

The Decline in Migrant Labour and its Impact on Diversified Rural Livelihoods in a Mountain Area of Lesotho

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ABSTRACT Lesotho is a mountainous country located in the Drakensberg Mountains in southern Africa. This small, landlocked country is about 30,000 km² and is completely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa (South Africa). Its rural inhabitants depend on agriculture and pastoralism; they also work as migrant labourers in the mines of South Africa. Maize and wheat are the staple crops, cattle are raised for food, and sheep and goats are raised for sheared wool and mohair that are sold to provide cash income. Migrant labour is also a very important source of livelihood, and most young men, after initiation, undertake such labour. Following the discovery of gold in South Africa in 1886, the population of migrant workers in South African mines grew constantly, and Lesotho became known as a labour reserve for these mines. Soon after settlement of mountainous areas at altitudes of 2,000 m or higher began in the late 1800s, the population began to rely on local workers who migrated to neighbouring countries for jobs to supplement local earnings. Thus, wages sent home by migrant labourers have been responsible for the development of mountain farmland along with agriculture and livestock farming. However, since the 1990s, factors such as the reduced price of gold, resource exhaustion, and wage inflation have resulted in a great retrenchment of Basotho workers, and the numbers of workers have declined dramatically. This paper focuses on rural villages in the mountain region of Lesotho where cash-earning activities were incorporated into residents' livelihoods during the early stages of village establishment, and analyses the impact of the macro-social changes in South Africa after the 1990s on this mode of livelihood. The research was conducted in L village, in the mountainous Mokhotlong district, for a total of 12 months (August 2005–March 2006, January–March 2008, March 2009). During the research period, the author lived in the village and interviewed villagers, using the English and Sesotho languages, about their personal histories, livelihoods, and cash income. Interviews that focused on the personal histories and experiences of migrant labourers found that most men in their 60s and younger had experienced migrant labour, and their incomes had been spent on buying items for daily life, clothes, and livestock such as cattle and sheep. After the 1990s, the reduction in available mine employment had a serious effect on households in L village, which lost a major source of income. A decrease in remittances also reduced the ability to purchase livestock, a situation made worse by an increase in stock theft in the country. This resulted in the shift of livelihood modes from a non-agricultural base to an agricultural base, with villagers focusing on agriculture as a significant source of income. However, this has led to another concern: an increasing burden on the land. [*Lesotho, diversified livelihoods, deagrarianisation, migrant work, macro-social change*]

INTRODUCTION

The diversification of livelihoods in rural communities in developing countries through the incorporation of non-agricultural activities has been discussed by many researchers since the 1990s. Previous research has presented an image of farmland being marginalised or excluded from economic development due to the population's reliance on subsistence agriculture (Reardon 1997; de Haan & Zoomers 2005; Hajdu et al. 2011). Many poverty-reduction policies have targeted the agricultural sector, neglecting the cash income sources of non-agricultural sectors. However, as these poverty-reduction policies began to be reviewed from the 1990s onward, income-generating strategies at a household level were noted. This review indicated that farmers were no longer relying solely on agricultural production but rather were diversifying their livelihoods, combining agriculture with other cash income

sources (Ellis 2000a; de Haan & Zoomers 2005; Zezza et al. 2009; Hajdu et al. 2011). Cases in which the income sources of the non-agricultural sector surpassed that of the agricultural sector have been reported (Kamanga et al. 2009; Davis et al. 2010; Winters et al. 2010); for instance, the importance of non-agricultural incomes in Africa is increasing compared with other regions (Reardon 1997; Barrett et al. 2001). In addition to the sale of agricultural products, informal means of earning cash, such as the sale of homemade food, home-based manufacture of utensils, and provision of transportation services to the city have been observed frequently, particularly in southern Africa. Such activities have now become part of development plans (Hajdu 2006). A review of research indicated that the diversification of modes of livelihood that incorporate means of earning cash from the non-agricultural sector is a survival strategy for farmers during times of socio-



FIGURE 1. Map of Lesotho and southern Africa.

economic change and an effective measure for overcoming poverty (Ellis 2000b).

Past studies have presented livelihood diversifications being accompanied by social changes (Bryceson 2002). In other words, it is a deagrarianisation process in which farmers accept social change and incorporate non-agricultural activities into their livelihoods. But a question remains: Do livelihood diversities still perform as survival strategies for farmers during times of macro-social change, even after their establishment?

To address this question, I focused on a case study of Lesotho's mountain region, which has a long history of incorporating non-agricultural activities from the beginning of human settlement in the 1800s.

Lesotho's economic dependence on South Africa

The Kingdom of Lesotho (Lesotho) is a mountainous country located in southern Africa that includes the Drakensberg Mountains in the eastern half of the country. With an area of approximately 30,000 km², it is completely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa (South Africa; Figure 1).

Lesotho is no exception to the trend that has prevailed across southern Africa: it is a country where non-agricultural cash-earning activities are thriving, as mentioned above. The agricultural sector involves crop farming, which includes cultivating crops such as maize and wheat, and livestock farming, which involves raising cattle for ploughing as well as sheep and goats that are a source of cash. The country's non-agricultural sector mainly involves migration to South

Africa for work, operating general stores, or joining the taxicab industry. In the mountain regions, at an altitude of 2,000 m or higher, the population began to rely on local workers who migrate to neighbouring countries for jobs to supplement local earnings soon after human settlement began in the late 1800s. Thus, wages sent home by migrant labourers have been responsible, along with agriculture and livestock farming, for the development of the mountain farmland. This development is sustained by the diamond and gold mines that were discovered in South Africa in the late 1800s, making South Africa the main provider of employment for people from neighbouring countries.

Compared with other southern African countries, Lesotho heavily depends on South Africa economically. In addition to its geographical location, i.e., entirely surrounded by South Africa, this dependence stems from the fact that the country is unable to sustain itself by agricultural production alone, being densely populated and with two-thirds of its area covered by mountainous regions. Lesotho relies strongly on imports, with 26% of its export value and 77% of its import value coming from trade with South Africa (Lesotho Bureau of Statistics 2009). Furthermore, the total remittance payments sent back home from South Africa by Lesotho migrant workers accounted for 27% and 46% of the GNP and GDP, respectively, in 1993 (IMF 1994). With such a background of economic relations with South Africa, many studies have been concerned with the dependence of the household economies of Lesotho on migrant workers' remittances. These studies have revealed the

importance of cash income to both the national and household economies (Maloka 2004; Showers 2005; Murray 2009).

However, in the 1990s, there was an over-supply of black labourers in the mines. Therefore, there were fewer job vacancies in the mines, causing the number of migrant workers to decrease (Bardill & Cobbe 1985). As mechanisation progressed, the need for manual labour, jobs that the Lesotho village men could fill, declined. Furthermore, mines closed due to the depletion of resources and the worsening financial situation caused by the decline in gold prices. Moreover, South Africa gained democratic rule and abolished apartheid in the 1990s. This led to the protection of employment for native South Africans, who were oppressed during the apartheid era, reducing the number of migrant workers from neighbouring countries, including Lesotho. These socio-economic changes in South Africa caused significant ripples not only in the country itself but also in the societies and the economies of the entire region due to its significant socio-economic impact. In Lesotho, there was, of course, an enormous impact of income loss. In a survey by Mensah (2011), the differences in monthly income among the three household types - non-migrant household, former migrant household and current migrant household - were statistically significant, decreasing from an average of R3,683¹ for a current migrant household to an average of R1,643 for a former migrant household, demonstrating the connection between the decline in the number of migrant mine workers and the decrease in household income and level of welfare in Lesotho.

Taking into account this major social change in southern Africa, in this paper, I focus on rural villages in Lesotho's mountain region and analyse the transformations of migrant labour and agricultural activities at the household level. By so doing, I aim to examine the impact of macro-social changes on rural diversified livelihoods.

Research methods and description of the village

Field research was conducted for a total of 12 months, from August 2005 to March 2006, from January to March 2008, and during March 2009. I stayed in L village and investigated livelihood activities by interviewing all 64 households using English and Sesotho. Former migrant workers were also interviewed about their life histories to examine changes in livelihood in the village.

Village L is located approximately 45 minutes away from the mountain town of Mokhotlong, which can be reached by car on unpaved roads. Buses run about five times a day to the town and back. As of 2006, the population of the village was 428 (including migrants). Of the village members, South African residents were mostly male migrant workers in their 20s and 30s, and this number encompassed approximately 30% (22/69 people) of the total number of males in their 20s and

30s in the village.

MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD FROM THE 1940S TO THE 1980S

There were three main means of livelihood at village L: migrant labour, agriculture, and livestock farming. In this and the following sections, I describe how the means of livelihood in the village changed during the 1990s based on the migrant work history of the adult males.

Peak period of migration

The peak period of migration to South Africa was from the 1940s to the 1980s. The beginning of the peak period was traced only from the 1940s because the eldest interviewee (born in 1918) reached the age of eligibility for migrant labour in the 1940s. All the people interviewed had migrated for occupational purposes, except two residents, who had been turned down due to health reasons and one person who could not leave home because he had to take care of his father's large herds. Most of the people (26 out of 30 people) interviewed had been employed in South African mines through The Employment Bureau of Africa² (TEBA; Figure 2).

The real wages in the mines rose as the years passed, and although there were differences among the workers³, the average wage was R6 per month during the 1940s. By the 1960s, it had increased to about R10 per month. Thereafter, the monthly wages rose to R700 in the 1970s. The wages in the South African gold mines increased fivefold between 1972 and 1976 due to the good economic climate (Showers 2005). According to an ex-teacher in the town of Mokhotlong, who taught from 1979 to 1989, students at the time talked of how everything would be fine even if they failed their exams so long as they found a mining job. Even teachers were said to have left their jobs to work in the mines. In village L as well, OP, who progressed to a residential high school after finishing elementary and junior high schools in the village, went away to work in a South African mine after graduating from an agricultural vocational college in 1977.

The time spent working in a mine ranged from a few months to a year. When the contract ended, the workers renewed their contracts or moved to another mine with higher wages. For example, AZ worked in the mines from 1959 until 1978, when he hurt his foot. Then, he worked for different periods in different mines: 6 months in Guduld, 4 years in Daggafontein, 6 years in Western Deep Level, 1 year in Leslie, and 7 years in Vaal Reefs. Such contractual arrangements suggest that there was a high demand for mine labourers at the time and thus many opportunities for employment. Therefore, workers were able to move among different mines within South Africa.

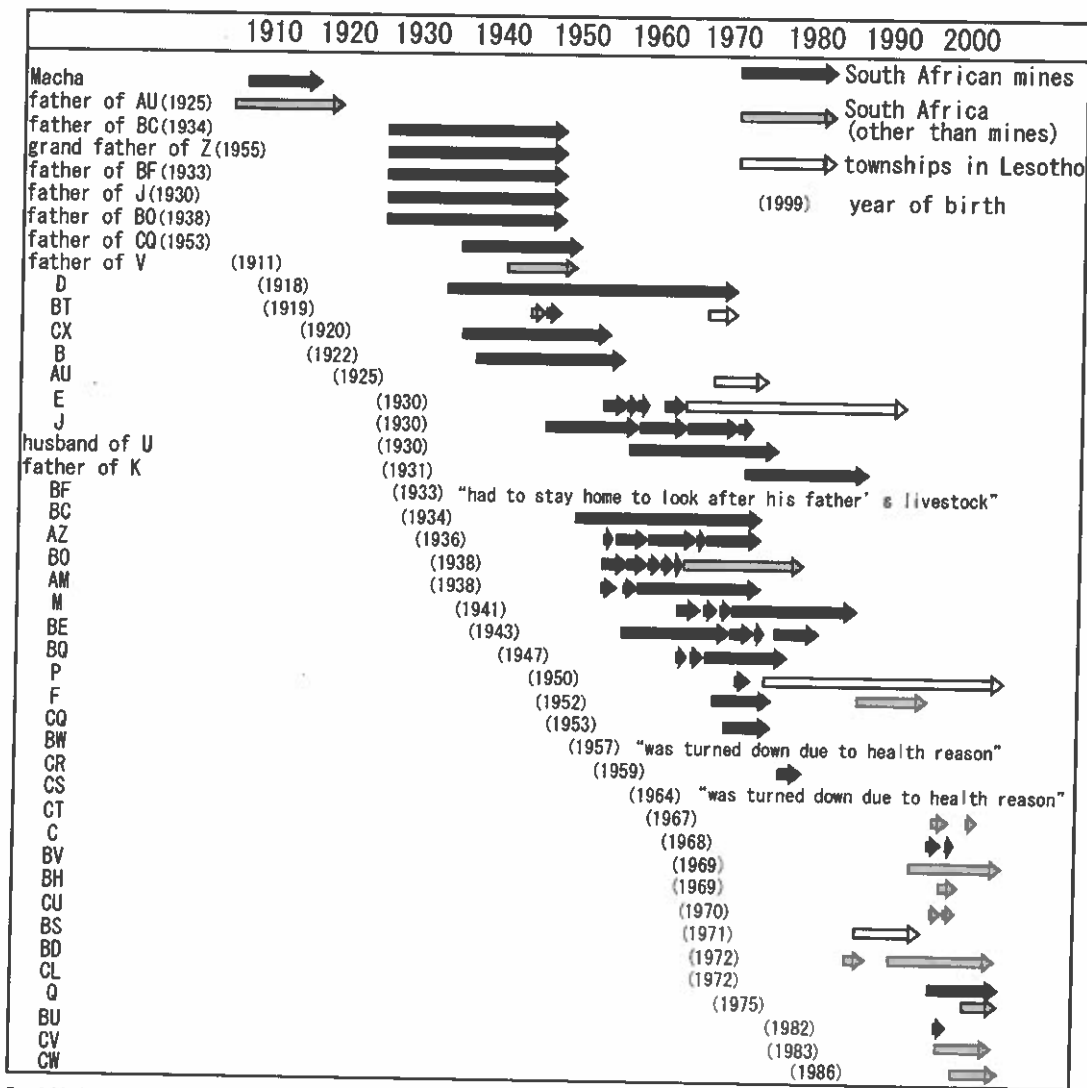


FIGURE 2. Life histories of migrant workers.

Use of remittance

I interviewed 22 people who migrated for work from the 1940s to the 1980s and asked them how they had spent their wages. The most popular item among the purchased goods was livestock, with cattle being bought by 14 interviewees. One interviewee bought 20 cattle in 1963. One reason that people were able to buy so many livestock was that in the 1960s, cattle and sheep were inexpensive, costing R5 and 25cents each, respectively.⁴ Sheep (a few dozen) and horses were bought by seven people. Eight people bought farming implements for ploughing. Seeds (e.g., maize, wheat, and vegetables) were also purchased and people were employed to work on the farm while men were away for mine work. Wages were also used for living expenses such as food and clothing; however, they never spent the entire amount on living expenses. Therefore, most of the remittance was invested in agriculture and livestock farming (Table 1).

For young men in Lesotho, going to work in the mines was a symbol of masculinity. Therefore, it was commonplace for men, once they had reached the age of maturity, to work in

the mines and earn money to purchase livestock.

Agriculture

Crops were produced mainly for subsistence, with maize and wheat cultivated as staple foods, while added crops such as peas and cowpeas (black-eyed beans) were cultivated for supplementary food, in addition to vegetables such as cabbages, potatoes, and pumpkins. In the interviews, many people stated that the production of crops was sufficient until the 1960s and that when the wheat harvest, which was not normally cultivated for sale, resulted in a surplus, it was sold within the village.

Because a male workforce was needed in farm work to manage the cattle during ploughing, when the male heads of households migrated for work, family members who looked after the home would generally help out. In most cases, it was the migrant worker's father who looked after the farm, followed by the migrant's brothers and other relatives. Some people also hired help and paid them with money earned by the migrant family member. Additionally, a system called *seahlolo*⁵

TABLE 1. Usage of remittances (~1980s).

	Livestock				farming implements	food	clothing	others
	cattle	sheep/goats	horse	donkey				
V	10	60	1			○		
D	3	20	1		yoke			
CX				2	yoke	○		
AU	1x several times	2x several times	1x several times		yoke			
E					seed (wheat)			education
J	2				yoke	○	○	
K	5	30	10					
BC	1				seed (maize, wheat, peas)	○	○	
AZ	"many"		"many"		2 yokes			
BO	8				hire a person			
AM	5	12	1	1	yoke	○	○	
M	1							
BE	20, 3	50-100					○	
BQ								
P	1				4 yokes			
F	7							
CO	3		2		yoke	○	○	education
CR		30						

was used to bring in additional help. For example, the wife of BE said that she was helped by *seahlolo* to feed her children when her husband was away for work. Because most of the farming implements had been bought using money earned from mine work, it could be said that the operation of agricultural work was supported by the cash income of migrant labour.

Livestock farming

As mentioned previously, many farm animals were bought using money earned at the mines. The livestock most frequently purchased were cattle. In addition to their use in ploughing, cattle were also used as bride wealth. Because sheep and goats were cheaper than cattle, they were the second most frequently bought livestock and were purchased in numbers of 10 or more at a time. Their wool and mohair were a source of income, and sheep and goats were also produced as investments because they could be sold individually. Migrant workers are said to have invested in livestock as a "pension" for their retirement.

Livelihood of the village during 1940s to 1980s

In summary, many of the village men went to work in the mines during the period from the 1940s to the 1980s. The wages were used to provide for major expenditures, such as livestock and farming implements. Wages were also used for labour costs such as managing agriculture and livestock farming and employing people to perform agricultural tasks. Although income from working in the mines was also used for purchasing daily necessities such as food and clothing, most of the earnings from migrant labour were invested in agriculture and livestock.

In general, people talked about their time as migrant workers nostalgically, saying it was "good back then."

Agriculture and livestock farming functioned well, supported by sufficient cash earnings from migrant labour. Moreover, when surplus crop was produced, it could be sold, and the village was able to support its small population.

MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD FROM THE 1990s TO 2010s

Decline of migrant labour at the mines

In village L, after the 1980s, the rate of contract renewals and employment of new labourers decreased significantly, in accordance with the national trend. The concomitant decline in cash earnings had a great impact on the village's livelihood. When BE applied for a contract renewal in 1986 and BU did the same in 2003, they were both rejected by their respective mining companies. When BD applied for mining labour jobs through TEBA in 1991 and BH did so in 1999, they were both declined, as new recruits were not needed. Of those interviewed who were engaged in migrating for the purpose of labour from the 1990s onward, only three of the migrating workers were employed in the mining industry (see Figure 2). Since the 1980s, TEBA has continually reduced the numbers of new mining labourers being hired, tending to favour labourers with considerable experience (Bardill and Cobbe 1985). In 2002, TEBA effectively stopped hiring new labourers. Only when a labourer dies in the mines, a relative of the deceased is allowed to be employed as an inexperienced labourer. Thus, BU was employed by a mine in 2003 as a new employee because his uncle had died in a mine. However, he was not allowed to renew his contract after completing his initial 11-month contract.

Although mining job opportunities have decreased, migrant workers have become engaged in other work. When villagers could not find work within Lesotho, they went to

TABLE 2. Usage of remittances (1990s-).

	livestock				farming implements	food	clothing	commodities	expenditures in S. Africa	others
	cattle	sheep/goats	horse	donkey						
CT						○	○	○		
C			5			○	○			
BV						○	○	○	living expenses transportation	
BH						○	○			
CU							○		living expenses transportation	
BD						○	○		living expenses transportation	
CL										construct brick house
O						○		○	living expenses transportation	
BU		1			yoke	○	○		transportation	
CV						○		○	living expenses transportation	
CW						○				give to parents

only C, CL and BU are the mine workers

South Africa to search for jobs. They often knocked on the gates of white farm owners, seeking work and sometimes engaging in direct negotiations. Most of the work they have found involves house building, followed by farm and retail work.

One of the major differences between working in the mines and other migrant labour is the income. Whereas the households of mining labourers can purchase livestock such as sheep, although not as many as in the past, migrant workers in other jobs do not have the extra money to buy livestock because a large portion of their wages is used for living expenses (Table 2).

Agriculture

Farm fields can be divided into two types. Farmland where staple crops are cultivated is called *tsimo*, and vegetable gardens where vegetables are grown around one's home are called *jarete*. According to interviews, the oldest *jarete*, where cabbages, carrots, and potatoes were cultivated for home use, was established in the 1940s. Although *jaretes* were cultivated mostly for home consumption until the 1980s, from the 1990s onward, young and older people alike started expanding them, growing produce as cash crops as well (Figure 3).

In recent years, the range of *tsimo* crop cultivation has also undergone changes. Although cultivation of crops for home use continues, additional cultivation of cash crops such as cabbages and carrots began in the 1980s. In the 2000s, a household planted sunflowers in an entire block of *tsimo* and started selling seeds on a commercial basis. In 2009, three other households planted a few sunflowers on their farms with the intention of growing seeds so as to cultivate the crop on a larger scale (Figure 4).

Thus, the decline in migrant labour and the start of

intensive use of farmlands coincide in the village. This can be speculated that the lack of migrant labour earnings is driving households to expand their *jarete* or convert *tsimo* from cultivating crops for home use to large-scale commercial crops, with hope for compensation of income loss.

Livestock farming

The number of livestock is declining nationally, and the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics (2009) attributes this decline partly to the theft of livestock. In fact, the number of cases of stock theft has been increasing since the 1990s (Dzimba and Matooane 2005), and according to Kynoch and Ulicki (2000), 40% of households who do not own livestock attribute this lack to stock theft. Dzimba and Matooane (2005) reported that due to the increase in mortality rates in Lesotho in recent years, the demand for livestock to slaughter at funerals is increasing. Moreover, they also point out the increased unemployment which has forced many of them to turn to livestock theft as a means of survival, and concluded that the main cause of stock theft was the increased unemployment in the country.

In village L, the damage caused by stock theft was serious, with a noted increase in theft cases since the 1990s. A household that had 40 sheep stolen during one night was suddenly deprived of their precious source of income, gravely affecting their domestic financial situation. In most theft cases, cattle kept in livestock corrals next to the house were taken away during the night or cattle were stolen while grazing on the mountainous areas during transhumance in summer. Although a neighbourhood watch was established as a countermeasure, members only pursued the stolen livestock but did not engage in preventative measures. In 2008, stock owners began to build small sheds next to their cattle pens where the shepherds would stay at night to keep watch over the animals.

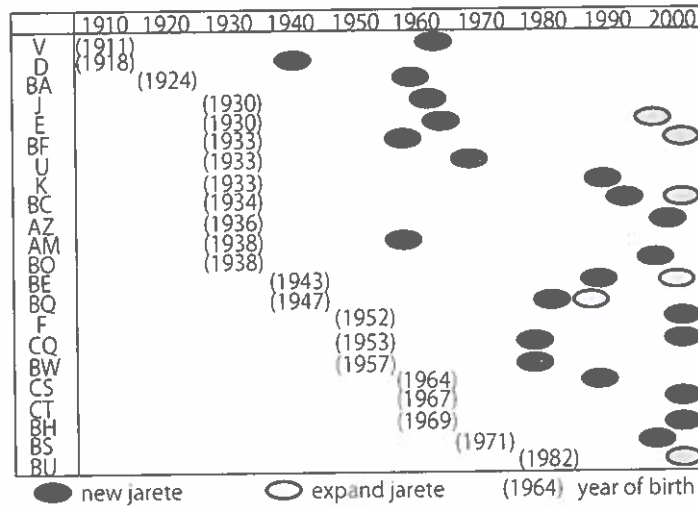


FIGURE 3. Expansion of jarete.



FIGURE 4. Sunflower grown in tsimo as cash crop.

Figure 5 shows the population in village L, categorised by the number of cattle they owned. The figures reflect statistics from 2008, although the number of animals fluctuates considerably as they are bought and sold. The common number of animals owned is between one and five animals per person. This number has declined greatly from the era when people were able to buy a large number of animals with earnings from the mines. Moreover, the number of households that own no animals almost equals that of households that own animals. Thus, the number of animals, which increased when mining jobs were plentiful during the 1940s–1980s, declined greatly partly due to the increase in stock theft. Because the number of mining jobs available, which was the major source of cash earnings, declined greatly at about the same time, villagers were unable to buy more livestock.

Sources of cash income among men and women

Men in households whose main sources of cash earning, i.e., mining labour and raising livestock, have been cut off, can earn interim cash through casual work. Examples include digging up *lisu*⁶ (cow manure used as fuel; R4 per corral), collecting rocks for construction (R150 per house), and building foundations for houses⁷ (R500 per house). These jobs are not available on a regular basis, and a worker might be able to find such jobs about once a month.

According to the interviews, even before the 1980s, miners' remittances occasionally fell behind, and at such times, women engaged in activities to earn cash to supplement their incomes. However in recent years, such activities by women have become an important source of domestic income in the midst of low employment rates among males.

Selling home-brewed alcohol (*joala*) was an activity conducted mostly by women in the village, although this was not done on a regular basis. Of the 22 women interviewed, 17

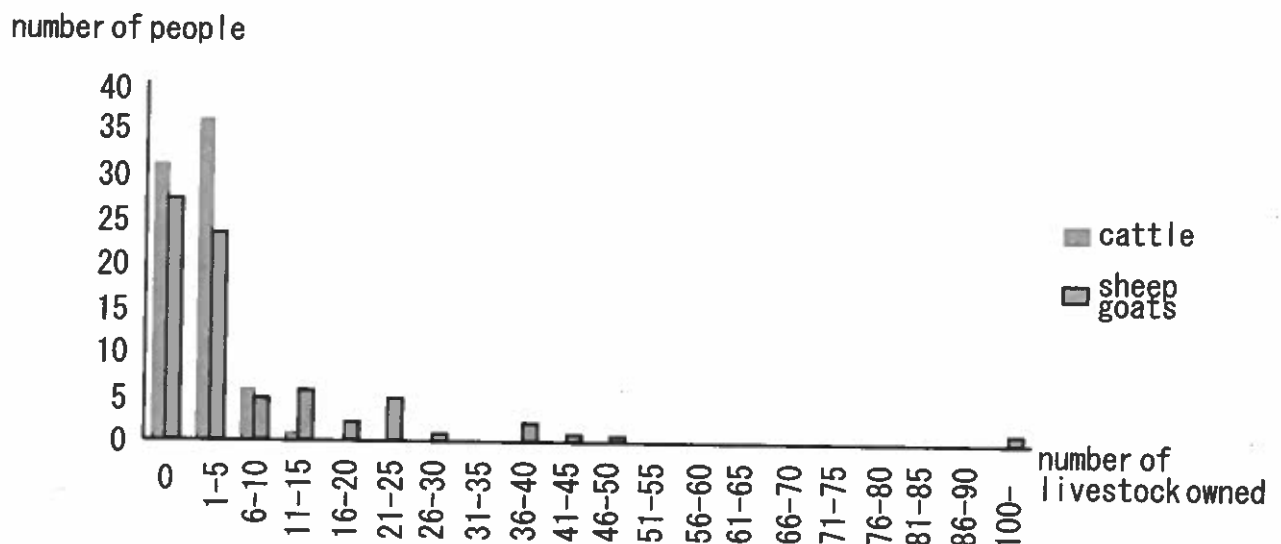


FIGURE 5. Number of livestock owned in L village.

were currently engaged in brewing and selling alcohol. Next to making *joala*, baking and selling bread (*lipapata*) was the most common activity engaged in by women. Women also often gathered and sold firewood (*patsi*). Using a pickaxe, women gathered shrubs 30 cm or more in length by digging them by from the roots. It was difficult and heavy labour, and women were required to collect large amounts to provide for their own home use as well as to sell; therefore, this form of business was not as common as making *joala*. Nevertheless, it is a common means of earning cash when there is no money to buy raw materials needed to make *joala* or *lipapata*.

As described above, due to the reduction of major sources of income, i.e., the decline in migrant worker's remittances, and also the damage caused by cattle theft, villagers started to rely on agriculture as a source of cash. Moreover, casual labour within the village is also becoming an important source of cash income, complementing insufficient earnings from agricultural work.

CONCLUSIONS

During the period when the population of Lesotho's mountain region started to increase, migrant work in the South African mines was already one of the main means of livelihood in Lesotho. Thus, the history of the mountain villages developed against a background of non-agricultural activities. The wages for mining labour increased annually, and many youths went to the mines to work. Most of the earnings were used to purchase livestock and farming implements, and this livelihood structure in which migration labour that supported agriculture and livestock farming continued for decades. During this period, villagers cultivated food only for their own consumption. However, this structure changed in the 1990s.

Along with the socio-economic changes in South Africa during the 1990s, the number of mining labourers decreased significantly in the Lesotho mountain region, cutting off a

major source of income. Meanwhile, although raising sheep and goats remained a major source of income in addition to migration labour, villagers were unable to rely on stock farming due to a serious increase in stock theft during that period. As a result, crop cultivation shifted from growing crops solely for domestic use to cultivating cash crops, gradually raising the importance of agricultural work as a significant source of income. Furthermore, cash income resulting from the work of village men and women also came to play a significant role in domestic incomes.

Similar drastic changes in modes of livelihood were observed throughout southern Africa. For example, in Botswana, a decline in migrant labour to the South African mines has been one of the reasons for the changes in the life course of male villagers (Townsend 1997). During the peak period of mine work, the miners left their families in the villages, and their extended families, including their parents and any kin who needed support, were economically dependent on remittances. However, after the decline of migrant labour, men (especially young men) gained the option of staying permanently in urban towns with their nuclear families. As a background of this, there was the increasing demand for labour in rapidly growing capital of Gaborone. Andersson (2006) described the Malawian case in which after the 1990s, form of international migration has changed. After centrally organized mine migration to South Africa ended in the 1980s, migrants who were engaged in an informal commodity market have newly emerged. Contemporary movements of migrants are more diverse and are less tied to labour works. In these countries, social changes did not impact the structure of diversified livelihoods itself because people continued to engage in other non-agricultural activities, instead of mine works.

However in my case study, diversified livelihoods seem to have transitioned to agrarianised ones. After South African

mine labour became limited option for foreigners, ex-mine workers of other countries were absorbed into their domestic employment markets, whereas in Lesotho mountain region, there was shortage of other means of earning cash. As a result, locals had to focus on using available natural resources (i.e. to engage on agricultural activities) that required little investment.

To address the previous question, "do livelihood diversities still perform as survival strategies for farmers during times of macro-social change, even after their establishment?", I conclude that the diversification of livelihoods may be an effective strategy in protecting the lives of villagers from macro-social changes because it provides options for making a living. In Lesotho mountain case, livelihoods were diversified in that non-agricultural activities were conducted alongside agricultural work, but there was only one option, mining work, which fully supported the financial soundness of village agriculture.

As Yaro (2006) indicates, diversification *per se* does not automatically lead to livelihood security, as few profitable non-farm activities exist for the many affected by economic decadence, population pressure, climatic variability and social marginalisation. According to literature on livelihood diversification, limited access to non-farm activities can be resulted from the need of investments for profitability, that precludes many poor people from engaging in them (Meagher 2000; Yaro 2006). In addition to this, Lesotho's forepassed colonial policy has also influenced the shortage of non-agricultural income source, who had offered minimal formal employment opportunities to locals. The government's aim of that time was to tie the locals to South African labour markets in mines, agriculture and industries (Southall 1994). After the independence in 1966, the new government attracted foreign manufacturing industries to create new jobs, by reference to the low cost, docility and easy availability of workers, but success was limited due to the competition with the former homelands in South Africa (Southall 1994). This historical case was partly responsible for Lesotho's poorly developed employment market.

Moreover, because only minimal investments have been made in agriculture until 1980s, it is unlikely that effective land-use systems for intensive agriculture were established in the studied case. Therefore, after the transition to agrarianised livelihoods, the increasing burden on the land in the future is a concern.

Nevertheless, the livelihood structure of managing agriculture work by having non-agricultural activities as the base has the long-term advantage of not imposing an excessive load on the soil, particularly in mountainous land where the natural environment is fragile. However, this economic structure has strong ties with the global economy and is vulnerable to socioeconomic changes. So, the number

of available options can influence the vulnerability of village economy and natural resources, otherwise they may need intervention by government or aid organisations to manage land for sustainable use.

With the construction of the Polihali Dam in the mountainous region, which is beginning in 2012 as part of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project,⁸ the government aims to alleviate poverty by offering jobs involved with this construction to residents of the region. However, this employment will only be temporary, and when construction is completed, a repeat of what transpired from the 1980s onward is likely to occur. To protect the local residents from economic instability, it is necessary to create long-term job opportunities for the local population as well as devise methods of sustainable land management, or the risk of imposing a further load on the natural resources will remain significant.

NOTES

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1. Currencies in Lesotho include the Maloti (plural form) or the Loti (singular form). However, due to the Common Monetary Area arrangement, this currency is fixed at a one-to-one rate with the South African currency, Rand. Therefore, it is possible to use Rand notes within Lesotho. Accordingly, this paper will use the Rand (R).
2. TEBA is a recruiting company that is operated by the mining companies.
3. Wages differed depending on the mining company, the specific position, and the worker's experience.
4. In 2009, a cattle cost R3,000 and a sheep cost R700.
5. This is a system in which the landowner provides agricultural land, while the tenant provides the seeds and cattle for ploughing. Farm work such as planting, weeding, and harvesting is done in collaboration, and the harvest is divided equally.
6. Because the cow manure accumulated in cow pens is hardened from being walked on, it is dug up in small blocks for use as solid fuel.
7. Because houses in village L are built on a slope, a flat area has to be dug out before construction can begin.
8. This is a joint development project of Lesotho and South Africa. It involves the construction of several large dams and other infrastructure like roads, bridges, and power lines with the aim of transferring water to the Gauteng region of South Africa and providing electricity to Lesotho (Devitt & Hitchcock 2010).

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