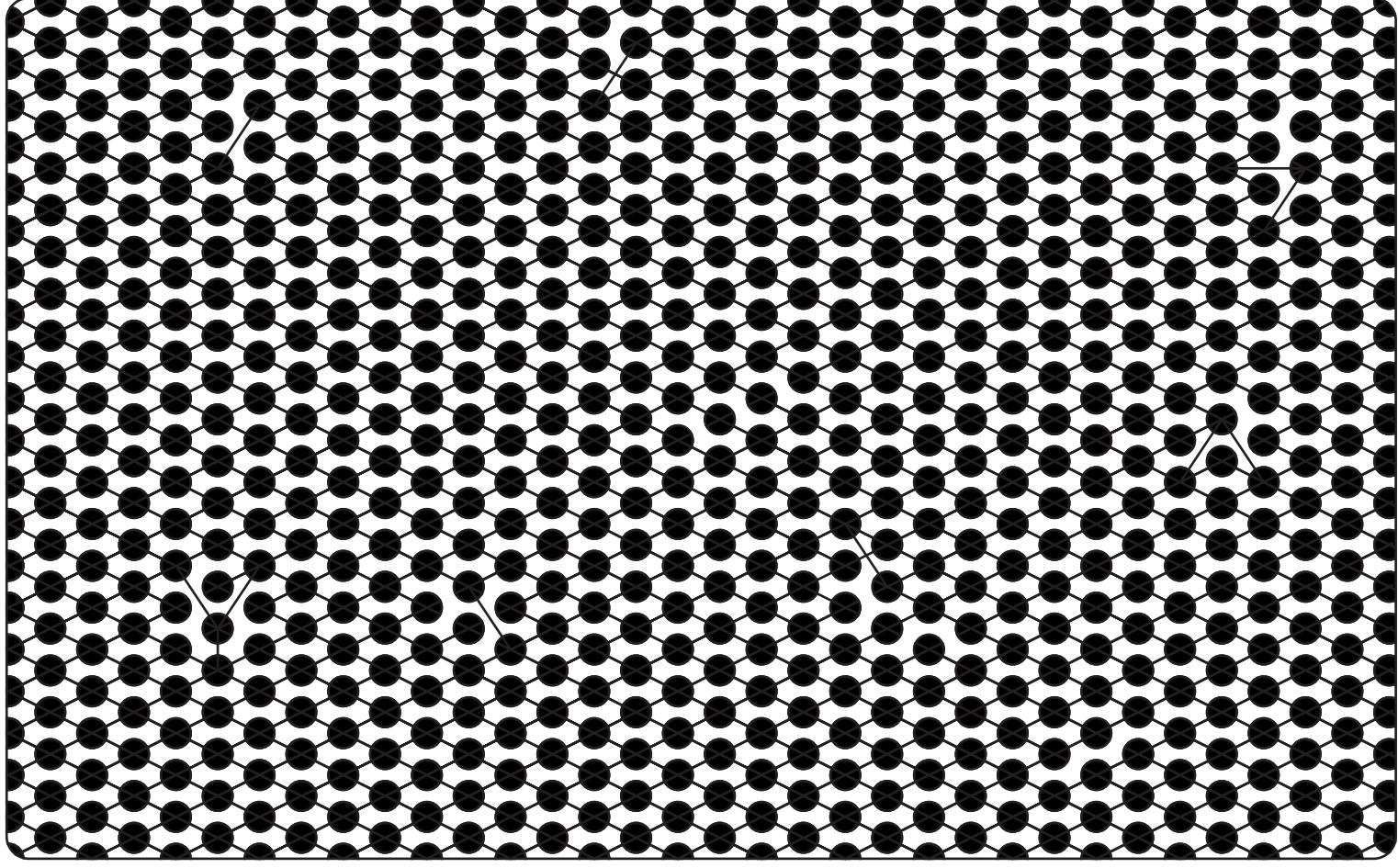


“Interested in discovering Basotho heritage, history and culture? The cultural center of Lesotho, Morija is the perfect destination to get a taste of Basotho heritage, it’s unique way of life and discover Basotho cultural assets in a friendly and relaxed manner. Morija is known for its historical significance and is regarded as the cultural center of Lesotho. It is where one of the first European mission sites was settled in Africa. It is also the seat of Christianity in Lesotho. You will see beautiful old buildings and leafy pastoral scenes.”



WORKING GROUP: MASERU

MORIJA, THE FIRST MISSIONARY SETTLEMENT IN LESOTHO

The Morija Mission was established by Thomas Arbousset, Eugene Casalis and Constant Gosselin in 1833. These Frenchmen had been sent by the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society to the Kingdom of Lesotho to assist the London Missionary Society in bringing about what that society described as the "regeneration of the Negro race and its adoption into the mainstream of human progress" (Kimble 1978:105). In pursuance of this aim, Arbousset, Casalis and Gosselin opened schools. The first of these was the Morija Theological School, which opened in 1882. Its primary activities were the teaching of reading and writing, the study of the bible and instruction in the spiritual values and teachings of the Christian faith. European cultural values were emphasised; students had to adopt a biblical name, wear European clothing, and practice European eating and living habits.

The Morija mission began publishing books in Sesotho in 1861 after the founding of the Morija Printing Works by Adolphe Mabille. The Morija Museum and Archives was formally established in 1956 to house the collections of the two prominent European missionary families: the Dieterlens (who had collected ethnographic and historical material) and the Ellenbergers (who had collected paleontological and geological specimens). In 2011 Patrick Rorke, a descendant of former Morija's missionary settlers, opened the Maeder House Art & Craft Gallery and the Morija Arts Centre at this site.

Because they were neither English nor Dutch (the two groups then aggressively colonising southern Africa), French, Swiss and German missionaries at Morija experienced less resistance to their activities in Lesotho during the early to mid-19th century. However, when Lesotho became a British colony in 1868, the Basotho leaders accepted grants from the British Colonial Government to run schools and abided by British colonial policies and curricula.

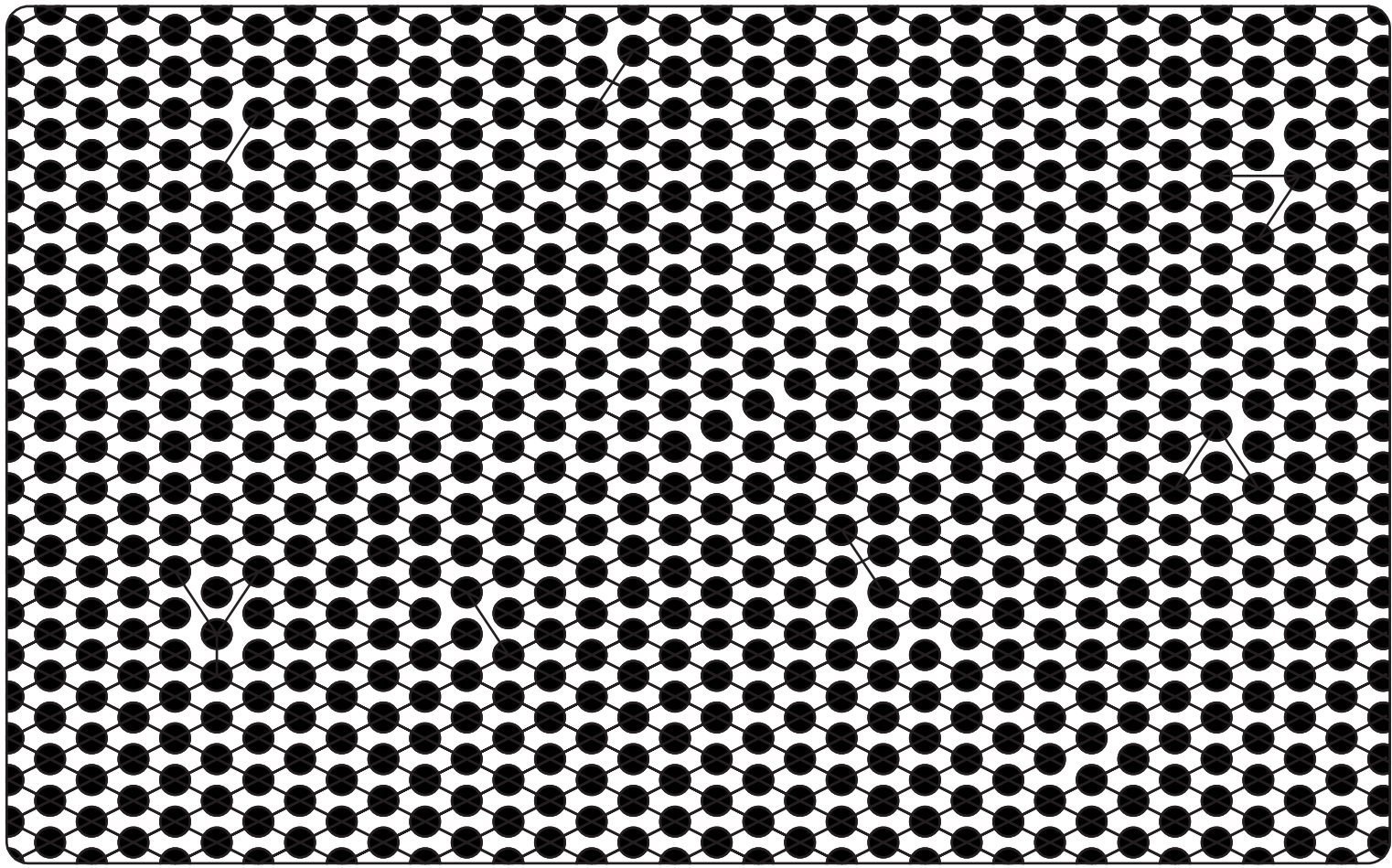
Quote: last accessed on 26 February 2018 from www.morija.co.ls

Take another look at the quotation from the Morija Mission and analyse whether the phrasing and language used here appropriate? Explain.

Does the custodianship of the memory and knowledge of a former colony matter? Think about this question based on your own local context.

In your view, how does the legacy of colonial and missionary education affect schools in the present?

Thomas Mofolo, Author



1948

1876

LESOTHO # LITERATURE
STORYTELLING # MISSIONARY DIMENSION
COLONISATION

WORKING GROUP: MASERU

The fictional work produced by the celebrated author Thomas Mofolo is important in the ways that it challenged colonial notions of literature and art in early 20th century Lesotho. After graduating from the Paris Evangelical Mission Society school with a teacher's certificate in 1898, Mofolo worked for over a decade as a manuscript writer, proof-reader and secretary for the Sesuto Book Depot, while at the same time contributing regularly to the mission newspaper Leselinyane. Mofolo's personal experience of working in support of the colonial order is not a unique one for the time, however it is important to note his progression towards a decolonialised mindset in his fiction and in his political writings about missionary education.

Mofolo's first two books *Moeti oa Bochabela* (1907) and *Pitseng* (1910) are some of the earliest recorded works of fiction in the Sesotho language. Both clearly reflect the influence of his colonial and Christian education. Their protagonists are presented as pillars of their societies because of their proximity to the church which itself propagates Christian virtues and morality. Interestingly, however, in *Pitseng*, Mofolo ultimately describes formal Christianity as a debasement of love and suggests that the sacred love found through God is maintained by the unconverted. This is a crucial turning point in Mofolo's political and philosophical development.

In *Chaka* (1925), Mofolo seemingly disassociates from his colonial Christian education by writing a fictionalised account of the demise of a renowned Zulu warrior king. In this book there is no condemnation of what would have been perceived by Europeans as the uncivilised and tribal way of life. Mofolo explores with nuanced detail the intricacies of Chaka's life, and by so doing he humanises the experiences of the character and his society. This defiant narrative was considered so threatening by the colonial administration that the release of the book was delayed for 15 years.

Which authors in your context played a critical role in the decolonisation of literature?

In which ways was their work pivotal to the progression of the decolonisation movement?

Has their work influenced contemporary art and creative expression? If so, how?