PART II
Compounds as Home and Grave
We entered the compounds with dilated nostrils,
There we found dogs from many villages standing in a queue,
Vultures queuing, children from small houses.
Listen to the cruel clerk, men,
He says we left our mothers behind,
He calls a *koata* by his mother,
His mother who does not even know him,
In his heart the *koata* keeps on saying: ‘You too’!

Part I has examined the dynamics of labour migrancy in Lesotho as well as the making of the Basotho migrants’ identity during the period 1890s–1940s. The main focus in Chapter One was on the processes leading to the concentration of Basotho migrants to the Witwatersrand gold mines in the course of the 1920s. Chapter Two examined the impact of Basotho’s dependency on migrants’ earnings; how this dependency was articulated within Basotho homesteads and within the Basotho colonial society in general. While showing how the entrenchment of labour migrancy in Lesotho resulted in the improvement of travelling and transportation conditions and the establishment of 168 facilities in the country, Chapter Three, however, put emphasis on how Basotho migrants themselves transformed their own world, shaping their own experiences in the process. All in all, Basutoland of the 1930s was significantly different from that of the 1890s. Not only was migrancy to the gold mines no longer discretionary by the 1930s, but the Basotho society had absorbed socio-cultural influences brought by its men from South Afri-
Desecrating the Sabbath? Leisure in the Compounds

ca's urban centres. The bulk of Basotho men now spent the most part of its active life on South African mines and its compounds. The following three chapters, comprising Part II, focus on aspects of the Basotho experiences in the mine compounds.

The period 1890 to 1940 is important for understanding not only the history of labour migration and the deepening of dependence on migrant earnings in colonial Lesotho, but also the development and social history of the gold mine compounds which were used to house African mine-workers. The efforts of the Randlords to reduce the cost of labour involved not only cutting down expenditure in procuring labour by establishing a recruiting monopoly, but also the central fact that little was spent on the housing, health and safety of African miners. Because the number of African employees was increasing even as wages were cut, mine managements struggled to find increasingly authoritarian ways of controlling the black labour force. More than the Pass Laws and Master and Servant measures which aimed at combating desertion from service, the compounds were used as a crucial instrument in this regard. By the mid-1920s, the mine owners were in a relatively comfortable position, with labour supply stabilised and costs kept in check. Now concerned with the long-term profitability of their mines, managements began to improve conditions in the compounds and address questions of occupational safety and the recreation of African miners.

But none of this was achieved without struggle, as managements often acted in response to initiatives taken by the miners themselves. Moreover, the 1920s and 1930s were a critical period in South African urban history. This period saw the rapid development of black urbanisation, as well as the emergence of an urban black petty bourgeoisie on the Witwatersrand. This was linked to the decline of rural economies in the years following the 1913 Land Act. It was also in this period that the white government grudgingly accepted the fact of black urbanisation, and passed the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923, which was intended to control this process.

The permanent settlement of Africans on the Rand dates from the very beginning of mining development. They settled in the slums, which had proliferated and spread across Johannesburg before and especially after World War I. Places such as Fordsburg, Ferreirastown, Marshalltown, City and Suburban, Old and New Doornfontein, Ophir, Jeppe, Vrededorp, Prospect Township, and George Gogh, were all affected. Black locations first emerged after the South African War as a result of attempts by the state to purge Johannesburg suburbs of African slums. Klipspruit was established in 1903, Alexander in 1905, and the free-hold areas of Western Native Township (Sophiatown, Newclare and Martindale) in 1919, and the Eastern Native Township in 1925, were all established as dumping grounds for African urban dwellers.
Nonetheless, inner city slums and locations came to be centres of a rich urban working class culture. By the 1920s, a particular form of music and dance called *marabi* had emerged as a principal form of working class entertainment. Parallel to this was the ‘dance hall’ culture of all night ‘concerts’ and ‘tea meetings’ with American-style jazz bands, patronised largely by the African middle-class. The central spaces of *marabi* culture were the *shebeens* (taverns) which began to appear after 1897 following measures which prohibited the sale of liquor to Africans. The illicit sale of liquor to Africans was initially dominated by white *shebeen* owners who purchased spirits from bottle stores at a price of 1s.8d per bottle and sold at 10s per bottle.3

As the number of African women on the Reef increased dramatically in the 1920s, many of them, without employment opportunities, opted to brew sorghum-based African beer. By the 1930s, their *shebeens*, which also provided sexual services, had replaced white-owned ones. Some powerful and easily-made drinks like ‘khali’, ‘shimeya’, ‘skokiaan’ and ‘babaton’ became popular; their manufacture was based on yeast, golden syrup, stale bread, figs, sugar and raisins, and sometimes methylated spirits, tobacco or bluestone, and carbide. The advantage was that such beverages were cheap to make and fermented more quickly than traditional beer which required at least a day. Also, drinkers could become intoxicated without having to drink the beverage in great quantities, as was the case with African beer. However, the survival of the *shebeen* was threatened by the passage of the Slum Act of 1934, which led to attempts to clear Johannesburg suburbs of Africans, and resettled them in the locations. The establishment of municipal beer-halls after 1938 was another threat.4

The principal clients of the *shebeens* during the period in question were migrant workers from mine compounds who could obtain special passes on weekends to visit other mines, slums and locations. Basotho *shebeens* also emerged and developed their own form of music and dance, thanks to the number of *matekatse* (‘prostitutes’ or ‘women out of male control’) on the Rand. The Basotho *famo* dance and *focho* music played on concertinas with the accompaniment of home-made drums, were the equivalent of *marabi*. This music was centred around the *matekatse* whose dance movements involved the lifting and flaring of skirts. One part of Newclare location where large numbers of Basotho had been settling permanently since the turn of the century, became popularly known as ‘Seteketekeng’ (‘place of staggering’) because of the kind of entertainment that was taking place there.7

Furthermore, the rapid African urbanisation that followed World War I was accompanied by the radicalisation of African politics. For the mines, the period 1918–20 was one of African labour unrest across the Reef. Moreover, the support that the Transvaal Native Congress gave to the mine workers, and
the formation of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union in 1919, were both serious concerns for management. In all of these ways, the compounds were sites of struggle.

This chapter discusses the struggles over the meaning and content of leisure in the mine compounds, particularly against the background of rapid black urbanisation of the 1920s–1940s. The chapter will attempt to show how paternalistic whites, especially missionaries, aligned with the mine authorities, tried to use leisure activity to control and discipline the African labour force. But all these attempts had to face up with the preparedness of African miners to spend their leisure time as they wished. The next few pages will concentrate on the background to the compounds as an institution in order to lay the ground for a discussion of these struggles over leisure.

The Compounds

The institution of compounds was developed in the Kimberley diamond mines in the mid-1880s for the housing, and control of African migrant workers. To prevent diamond thefts, Kimberley compounds were ‘closed’, with workers only allowed to leave the premises at the expiry of their contracts and only after a thorough search. On the Rand, the housing of African gold miners was unplanned and unsystematic before the South African War. Workers were housed in loosely arranged wooden and iron, and, later, brick formations; and as these early compounds were not fenced, workers could move in and out without seeking permission. But after the war, the gold mines were faced with a serious labour ‘shortage’, ‘reducing desertion and loafing’ assumed a greater significance. In 1903 the Chamber of Mines despatched a delegation to Kimberley to study the compound system there, and this culminated in the 1904 Coloured Labour Compound Commission which presented recommendations relating to, amongst others, the number of workers to be allocated per dormitory, ventilation, and the type of windows and floors in dormitories. The Coloured Labourers Health Regulation Ordinance was passed the following year.

The importation and use of Chinese labour from 1904 allowed the Chamber to experiment with new compound structures. Workers were housed in rectangular and iron buildings resembling barracks. At the centre of this cluster of dormitories for the accommodation of between 20 and 50 workers, was a courtyard where a kitchen, washing facilities (if they existed), and the compound manager’s office were placed. But the absence of the problem of theft on the gold mines – and pressure from the local trading community – led the Chamber to opt for ‘open’ compounds whereby miners could come and go, albeit with special passes from the compound authorities.
Central to the running of a compound was the compound manager. During this period, a compound was seen as a ‘tribe’ and the compound manager as the ‘Supreme Chief’. The popularity of the mine partly relied on the popularity of its compound manager whose paternalistic relations with the workforce, so it was believed, shaped their outlook of the mine and their work. Almost all gold mine had ‘native’ names, some of which were inspired by their compound managers. Meyer and Charlton mine was known as ‘Mahleka’ (‘the one who likes laughing’); the Witwatersrand Gold Mine as ‘Mafuta’ (‘the fat one’); and the Government Areas mine as ‘Nkosi’ (‘the chief’). The majority of compound managers during this period had ‘native’ nicknames, even where the mine carried a different name. Although Crown Mine, for example, was called ‘Mafenstere’ (‘the windows’), its compound manager in 1934 was known as ‘Molokisi’ (‘the one who puts things in order or makes people happy’) to Basotho workers.11

Often enough, African miners associated a mine with its compound and authority with compound managers. In the Basotho press, the words merafo (mines) and kompone (compound) were used interchangeably to refer to the mines.12 One Mosotho wrote to Leselinyana in 1911: ‘I just arrived here at the mine called City Deep Compound, which was once under Mr Blisset (Mkulu-ndaba,13 in Setebele14) but now it is under Mr Cook (Mboma in Setebele): this is Sezelu not Sexhosa, it means, a sjambok [whip].’15 This particular individual was writing to encourage his fellow countrymen on their way to the mines to join him, because Cook, although very strict, prohibited any maltreatment of workers.

Mine officials promoted certain names to make mine work and mines popular, and to manage and control the workforce without coercion. They and the Natives Affairs Department officials were aware of Africans nicknames of the mines, even circulating in 1906 and 1917 a list of Sesotho and Zulu/Xhosa names of Rand, Pretoria, Heidelberg, Roosiberg, Klerksdorp and Witbank gold, coal and diamond mines. In addition to the character and appearance of compound managers, these names were also inspired by the location of the mine, a memorable incident, the nature of the work and the working conditions, and the composition of the workforce. But names like ‘Dagafontein’ (Daggafontein) and ‘Banches’ (Banjes Consolidated) were based on the original English names.16 Most names were derived from Nguni languages (with Basotho simply adapting the name to their language),17 with a few mines carrying Sesotho names.18

Under the compound manager were the induna (headmen), who were often chiefs or sons of chiefs from the rural areas. These men were appointed by the compound manager to ensure law and order and settle quarrels among the workers. As a privileged group, the indunas were given separate rooms, extra meat and beer, and earned more than other miners in the compounds.
In addition, relatively highly-paid ‘policeboys’ or compound police were appointed by the compound manager to carry out police duties in the compounds, though sharing rooms with their compound mates. Armed with knobkerries and sjamboks, they guarded the compound gates, patrolled and searched dormitories when necessary, controlled queues in the kitchen and washing rooms, and detained workers who contravened the mine rules. Each dormitory chose a sibonda who would liaise with compound authorities and settle petty squabbles among the room-mates.19

But compounds were more than merely institutions for the control and discipline of labour, as miners tried to make a living and live their lives against the odds. Arriving on the mine, a worker was initiated and socialised into a network of sometimes conflicting and contradictory relationships that linked him to compound and mine authorities, his room-mates, home-mates and work gang-mates. This process began at home as recruits travelled in home-boy groups, and took shape in the daily experiences on the mine, as well as in nearby slums and locations.20 For Basotho miners, relatives were the most important network because of the extended nature of the Sotho family structure. Cousins, fathers, brothers and uncles advised new recruits on the best choice of mine and type of job to take; what to expect on arrival; and how to respond. Stimela Jingo, who took his first mine contract in 1916, learnt a lot about the mines from his father who was a miner himself, and knew about ‘hammer-boys’ (and chose to be one at Langlaagte Mine): ‘I knew about them through a cousin of mine who was earning, about eleven pounds a month at that job’, and had been told by another cousin, Mokoena, ‘You take care when you first go underground…’ 21 According to one informant: ‘In all those compounds, I arrive already with the knowledge that this one is my relative, he is of so and so, he is from such and such a place...when one is now inside [the compound], meeting new faces, he come across his relative without knowing, that he was there’.22 It was ngoaneso (a relative) who facilitated one’s integration into the complex relations with the new ‘faces’, community and authority.
Map 5: The Witwatersrand, 1965

Chiefs on the Mines

Chiefs were very important during the period under discussion, not least for the fact that non-ethnic forms of organisations such as trade unions were unknown among the African workers. Even the short-lived African Mineworkers Union of the mid-1940s did little to alter this fact. It is for such reasons that the role of chiefs is essential to an understanding of how both the system of labour migrancy and compounds functioned.

The movement of growing numbers of Basotho migrants to mines, the increasing phenomenon of bokholoa, and the permanent emigration of thousands of Basotho to South Africa’s urban centres following the 1932–33 drought, all posed serious challenges to the chiefs. Almost from the start, the latter had played an important role in the lives of Basotho in the compounds and locations. One of the oldest roles assumed by chiefs was that of indunas and ‘policeboys’ in the compounds. With regard to Basotho, this practice first came under scrutiny in 1907 following the outbreak of a ‘faction fight’ involving Basotho at the Premier Diamond Mine. Ernest Mabille argued in his report that young Basotho chiefs who were employed there as indunas and ‘policeboys’ were ‘irresponsible’, and suggested that the mine should consider employing ‘elderly headmen from Basutoland responsible to the Compound Manager’.23

Although this suggestion was not implemented, it was later resurrected after another ‘disturbance’ at the same mine in June 1910. During the 1910 Basutoland National Council sitting, Basotho chiefs blamed the cause of the ‘disturbance’ on the use of Zulu ‘policeboys’ over Basotho workers. They communicated their protest to the Government Native Labour Bureau, and an investigation was conducted. They suggested, with the support of the High Commissioner, that a ‘Mosotho of high rank’ should be employed as an induna for Basotho (along the same lines suggested by Mabille three years earlier), and that if the scheme worked it could be tried on other mines.24 It is not clear whether the suggestion was followed up, but a similar complaint occurred in 1919 when Chief Mojela was sent to investigate factors behind the ‘bad’ conduct of Basotho on the Reef.25 It was also raised again during the National Council proceedings in 1938 but was quickly dismissed by the then Resident Commissioner, who argued that Basotho miners already had ‘enough’ ‘policeboys’ in proportion to their total number on the mines.26

Relations between chiefs and mine officials, the GNLB and the Native Affairs Department, tended to be good. As the Director of the Native Recruiting Corporation, Taberer had developed good links and relations with chiefs in the labour supplying areas through his regular tours of those places. When Taberer died in June 1932, Paramount Griffith sent a wreath on behalf of the Basotho ‘nation’, and instructed three Basotho chiefs who were em-
ployed as tax collectors in Johannesburg to attend the funeral. Some lower-ranking mine officers were also held in high esteem. When Knight Deep compound manager Jack Moseley passed away in 1916, Sotho, Pondo, Xhosa and Pedi chiefs arrived on the mine to convey their condolences. Moseley was well liked because he never allowed the beating of workers. Moreover, there were rewards attached to loyal service; the NRC assisted Griffith in 1916 to buy a Hudson motor car valued at £550, and even railed it to Lesotho.

Chiefs also personally visited the mines. Such visits, which became regular from the 1910s, were supported by mine-owners as they helped ensure a regular flow of labour and assisted with discipline on the mines, despite reservations expressed over the expense involved. The first formal Basotho chiefly visit to the mines was after the formation of the GNLB in 1907, when two representatives of the Paramount Chief were sent to the Rand at the invitation of Taberer. In 1916 Chief Jonathan sent Chief Peko to the Rand to raise £1000 for the payment of a fine, following his attack on his brother Joel. Peko only visited the Premier Mine because most Basotho employed in the Transvaal were there. In June 1918 a chief from Maseru visited the Rand to look for his daughter, and later applied for work as a ‘policeboy’ at the Jupiter Compound. The following year, Chief Seesio who was to succeed Griffith as Paramount Chief, visited the Premier Mine to collect his ‘tribal dues’. In June 1926 Chief Letsie Moshoeshoe was said to be on the Rand to meet ‘his friends’ and was given temporary accommodation at the Nourse Mines.

Seesio again visited the Rand two months after succeeding his father as Paramount Chief in October 1939. He was accompanied by the Deputy Resident Commissioner, ‘six leading chiefs’, two Basotho police officers, a Mosotho Catholic priest, and a number of attendants. He later met Basotho (including miners) at a pitso at Dougall Hall in Pretoria. For his formal inauguration in February 1940, 500 Basotho left the Rand in buses and cars to attend the ceremony. Among this group was ‘a special committee of mine Indunas’ who, according to the Rand Daily Mail, ‘will carry with them for presentation to their Chief a cheque of nearly £200’... ‘[t]his money has been collected in less than three weeks from mine employees, the donation ranging from three pence to 2s.6d’. During the ceremony ‘mine natives will form a separate procession and will march, led by a European official of the Basutoland Government’. The Witwatersrand Native Labour Association band was expected to perform.

The procedure for a chief intending to visit the mines was to approach the local Assistant Commissioner who would then contact the NRC through its local representative. On arriving in Johannesburg, the chief reported at the GNLB offices where he was given a temporary pass. The NRC then gave him a letter of introduction to be handed to compound managers on the different
mines where his people were. Outside the Rand itself, chiefs could go straight
to the mines, merely requiring letters of introduction previously sought from
Assistant Commissioners and the Resident Commissioner. So popular were
these visits that some elements even tried their luck. In April 1913 a certain
Mohale, pretending to be a chief, visited the Premier Mine to raise money for
a National Memorial to Chief Moshesh', but received no cooperation from
Basotho workers as they did not trust him and questioned his credentials. In
September 1916 one Lehlonono Mpiti visited Ferguson mine with his wife
and met Basotho miners without the knowledge of the compound manager.
Claiming to bring them a message from the Paramount Chief, he instructed
them to remove and kill a clerk employed on the mine and push for his uncle,
who was part of the gatherings, to be made a ‘policeboy’. The uncle himself
and other Basotho present protested, questioning Mpiti’s credentials.

Chiefs played another crucial role. At the height of the African workers’
strikes across the Reef in July 1918, the NRC superintendent in Maseru,
Maitland Brown, and the Resident Commissioner, asked the Paramount Chief
to intervene and stop Basotho from participating in this activity. Chief
Sekhonyane Bereng was subsequently despatched with haste to catch the next
train from Maseru. Basotho on the mine met the chief and presented their
grievances to him; he urged them to be peaceful and promised redress. With
nothing improving, the Transvaal Native Congress approached the director
of the NRC, Taberer, in March 1919 to ask for a meeting to raise the grievances
of the mine workers. But Taberer, believing that ‘the only persons that I can
recognise as representing the natives on the mines must be their own Chiefs’,
sent an emergency telegraph to labour-supplying areas asking for chiefs or
their representatives to hurry to Johannesburg for a meeting. The telegraph
was received in Lesotho on the 21st of March, and the following day Chief
Mojela was on the train to Johannesburg. The meeting took place on the 2nd
of April. Mojela then moved around meeting Basotho, calling for calm. Basotho
complained that Sekhonyane had also asked for calm and promised to address
their grievances, but nothing happened. Mojela later reported to the Resident
Commissioner that ‘as far as he was able to ascertain, all the trouble amongst
the natives outside the mines originated at a Native Congress’.

Sunday and the Miners
The efforts of mine management to keep check on the militancy and move-
ment of African mine employees were not limited to the mobilisation of
the support of the chiefs. African mine-workers’ leisure time and space also be-
came a target. From the companies’ perspective, controlling leisure time in
the compounds helped keep workers from the reach of industrial or political
‘agitators’, as well as away from the locations where they engaged in beer-
drinking (and the associated difficulties of Saint Monday). However, for African miners, far from their homes and largely isolated in compounds, leisure time was spent in reaffirming one's self and dealing with the alienating effects of mine work. Thus leisure became a contested terrain.

Key figures in the struggle to control the leisure time of African miners and Africans in the locations were white liberals, especially the American Boards of Foreign Mission (ABM) missionaries. A number of studies have demonstrated how after the First World War, especially in the aftermath of militant working class action during 1918–1920 and the growing radicalisation of the Transvaal Native Congress, white liberals developed a programme aimed at winning over the African petty bourgeoisie. Inter-racial forums, in the form of the Gamma Sigma Club established in 1918 and the Joint Councils of the 1920s, were initiated for the exchange of views on racial issues. This culminated in the opening in 1924 on Jeppe Street of a Bantu Men’s Social Centre, which came to play an important role in the promotion of sport among Africans. Parallel to this was the establishment of the Chamber of Mines newspaper *Umteteli wa Bantu* in 1920 and later the missionary-run *Bantu World*, both at least designed to counter the Transvaal Native Congress.45

Time and work shifts on the mines were structured in such a way that Sundays were the only days when miners could have leisure time. The Transvaal Sunday Observance Law of 1894 required that Sunday, Christmas, Good Friday and Dingaan’s Day, be observed as holidays; although an amendment in 1898 allowed the mines to utilise such days for repairs and other work necessary for the running of the mine. Any work on Sunday had to be arranged in such a way that miners on shift were able to attend church services either in the morning or evening.46

Sunday, as the most frequent mine holiday, assumed a particular meaning for miners in the compounds. The day not only provided African miners with time for rest but also the opportunity to engage in different activities. The Anglican missionary, Latimer Fuller, described what a Sunday looked like in one of the compounds he visited shortly after the turn of the century:

Everywhere in this great courtyard you see groups of men. Here half a dozen lying in the sun, wrapped up in their brown blankets asleep. There three or four sit smoking round a fire burning in an old tin; you watch them a moment and can hardly believe your eyes; they smoke cigars with the lighted end in their mouths; why, I don’t know, probably because they find it nice and warm! There again by the door of one of the rooms a couple are hard at work; they have a flat stone, a bit of iron for a hammer and a quantity of horsehair and brass wire. They are making bangles such as are universally worn by men, women and children. A little further on seven or eight have made a square of little cup-like holes in the ground and are playing a most complicated game with little stones. Another group have another
fire, but they are cooking their Sunday meat by hanging it in gruesome chunks all rounds and on the embers; when it is sufficiently charred, they will eat it.  

The ‘complicated’ game that Fuller referred to was *tchouba*, introduced into the compounds by the Shangaan; Basotho miners would play their *morabaraba* on a board with pebbles. On diamond mines, such as the Premier Mine where the workers had to purchase their food at the compound stores, some miners spent Sundays supplementing their income by cooking and selling cheap food. The Swiss missionary Creux visited the Premier Mine on one Sunday in March 1907, and after meeting his contacts, stated the following: ‘... we went to a big, and immense courtyard by going through the dormitories and corridors where there were tobacco, meat, fruits, etc. on sale. What a mess and disorder! Hundreds of Bapedis were dancing, to the sound of drums...’.  

The informal sector in the compounds was an important area for supplementing one’s meagre wage. Barbers, diviners, tailors, knitters, food peddlers and hawkers, all supplied workers with services and goods at cheaper rates and great convenience. Some miners grouped themselves into the *magodisana* (‘pay each other’) or mutual aid associations, whereby each member contributed a given sum each month to the common pool, the money going to the member leaving the mine. These associations helped miners to save money to take home at the expiry of their contracts. As in the Southern Rhodesian gold mines, these mutual aid associations, including burial societies, were informed by concerns over destitution, sickness and death. The scope and function of, say, *magodisana* and burial societies, was flexible and indeed broader than is suggested in the name. What was established for *magodisana* purposes could also carry out the functions of a burial society. But the functioning of these associations relied on the honesty of its members, especially those chosen to keep the monthly contributions. The Chamber of Mines issued a circular in 1927 instructing compound managers not to accept to keep the funds of these ‘financial societies’, because this money was causing lots of fights among miners at Kimberley where several treasurers had disappeared with their associations’ funds. Indeed, one Mosotho complained in *Leselinyana* that:  

Here in Dutoitspan mine, Beaconsfield, we see a lot of trouble. Money ‘Societies’ are being formed. But those who keep the money abuse and steal it. On Monday when we were about to sleep a fight broke out between 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. What will bring Basotho back to line? That is why we are expelled from work. We are always implicated during fights.  

Gambling was another way in which workers hoped to supplement their wages. Card-playing was most common during the period under review, and regularly took place in compounds and in the many gambling dens along the Reef. At the Premier Mine in the 1920s, one could win up to £17 a day from the...
cards. But those who lost found it hard to accept. In one case in 1911 at Driefontein Hill mine:

A young Zulu man [wrote a Mosotho worker at this mine] has just brutally killed a Shangaan. These people were playing cards for money, then afterwards the Shangaan wanted to leave, but the Zulu [known as Sekei] refused... It was in the evening, and in the end the Shangaan decided to leave without an agreement. Sekei then extinguished the light and grappled the innocent Shangaan, cutting, the latter's sinew of the leg, with a knife, killing him instantly.53

Sekei was later arrested together with his Mosotho accomplice. Another case was of two Basotho (Ngaka and Sello) at the Premier Mine in which the compound police intervened when Sello approached Ngaka one night to demand his money back, threatening to kill the latter when he refused. The two men were advised to share the money lest the compound manager was informed.54 Gambling, especially card-playing and dicing, also spread to Lesotho, introduced by returning migrants anxious to earn cash for themselves.55

Many miners were anyway robbed of their money by the gangs which infested and patrolled certain parts of the Reef at night.56 Concern with security outside the mines was a recurring theme in letters written by Basotho miners to Leselinyana.57 One instance was of a Mosotho who wrote to this newspaper in 1913 from his hospital bed:

We were from Ferreira, then we saw them [the ‘Malaita’ gang]... and they started telling us to take out our money. Then my companion, Samuel Sepitla, said that he did not have their money. Then they started attacking; I tried to tell Samuel to run, but he refused as he had no speed. They grappled him, and I escaped. I saw someone fall, I thought it was Samuel, but it was one of the malaeta who killed him. The police appeared, then those thugs fled. As to Samuel he is in hospital in intensive care as he was stabbed with a knife which is still stuck in him. We understand that he is not going to survive. He is from Ficksburg.58

Partly as a result of the persistent danger of walking at night, in the 1940s some Basotho formed the ‘MaRussia’ gang. However, the gang later developed its own momentum, playing a role in influencing the Basotho urban culture, and even contributing to the notoriety of Moshoeshoe’s people on the Reef.59

Despite such incidents, Basotho and other African miners were not deterred from visiting their friends and relatives in other compounds, locations and slums, as the link between compounds, and between compounds and locations, provided them with an avenue for leisure. Ironically, even the mining house historian, A.P. Cartwright, recognised this dimension when he wrote in defence of the gold mines:
To dispel this illusion [that miners are locked up in the compounds] they [the critics] ought to see the mines on Sundays, which are 'visiting days'. There the Reef trains and roads are crowded with mine employees dressed in their best and on their way to visit others mines. Every representative of the fifty tribes who are employed in the mines has dozens of 'brothers' – men from his own kraal, men from the same district, men who live under the same headman. He visits them all. There are hours of conversation and interchange of 'home news'. Not a single calf is born, a snake killed or a good rain recorded in the far-off village but these men hear of it through this intelligence service.60

An essential part of these weekend visits was beer-drinking, not only for maintaining and asserting home-boy and work-mate networks, but also for helping workers briefly forget the isolation, alienation and danger associated with living and working in the compounds and on the mines.61 So entrenched were visits as one of the main forms of leisure for African mine-workers that in the mid-1940s the Chamber of Mines, concerned about the number of weekend robberies and accidents in which these workers got involved during such visits, established information bureaux in the compounds to advise workers on train schedules and fares, to help with small money change, and to distribute slips with ticket prices on them and maps of railway stations. This latter measure was also intended to stop corrupt train and station officials from misinforming, miners about train fares and destinations.62 Out of sheer self-interest, the mining companies wanted to make sure that their men returned safe for work. For that matter, the introduction of all these measures and facilities (including those related to sporting activities) was at a very little financial cost to the mine management, as interest from the African mine-workers’ Deferred Pay Fund footed the bill.

**Sport and Recreation**

Visits on their own could not satisfy the leisure needs of African mine-workers. African miners brought their recreational activities from home and organised themselves into, among others, dance groups to perform on Sundays and other holidays. Though there were no conspicuously dominant dances like the Mbeni and Kalela ones found on the mines of Southern Rhodesian and the Central African Copperbelt,63 Hugh Tracey estimated in the 1950s that over 30 percent of the total African workforce in the compounds entertained itself with dances.64 Both missionaries and some mine managements regarded these particular activities as 'war dances', associating them with 'savage' rituals. In October 1914, at the height of the recently introduced wartime measure of Marshall Law, the Director of Native Labour issued a circular asking the Department's inspectors to inform compound managers in their respective districts that special passes issued to miners 'should be carefully
restricted and that organised native dances in compounds should not be permitted.65

For their part, missionaries, convinced that theirs was a civilising mission, targeted ‘war dances’ as an ‘evil’ to be eliminated. Dexter Taylor of the American Board wrote in 1926 about the Chopi and Shangaan dances in the compounds: ‘The weird music of the crude African xylophone, the marvellous rhythm, the display of physical energy rising at times almost to dervish madness is a sight to be remembered. Efforts have been made by the Church Council to have them suppressed as a desecration of the Sabbath, but to suppress them before a better form of social and rhythmical expression has been provided would be folly’.66

Taylor was responding to the condemnation of Sunday sport programmes in the compounds and locations by Sabbateranian groupings.67 Among those strongly opposed to Sunday sport were the Dutch Reformed Church and the Methodists, both of whom were convinced that such activities diverted the attention of Africans from the church and undermined the sacredness of the Sabbath. American Board missionaries, on their part, thought that the prime target of their programmes should be those Africans who were outside the reach of the church and thus exposed on a daily basis to the ‘evil’ temptations of the Rand. All of them tended to see Africans as infants or as human species in a primitive stage of development needing moral, spiritual and intellectual guidance. One convert even wrote in April 1932 to the Bantu World: ‘There is no objection to war dances, provided they are staged by the enlightened Bantu. When they are staged by the uncivilized, it is a sign of retrogression, because finding his performance so patronised, he has no inducement to progress’.68

Unlike the missionaries, the more sophisticated of the mine authorities merely tried to contain dances, and as far as possible transform them into recreational devices for the control of labour. At the third annual meeting of the Transvaal Compound Managers Association in September 1921, it was reported that ‘the dieting and entertainment of Natives... [was] given serious thought’.69 Dance groups were encouraged, and competitions were subsequently organised among Mozambican workers as they were regarded as the best dancers, as well as being the most numerous on the mines. Competitions went through three stages: starting with the eliminations in each of the three Rand districts, the winners continuing to the semi-finals and finals. The teams were divided into three categories: namely, the ‘Manyambanes’, the ‘Matshangaan’, and the ‘Batshopi’. White umpires used four criteria: (a) the rendering of the music; (b) the general appearance of the dancers; (c) the precision of movement of the dancers; and (d) the regularity of the dancing line.70 Indeed, these criteria had little to do with the music and dance, but
reflected the European notion of the ‘savage’. For that matter, these dance occasions were well exploited by the Portuguese authorities who saw them as an opportunity to exert their ideological hegemony over their Shangaan colonial subjects.

Prizes were distributed by the Portuguese Curator, and included a shield for the winning ‘tribe’, which was held for a year; a flag kept permanently by the winning team; flags for the losing finalists; and a bronze medal for each member of the winning team. These competitions were temporarily discontinued in the mid-1920s because, according to the then Acting Director of Native Labour, ‘there were indications that teams defeated at dancing were likely to test their capabilities in a more serious direction’.71

Basotho dancers, however, were not ‘privileged’ in the same way as Mozambicans were, even though their mohobelo dance, taken from home where it was used for amusement and recreation, was also performed in the compounds. An American missionary visiting a compound in 1918 ‘saw a perspiring line of Basutos, almost naked, writhing, stamping and grunting through a snake-like dance’.72 Unlike the Mozambicans, Basotho dancers did not wear ‘traditional dress’ or carry the Sotho cow-hide shield. By the late 1940s, their preferred uniform was khaki or black trousers, a headdress, shoes, and a short black ostrich feather. The upper part of the body was not covered in order to display masculinity and physical strength in line with the koata ideology of mine work. It is unclear whether mohobelo competition took place in the compounds during this period, but in Lesotho itself, inter-village dance competitions were held periodically.73 However, the mokorotlo dance, which was performed in Lesotho during important political ceremonies, weddings or letsema (tribute labour) parties, or when a chief was going for lebohlo (initiation school) was absent from the mines during this period.74 This was probably because Basotho men did not regard the mines as their ‘home’.

As Sunday dances attracted a number of European visitors, the Tourist Office approached the NAD in March 1926 to consider utilising such activities for tourism purposes. The activities were to be organised on the Reef, in Zululand and in Basutoland (but the latter two were later dropped as they had no hotel facilities to lodge tourists). The Acting Director of Labour, aware, that ‘there are serious objections to public entertainment of this nature on that day [Sunday]’,75 suggested that the activity be organised during the week. The idea was that these dance shows would take place every three years. The Chamber of Mines was asked to release between 500 and 1,000 Mozambican dancers from their duties for the event because no African group from inside South Africa and employed on the mines had recognised dancers.76 The Chamber declined, arguing that:
In the first place, there are not so many as 500 to 1,000 trained dancers amongst the East Coast natives employed on the Mines; secondly, the Mine natives themselves are usually unwilling to participate in combined dances of this description. The individual dancing teams have high opinions of their own abilities, and efforts to bring them together for a combined dance would probably result in failure.77

A compromise was eventually found by organising underground tours for tourists which romanticised African labour; and which by the 1930s, included ‘native’ dances. This process culminated in the erection of dance arenas for audiences of up to 2,500 people. From 1946, tourist excursions in Chamber of Mines’ coaches also included visits to the compounds and the surface works of certain mines.78

As part of their programme to combat ‘war dances’ and influence the outlook of the workers, American Board missionaries, for their part, encouraged the playing of sports of their own choice. The Rev. Bridgman, while preparing Ray Phillips in 1918 for his job as a social worker in the compounds, laid down the basic framework:

... during long hours of leisure these young fellows [referring to a group of Basotho dancers] have nothing to do but get into trouble. If we have anything in the way of Christian social service activities to project into this situation which will give these young fellows something clean and wholesome to think about and talk about during these hours, we shall be rendering a Christian service. We must capture the physical and mental life of these young men during six days of the week, besides preaching the Gospel to them on the seventh.79

Phillips was to introduce volleyball, football, athletics, and, more bizarrely, games like ‘Hunt the Thimble’ and ‘Who’s got the Ring?’, but he met with little success.80

However, in giving the impression that the only forms of recreation in the compounds before the ABM’s work were gambling, ‘war dances’ and beer-drinking, Phillips and his missionary associates were certainly mistaken. Cricket and football were the oldest and the most popular European sports in the compounds. Cricket, because of the influence of mine officials who were predominantly English, was more popular among the miners than soccer, which was the leading sport in the locations. Indeed, in 1915, the Native Recruiting Corporation Cup for cricket was established.81 But the competition only took place once because of a boycott by mine-based teams. The problem was that the competition was open to all African cricket teams on the Rand, and mine teams wanted the activity to be for them only, as the Cup had been donated by the NRC. Taberer, the NRC chairman, intervened, convening a meeting in October 1920 to resolve the conflict, but when the NRC
made it clear that it wanted to see all teams participating in the competition, the gathering broke up.82

As with the dance groups, the mine authorities in their attempt to exert paternalistic influence and control over their African workforce, played an important role in these competitions, making speeches and giving out medals to the winning teams. Cricket teams like Fight Forever, Orientals, Fear Not, and Wit Deep appear to have been amongst the strongest on the mines in the 1920s. The ‘Stone Breakers’ was one of the leading teams in the locations. But cricket was played mainly by Xhosa miners from the Cape Colony, and this partly explains why Umteteli’s cricket reports were generally written in Xhosa and not in Sotho-Tswana or English.83

The majority of Basotho miners preferred football, a sport which was very popular in their country, and where regular matches and tournaments became common by the 1930s.84 (The popularity of soccer in Lesotho culminated in the introduction of the Basutoland Football Cup in 1932). But some compound managers also played a role in the promotion of this sport among their African workforce. For example, at the City Deep in April 1923, a match was organised between the Chopi and the Shangaans who had never played football before.85 Nonetheless, at the Knights Mine, some Basotho workers formed the Basutoland Star Football Club in the same year, which, though not among the leading teams, performed well, even winning the label Majalipere (horse-eaters).86

The Witwatersrand District Native Football Association had been coordinating, soccer activities in the compounds and administering the NRC Challenge Cup as early as 1920, but not on sectional basis as the NRC cricket tournament. The Rand was divided into sub-districts, and the competition arranged along lines similar to those of the dance groups. The 1920 Cup was won by the Caledonians of Village Deep who beat the ‘Transvaal Champions’ at the Crown Mines sport field. By the 1930s, the Natalians of Simmer and Jack was the strongest team on the mines, even beating the location-based Pretoria Callies 5-0 to win the 1932 Cup.87

Ethnic affiliation appears to have played an insignificant role in the formation of sport teams. My informant, who was a great lover of soccer, claimed that skill rather than ethnicity, was the key in the choice of players.88 For example, a Mosotho was captain of one of the main soccer teams, the ‘Herbanies’, at the New State Areas in 1937, and most of his fellow players were from different ethnic groups. However, conflict among supporters, apparently more rife among the Xhosa with their cricket teams, was not uncommon. Certainly, football was no exception. In December 1914, there was a serious outbreak of violence between Shangaan and Xhosa supporters after a football match at the Crown Mines. The conflict engulfed nearby compounds,
causing a compound manager to intervene and kill one Xhosa with his revolver.89

The Chamber of Mines, motivated partly by the American missionaries and mostly by the sporting activities already established independently by Africans in the compounds, began systematically to introduce more recreational activities in the 1920s. It was, moreover, believed that compound sports would ‘civilise’ and educate the ‘natives’ and keep them away from the locations. In 1928, as an experiment, the Chamber employed a social worker, P.C. van Haght, to find the best recreational activity for some 6,000 workers on a large mine. Van Haght, himself supervised by the American Board, embarked ‘on outdoor activities under the bright lights of specially installed lamps, and aided by a giant, highly amplified gramophone’, and had ‘at his disposal material for active and quiet games, mass singing and instrumental music, dramatics, the cinema, Night Schools, Bible Classes, religious meetings, etc.’. He even ‘occasionally imported a drama or boxing match from outside’.90

By the mid–1930s, tennis and golf were also becoming popular on the mines. At Daggafontein Mine, for example, cricket and soccer were the only major sports until golf and tennis were introduced in 1937. A number of Basotho miners had taken the initiative in playing tennis long before facilities were provided. Initially [wrote one enthusiastic Mosotho from Daggafontein], we began in the compound, where we were learning to play it with well-shaped planks, hitting it [the ball] even though there were no poles or net, but only a small white line. Today we play it in [a beautiful court]; all is well organised’.91 On this particular mine, tennis was dominated by Basotho players.

A decade later, soccer, cricket, tennis and rugby were all major sports on the gold mines, with cricket largely played in summer, and soccer in winter. There were now 57 cricket teams on 33 mines, with 39 playing fields. There was a total of about 595 tennis players in the compounds, with 50 tennis courts on 31 mines. Rugby, a late comer, was played on 18 mines. The mine authorities provided sports players with balls, jerseys, money for equipment and other related facilities. It is unclear how these sporting codes were distributed among the African workforce. It is possible, at least among Basotho, that codes such as cricket and tennis were patronised more by clerks and indunas, not least because in Lesotho itself these sports were virtually reserved for the elite during this period. But, at the least, the presence of all these sports in the compounds suggests that the mines offered poorer Basotho who could not afford to purchase the necessary kit, an opportunity to enjoy what were regarded as elite sporting codes. By this time, too, a few mines had established libraries and distributed newspapers to those miners who could read. Writing paper and envelopes were given to those who wished to write letters home. About 20 mines now had nearly 40 recreation halls between them. Nearly 90
music bands, supplied with instruments by the authorities, could be found on the mines; and the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association brass band itself toured compounds on weekends. Loudspeakers were also installed in the compounds to broadcast radio programmes and gramophone music.92

Basotho miners had still another avenue for leisure. As part of their struggle to legitimise themselves, in 1919 Basotho chiefs in colonial Lesotho had declared the 12th of March, the day that Moshoeshoe accepted British protection in 1868, as ‘Moshoeshoe Day’. Moshoeshoe Festivals to celebrate this day began to occur on the Rand in 1928. Celebrations took place on the first Sunday after the 12th of March as the day was not a holiday in South Africa. But it was only in the 1930s, following the 1932–33 drought, and the consequent Basotho Diaspora, that the commemoration of the day on the Rand became more organised. A committee made up of chiefs was put in place, its activities financed by the Chamber of Mines and Basutoland government through the Johannesburg Agency. The organisation for the day was coordinated with location municipalities, mine officials, representatives from Basutoland, and the Johannesburg Agency. The Festival held in March 1935 in a hall at the Western Native Township was opened with a sermon by a Paris Evangelical Society missionary who spoke of Moshoeshoe as a man ‘who feared God, accepted the gospels and listened to advice’. The main speaker for the day was D.M. Wilson of the Basutoland Johannesburg Agency who was introduced as the ‘father’ of the Basotho, and who spoke about Basotho workers on the Rand and the work of his office. Among those present at the celebrations held in Pimville in 1939, were the location superintendent and the police, the latter of course to keep law and order. But these Moshoeshoe occasions were attended more by the Basotho miners. After all, the Festival was a ritual display of the alliance between the chiefs, colonial authorities, missionaries and a section of Christian converts.93

Basotho miners who were Christian converts developed their own particular way of spending their leisure time. As the next chapter will show, missionary societies targeted Rand mines and the locations as ‘universities of crime’. The ABM was especially concerned about all-night ‘concerts’ and ‘dance halls’ in the locations, which, according to Taylor, ‘make the heathen war dance on Sunday afternoon look like a Sunday school picnic’.94

Christian mine converts met on Sundays for church services and later divided into groups for the evangelising of other miners in the compounds. They also organised themselves into compound-based choirs (discussed in detail in the next chapter). Depending on the relations between different missionary societies, such choral groups would meet in a hall to celebrate a Christian festival like Christmas. While other miners in the compounds bought bullocks, sheep and goats, and prepared beer to celebrate their Christmas,95
converts bought tea, sugar, milk, cakes and bread for their ‘tea meetings’ and ‘concerts’ which were dominated by choral music, prayer and sermons. A distinctive church-music culture emerged which involved using body gestures to illustrate moods, meanings and certain phrases in choral songs and hymns. Arms could be raised to point to the imaginary star of Bethlehem, or hands put on heads to express a state of sin. A Swiss missionary described one of these choirs in the following terms:

Before starting, time is spent in putting this one a little to the right, that one to the back. Then they cough, the key energetically given in ‘So-mi-do-do’... The conductor, overwhelmed by his music, gesticulates... illustrating the words, pronounced with conviction by the members of the choir, with gestures, while others [in the choir] close their blissful eyes, lifting their heads, singing with pleasure.  

Moshoeshoe Festivals were themselves an important occasion for Christian Basotho who, in the company of female converts from the locations and in competition with fellow Christians, displayed their new and colourful clothes. Particular forms of dress, walking styles, evangelical work, Bible-reading and singing, were all at the core of the leisure activities of this generation of mine converts.

Films

The struggle to confine African workers to the mines (during weekends and holidays) without ‘closing’ the compound was also launched on another front. As early as 1913, individuals were approaching mining companies to erect cinemas or ‘bioscopes’ on the mine property. Under section 69 of the Transvaal Act 35 of 1908, application for ‘surface right’ or the permission to use the mine land for other purposes other than mining, had to be addressed to the Mining Commissioner. Mine managers could offer sites but only with the approval of the Commissioner and the Director of Native Labour. As there was no clear guideline for the operation of ‘bioscopes’ on the mines except Act 35, the Mining Commissioner, in granting permission, did so on three conditions: firstly, that the permit could be cancelled should the government ’not approve of the character of the entertainment or the class of films being shown’; secondly, that the authorities ‘may at any time investigate the class of entertainment which is being carried on or the conditions under which [mine] employees are admitted’; and finally, that the permit could be withdrawn with one month’s notice without offering any reason or compensation. Responsibility for ensuring that these conditions were adhered to and the censuring of films was left to the Native Affairs Department. These conditions were motivated by, among others, the fear that the existence of cinemas would facilitate trade in and the sale of liquor, as well as the contravention of the Trading on
Mining Ground Regulation Act which forbade the running of business on mining property. But mine, Native Affairs and South African Police officials were all in favour of the project on the ground that it would popularise mine work, educate mine-workers and keep them away from locations.97

A major problem for the authorities was the question of censorship. It was believed that ‘the majority of the Natives [who were to watch the films] would be those fresh from the kraal and incapable of distinguishing between fact and fiction. It would be essential to cut out any films dealing with sexual matters or those which in any way lower the status of white women or men’.98 The South African Police District Commandant for the East Rand (Boksburg) suggested that a Film Censorship Board be formed, consisting of three or four missionaries, and one Native Affairs official. The Native Affairs Inspector for Benoni also supported the view that films should be allowed only if there was ‘strict’ censorship, but felt that the censoring committee should include one compound manager seconded by the Compound Managers Association and one Inspector of the Native Affairs. After some deliberation, the three main actors (the SAP, NAD and the Mining Commissioner) agreed on a central committee to be made up of the Deputy Commissioner of Police for Johannesburg, a NAD inspector, and a compound manager. In the event, actual censoring of films was left to the SAP.99

Among the first individuals to be offered surface rights for the purpose of establishing a ‘bioscope’, was a local comedian, J. Smith, who regularly visited the compounds to give his shows. Smith was given permission in September 1913, but his scheme failed when a compound manager indicated that he knew the comedian, and that his experience with him was that he treated his African audiences so badly that in some instances he had to intervene. By the 1920s, Phillips of the ABM, was showing films in the compounds for the NRC.100

There were generally three categories of films: those showed to whites and not ‘suitable’ for anyone black;101 those ‘suitable’ for all blacks except Africans; and those ‘suitable’ for the latter. In censoring films, Phillips would cut what he regarded as ‘low-grade, suggestive stuff that seemed to be gleaned from the gutters of the world; the worst products of English, American and continental studios’.102 He concentrated his attacks on films that showed sex and nude whites, violence and crime. His flight against such films led him in 1921 to fight for the withdrawal of two films, ‘Intolerance’ and ‘The Daughter of the Gods’, at the Good Hope Cinema on Commissioner street, which, in theory, was for Coloureds, but in practice was also patronised by Africans. In June 1922, Phillips addressed a memorandum to the Director of Native Labour complaining about the Good Hope, which had just shown two other films that he did not approve of for ‘his natives’. It was a fight, which he
continued well into the 1930s, constantly demanding tighter censorship. Over the same period, he succeeded in having commercial cinemas pushed away from the mines.103

The Chamber of Mines itself made deliberate use of films. In collaboration with African Film Production, films were produced for the purpose of labour recruitment and the glorification of mine work. A film ‘W.N.L.A. in Portuguese East Africa’, produced in 1920, showed the recruitment and movement of Shangaan recruits to the mines. In 1925 the NRC head, Taberer, directed a documentary ‘From Blanket to Civilization’ which depicted Cape Colony recruits progressing from their ‘primitive’ societies to ‘civilisation’ on the mines. Though this film was initially produced for the Wembley Film Exhibition, it became such a success that a copy was presented to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in London. Phillips also used this film during his 1926 fund-raising campaign in the United States of America to counter ‘propaganda’ in the ‘native’ press. In December 1928, ‘From Blanket to Civilization’ was shown at the International Labour Organisation offices in Geneva. ‘From Kraal to Mine’, a 1930 series filmed in Natal/Zululand, the Ciskei, Basutoland, the Northern Transvaal and Pondoland, also dealt with themes that juxtaposed ‘barbarism’ with ‘civilisation’, or village with mine life. These films were not only showed in the compounds but also in the rural areas. WANLA and NRC film vans would drive to remote villages to present film shows with the assistance of interpreters. Taberer showed one such film to a packed hall in Maseru during his visit there in June 1926.104

Films also played an important role in health and safety programmes in the compounds. ‘The Dust that Kills’, produced in 1921 under the directorship of the head of the Rand Mines Group Department of Sanitation, Dr A.J. Orenstein, aimed at educating workers about miners’ phthisis. ‘The Golden Harvest of the Union’, produced during the same period, dealt with the prevention of the spread of diseases. This film was even awarded a bronze medal at the 1939 Biennial Exhibition in Venice. There were other ‘safety’ but comical films in fanakalo, the mine lingua franca, with actors drawn from the mine workforce, and intended solely for mine audiences. One of these was the 1942 production ‘Pas Op Wena’ (You Watch Out!), which dealt with trucks and tramways.105

But, in many ways, Africans determined what they watched; they could tacitly boycott a show by staying in their dormitories or display no interest at all when present during a performance. It is such reactions which explain why circus and comedians’ shows were discontinued in the compounds,106 and certainly why the Chamber was willing to spend money on the film scheme. Phillips usually showed four kinds of films; animal, travel and adventure films; comedies, especially of the Charlie Chaplin, Larry Semon and Buster Keaton
types; safety films; and religious films supplied by the Religious Films of South Africa Ltd., which were shown on Sundays with the help of two or three interpreters.\textsuperscript{108}

By the end of the 1920s, Phillips’ enterprise had expanded to 60 centres outside the mines, including police barracks, orphanages, goals, reformatories, hospitals, locations and municipal compounds across the Reef. After the Rand shows, the films were then railed to Natal’s sugar plantations and Durban’s locations, then to Pietermaritzburg and finally back to Pretoria. The last leg covered Rhodesian copper, coal and gold mines. It took over twelve months for a film to complete this process, being shown to an estimated audience of between a quarter and a half million African men and women.\textsuperscript{109}

But by the 1930s, Africans had become sophisticated consumers of films, and this put Phillips in a dilemma. The major challenge came from the ‘talkie’ (talking) films introduced to South African cinemas some years previously:

The commercial talkie film [lamented Phillips in 1938] has gained a foothold in the consciousness of the South African Bantu which can only be supplanted by more and better films of an entertaining and amusing nature. The huge audience of the gold mines are to-day highly critical of programmes offered them. If the single-reel topical or educational picture is not quickly followed by a comedy or feature in which there is considerable action and interest, shouts of ‘Take it off!’ are heard, and the crowd begins to thin. Single reels of an educational nature are tolerated at the start of the programme, and the substitution of the same amount of material showing Native actors speaking SiXhosa or SeSutho might be well received. But these reels would have to be of professional quality, with perfect voice synchronisation.\textsuperscript{110}

What was ‘supplanted’ were, however, his films, as the degree of censorship also affected the film narrative: ‘Most films depicting action, animals and actual circumstances appealed to natives’, noted Thelma Gutsche, ‘but drama proper, rendered aseptic by sever censorship, interested them very little, particularly as audience, despite the sound-film, persisting on chattering, loudly throughout the performance’.\textsuperscript{111}

A decade later, the ‘talkies’, especially ‘westerns’, were the most popular films in the compounds. ‘Westerns’ were followed in popularity by action-packed films with actors such as George Raft. Coming third were the Chamber’s \textit{fanakalo} safety movies with \textit{momparas} (dim-witted people) putting the audience into stitches of laughter for doing ‘everything,’ obviously wrong and stupid.\textsuperscript{112} A hundred performances were now being shown weekly in the compounds to an audience of 1,500 on average and, in one instance, of 7,000; in general, over 50 percent of the miners attended the shows, which lasted for about an hour.\textsuperscript{113} Mine managements certainly derived some benefit from the
film shows which occupied the leisure time of the workers. But as performances were spread across the week, the larger part of any weekend remained ‘free’ on most mines, still leaving, workers time to visit the locations and their friends. For that matter, African mine-workers were not passive recipients of pictorial images that the Chamber and missionaries chose for them. They had their own avenues for demonstrating their rejection of what they were being shown. In this way, they could partly choose what interested them most.

**Conclusion**

The introduction by mining managements of recreational facilities in the compounds was primarily to keep African miners away from the slums and locations where they drank beer, interacted with women, and got exposed to political and labour activists. These measures, however, did not succeed as African miners accepted new recreational facilities without parting with aspects of their life, which they valued most. Beer-drinking and frequenting the locations remained at the centre of recreation and entertainment for most African miners who had transformed compounds, an institution for social control, into their homes.

**Endnotes**


5. From *bo teka*, that is, ‘to wander about’.


12. Even in A. Mabille, and H, Dieterlen, *Sesuto-English Dictionary* (Sesuto Book Depot, Morija, 1911), *kompone* is defined as ‘company, compound, mine’ (p. 155); and *morafo* as ‘digging, mine’ (p.289).

13. ‘Big news’.

14. From ‘Ndebele’; a reference used by Basotho to refer to the Nauni-speaking people. It dates to the 1820s, during the highly disputed period of ‘Mfecane’, when the Basotho were subject to attacks which are being attributed to Shaka in popular history.


16. Modder Deep Level = ‘Mapondweni’ (‘at the Pondos’); Van Ryn Deep = ‘Mazambane’ (‘the potatoes’); Angelo = ‘Nyoni Mhlope’ (‘a white bird’); Premier Diamond Mine = ‘Pikinini Kimbili’ (‘Little Kimberley’). Different mines could also carry the same name or more than one name; ‘Pinkinini Kimb ele’ was also applied to Langlaagte Deep which was a gold mine, and New Gogh gold mine was known as ‘Joji Goro’ and ‘Mafuta’. For the full lists, see LNA, S7/7/35, Assistant SNA to GS, 9 January 1906; S7/7/76, Acting DNI, circular to labour supplying areas, 7 February 1917.
17. For an example, 'Nkonyarna' (Robinson Deep) for the Nguni ‘Ngonyama’ ('lion' used as a symbol of royalty and bravery), or 'Mafopoka' (Crown Reef) for ‘Mavumbuka’ (‘the one who emerges/appears unexpectedly’).

18. City and Suburban = ‘Machechisa’ (‘the one who makes you crawl/creep/go backwards’), and the Nguni turned it to ‘Matshetshe’sia’; Randfontein Estate ‘Mohlakeng’ (‘marshy place’) or ‘Malehlakana’ (‘the mother of marsh’).


22. Interview with Solomon Mokoaleli.


24. SAB, NTS 2092, 216/280, Imp. Sec. to Governor General, 30 April 1919.

25. Litaba, 1938, p.316. For a different perspective, see a Mosotho miner who visited the Premier Mine in February 1922 and was impressed by the number of Basotho employed there and the use of leaders of the nation’ to manage them and listen to their complaints. He wished that such a system could be implemented on other mines, as workers had complaints that they were afraid of raising with compound managers and their indunas because of fearing to be dismissed. See Umteteli, 4 March 1922.

26. LNA, S7/7/75, NRC to PC, 7 January 1916; S8/2/2/28, PC to Armstrong, 27 June 1932; Liteta, 14 January 1916; 22 June 1932.

27. Jeeves, Migrant Labour, pp. 162-63; SAB, GNLB 149, 136/141D.37, NRC to DNL, 7 July 1915.


29. The dispute between Jonathan (the principal chief of Leribe) and Joel (the principal chief of Butha Buthe), both sons of Molapo (one of Moshoeshoe’s brothers), had been a serious issue in Lesotho as early as the 1890s. This remained so until the death of Joel in 1919. See Machobane, Government and Change, pp. 108–10.

30. SAB, GNLB 149,136/14/D.37, SNA to DNL, 24 October 1916.

31. Ibid., SNA to GS, 7 June 1918.

32. Ibid., NAD Inspector (Rayton) to DNL, 18 November 1919.

33. Ibid., temporary pass issued to L. Moshoeshoe, 22 June 1926.
Desecrating the Sabbath? Leisure in the Compounds

34. *Rand Daily Mail*, 16 February 1940; 14 February 1940; Star, 31 October 1939; 1 November 1939.
35. Ibid., 16 February 1940.
36. Ibid., 14 February 1940.
37. SAB, GNLB 149,136/141D.37, Acting DNI, to NRC, 2 July 1915.
38. In 1906 PC Letsie asked RC to give pass and letter of introduction to Chief Mojela who was going to Kimberley to 'see how the people are working'. See LNA, S7/3/22, Letsie to RC, 15 October 1906.
39. LNA, S7/7/68, GS to SNA, 15 April 1913; Leselinyana, 10 November 1916.
40. LNA, S3/19/5, Taberer to GS, 29 April 1919.
41. Ibid, Taberer to GS, 27 March 1919.
42. Ibid., RC to HC, 25 March 1919; GS to Taberer, 24 April 1919; RC to HC, 16 April 1919; PC to RC, 14 April 1919; S3/19/6, 'Minutes of meeting of Chiefs and Headmen, held at the offices of the NW', 2 April 1919; Star, 4 April 1919.
43. SAB, NTS 2092, 216/280, RC to HC, 16 April 1919.
45. CMAR, 1894, pp. 118-23; 1896, pp.31-32; 1903, p.44; 1911, pp.53-65.
50. Leselinyana, 2 October 1913.
52. Leselinyana, 17 June 1911.
53. Ibid., 8 April 1927.
56. See, for example, Leselinyana, 2 October 1913; 27 March 1913; 1 May 1913; 15 September 1937.
57. Ibid., 1 May 1913.
64. SAB, GNLB 192, 1329/14, DNL circular to Inspectors, 28 October 1914.
68. *Bantu World*, 16 April 1932.
69. *Umteteli*, 1 October 1921.
70. Ibid., 10 October 1921; 5 March 1921.
71. SAB, GNLB 368, 88/26/110, Acting DNL to SNA, 17 June 1926.

75. SAB, GNLB 386, 88/26/110, Acting DNL to SNA, 17 June 1926.

76. The Acting Director of Native labour wrote: ‘I think one can definitely put on one side any idea of organizing a Dance of Union Natives on the Witwatersrand. The only Union Natives indulging in dances to any extent are the Zulus, who are scattered about mainly in domestic service on the Witwatersrand and it would be quite impossible to organize them or get them together for the purpose. It occurred to me that the Chamber of Mines might be disposed to assist in the arrangement of something on a fairly large scale in connection with natives from Portuguese East Africa, who are the only natives who indulge in dancing, on the Mines’. See SAB, GNLB 386, 88/26/110, DNL to SNA, 17 June 1926.

77. SAB, GNLB 368, 88/26/110, General Manager (Chamber of Mines) to SNA, 3 June 1926.


80. Ibid., pp. 138-41.

81. This was to remain the highest Cup for Africans until 1976. See R. Archer and A. Bouillon, *The South African Game: Sport and Racism* (Zed Press, London, 1982), p. 92.


83. Umteteli., 16 October 1920; 25 December 1920; 3 September 1921; 6 December 1924; 26 April 1930.


85. The *Bantu World* described the event for its readers: ‘Arrayed in their usual war dance apparel, the two teams were an interesting sight. Some of the players have such strong toes that they would easily make three-inches-deep excavations on the ground in an attempt to kick the ball’. See the issue for 23 April 1923.

86. *Leselinyana*, 27 April 1923; 2 November 1932.


88. Interview with Mokopoi Mokopoi.


92. Paragraph based on Mochochono, 22 June 1946; 29 June 1946; 6 July 1946; 13 July 1946; 20 July 1946; 27 July 1946; Chamber of Mines, Native Workers, p.8; Ashton, Basuto, p.98.

93. Paragraph based on Umteteli, 22 March 1930; 15 March 1930; 16 March 1935; 23 March 1935; Mochochono, 17 April 1935, 7 January 1939, 29 March 1933; Basutoland News, 12 March 1940.


95. Harries, Work, Culture and Identity, p.196; Interview with Solomon Mokoaleli.


97. SAB, GNLB 277, 335/17/370, Mining Commissioner to Native Commissioner (Witwatersrand), 5 February 1913.

98. Ibid., Mining Commissioner to Native Commissioner (Witwatersrand), 27 March 1917; NAD Inspector (Roodepoort) to DNL, 2 April 1913. For a general study, see K. Tomaselli, The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Film (Radix, Sandton [Johannesburg], 1989), pp.54–80.

99. SAB, GNLB 277, 335/17/370, SAP Inspector (East Rand) to Mining Commissioner, 19 September 1919.

100. Ibid., NAD Inspector (Benoni) to DNL, 14 October 1919; SAP Commissioner to SNA, 24 November 1919; NAD Inspector (Johannesburg) to DNL, 25 June 1920; SAP Commissioner to SNA, 31 December 1919; SAP Commissioner to SNA, 14 January 1920.


102. 'Blacks' here refers to Africans, Indians and Coloureds.


105. T. Gutsche, The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa, 1895–1940 (H. Timmins, Cape Town, 1972), pp.355, 378-8 1; Umteteli, 10 July 1926.

106. Other examples were Pas Op Lo Dopi (Look Out for Detonators), and Pas Op Lo Sandla (Look After Your Hands). See Gutsche, History and Social Significance, p.379; and Chamber of Mines, Campaign Against Mining Accidents, p. 18.

107. The experience of many compound managers, it was reported in 1919, was ‘that only the educated and semi-educated natives attended those shows’. See SAB, GNLB 277, 335/17/370, NAD Inspector (Benoni) to DNL, 14 October 1919.


109. Ibid., pp. 146-51; Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa, vol.4 (pp.498-503), vol. 3 (pp.233-38).


111. Gutsche, History and Social Significance, p.379.

112. Umteteli, 5 March 1921; Standard Encyclopaedia, vol.3; Mining Survey, vol. 1, no.2, July 1946.