

**A FRAGMENT OF  
BASUTO HISTORY,  
1854 TO 1871**

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OF  
BASUTO HISTORY.

1854 to 1871.

BY  
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## PREFACE.

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This fragment of the history of South Africa was compiled under the following circumstances :

In 1880-81 the rebellion of the Basuto tribe brought to view a strong military power which had grown up almost unheeded under the eyes of colonial officers. At once there was a demand for reliable information concerning a people who had for the previous ten years been supposed by nearly every one to be a peaceful tribe intent only on adopting European civilization. The demand could only be met with opinions. Previous to 1871 the Cape Colony had very little to do with the Basuto, the transactions with Moshesh having been conducted by the Governor in his capacity as High Commissioner. There was no published history to refer to. Even in our legislative chambers the most contradictory statements were made concerning events of less than thirty years ago.

No one could in justice be blamed for this. The Native Department of the Colonial Government only came into existence in 1872, and it had no records beyond that date. In the Colonial Secretary's office there were many documents dating from 1833 to 1872 referring to the Basuto tribe, but they had never been kept separate and were consequently almost lost in

the vast mass of manuscript accumulated there. By far the greater quantity of Basuto records was in the High Commissioner's office, in which there is so little space that everything not frequently required is of necessity deposited in a store room. Add to this, that a generation ago very little importance was attached to documents relating to tribes in what was then the far interior, and the difficulty may be realized of even Government officers obtaining in 1881 information that could not be contradicted.

Early in 1882 the Government resolved to have all the authentic records that could throw light upon the history of the Basuto tribe collected and published, and the duty of carrying out this work was entrusted to me. It was not supposed at the time that the quantity was as great as it was subsequently ascertained to be. The Government of the Orange Free State was applied to, and with the utmost cordiality opened its archives for our use. A clerk was engaged for some months at Bloemfontein copying documents which had not previously been supplied to the High Commissioner. The missionaries in the Lesuto were not less ready to help. The early letter books of Moshesh were in their possession, and these were forwarded to me with many other papers of the utmost value for the object in view. The journals, reports, and maps of the first missionaries in the Lesuto were copied and supplied in the most obliging manner. When collected and arranged the papers consisted of :

- (a) Correspondence between the Home and Colonial Governments, between the Colo-

nia] Governments and the Basuto Chiefs, between the Sovereignty and Free State Governments and the Basuto Chiefs, and between the High Commissioner and the Free State Government.

- (b) Treaties between the Imperial and Free State Governments and the Basuto Chiefs.
- (c) Reports of Commissions, of Imperial, Colonial, and Free State officers sent to confer with the Basuto Chiefs, of the British Resident in the Sovereignty, of the High Commissioner's Agent, of the Superintendent of the Wittebergen Reserve, of the Civil Commissioners of Colesberg and Aliwal North, and of military officers of the English and Free State forces serving against the Basuto.
- (d) Discussions and resolutions of the Cape Parliament, the Legislative Council of Natal, and the Volksraad of the Orange Free State.
- (e) Proclamations by officers of the Imperial and Free State Governments and by Moshesh.
- (f) Reports and journals of missionaries.
- (g) Printed accounts by travellers who visited the Lesuto.
- (h) Articles from the leading South African newspapers of different views.
- (i) Statements made by Basuto Chiefs.
- (j) Declarations made on oath by various individuals, and evidence given before Commissions.
- (k) Minutes of Meetings, Petitions, Memoranda, Addresses, Instructions, &c., &c.



These documents date from 1833 to 1872. After excluding those of secondary importance, that is those which contained only information given in others of greater weight, there were published three volumes, containing 2,141 closely printed royal octavo pages, and there were 1,712 pages of foolscap manuscript ready for the press when the Cape Government was relieved of Basutoland and the work was stopped. In print and in manuscript which has been recently indexed and bound, the Basuto records are thus as complete as it is possible to make them down to the date of the creation of the Native Department.

As soon as it was ascertained that the bulk of these documents was so great that very few people indeed would have time or inclination to go through them, it was arranged that I should out of office hours condense their substance into two or three hundred pages, in such a way that the essence of the contents of each volume should appear as an introduction to the succeeding one. As fast as I could prepare it, slips were printed and sent for criticism to those who were best acquainted with the subject and to those who had taken part on both sides of the strife in years gone by. The object was to get an accurate version of events, one that could be referred to in confidence by all parties, and not to favour any particular theory or any opinions whatever.

With the return of the first slips sent out it was evident that it would be difficult to compile a history of the Basuto that would be acceptable to every one. Men who had throughout their

lives regarded every black man as an Uncle Tom and every colonist as a Simon Legree could not view events in the same light as those whose kindred had been butchered by the Zulus or had been reduced to destitution by the faithlessness of Moshesh. It very rarely happened that a set of slips was returned with marginal comments pointing in one way but another set would be returned with comments on the same events in exactly the opposite direction. These extreme views were, however, held by very few individuals, and the comments referred to served the useful purpose of compelling me to verify what I had written by careful reference again to the documents from which the information was drawn, and in a few instances only caused me to alter the wording of sentences. Most of those who assisted in reviewing the work were satisfied that strict justice was being done to all, and were content with pointing out small omissions, suggesting additions, or referring to sources of information. After the publication of the second volume of records it was not possible for those who had previously maintained the integrity of Moshesh to do so any longer. And I believe that the number is now very small, if indeed there are any at all left, who hold that these papers are capable of being read in any other way than that in which I have read them.

It is more than two years since the work was brought to a close, when the portion of Basuto history before the public extended in records to March 1868 and in the condensed form to the end of 1861. The remainder of what was then

ready,—records to December 1872, condensed form to 1871,—has from that time been lying unused. In March 1884 Basutoland was re-transferred to the Imperial Government, and politically we have now no more to do with it than with New South Wales. But its history has an abiding interest for all South Africans, and no one will consider it inappropriate that even a fragment like this, upon which so much labour has been expended, should be printed for general use. A few months ago the Hon. Mr. De Wet, Secretary for Native Affairs, was kind enough to give me permission to publish it in the form in which it is now before the reader.

GEO. M. THEAL.

Cape Town, April, 1886.