

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-44067-7 - A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-century Lesotho

Elizabeth A. Eldredge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The BaSotho kingdom emerged and consolidated in the dramatic and dangerous environment of nineteenth-century South Africa. Elizabeth Eldredge provides a rich description of local agriculture, iron-working and craft industries, bringing out the resourceful responses of the BaSotho to the challenges of drought and famine, and explaining the dynamics of the competition for land. During the colonial period, regional economic integration increasingly influenced local production, land use and internal politics, and drew the BaSotho into the regional migrant labor system. Throughout these turbulent years, the overriding interest of the BaSotho was the pursuit of security. Dr Eldredge analyzes the epic struggle which bound together rich and poor, chiefs and commoners, and men and women in a largely successful effort to sustain this fragile and innovative society in the face of political threats and environmental challenges.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-44067-7 - A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-century Lesotho

Elizabeth A. Eldredge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-44067-7 - A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-century Lesotho

Elizabeth A. Eldredge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## A SOUTH AFRICAN KINGDOM

### AFRICAN STUDIES SERIES 78

#### GENERAL EDITOR

J. M. Lonsdale, *Lecturer in History and Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge*

#### ADVISORY EDITOR

J. D. Y. Peel, *Professor of Anthropology and Sociology, with special reference to Africa, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*

Published in collaboration with

THE AFRICAN STUDIES CENTRE, CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-44067-7 - A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-century Lesotho

Elizabeth A. Eldredge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

*A list of books in this series will be found at the end of this volume*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-44067-7 - A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-century Lesotho

Elizabeth A. Eldredge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

# A SOUTH AFRICAN KINGDOM

**The pursuit of security in  
nineteenth-century Lesotho**

ELIZABETH A. ELDREDGE

*Michigan State University*



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-44067-7 - A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-century Lesotho

Elizabeth A. Eldredge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,

Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by

Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521440677](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521440677)

© Cambridge University Press 1993

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1993

Reprinted 1996

First paperback edition 2002

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data*

Eldredge, Elizabeth A.

A South African kingdom: the pursuit of security in nineteenth – century Lesotho /  
Elizabeth A. Eldredge.

p. cm. – (African studies series)

Includes bibliographical references. ISBN 0 521 44067 X

1. Lesotho – Politics and government – To 1966.

2. Lesotho – Economic conditions – To 1966. I.

Title. II. Series. DT2630.E44 1993 968.85–dc20 92–31675 CIP

ISBN 978-0-521-44067-7 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-52304-2 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate. Information regarding prices, travel timetables, and other factual information given in this work is correct at the time of first printing but Cambridge University Press does not guarantee the accuracy of such information thereafter.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-44067-7 - A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-century Lesotho

Elizabeth A. Eldredge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

To David  
and  
to Michael and James

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-44067-7 - A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-century Lesotho

Elizabeth A. Eldredge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-44067-7 - A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-century Lesotho

Elizabeth A. Eldredge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Contents

	<i>page</i>
<i>List of illustrations</i>	x
<i>List of tables</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xii
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xiii
<i>Note on orthography and terminology</i>	xiv
1 Introduction	1
2 Settlement and trade patterns before 1830	18
3 Political consolidation and the rise of Moshoeshoe in the 1820s	28
4 The land of the BaSotho: the geographic extent of Moshoeshoe's authority, 1824–1864	42
5 The European intrusion and the competition for land, 1834–1868	47
6 Food and politics: feasts and famines	58
7 The rise and decline of craft specialization	82
8 The allocation of labor, 1830–1910	101
9 The local exchange of goods and services, 1830–1910	117
10 Women, reproduction, and production	126
11 The BaSotho and the rise of the regional European market, 1830–1910	147
12 The colonial imposition and the failure of the local economy, 1871–1910	167
13 Economy, politics, migrant labor, and gender	182
14 In pursuit of security	195
<i>Appendix Note on oral sources</i>	202
<i>Notes</i>	208
<i>Bibliography</i>	234
<i>Index</i>	245

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-44067-7 - A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-century Lesotho

Elizabeth A. Eldredge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Illustrations

	<i>facing page</i>	<i>page</i>
1 Southern Africa	1	4
2 Lesotho	24	52
3 The distribution of peoples in Southern Africa, <i>c.</i> 1830	54	
4 The changing borders of Lesotho, 1843–1849	64	
5 The changing borders of Lesotho, 1858–1872	65	
6 Migration into Lesotho	160	
7 Estimated population of Lesotho, 1845–1905	160	
8 Cereal exports by quantity	161	
9 Cereal exports by value	161	
10 Livestock exports by quantity	163	
11 Livestock exports by value	163	
12 Grain prices in Lesotho	163	
13 Wool exports by quantity	165	
14 Wool exports by value	176	
15 Values of imports and exports	176	
16 Hut tax revenue	189	
17 Migrant labor passes	189	

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-44067-7 - A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-century Lesotho

Elizabeth A. Eldredge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Tables

1	Incidents of drought, famine, and disease in nineteenth-century Lesotho	<i>page</i> 74
2	Agricultural calendar	103
3	Seasonal distribution of labor for women	109
4	Seasonal distribution of labor for men	110
5	Licenses issued by the colonial government	157
6	Livestock exports	162
7	Commodity prices, 1841–1880	162
8	Values of imports and exports	164
9	Migrant labor passes	190

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-44067-7 - A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-century Lesotho

Elizabeth A. Eldredge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Acknowledgements

The fieldwork on which this book is based was supported by an Oesau Fellowship from the History Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a grant from the Vilas Foundation, and a Fulbright grant for doctoral research. Funds for additional research were provided by York University (Toronto).

I am indebted to Mr. Malete Mokhethi of Mashai, Qacha's Nek District, for his invaluable assistance with interviews and SeSotho transcriptions in 1981 and 1982. I am also grateful for the assistance of Mr. Malefetsane Marabe on subsequent research trips in 1988 and 1989.

Many people have provided generous hospitality to me and my family during our visits to Lesotho. I am particularly grateful to Lois and Molapi Sebatane and to Mpoetsi Lemeke for sharing their homes with us. Aline and Albert Brutsch have made work with archival materials in Morija thoroughly enjoyable. Albert Brutsch, David Ambrose, and L. B. J. Machobane have generously shared their expertise on the history of Lesotho. I would also like to thank Robert Edgar, who provided advice and assistance in the later stages of manuscript preparation. Father David Wells S. S. M. assisted with archival materials from the Society of the Sacred Mission in Modderport, and has always provided generous moral support. I am indebted to Mr. Robert Kukubo for his assistance with materials at the BOLESWA collection in the library of the National University of Lesotho; Father Frank Bullivant at the OMI archives in Rome, Italy; and the staff of the archives of the Société des Missions Evangéliques in Paris.

As always, I am especially grateful to Jan Vansina for his unfailing support.

Finally, I pay tribute to my wonderful family. This work would not have been possible without the countless contributions of my husband, David N. Plank, and the loving patience of our sons Michael and James.

In the end this work rests on the contribution of the old people of Lesotho, who allowed their knowledge to be recorded for posterity. I hope that their contribution to the writing of their history will help to forge a brighter future. *Kea leboha le ka moso.*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-44067-7 - A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-century Lesotho

Elizabeth A. Eldredge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Abbreviations

BR	Basutoland Records
BBNA	Blue Book on Native Affairs
CRA	Colonial Report – Annual (Great Britain)
JME	Journal des Missions Evangéliques
OMI	Oblats de Marie Immaculée
PEMS	Paris Evangelical Missionary Society/Société des Missions Evangéliques de Paris
SANAC	South African Native Affairs Commission

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-44067-7 - A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-century Lesotho

Elizabeth A. Eldredge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Note on orthography and terminology

I have chosen to use the official SeSotho orthography of Lesotho instead of the SeSotho orthography in use in South Africa, in accordance with the choice of modern BaSotho to retain their own orthography. The spellings of names and places reflect this choice.

In the SeSotho orthography of Lesotho, the letter *L* followed by *i* or *u* is pronounced as a *d*; when followed by other vowels it retains the ordinary English pronunciation of *L*. The vowels *o* and *u*, when followed by *a* or *e* and sometimes another *o*, serve as consonants sounded as *w*. Similarly, the vowel *e* when followed by *a* or *o* and sometimes another *e* serves as a consonant sounded as *y*. Clicks are represented by *g*, *c*, and *x*. An apostrophe before *m* or *n*, as in *'me* or *'na* indicates duplication of the consonant (*mme* or *nna*). The consonant *h* does not form a new sound when it follows *p* or *t* as in *ph* or *th*, but indicates the *p* or *t* are aspirated in pronunciation.

I have avoided the use of word stems as words; such use of stems in place of full words would not be acceptable in English usage, where full compliance with word transitions, such as from England to English or Britain to British, is standard. As in other Bantu languages, word changes in southern Bantu languages often occur before the stem, which can be confusing for readers accustomed only to European languages. To alleviate confusion I have adopted a system used by other scholars by which the stem is capitalized in the middle of the word. This should make changes from singular to plural, and differences between group names, easier to identify. For example:

Sotho:	word stem
SeSotho:	language and customs
MoSotho:	person
BaSotho:	people
LeSotho:	nation

Group names are particularly problematic in the ambiguity of their meaning. Thus the term *BaSotho* could refer to anyone speaking the SeSotho language, or it could refer to a member of the nation of Lesotho. I differentiate

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-44067-7 - A South African Kingdom: The Pursuit of Security in Nineteenth-century Lesotho

Elizabeth A. Eldredge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Orthography

between SeSotho-speaking peoples, who might or might not belong to the nation called Lesotho built by Moshoeshoe from 1824; and the BaSotho, by whom I mean those people who gave their allegiance to Moshoeshoe and Lesotho, and their descendants, among whom are included people speaking numerous languages and dialects. Similarly I distinguish between IsiZulu-speaking peoples, some of whom became BaSotho, and the AmaZulu people of the nation built by Shaka. The distinction is more ambiguous for the IsiXhosa-speaking peoples and the SeTswana-speaking peoples. Again, various IsiXhosa and SeTswana-speakers became BaSotho by virtue of their incorporation into Lesotho under Moshoeshoe, but the terms AmaXhosa and BaTswana cannot be used to designate people belonging to a single specific polity in the region. I therefore try to designate the specific polity or political context where appropriate. Because there were numerous polities which were composed primarily of SeTswana-speaking peoples, they are sometimes distinguished by separate group name (for example, BaThaping, BaRolong), and sometimes designated collectively as BaTswana when the specific sociopolitical distinctions are not relevant. It should be noted that chiefdoms and kingdoms throughout the region, whether dominated by AmaXhosa, AmaZulu, BaSotho, or BaTswana, included peoples of various origins speaking various language. Processes of amalgamation and acculturation accompanied ongoing political changes among all southern African peoples in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The descriptive term I use to designate Lesotho changes, varying from chiefdom to kingdom to nation to colony according to the historical context. The BaSotho have referred to Lesotho from its origins as their *sechaba*, which translates as nation, and this seems generally the most appropriate term for the polity established by Moshoeshoe. On the other hand, when Moshoeshoe's chiefdom incorporated other chiefdoms after 1824 Moshoeshoe became the *morena o moholo*, or paramount chief, distinct from subordinate chiefs within Lesotho, and the polity can appropriately be termed a kingdom. During the colonial era the kingdom persisted in the status of the colony of Basutoland, so the term kingdom has the advantage of remaining appropriate for the entire history of Lesotho. I apply the term nation in most contexts, however, because it draws attention to the dynamic role played by the BaSotho in shaping their political and economic destiny in a changing political context, independently of any one chief or king. By using the term nation I suggest an underlying allegiance and loyalty to the polity which survived Moshoeshoe and his heirs in the paramountcy, as well as the colonial era, to shape the modern nation of Lesotho. At the same time the term nation implies dynamics which have allowed the incorporation of people of diverse origins, and therefore also suggests the potential for broader regional incorporation based on wider regional ties and loyalties.

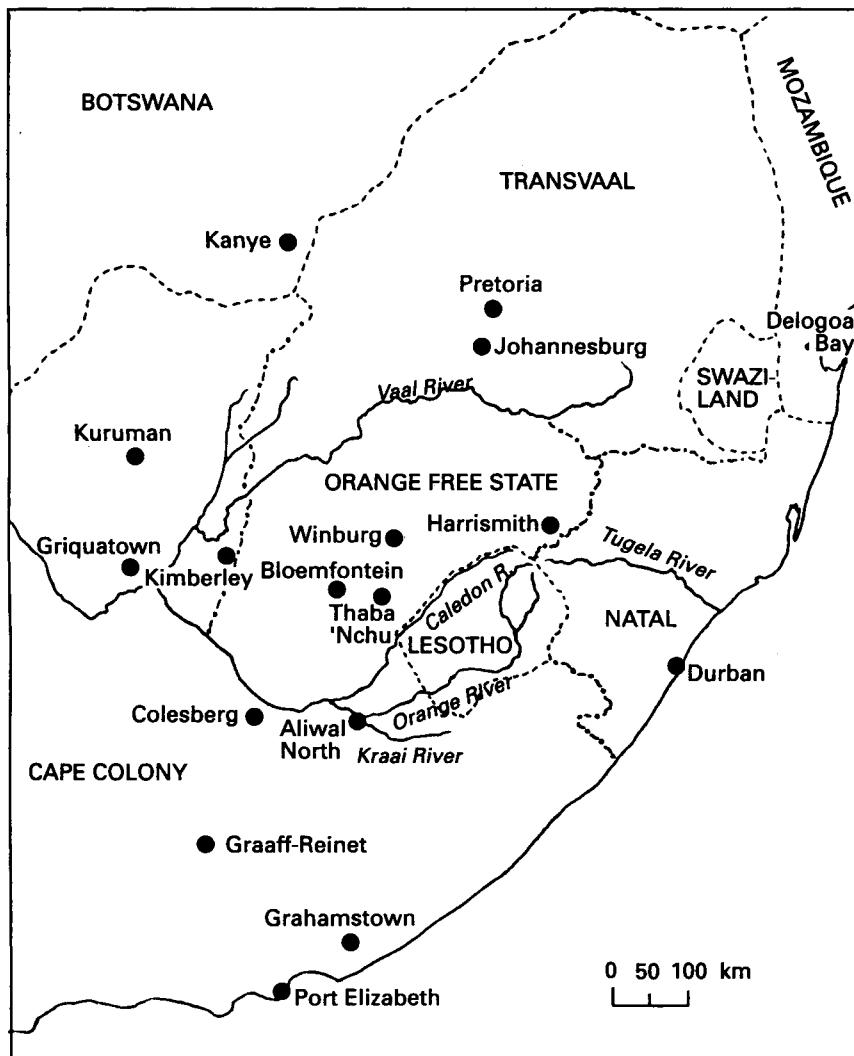


Fig. 1 Southern Africa