rankuwa would become a “home” for them from 1962 to 1977, including soil improvement¹⁴⁴ and the forging of new social bonds.¹⁴⁵ Some former tenants saw resettlement in Ga-Rankuwa as partly affirming their humanness, even though they did not have title deeds, as they had their own plots and more status than before.¹⁴⁶ Even their optimism was dampened by poor soil quality,¹⁴⁷ but the partial participation of some residents in environmental issues, manifested by the buying of manure and the planting of fruits, trees, grass and vegetables, indicates a journey towards “making a home” in the resettlement area.¹⁴⁸

138. Interviews: Mrs Kgari, Ms Motshetshane, Mr Tshweni & Mr Andrew.

139. Interviews: Mrs Kgari, Mr Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu & Mrs Mohlahledi.

140. Interview: Mrs Tshweni.

141. Khan, *Contemporary South African Environmental Response*, p 18.

142. Interviews: Mrs Mvula & Mr Andrew.

143. Carruthers, “Urban land claims in South Africa”, p 3.

144. Interviews: Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mrs Mohlahledi & Mrs Madumo.

145. Interviews: Ms Motshetshane, Mrs Tshweni, Mr Tshweni, Mr Maphalare, Mr Andrew & Mrs Manamela.

146. Interviews: Mrs Kgari, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila & Mrs Madumo.

147. Interviews: Mrs Kgari, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mr Matlaila, Mrs Matlaila & Mrs Madumo.

148. Interviews: Ms Motshetshane, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mrs Madumo & Mrs Manamela.

Conclusion

Fieldwork conducted in Ga-Rankuwa in 2004 to 2006 for the purpose of this research suggests that the ramifications of forced removals include the degradation of the environment in Ga-Rankuwa.¹⁴⁹ Widespread environmental apathy represents a form of passive resistance against forced removals and resettlement. As a result, the relocation area could not become a “home” for many of its residents, particularly former landlords and especially those who could not purchase plots. Thus there should be different steps that the state, residents, non-governmental institutions and educational institutions should undertake to ensure that the residents of Ga-Rankuwa find fulfilment in the area and establish it as a “home”.

This article has argued that Lady Selborne was a “home” for its community and was characterised by social harmony and successful subsistence farming.¹⁵⁰ Its environment ensured “fulfilment” and the establishment of “viable homes” that affirmed its residents’ humanness. Developed infrastructure and free title over properties allowed residents to enjoy their *botho* in an area that was situated close to Pretoria’s city centre.¹⁵¹ Its interconnected community “simply allowed each individual to become a unique centre of shared life”.¹⁵² This also affirmed people’s humanness, as is suggested by Ross’ argument that a “home is an ideal toward which people strive, over which they struggle, and in relation to which they construct aspects of identity without necessarily achieving ‘domestic consolidation’”.¹⁵³

This explains the spiritual importance of land and “home”. Casalis argues that in the pre-colonial period, “the Basotho’s had a strong attachment to the land like superstitious respect for the soil and it was not natural for the land to be cut because their soul revolted in it. Instead of

149. Interviews: Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari, Ms Motshetshane, Mr Kgari, Mrs Tshweni, Mr Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mrs Madumo & Mrs Manamela.

150. Interviews: Mrs Mvula, Mrs Kgari, Ms Motshetshane, Mr Kgari, Mrs Tshweni, Mr Tshweni, Mrs Sekhu, Mr Maphalare, Mrs Maphalare, Mrs Mohlahledi, Mrs Madumo & Mrs Manamela.

151. Horrell, *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa*, p 164.

152. Shutte, *Ubuntu*, p 2.

153. F. Ross, “Model communities and Respectable residents? Home and housing in low-income residential estates in the Western Cape South Africa”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 31, 3, 2005, p 648.

cutting the land the Basotho's would better lose it altogether".¹⁵⁴ This explains why displacement aggrieved the Sotho-Tswana of Ga-Rankuwa, because they saw land as more than a shelter: it was place for making history, where family and neighbours socialised. It was also a sacred space for rituals and an environment that provided food. Losing it meant the loss of *lefa* and *botho*.

Resettlement in Ga-Rankuwa meant that the former residents of Lady Selborne had to start a new history, interpersonal relationships and engagement with the environment – a frustrating process as people were unfamiliar with each other and the soil was infertile. Thus it was difficult to make a “home” of Ga-Rankuwa, as people hankered after their “lost home” in Lady Selborne. Many residents became apathetic towards environmental issues.

Some informants, mainly former tenants, described “a quest for a home in Ga-Rankuwa”. For such former tenants, forced removals came with some positive results and actually affirmed their humanness. This optimism proved short-lived, as the area deteriorated further under homeland rule in the 1970s and the environment resisted improvement. Former landlords found it even harder to adjust to the loss of privilege and the absence of title to their “homes”. Despite these frustrations, the “pursuit” continued in the face of crippling environmental degradation, and this “quest” requires drastic steps that include environmental activism by the community of Ga-Rankuwa that would assist in ensuring that the resettlement area would become a “home” for the resettled.

Abstract

This article presents a case-study in forced removals and its ramifications from 1905 to 1977 from the perspective of socio-environmental history. The focus area is a township in Pretoria called Lady Selborne (currently known as Suiderberg) and Ga-Rankuwa, where some of the displaced were relocated. The article demonstrates that forced removals did not only result in people losing their historical land, properties and material possessions, but that they also lost their “home” and thus their sense of being and of connectedness. Hence the focus is on the changing perceptions of people in the midst of their land loss, which is the focus that is lacking in academia. The article depicts the complex picture of the ramifications of forced removals among the former inhabitants of

154. E. Casalis, *The Basutos, Twenty-Three Years in South Africa* (Struik, Cape Town, 1965), p 156.

Lady Selborne. The latter was a “home” – a place for being human, where the residents managed to engage in food production and were able to own properties in an area that was multiracial. In the case of Lady Selborne, Africans were displaced from a scenic area that was fertile, close to the city centre of Pretoria and relocated to Ga-Rankuwa, a place with infertile soil on the outskirts of Pretoria. The article illustrates that successive white governments and many scholars have tried to downplay African environmental ethics and to disregard them as “superstition”. This resulted in forced removals and consequently in Africans ending up being apathetic to environmental issues in the resettlement area of Ga-Rankuwa. Environmental apathy emerged unconsciously as a weapon of opposition against removals.

Opsomming

“n Tuiste maak jou *Motho*” – die rol van die konsepte “Menswees”, “Tuiste” en Geskiedenis in Lady Selborne se gedwonge verwyderings, van ongeveer 1905 tot 1977

Hierdie artikel is ’n gevallestudie uit die oogpunt van sosio-omgewingsgeskiedenis oor gedwonge verwyderings en die nagevolge daarvan tussen 1905 en 1977. Die fokusgebied is ’n *township* in Pretoria, Lady Selborne (tans bekend as Suiderberg), en Ga-Rankuwa, waar sommige van die verplaasde mense hervestig is. Die betrokke mense het nie net hulle historiese blyplekke, eiendomme en besittings verloor nie, maar ook hulle “tuiste”, insluitend hulle selfbewussyn en hulle samehorigheidsgevoel. Die soeklig word dus op die wisselende persepsies van mense te midde van hulle eiendomsverlies gefokus – ’n benadering wat tot dusver afwesig in akademia was. In hierdie artikel word die komplekse gevolge wat die gedwonge verskuiwings vir die voormalige inwoners van Lady Selborne gehad het, bepaal. Lady Selborne was ’n “tuiste”, ’n heenkome vir mense, waar die inwoners voedsel suksesvol geproduseer het en eiendomme in ’n veelrassige gebied kon besit. Swartes is verplaas vanuit ’n vrugbare gebied, geleë naby die stadskern van Pretoria met ’n mooi uitsig, en is hervestig in Ga-Rankuwa, ’n onvrugbare plek aan die buitewyke van die area. Daar word aangetoon dat opeenvolgende blanke regerings, asook talle navorsers probeer het om die omgewingsetiek van Afrika as onbelangrik en selfs as bygeloof af te maak. Gedwonge verskuiwings het gevolg en swartes het uiteindelik in Ga-Rankuwa apaties teenoor omgewingskwessies begin staan, asof hulle daardeur, in die onderbewussyn, apatie as wapen teen gedwonge hervestiging kon gebruik.

Key words

Afro-centric history; conservation; environmental history; environmental justice; forced removals; Ga-Rankuwa; home; indigenous land tenure; Lady Selborne; *motho*; social identity; usable past.

Sleutelwoorde

Afrosentriese geskiedenis; bewaring; bruikbare verlede; Ga-Rankuwa; gedwonge verskuiwings; inheemse grondbesit; Lady Selborne; *motho*; omgewingsgeskiedenis; omgewingsreg; sosiale identiteit; tuiste.