

*Translated from Tswana to English



Interview with Petrus Rampou

Project name:	Land Act Project
Date of interview:	29 May 2013
Location of interview:	Mogopa Village
Language/s of interview:	English and Setswana
Length of interview:	47m: 52s
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Notes on access and use (if any):	None
Audio file name/s of interview:	LAP_MOG_Rampoumosekatsabo_20130529

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Nohlanhla Ngwenya (NN): Ok, this is Nonhlanhla Ngwenya. I'm with Mr Peter Rampou. We are conducting an interview regarding the forced removals in Mogopa, Mr Peter if you could please introduce yourself.

Petrus Rampou (PR): I'm Petrus Rampou My name is Pule Mohutsioa I was born here in Mogopa in 1958. I'm George Rampou's son that was there during the forced removal in 1984. I grew up here in Mogopa. There were two villages: Hartebeestlaagte, IP 146 and Swartrand, IP 145 that were bought by our forefathers, they bought them from the government. This government negotiated with the commissioner. The commissioner that they negotiated with was for the mineral rights here in Mogopa. When talking to them, our elders started buying Swartrand first. Swartrand was a residential place and Hartebeestlagte was a grazing place for their cattle. The commissioner gave them Swartrand 605, the Swartrand number was 605. The Hartebees number was (he pauses trying to think) the Hartebeeslaagte number was 3367. The Morgen is 7865 the Swartrand one is 4483, those were our morgen's, then after that, in 1984, our government took us to Pachsdraai. We didn't want to go to Pachsdraai because it was under Bophuthatswana.

NN: Ok, sir. As you were growing up, how was life like before they moved you?

PR: When I grew up here in Mogopa, our elders were the kind of people that were ploughing. They farmed with cattles. We could eat from those ploughing fields; go to town to sell the cattle to live.

NN: How were the infrastructures, the schools?

PR: Our school was called Swartkop Bantu School. It ended with Standard 6. We had a clinic that serviced us, our kids, and our parents.

NN: Before they moved you from here, Mogopa, how was life? How did the community interact with one another?

[TIMECODE: 04:24]

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PR: The community of RaMogopa was united. We were divided because of the forced removal; this removal was caused by people that wanted to move to Bophuthatswana. Before the move there were departments that came here in Mogopa in 1972 to come ask as to decide who are we siding with. There were two people: Pilane who was a Chief and Maselwane, they came to the village in 1972 to ask if we were siding with Pilane or siding with Maselwane but because we didn't want to move us to Bophuthatswana we didn't agree with what they came with, we refused their proposal. Later in 1973, there were a few people that moved to Modikwe near Brits.

NN: According to you sir, when your parents told you, when did Mogopa start?

PR: Mogopa. Let me explain it like this: it's a place of people that come from the Free State, they came with their cows grazing, sleeping on the fields, until they find this village called Mogopa. Mogopa was very fertile for ploughing, full of productions like diamonds. It has lots of water. For our parents to get water, they dug the water using spades, so where they were digging they were draining water, hence they say Mogopa (draining). They would pass where there were crocodiles, there were lots of crocodiles, until here at Mogopa. They loved drinking water there. They would drain water with buckets they had that is why we call this place Mogopa.

NN: As you were growing up here in Mogopa, how did the government treat you?

PR: Please repeat your question.

NN: Before you were moved from Mogopa, how did the government treat you?

PR: As we lived here government treated us in an unsatisfactory manner. Whatever we wanted to do we were told this is not our land, this is their land. We disagreed with them. What we knew is that parents told us that they bought it top to bottom. They didn't owe it - they paid a full amount.

NN: Mogopa: was it under the government or under the community?

PR: Mogopa had their own people ruling themselves. They had a title deed. It had its own clans. It had 6 clans. It had the BaPhuting clan, the RaMorola clan, they had the RaMore, they had the BaTloung clan, they had the BaTlase clan, and they had a Kgafela one. In all those clans the RaMore one was the biggest in Mogopa. There was a Head man put in place, it started with Thomas More. Then Simon More succeeded, for them to be nominated as Chiefs. Where they came from they bought 2 lands Hartebeestlaagte and Swartland, but buying that land they had no permits. They could not meet the Native affairs commissioner (Home affairs) in town but none of them was brighter, so they worked in hand with the Bethanie Chief, chief Mamogale. Chief Mamogale was the learned one. He is the one who took the elders' money to (*Native affairs*) Home affairs to buy them these 2 lands.

NN: Meaning in other words Mogopa was under the Chief?

PR: Under the Chief, instated by the paramount chief Mamogale.

NN: How did you do things here in Mogopa? Did you do things traditionally, or you got orders from the Chief?

[TIMECODE: 10:30]

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PR: Things were done by the Tribal Authority, anything you wanted to do you had to via the Tribal authority , if someone is looking for a stand, Authorities would ask for a testimonial letter from where they are coming from, just to know what kind of person were they.

NN: When you did things, did you them traditionally? How were things done around here?

PR: Everything we did, we did it traditionally, especially when we went to the graveyards where we buried our loved ones. We would wear black attires. If there is a ceremony we would campaign for that. Each and every household will contribute food for that.

NN: What was the Mogopa land mainly used for?

PR: The Mogopa land - hence I'm saying there is two lands there was Hartebeestlaagte, there was Swartland. The Swartland was a residential area and the Hartebeestlaagte one was for grazing and ploughing, so that we can feed ourselves

NN: How did the removal affect you coming back to Mogopa?

PR: It really bothered us, this thing of being moved. We were looking at feeding ourselves. There were no jobs we were farmers, farming in cattle's.

NN: The relationship amongst the Mogopa people, the unity how was it?

PR: I beg yours?

NN: The relationship here how was it before you were moved?

PR: We were very united here in every way. We were so close to each other. If the Chiefs calls with his horn, we would all go as men, to hear what he says. We would go there unite and be able to do whatever he is asking of us.

NN: If I could take you back, Mogopa was it under farmers, like white farmers?

PR: Mogopa was under people that were self-employed not under white people, it was under us; black people, and black farmers

NN: Can you tell how many incidences that people saw or suspected that these will lead us to being removed from Mogopa?

PR: The main reason for us to stay here at Mogopa, Mogopa is full of diamonds; it's full of water, a lot of grazing land, it's a place where we can all "eat" from it, that is why the white people moved us.

NN: In the community, things that were done or visible, that you will be removed from Mogopa? The relationship you had with the government that made them move you from Mogopa?

PR: The government had some people that they sided with. Those that were against Mogopa, especially the biggest clan of BaKwena, is the one that made us to move here because they were promised that if they go to Pachsdraai they will be given farms and we will be under them. That is why we refused to move with them, but then the Bophuthatswana president Lucas Manyane Mangope came in 1983. He came to ask us to move to Pachsdraai. We refused because we didn't like the Bophuthatswana area.

[TIMECODE: 14:20]

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NN: As community: when you saw what was done by the Chiefs- what did you do? How did you react to that?

PR: Some of us, the Bakwena that were left there, we fought against what the others were doing to side with the Chief, to say why are they taking us to a land we don't want. We went to court; the court of Ventersdorp agreed with them that we should be moved from Mogopa so that they can occupy it.

NN: Before the removal happened, which incident did you notice that there is a possibility of a removal?

PR: In 1972 when I was at school, people were moved to Bethanie. That was this man called RaMogopo. They initiated the Mogopa removal; the removal didn't start in 1984 it started in 1972. Others then moved to the Modikwe area next to Brits.

NN: In 1972 was it a forced removal or they just moved willingly?

PR: It was not a forced want. They wanted to leave Mogopa, I can say most people didn't want to move from this village, I could say about 400 people

NN: What tactics did the government used to remove people of Mogopa?

PR: The tactics that they used: there were churches around here, the Roman Catholic Church and some of its committee members. They would hold meetings at night and agree that they will move the people of Bakwena to Pachsdraai.

NN: What other ways did they use you to move you from Mogopa?

PR: Ways that the government used, they came at night towards the early hours of the morning. They came with the police and took some of the leaders that also made us to refuse to move. They put them in cars and moved them to Pachsdraai.

NN: After being moved how did the community react to that?

PR: Because amongst other community members there were those that worked in big cities like Gauteng, we managed to call to ask them that on the 14th February 1984 there is a removal: what should we do, come help us and see what we can do.

NN: Would you be able to tell how many people did the government employ to remove you from Mogopa?

PR: The government used their trucks mainly to remove us from Mogopa.

NN: How was the removal according to your observation?

PR: In the removal of going Pachsdraai, those that wanted to go were so happy. They were only happy because the government was giving them maize meal, sugar and powdered milk. They were happy to move as far as 250 km from Mogopa

NN: Then the forced removals started here in Mogopa?

PR: That's when the forced removals started in Mogopa. When they started in Mogopa, in 1983 towards the end in September, we asked, we had visitors like Mr Boesak, Desmond Tutu and others that were with them, we were under the tree the whole night. They helped, watching us so that the government doesn't move us. The whites still came but they made a turn at the main entrance of Mogopa, they couldn't remove us.

[TIMECODE: 19:16]

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NN: According to you, the night vigil, how did it impact on the people of Mogopa?

PR: We had hope because we had older people like Archbishop Tutu and Allan Boesak. We were happy that we won't move, but the government has a "long arm". We relaxed, hoping we no longer going. After that we were surprised to learn that there is another removal on the 14th February 1984.

NN: If I can please take you back. When they removed you, did they move you all at once or they moved you bit by bit?

PR: They came with a lot of trucks, they came with trucks to load the livestock, buses to load people, even trucks to load people's furniture, but because they were doing things in a hurry for us to move from our village, most of us we left our things. Even cars were left here, when we came back we never found them, we never knew what happened to them. We left in a hurry because we were removed forcefully.

NN: When the forced removal happened, what impact did it have in the community in terms of changing people's lives?

PR: You know what the government did. When we got to Parksdraai, they had a list. There were houses that were built with rocks,[at Mogopa. This is a reference to government compensation methods] and so they would give you something.

There were houses that were built with rocks, other with corrugated house. If your house was built with rocks they would give you better money, if it was corrugated iron they will give you less money. Most of the people thought we could live off that.

NN: After moving you, the unity of the community, or the time they were busy moving you, how was the unity in the community?

PR: When they moved us, as a community we started grouping ourselves because we didn't want this land of Bophuthatswana, we found ways of what we could do. We found people that worked in Gauteng they gave us people like Black Sash that really helped us to move us from Parksdraai to go to Bethanie where our paramount chief is. We lived a better life. When we got to Bethanie we realized that Bethanie falls under Bophuthatswana. Then we realized we can't live under Bophuthatswana ruled by the government. We don't want the Bophuthatswana government. We started holding our meetings at Brits [a township nearby]. We started holding our meetings there as we could not hold any discussions in Bethanie. [Mangope had forbidden the Mogopa community to hold any meetings while in Bophuthatswana].

NN: Taking you back a bit, the community: what forms of resistance did they do to show that they don't want to move?

PR: The community did a lot of things to show they don't want to move from Mogopa, firstly the title deed of Mogopa; it's ours the people of Mogopa, our elders bought it from top to bottom.

NN: The role that women played to show that they don't want to move from Mogopa?

PR: It really bothered us, but women didn't really play a significant role in the removals, but later there was a lady called Ms. Dijo More, she really encouraged to work closely with women. She was with a lady called Lydia Kompe. They really encouraged us to be united with women to enable us to work with the government. We would let women to lead us when going to court especially the elderly women to show them that these are elderly people. They were not supposed to have moved them - it was bought for them by their parents.

[TIMECODE: 23:38]

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NN: Putting women in front: did it make the situation better or was it the same?

PR: When we put older women in front, it became easier. It make the government to realize that these are elderly people. There is a saying that says a mother will do anything for their child (loosely translated- a mother would hold a knife on its sharp side to protect their child) that is why we put ladies to show the government that women rule.

NN: After moving you from Mogopa, who occupied Mogopa?

PR: After moving us, the white people have always wanted this place. They brought their cattle here to graze.

NN: According to your observation, why would they bring their cattle to graze instead of them occupying it?

PR: That is why I'm saying it was good for grazing. If you kept your cattle here, they will graze nicely. If you ploughed here, you reap something, and the things produced here, the whites wanted them for themselves.

NN: After moving you to Bethanie, how was life in Bethanie?

PR: When we got to Bethanie, Bethanie was a place that fell under Bophuthatswana. But because we thought the Paramount chief will really take care of us like being his children, and then we realized we were not in a good place, we couldn't do anything under Bophuthatswana. Not free to do anything. Everything had to be scrutinized even just holding meetings. We spoke to the government to look for a land for us to move us from Bethanie. They found a place like Onderspoort, and we also refused to live on that land. That land was near Sun City but we noticed that we lived in place of wealth but we can't work.

NN: At Bethanie, were you under the chief or under the government, how did it change, the way you did things in Mogopa?

PR: There was never a change when we got to Bethanie like we thought, as we were under our chief. Our Chief was attracting us to Bophuthatswana, hence we asked to be moved to our mother land, we also wanted to show the government the land we wanted.

NN: Like said that here in Mogopa you did things traditionally, in Bethanie didn't you continue doing things like you did in Mogopa, did it change things traditionally?

PR: When we got to Bethanie things changed. We couldn't do things like we used to in Mogopa. You wouldn't plough, farm, your cattles will disappear.

NN: How did you manage yourself to go back to Mogopa from Bethanie?

[TIMECODE: 28:36]

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PR: When we came back from Bethanie, like I said there were organizations like Black Sash and TRAC. We sat them down to ask them to find us a better place either than Bethanie. They saw our unity as the Bakwena from Mogopa, with that they managed to get us lawyers. They got us Human rights lawyers like Fink Haysom. They represented us in Bloemfontein in 1985, then a judgment was passed, that you removed these forcefully. We grouped ourselves that we want to go back home. There were problems because the government wanted this place. Then we were divided, we even went to Onderspoort, most of us remained there, but about 350 families tried to come back to Mogopa

NN: With your observation which group played the most important role for your coming back home? I mean we have the youth, community, women, who would you say played the most significant role in your coming back; the youth or the community as a whole?

PR: For us to come back to Mogopa, we were with elders, youth. Everything we did we would sit down together and discuss it. We would go Gauteng for a week in Rivonia to discuss our problems; it will be elders, women and youth

NN: How did it come that you ended up coming back to Mogopa, the process?

PR: I beg yours?

NN: What led you to coming back to Mogopa?

PR: We asked the government, there is a grave yard here in Mogopa, it wasn't moved. We thought about talking to the government to give us permission to clean the grave yards. Gert Viljoen gave us permission to do so. As we were planning to clean the graveyards we grouped together and decided to move the elders to the Mogopa village so that the whites won't notice that we've gone back to Mogopa. We did that. When the government noticed that we want to go back to clean the graves, they wanted to stop us from cleaning the graves

NN: How did they stopping you from cleaning the graves affect you?

PR: When they stopped us it was too late as most of the elders were here in Mogopa. We had a lot power now. It gave our lawyers Fink Haysom and the others, [an argument] that we are going back to our parents. Our parents are at Mogopa.

NN: After winning the battle, who came back to Mogopa?

PR: I beg yours?

NN: After winning the battle did you all come back to Mogopa or others remained?

PR: Not many of us came back, they complained that they have built houses at the alternative places that they gave us, it was Onderspoort, most stayed in Bethanie. Others stayed in Onderspoort, but about 350 families came back to Mogopa.

NN: Would you say how their remaining behind affected you as the community of Mogopa?

PR: It affected us. When we noticed, we told our parents that we understand that they didn't get the education we got, but for us to come to Mogopa it's because of the graveyards. Then some realized it was going to be difficult to bury their loved ones. So they went back home for them to be able to bury their loved ones, kids, families, or where my grandparents are.

[TIMECODE: 34:31]

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NN: When you came back to Mogopa did life change or did it go back to where it was?

PR: When we came back to Mogopa we said we don't want tribal authority. We want a Trust that started in 1984. When we started this Trust it had men and women so it worked well, they were given 5 years in the office. After that when their term of office [finished] and the new one started, the likes of Ishmael Mohutsioa, that group really treated us well. They even built the houses that we are in, the roads, the water and the schools.

NN: What was the women's role in changing Mogopa system the way it was to where it is now?

PR: The women did a bakery; they baked bread for us, they're sowing for us.

NN: When you came back how the relationship of the community was: did it change?

PR: We were united. Problems started. We noticed that as youth in 2003, there were openings of Diamond mining. They did well because of the likes of Ishmael Mohutsioa. We agreed on lots of things, we could see here we are going, and the Old Trust worked hand in hand with the lawyers Fink Haysom to win this land of Mogopa. After the Trust there were problems, because they wanted lawyers. Not those that won the Trust for us. They like other lawyers because they were Black, they understood them. The lawyers that were led by the Mohutsioa Trust were white people, so the community didn't trust them. But now [with] these Tswana or Black lawyers we are not getting an income from the Diamond mine. We would get money from Mohutsioa group and they would tell us that this is from the mines, from your diamonds. .

NN: After we got freedom how did Mogopa become in terms of job creations and all that?

PR: Since we got freedom there is a problem in Mogopa. There is no problem with the freedom, it's the people of Mogopa who has a problem. There is no unity. The majority has matric but does nothing. We are just sitting around, us as the youth that was involved in the struggle that we must come back here. We used to work with a company called Mogopa Minerals in town. It was an office where you could get information. We did something that our parents didn't think of: we wrote a letter to Minister Blade Nzimande who is now the Minister of Education. We wrote him a letter asking him, there are kids who passed in our community, they have no money to further their studies, like we saw on TV that you are giving away bursaries, please help these kids for us. He said he wants to see those kids and he wanted the results. He saw how they passed, he said he wants them to go to an FET college or the teachers college. We came back and gave them feedback to say if they want to go for teaching it's fine. Most of the kids did as we asked. Others went to Potchefstroom; others went to Orbit in Rustenburg. They did a sterling job. We're waiting to see their progress. Those that are on this Trust with this government, they were against us, thinking Minister Blade gave us money and we are using it for personal use. We explained that the government just said we must take the kids to school, that's when there was division amongst people.

[TIMECODE: 38:55]

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NN: Taking you back what do you think the reason could be that there should be division in the community?

PR: The reason for lack of unity is because of the mine. It's making money for us, but we have no idea where it's going. Now we've noticed that during the Mohutsioa Trust we saw where the money is going. They would deposit the money in the bank. Since this [new Trust] took over they go to court and use the Bakwena money to pay for the lawyers.

NN: would you say this forced removal, how has it impacted the Mogopa future?

PR: It created problems; most of us are not working. We can't even do things the way we wanted to do things. We used to be able to speak to the government and they would listen to us, now they say we are fighting. It would only help us when we stop fighting.

NN: In your observation, which role would you say the youth of Mogopa is playing to change the situation?

PR: The youth of Mogopa tries and meets, to have an understanding. We're working towards the future of our siblings that have passed. They can't go to schools because there are these fights. We're meeting to bring peace, we are not given permission like the Trust has the opportunity but it has no clue how these things work, that is why there are these problems.

NN: How would you say this has changed your life?

PR: The forced removal changed my life. We've always been independent, so since the removal we no longer are sure where we stand. We've turned out to be beggars. We used to be providers.

NN: According to you would say forced it has ruined a lot of lives in Mogopa?

PR: Forced removals have ruined a lot of lives in Mogopa. There is no peace, even as families we fight

NN: Thank you, if there is any information missing we will contact you.

[TIMECODE: 47:52]

[END]