Tapping into the Political Assets of Basotho Traditional Religion: In Search of Political Stability in Lesotho

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Abstract

In this article, I employ a critical literature review to address three key points. Firstly, I argue that ongoing political and constitutional reforms in Lesotho are unlikely to establish long-term political stability, supported by historical evidence. I reinforce this argument by highlighting past political reforms that failed to achieve lasting stability in Lesotho. Additionally, I show how political stability rooted in Basotho religious beliefs existed before the influence of Western Christianity and colonialism. I demonstrate how colonialism, specifically coloniality, contributes to the persistent political volatility in Lesotho. Lastly, I present reasons for reviving Basotho political traditions embedded in traditional religious beliefs. My argument draws from the perspectives of the *Lekhotla la Bafo* decolonisation movement, representing subalterns who endured oppression under colonial rule and educated elites aligned with colonialism. I propose the retrieval of *Lekhotla la Bafo's* views through the school system, aligning with Durkheim's theory of education's function and decoloniality border thinking.

Keywords: Basotho traditional religion, Christianity, civilisation, coloniality, decoloniality, political religious beliefs

Introduction

In this article, I argue that Lesotho's continuing political reforms might not result in long-term peace and stability. Lesotho has a history of political instability since gaining autonomy in 1966, characterised by factionalism, violence, coups, and political deaths (Vhumbunu 2015). Recent political turmoil prompted these reforms, as highlighted in reports from international organisations like SADC and the Commonwealth. The proposed reforms encompass changes in parliament, the constitution, the security sector, the judiciary, and the civil service (Institute for Peace and Security Studies 2019:12).

The anticipated reforms raised hopes both locally and globally, but this paper argues that despite Lesotho's various political, constitutional, and institutional changes, none have significantly advanced its progress. Three key points are made:

a) Reforms have predominantly focused on administrative adjustments rather than instilling values and norms of good governance. To ensure lasting peace and stability in Lesotho, it is proposed that political morality, not just constitutional democracy, should take precedence. Makoa (2004:83) suggests that effective constitutions rely on citizens' commitment to unassailable values.

b) Lesotho's pre-colonial governance was robust, rooted in socially binding moral principles and good governance. Learning from this historical foundation can offer insights into contemporary political issues. Early missionaries in Lesotho acknowledged the political stability of traditional Basotho society, noting elements of a representative form of government (Casalis 1861:236). However, their religious biases led them to believe it required Christian development for justice and good administration.

c) Colonialism is identified as the primary impediment to Lesotho's democratic governance. Other reform targets, such as political, constitutional, and institutional issues, are viewed as symptoms of colonial influence. This argument finds support in the works of authors like Mokoa (2004), Turkon (2008), and Coplan and Quinlan (1997).

Lastly, I recommend preserving the political feasibility embedded in traditional Basotho religion. This proposition is not a recent innovation but was advocated by the *Lekhotla la Bafo* during the decolonisation era. To tap into the political principles of traditional Basotho religion, I suggest employing a decolonial approach known as "border thinking." The strategy involves integrating traditional religious values and beliefs into the modern school system, drawing inspiration from Durkheim's educational theory.

Durkheim (1956:54) argued that education serves to develop physical, intellectual, and moral qualities required by society. It aims to establish political moral values compatible with the child's society. Therefore, the research suggests that education is a key means to instil the necessary political moral ideals rooted in Basotho tradition religion.

To expand the scope of the debate, four critical questions are addressed:

    a) Why are the proposed reforms unlikely to achieve lasting peace and stability in Lesotho's political landscape?
    b) What lessons can be gleaned from Lesotho's pre-colonial political stability?
    c) Why are traditional political and religious assets currently dormant?
    d) How can traditional political resources be harnessed to address modern Lesotho's political challenges?

In line with the approach to addressing these questions, I employed a rigorous review strategy that involves critically evaluating and reimagining existing literary ideas (Snyder 2019:335-336). Sander and Rojon (2011: 23) outline four key perspectives within critical review: rhetorical criticism, traditional criticism, authoritative criticism, and objective criticism. "Rhetorical Criticism" guided my exploration of the literature to extract relevant insights on the aforementioned issues. "Traditional Criticism" and "Authoritative Criticism" facilitated a critical examination of conventional and dominant literary viewpoints, which may have contributed to side-lining other valid perspectives in the quest for political stability in Lesotho. "Objective Criticism" underscored the importance of recognising that knowledge and information derived from the literature are not devoid of value. For instance, colonial perspectives may legitimise colonising ideologies like political constitutions, while decolonial perspectives offer alternatives to break free from the shackles of colonialism. Hence, the objective of this paper is to examine the impact of colonial perspectives on the development and legitimisation of political constitutions in Lesotho, exploring how colonial powers imposed their political systems and their enduring influence on contemporary governance. Additionally, it delves into decolonial perspectives, which propose strategies to challenge and dismantle colonial legacies. These strategies include restoring indigenous governance through revitalising traditional beliefs, and establishing alternative political structures free from colonial ideologies.

The failure of Lesotho's political reforms

Throughout its history, Lesotho has seen numerous attempts at political reform, yet none have yielded satisfactory results. Makoa (2004:80) chronicles the series of political reforms proposed and implemented from colonial times to the present day. Among these reforms, the 1998 changes were hailed as the most promising solution to Lesotho's political instability.

The backdrop to the 1998 reforms was a tumultuous period in Lesotho's politics. It began with the aftermath of Lesotho's first post-independence elections in 1970, a milestone referred to as "Lesotho's tragic failure of the first democratic test" by Weisfelder (2015:52). In this election, the opposition Basotho Congress Party (BCP) emerged victorious. However, then-Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan of the Basotho National Party (BNP) refused to step down and clung to power with the support of Lesotho's security forces and the South African apartheid government (Motseki, Maluleke & Dlamini 2020:2; Southall 1993:2; Ardigó 2014:1; Bardill 1988:186). Jonathan suspended the constitution, ushering in an era of authoritarianism marked by force, oppression, and de facto one-party rule, as described by Mothibe (1998:47). This authoritarian rule endured for 16 years until Jonathan was ousted in a 1986 military coup, leading to eight years of military rule in Lesotho (Letsie 2018:2-3; Amnesty International 1992:1-3).

In 1993, Lesotho returned to democratic governance, with the BCP led by Ntsu Mokhehle winning the elections (Rakhare 2018:82). However, the BNP, as noted by Makoa (2004:84), disputed the election results and incited riots. King Letsie III intervened in what became the "palace coup," resulting in the overthrow of the elected government. After Southern African Development Community (SADC) intervention, King Letsie III's government was dissolved. To prepare for the second election post-restoration of democracy, a national dialogue was initiated in 1997 to recommend reforms to the electoral system. Previously, the election process was overseen by the office of the Director of Elections, criticised by the opposition for bias as a civil servant entity. This led to the establishment of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), a significant step towards promoting political stability (EISA Election Observer Mission Report 2019; Sekatle 1999:32-33). Likoti (2010) also emphasizes the IEC's autonomy and non-partisanship, ensuring impartiality and independence from external influence.

After the 1998 elections, Lesotho experienced political strife and riots, leading to the burning of the capital, Maseru (Molomo 1999:134). The election was contested by the opposition, and the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD), led by Pakalitha Mosisili, emerged as the winner after splitting from the BCP. These riots prompted SADC intervention and the formation of the Interim Political Authority (IPA). The IPA recommended transitioning from the First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system to the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) model, combining FPTP and party-list Proportional Representation (PR) (Gay and Green 2001:3; Kapa & Shale 2014:97). The adoption of the MMP election model marked a significant reform in Lesotho's politics, aiming to reduce fragility and instability (Matlosa 2008:23). It was envisioned to transform Lesotho from a culture of political antagonism to cooperation, promoting inclusive democracy and diverse representation, fostering consensus among multiple parties, in contrast to the FPTP system (Likoti 2010).

The MMP election system did bring a brief period of political stability after the 2002 national and 2005 local government elections, according to Matlosa (2003:90). However, challenges emerged during the 2007 elections when the LCD, led by Mosisili, won, but disputes arose over the allocation of parliamentary proportional seats. This disagreement escalated into a parliamentary 'sit-in,' with five opposition parties refusing to leave the parliament, requiring the intervention of the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) to remove them (Weisfelder 2015:57). The disagreement spilled into Maseru's streets, leading to a widespread general strike. To address

the crisis, the SADC Troika facilitator mediated dialogue among key stakeholders, including the IEC, the ruling party, and the opposition parties, resulting in constitutional revisions and electoral reforms that set the stage for the 2012 elections. These reforms included changes to the 2007 voting system.

The 2012 election resulted in Lesotho's inaugural coalition government due to no single-party achieving a majority. It consisted of three parties: ABC (30 seats), LCD (26 seats), and BNP (5 seats), with leadership determined by seat count. However, this coalition, often described as a "marriage of convenience" by Motsamai (2015:5), particularly between ABC and LCD, lacked a cohesive vision. Their cooperation was primarily driven by "anti-Mosisili sentiment," resulting in conflicts, parliamentary suspension, a coup attempt, SADC intervention, and the government's downfall in 2014.

After snap elections in 2015, a 7-party coalition formed, led by Mosisili's DC with 47 parliamentary seats and Metsing's LCD with 12. Mosisili became Prime Minister, Metsing his deputy. During this coalition, Major General Maaparakobo Mahao was assassinated, allegedly by his predecessor Major General Tlali Kamoli, who had resumed leadership of the LDF (Pherudi 2018:124). Leaders from ABC, BNP, and RCL sought refuge in South Africa after an alleged assassination plot supposedly orchestrated by General Kamoli, who had been ousted by a coalition formed by these three parties. Their escape raised international concerns. SADC intervened, establishing the Phumaphi Commission led by Botswana High Court Judge Mpaphi Phumaphi, which investigated Mahao's death and other political crises, including the 2014 coup attempt. The Phumaphi report, along with the 2014 Commonwealth envoy Rajen Prasad report, laid the groundwork for ongoing reforms.

This example underscores the failure of prior reforms to achieve lasting political stability in Lesotho, prompting the exploration of alternative solutions. Therefore, this article proposes a return to the political ethics rooted in traditional Basotho religion. The political dimension of Basotho culture, inherent in traditional religions, endured marginalization and assaults throughout colonial and post-colonial eras.

Coloniality framework

Agreeing with Weisfelder (1981:224) and Makoa (2004:80), Lesotho's dysfunctional democracy is attributed to colonialism. Lesotho experienced direct colonisation from 1865 to 1965. Colonists often imposed their culture, religion, language, and socio-political system on the colonized. While Lesotho gained autonomy during parts of this period, it has been over 50 years since gaining independence. Blaming this historical period is now irrelevant. Colonialism's impacts and influence persisted through independence, post-independence, post-colonialism, and neo-colonialism. Therefore, the concept of coloniality is more relevant for analysis.

Coloniality refers to enduring systems of power and control born from imperialism. It encompasses culture, the exchange of ideas, both conscious and subconscious, and knowledge creation that extends beyond colonial borders. Unlike mere colonial legacies, coloniality persists, demonstrating how colonialism transcends historical and geographical confines. It continues to shape knowledge acquisition, societal structures, human desires, and all facets of life, to the extent that its impact becomes ingrained and commonplace (Maldonado-Torres, 2007:241).

Coloniality is a comprehensive tool for analysing European hegemonic power dynamics beyond metropolis-colony relations. It operates at three intertwined levels: coloniality of power, coloniality of being, and coloniality of knowledge, providing a robust framework (Seroto 2018:4-5; Maldonado-Torres 2016:19-22).

- Coloniality of power explores how European imperialism, classical colonialism, and neo-colonialism exerted control and subjugation over non-Europeans, with lasting impacts on post-colonial societies (Maldonado-Torres 2016:19-22).
- Coloniality of being examines how colonisation still divides the world into the 'Zone of Being,' controlled by colonists who shape socio-economic and political actions, and the 'Zone of Non-Being,' where predetermined victims reside (Ndlovu-Gatshani 2015:33).
- Coloniality of knowledge delves into epistemology, addressing how colonial information shapes knowledge and influences the colonised mind, perpetuating disparities and alienating cognitive information construction (Ndlovu-Gatshani 2015:33).

This article utilises coloniality as an analytical lens to trace colonialism's role in Lesotho's persistent political instability, spanning from the missionary era through direct colonialism to the present. It reveals how colonialism has deeply ingrained itself into all aspects of modern Lesotho society, making it irreversible but necessitating coexistence. The coloniality matrix of power explores how European power structures and ideologies have contributed to Lesotho's ongoing political instability. The coloniality of being sheds light on how denying the existence of others impacts victims' perception of their culture and humanity. The coloniality of knowledge reveals how colonialism hinders Lesotho's progress and stability. To effectively apply the tools of coloniality analysis, it is crucial to understand Basotho's political arrangements before colonialism.

The political organisation of Basotho in the pre-colonial period

Before Western influence, including 1830s missionaries and 1860s British colonists, Basotho politics revolved around religious values and beliefs, noted by Makoa (2004:83). Key elements included ancestral reverence, initiation, and the *borena*, an indigenous political institution. Pre-colonial Basotho politics centred on religiously ordained leaders known as "*marena*" (Mahao 2007:207; 'Nyane 2019:4). This system was commonly referred to as chieftaincy, *borena*, or traditional leadership. Selection of a *Morena* (political leader) was endorsed by the *seboko* institution, consisting of relatives who identified with a specific ancestor's animal (totem) as their symbol. Political management relied on blood ties and hereditary beliefs, resembling an extended family, guided by familial norms (Coplan & Quinlan 1997). King Moshoeshoe 1, the founder of the Basotho Nation, united the nation through ancestral beliefs by marrying spouses from various clans, creating blood ties. Consequently, the pre-colonial Basotho nation became a familial community bonded by diverse ancestors' marriages. This positioned political leaders as parental figures, bearing moral responsibilities for the nation.

Political and economic stability are closely linked. Political stability provides the foundation for economic stability by creating an environment conducive to economic growth. In turn, a stable and prosperous economy can help maintain political stability by reducing the risk of social unrest and dissatisfaction. In his role as a father figure, *morena* adhered to the boundaries of political checks and balances. As highlighted by Mahao (2007), pre-colonial *borena* (chieftaincy) was not centred on the personal authority of the chief, but rather on a governance system. The chief's role was one of collective participation within the context of the *Lekhotla* (court of council), involving various members. Collective governance led to public ownership of means of production, except for private property such as livestock. All other natural resources, notably land, were held collectively. As Casalis (1861:215) observed, the *morena*, as a guardian, could have more possessions than others could, but they were obligated to support the less fortunate in the community. Failure to meet this responsibility led to

deportation, as illustrated by the replacement of Libe with his younger brother Mokhachane, who happened to be Moshoeshoe's father (Casalis 1861:216).

In pre-colonial Basotho society, besides ancestry, initiation/circumcision (*lebollo*) was a vital religious principle for political leadership and governance. The initiation ceremony, emphasised by Ellenberger (1912:280), played a central role in civil and political life. The *morena* supervised this institution, bringing young men of his son's age together for a rigorous six-month training to cultivate lasting bonds. Upon completion, the chief's son gained approval to establish his designated village, and fellow initiates became integral members of the government and judiciary, ensuring equal participation in political and legal affairs for all village men. This initiation process empowered age companions (*thaka tsa mphato*) of *ngoana oa morena* (the ruler's son) for collective governance, sharing political and legal responsibilities.

Initiation, despite its strong religious foundation and complex rituals, encompasses essential physical and psychological aspects of political life. It begins with seclusion, as described by Magesa (1997:107), where initiates are temporarily isolated from their community to endure physical and psychological pressures that foster a sense of community longing. This separation from family and community support briefly makes them homeless, highlighting the importance of belonging to a family and community and the challenges of individualism. In essence, initiation instils the principle of "*motho ke motho ka Batho*" - the concept that a person's identity and humanity are shaped through interaction with others, where the desire to give, receive, and belong becomes paramount.

Initiation, including circumcision, holds both health benefits and profound religious significance in the African worldview. According to Magesa (1997:110), circumcision symbolises social bonds, involving the merging of initiates' blood, which in African culture symbolises life itself. This act represents giving one's life to their age-mates, who collectively form the community. Being part of the community implies self-sacrifice, as the surgery carries risks and pain, potentially requiring one to sacrifice for the community. As Magesa (1997:106-107) notes, this age-pact fosters solidarity, patriotism, a commitment to the common good, as well as qualities like decency, respectability, and wisdom. In essence, circumcision cultivates a political morality focused on self-sacrifice, solidarity, communal values, and patriotism.

Lesotho's coloniality legacy

Colonialism eroded Basotho traditional religious foundations for political stability. Missionaries arrived in the 1830s with the aim of converting non-religious people to Christianity. Initially, the Basotho were viewed as lacking religion, and their beliefs were seen as superstitious (Mabille 1906:355). Laydevant (1935:308) supposed that the Basotho, like many Africans, had limited religious knowledge before European contact, where "*molimo*" (God) referred to ancestors and was used in the plural "*balimo*." Being without religion was associated with lacking a soul, leaving individuals in a state of non-being, where those from the realm of being could impose new beliefs. Gill (2010:82) noted that converting to Christianity became synonymous with adopting Western civilisation, requiring the abandonment of traditional beliefs and culture in favour of Western values.

Missionaries aimed to alter crucial cultural beliefs and practices within the pre-colonial Basotho political structure, which, according to Mothibe (2002:31), greatly enriched the indigenous democratic system. These targeted cultural elements included ancestral beliefs, polygamy, initiation, and *borena*. Ancestral beliefs were seen by missionaries as a sign of irreligiousness, making them a primary target for replacement with belief in God, despite the already existing belief in God among the Basotho. Casalis (1861:248) noted a strong belief in "*molimo*" (God)

among the Basotho, hence the adoption of this term to describe the Christian God in the Sesotho language.

Missionaries scrutinised Basotho polygamy and the marriage system, particularly *bohali* (bride-wealth). According to Machobane (2001:47), they interpreted *bohali* economically, viewing it as the commercialisation of women. They saw *bohali* (lobola) as a transaction where men appeared to purchase women, diminishing their humanity and treating them as commodities. Despite objecting to *bohali* for this reason, missionaries failed to provide compelling arguments against polygamy. They mainly cited the biblical account of God creating one man and one wife, without addressing the polygamous practices of biblical figures. Their opposition to polygamy largely arose from its incompatibility with Western marital ideals.

Missionaries strongly condemned the initiation ceremony, although their rationale remained unclear. According to Machobane (2001:48), the primary objection was that initiation is the corner stone of Basotho religious beliefs and values. This perspective emerged during the 1891 Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) Missionary Conference, which considered initiation as an institution that promoted traditional beliefs and values, making it a significant obstacle to the spread of the gospel and civilisation. In a report to the colonial government in 1868, Roland, a missionary and government agent, labelled initiation as "the starting point of heathenism, school of Satan, and a powerful corrupting and seductive influence in the country that hindered Kaffirs from converting to Christianity" (Roland, 1868).

Missionaries also targeted the Basotho's indigenous political system, citing perceived power abuses. They accused *marena* (political leaders) of accumulating excessive power by being the sole landowners and amassing livestock through fines imposed on subjects, allowing them to take multiple wives (Ronald 1869). However, missionaries failed to understand the indigenous rationale behind these practices. According to Mothibe (2001:25), in Basotho traditional society, no one owned land or other natural resources such as trees and grazing land, not even the *morena* or commoners. Instead, collective ownership of these resources prevailed. Casalis (1851:159) emphasised that the entire community owned the land, and no one else had the right to dispose of it. The *morena*'s role in allocating land and *liremo* (resources like grazing grass, trees, and stones), as well as livestock through the *mafisa* system, aimed to ensure subjects' loyalty and allegiance, not necessarily to the *morena*, but to the community they belonged to (Mothibe 2001:26; Eldredge 1993:37). Mothibe (2001:26) highlighted that the *morena*'s responsibility in allocating natural resources fostered patriotism.

Missionaries established formal schools to impart colonial knowledge, with the goal of Christianising and civilising those seen as irreligious and uncivilised. Basotho educated in these schools often adopted Western customs, including clothing, housing, English language skills, monogamous families without lobola, and Western political and economic practices, while abandoning traditional beliefs (Gill 2010:81; Epprecht 1992:71).

Epprecht (1992:34-35) highlights the coloniality of education with the motto "Knowledge is power". This concept involves assigning specific meanings to words and concepts to shape and control expected behaviour. Missionary education aimed to narrow Basotho's epistemic perspective and introduce them to Western culture, politics, and economics. Through formal Western education, Basotho were taught to accept the limitations of their traditional beliefs and politics in favour of Christianity and Western civilisation, despite recognising their oppressive aspects.

During the British protectorate (1868-1965), colonial power was solidified in two phases. According to Gill (2010:117), Basotho's traditional political and religious practices were forcibly

suppressed, while Western economic incentives were introduced. Legal changes supported Christianity and civilisation, permitting Christian monogamy without lobola and introducing private property and inheritable land ownership. Initiation training became optional, and the Christian society was officially recognised and supported, with the aim of replacing traditional Basotho society. Cash taxes were introduced to boost the monetary economy, and new magistrates and a police force enforced colonial laws. The Christian-educated elite secured government and church positions, working as teachers, evangelists, writers, police officers, and clerks within the colonial civil service (Gill 2010:117; Manyeli 2001:79-80).

The indigenous political system saw a significant shift as well. According to Turkon (2008:207), British qualifications and hereditary monarchy standards replaced totem rulers, who were the indigenous political leaders. Clan rulers were replaced by relatives of King Moshoeshoe 1, serving local interests while limiting local participation in governance. The newly established ruling elite received government salaries through the gazette system, solidifying the Bakoena clan of King Moshoeshoe 1's position. Indigenous rulers then used to collect colonial revenue from land, taxes, and fines. As noted by Proctor (1969:65) and Quinlan (1994:51), kingship aristocracy became a constitutional part of the prototype cabinet of the National Council, formalised in the Lerotholi laws, which turned flexible indigenous socio-political customs into rigid traditions. These changes, in accordance with Quinlan (1994:52), distanced traditional rulers from indigenous political structures and the populace, while simultaneously empowering the educated elites detached from cultural foundations and beliefs.

As Lesotho approached independence, the underlying contradictions, confrontations, and polarisation contributing to its current political instability became more evident. Colonialism divided society into three distinct groups with differing social, economic, and political beliefs: the ruling aristocracy, the educated elite, and the masses. Basotho moved toward independence by orchestrating conflicts between these groups. The educated elites, organised under the newly formed Basutoland Progressive Association (BPA), opposed chiefs and traditionalists. Weisfelder (1974:399) noted their efforts to privatise land and other means of production, aiming to break free from cultural constraints and embrace modern economic systems due to their education and modernisation. Essentially, "BPA members questioned their own culture's value and readily embraced the benefits of British tutelage" (Weisfelder 1974:399).

The educated elites played a vital part in guiding Lesotho to independence and continue to exert great influence on the nation's political landscape, with their ideology still being influenced by colonial economic and political structures.

An alternative to political instability in Lesotho

In this article, I advocate for revitalising the indigenous Basotho's political religious beliefs, based on three key points. Firstly, historical precedent exists in the incorporation of traditional Basotho religious beliefs into politics, exemplified by the pre-independence Basotho mass political movement known as *Lekhotla la Bafo* (the Council of Commons), despite its unfortunate suppression. Secondly, addressing Lesotho's political challenges at their root cause, which is colonialism, necessitates embracing a counter-decolonial approach. Lastly, I propose the integration of Basotho traditional beliefs into the education system.

The idea of incorporating indigenous Basotho religion into Lesotho's politics dates back to 1919 with *Lekhotla la Bafo*. This group opposed the Basutoland Progressive Association (BPA), considering it a colonialist puppet organisation influenced by missionary education (Leeman 2015:194). *Lekhotla la Bafo*, as highlighted by Weisfelder (1974:403), blamed Christian missionaries for destabilising Basotho political stability under traditional leaders,

arguing that missions conditioned young Basotho to accept European dominance as natural. Nyeko (2002:143-145) notes that *Lekhotla la Bafo* believed that the education provided to Basotho children aimed to groom them as servants for European colonists rather than as independent individuals. *Lekhotla la Bafo* asserted that mission attacks on indigenous initiation schools were attempts to disrupt Basotho society, despite some cases where missionaries accepted circumcision. They argued that missionaries contributed to the British policy of divide and rule among the Basotho, leading to social tensions and animosities between different Basotho groups, contrary to the Christian doctrine of fellowship preached by the missions (Gill 2010:172; Maundeni 2010:132).

However, as noted by Gill (2010) and Weisfelder (1974:403), *Lekhotla la Bafo* did not wholly oppose Western education and socio-economic culture. They recognised the importance of Western culture in shaping Europeans but advocated for its harmonisation with traditional Basotho beliefs. I wholeheartedly support *Lekhotla la Bafo's* view that Western political systems, like democracy, are vital for Lesotho, but should be inspired by traditional Basotho religious beliefs. Therefore, I advocate for decoloniality, which represents a strategic effort against ongoing colonisation. It differs from decolonisation, which aimed to free Africa and the world from classical colonialism and its remnants. Decoloniality aligns with *Lekhotla la Bafo's* ideas by acknowledging the importance of Western culture but, as argued by Mignolo (2011), it promotes a polycentric worldview that rejects the imposition of any single religion or civilisation over others. The decoloniality approach, as explained by Maldonado-Torres (2007:261), involves unveiling the invisible and analysing how coloniality shaped this invisibility to harness the "invisible" energy for improved social life. This paper adopts decoloniality thinking to advocate for the revival of suppressed traditional Basotho political beliefs, which were stifled by colonialism. It recognises the three colonial tendencies identified by Grosfoguel (2011:11), including the imposition of Christianity to convert those considered irreligious and uncivilised, followed by the imposition of the white man's burden of civilising mission, and the imposition of the white man's version of democracy.

Decoloniality, as described by Grosfoguel (2011:11), confronts ongoing colonial power dynamics within the nation-state, where colonial remnants and allies advocate for European-centric solutions to political issues. Its aim is to challenge the Eurocentric notion that democracy is exclusively Western and can only be improved within European-defined boundaries. I argue that the indigenous Basotho religious beliefs contain valuable political wisdom that can provide a lasting solution to political instability. I agree with Mothibe (2002:31) that if democracy involves good governance, then pre-colonial Basotho society possessed democratic principles and local resources capable of addressing current shortcomings in democracy.

Recommending the revitalisation of Basotho's traditional political and religious beliefs through the school system, I draw from Durkheim's (1956:54) theory of education's role. Durkheim posits that education serves as a means of systematic socialisation within the school environment, with its primary goal being the nurturing of the "collective conscience" or collective consciousness, distinct from individual personality traits. This fosters group unity and shared values, enabling active participation in social institutions like religion, politics, and decision-making. Furthermore, as national institutions, schools should instil political ethics aligned with democracy and good governance, aligning with Durkheim's perspective on education's function.

Drawing from Durkheim's educational principles, I recommend incorporating traditional Basotho religion into the school curriculum, with a focus on beliefs related to political morality. This involves instilling collective political consciousness through systematic socialisation.

Political collective consciousness aligns with traditional clan-based affiliations, fostering national unity akin to a fraternity, where political leaders are regarded as responsible guardians for all citizens. Initiation rites promote collective opinions and communal participation in governance.

Decoloniality, as enhanced by "border thinking," accelerates the integration of traditional Basotho religion into formal education. This approach, as outlined by Icaza (2017:2), urges a confrontation with colonial power dynamics, advocating cross-cultural reference and mutual epistemic understanding to counter the coloniality of knowledge. Grosfoguel (2011:25) contends that border thinking challenges the idea that colonized people must view democracy as exclusively Western, opposing nationalist elites who insist on Western political and constitutional reforms as the sole remedy for democratic instability.

Border thinking, as suggested by Querejazu (2016:4), promotes ontological and epistemological pluralism to challenge the Western-centric worldview. It encourages diverse ways of existence and understanding reality, encompassing both ontology and epistemology. Plural ontology aims to reintroduce the perspectives of marginalized groups, like *Lekhotla la Bafo* during the decolonial era, into the narrative, which was often neglected in classical and internal colonialism. Multiple epistemology involves recognizing *Lekhotla la Bafo's* subjective knowledge in upholding democratic governance within traditional Basotho religious beliefs. The role of the school education system is pivotal in revitalizing these traditional beliefs for enduring political stability.

Conclusion

In this article, I do not oppose ongoing constitutional and political reforms, and I do not propose that only indigenous Basotho religious and political beliefs should be integrated into the school education system as the sole solution to Lesotho's political instability. Instead, the article suggests incorporating traditional political and religious beliefs, without delving into the specifics of curriculum and pedagogy. My alignment is with decoloniality border thinking, advocating a radical departure from the mono-colonial norm by embracing subaltern thinking – ideas that have been suppressed and marginalized but may offer valuable insights if acknowledged.

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