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Office of the Sub Native Commissioner,

S e k u k u n i l a n d .

S.K.549/II/ 750 /II.

Circumcision Schools.

The Secretary for Native Affairs,

P R E T O R I A :

During the time I have been Sub Native Commissioner in Lichtenburg, Pilansberg and Sekukuniland I have made close investigations into the proceedings and rites of these schools. In minor details they vary among the Barolong, Bakhatla and Bapedi according to local circumstances but the ceremony is regarded as by far the most sacred of all native customs and is cherished as such.

1. Certain immoral songs, some of which I could if necessary quote, are taught and chanted by the boys at different periods of the school. They are taught to obey their chief and be ruled by him just as their circumcised fathers obey and are ruled. They are advised not to obey their mothers or their wives. In these parts uncircumcised men are scarcely looked upon as being under a chief. I have no reason whatever to believe that sedition is taught.

2. From the information I have time to time

time received I think that the actual surgical operation of circumcision causes remarkably few deaths in these schools, the deaths that occur are mostly due to exposure during the cold weather when the schools are held. Deaths, though they do occur in the schools, are not numerous from any causes.

*breaking maidenhood  
with a horn*

The schools for girls is not nearly so severe as that for boys. Girls may have had to undergo an operation in days gone by, but that particular operation is nowadays more of a myth than the truth at any rate in Sekukuniland: the girls are not now even examined before or after the school. They have to keep pure during the period of the school and though they may learn some immorality they do not then ~~xxx~~ practise it.

3. Strong pressure used formerly to be brought to bear on Christian parents to send their children to circumcision schools but this is no longer the general rule as they are well aware that it is safer to avoid trouble and leave them alone. I however know of a few instances of pressure of this kind. On the other hand sometimes a child will run away from his Christian parents and go to his heathen uncle or other relative in order to be sent to the school by him. The difficulty here is more that the children are anxious to pass the school.

4. Mission and Government schools are few and far between in Sekukuniland and the circumcision schools are numerous but they do not yet clash and the former are not disorganised.

It should be remembered that if heathen parents are prevented from taking their children from the Mission school during the bodikane period

many of them will not allow their children to go to the Mission schools at all, for fear that when the bodikane comes on their children will not be able to join, and thus many children may lose their Christian schooling or may not be able to get any till after they have passed the bodikane. Interference on this point would possibly hinder education still worse.

In Sekukuniland there is no trouble or difficulty about these schools. Every year Chiefs and headmen come to me as their Head Chief and formally ask permission to open a school and these are always allowed, except in the farming area where the youngsters are liable to thief stock, but inside Sekukuniland there is no reason to refuse them. Circumcision is opposed by the Missions but it seems to be a healthy operation and in itself should be encouraged.

I certainly do not recommend that bodikane schools should be suddenly stopped in Sekukuniland, it would upset the natives tremendously.

*J. H. Hume*

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