

THE RAPULANA BAROLONG

Rapulana was the younger brother of Seleka. Both of the sons of King Tau by Meshwaana his wife of lowest rank. That section of the Barolong nation which followed Rapulana's banner thus takes the last place in the Barolong ceremonial functions.

Rapulana was born at Taung about 1727. He accompanied his brother Seleka^{8th}, and his half brothers - Ratlou, Tshidi, and Makgetla in their emigration of the Barolong from Taung through Lithakong, Mamusa and Mesite. At the last place, Ratlou who had succeeded to the kinship, died, and Seleka being the eldest of Tau's sons acted until Medirwagale was appointed as regent. In the division of the Ratlou section over the question of succession, Rapulana followed Medirwagale to Setlagaletse, while Mokalaka went to Merckweng. Rapulana married Mma-maremela, the young widow of Ratlou. This action being resented by the sons of Ratlou led to dispute and separation, Rapulana being supported by Makgetla, Tshidi and Seleka families. The Seleka family then went off towards the south, finally settling at Thabeng, while the others, namely the Tshidi, Makgetla and the Rapulana families went towards Phitshane. Here the Medirwagale fell upon them and completely routed them, slaying Melekane Tlhutlwa, the future chief of the Tshidi Barolong, and also Melekane the future chief of the Rapulana Barolong, as well as his brother Koleshe.

After this, Rapulana and his followers retired to Letlhakane, and were followed by the Tshidi clan under Makgetla. After Makgetla's death there, at the age of about fifty years, Rapulana became blind, and soon after died about the year 1798. Some time after him, Makgetla also died.

The new Rapulana chief Makgwa now left Letlhakane to follow up the Seleka Barolong at Thabeng, and at the same time the Tshidi people, now under Meshame went again towards Setlagaletse, and settled at Ge-Jawana, where they were dislodged by Mokalaka, and forced to take refuge in the Bangwaketse country.

At Thabeng, the Rapulana, under their chief Makgwa built their new town in close proximity to the Seleka kinsmen. Here the two clans lived in close intercourse and close military alliance, opposing a common and united front to the assaults of the surrounding hostile tribes - the Griquas, the Bushmen, the Keranas, and the various clans of the prolific and widely distributed Bakwena tribes.

prolific Bakwena. So long as they were thus united, they invariably gave a good account of themselves, and in fact even took the offensive against their enemies. It was in one of these frequent battles that Moreka the 1 of the Seleka Barolong was killed in 1810, and soon after in 1818, Makgwa chief of the Rapulana clan also died. He was succeeded by his son of highest rank Matlaba (about 1818) a man of about twenty-three to twenty-five years, of roving disposition, restless, irresponsible temperament, changeable and capricious character.

In January 1823, the Batlokwa (Mantatisi) fell upon the Barolong settlement at Thabeng. The attack was from the south, and fell first, and most heavily upon the Seleka Barolong of Sehunelo. In the mean time the Rapulana Barolong of Matlaba whose village was about two miles distant to the south tried to clear out of the way, and partially succeeded in eluding the ^{invading} Batlokwa. But some of the men, disregarding the orders of their chief bravely went forth to help the Seleka army under Tshabadira and Sehunelo in stemming the avalanche of the Batlokwa invasion. [Soon after this, to wit, in February 1823, Matlaba moved from the neighbourhood of Thabeng, and after collecting the remnants of his people he led them in the south west direction, and established his headquarters at Didibaneng, some fifteen to eighteen miles from Thabeng, while his Seleka kinsmen now under Sehunelo moved at the same time to Makwasi further south .

with
After this catastrophe Matlaba and some of his people had wandered about as mere pariahs] He had then met some Bataung who were in similar circumstances owing to the identical enemy. With their help, Matlaba saw their chiefs and entered into a friendly alliance with them. He also induced some Keranas of Rakabi, and Griquas of Jan B₁oem to enter the alliance for predatory and defensive purposes. An expedition was duly organised ~~to~~ and guided by Matlaba to attack and rob the Matebele at of Mziligazi at Mosega. But it is said that Moletsana had proof or reason to believe that Matlaba was plotting secretly against him, and abetting his opponents and enemies. He therefore determined to punish him, and if possible slay him .

9

Rapulana and Successors
Makaleu at Diabaley
driven by Kotebame

Rapulana at Thobaithe
" Khatueing
" Palfontem
" Reiffontem

Box was
Disputed with T. Shides
Mortality of the Chief

Rapulana
~~*Rapulana*~~ Barobong

So long as they were thus united, the Rapulana and the Seleka clans almost invariably gave a good account of themselves, and in fact even took the offensive against their enemies. It was in one of these frequent battles that Merska I of the Seleka Barolong was killed (about 1810), and soon after, Makgwa, chief of the Rapulana Barolong also died (1818). He was succeeded by Mts-~~se~~Matlaba, his son of highest rank. Matlaba was then a young man of some twenty-three to twenty-five years, of reving disposition, restless manner, irresponsible temperament, changeable and capricious character.

In January 1823, the Batlekwa (or Mantatisi) fell upon the Barolong settlements at Thabeng (Buisfontein). The attack was from the south, and fell first and most heavily upon the Seleka Barolong of Sehunelo. In the meantime, the Rapulana clan, whose town was about two miles distant and to the north, tried to clear out of the way, and partially succeeded in eluding the enemy Batlekwa, but some of the men, disregarding the orders of their chief Matlaba, bravely went forth to help the Seleka army under its brave general, Tshabadira, and the chief Sehunelo in stemming the avalanche of the Batlekwa invasion.

Soon after this, to wit in February 1823, Matlaba moved from the neighbourhood of Thabeng, and after collecting his scattered people, he led them in the south-west direction across the Africander Mountains (Thaba tsa Bakgatla), and established his headquarters at Didibaneng (Harnet's Spruit) twelve to fifteen miles from Thabeng (Buisfontein). At the same time, his Seleka kinsmen under Sehunelo also left Thabeng, and moved towards the Vaal River, and ultimately settled at Makwasi, to the south of Didibaneng.

The Rapulana people had not long been settled at Didibaneng when they were attacked by a large army of the Bataung (1824) under Moleletsane Mephethe and his son Moleletsane (May 1824). This was a horde of some eighteen to twenty thousand people of all ages and both sexes. They were themselves fleeing from the invasion of the ferocious Batlekwa. The Bataung - more numerous and more warlike than the Barolong had no difficulty in overpowering the Rapulana Barolong and scattering them. They killed many people, and captured nearly all their cattle. Matlaba tried to effect junction with the Seleka Barolong, who had been dispersed by the same enemy and were fleeing from M^{ki} Makwasi, but was foiled.

After this catastrophe, Matlaba, force having failed, Matlaba determined to try a game of diplomacy. He had met some Bataung of Meletsane, and with their help, he interviewed their chiefs, and negotiated a military alliance with Meletsane. At the same ~~time~~ time, he also induced the ^{Koranas} Griquas of Rakabi, and the Griquas of Jan Bleem to enter into another secret alliance with him for predatory and defensive purposes. When Meletsane discovered this double alliance, he suspected Matlaba of plotting against him and abetting his enemies. He therefore determined to punish him, and if possible slay him. Matlaba got a hint of this and fled northward. First he went to the Bathaping ~~te~~ of Methibi to find asylum or help, but failing to induce them to ~~not~~ join him against Meletsane, he passed on to his mere immediate kinsmen, the ^{Ratleu} Barelong at Merekweng and Khunwana.

Meantime the Bataung of Meletsane engaged the numerous Bakwena and Bakgatla tribes along the Schoen Spruit (Kning) in several sanguinary battles, and scattered them in all directions.

Meletsane then pushed northwards, in pursuit of Sehunelo, but was defeated at Besadijwapise near Phitshane by the united forces of the Seleka clan of Sehunelo, the Tshidi clan of Tawana and the Ratlou clan of Gentse with the help of the Griquas who accompanied the missionary Moffat from Kanyethe Bangwaketse country on his visit to Makaba 1824.

Matlaba was unable to influence his timid bretheren the Batleu Barolong to join him against Meletsane, just as he had failed to induce the Batlhaping of Mochibi. He was generally regarded with fear, distrust and even suspicion. His was not a name to conjure with. Many people said he was low and unscrupulous, and treacherous, and that he would not hesitate to betray an ally to gain an advantage. This was no doubt the reason why no other Barolon consented to unite with an alliance with. But Matlaba was determined to take his revenge upon Meletsane. With this end constantly in view, after about two years he went towards Marico with his warriors, and offered to place himself in vassalage under Mziligazi, the chief of the Matebele, whose name was already a terror among the Bechwana tribes. After two or three years' service with the Matebele regiments, he persuaded Mziligazi to attack Meletsane, whose marauding bands were moving up and down on both sides of the Vaal River near its confluence with the Valsch River and committing revolting deeds of rapine and bloodshed.

The Bataung were no match for the warriors of Mziligazi, and they were attacked by surprise, defeated and pursued with much slaughter southwards beyond the Vaal. Their villages at Matlwantlwang along the Vaal were committed to the flames, their cattle captured, and their power completely broken by the Matebele in 1831.

After this, Matlaba

After this, Matlaba now attained a position of trust and responsibility in the Matebele army, and was engaged chiefly as a spy in connection with military plans ^{against} the Becwana and Basotho nations.

In 1834, the three sections of the Barolong - the Ratlou, the Tshid and the Seleka, settled at Thaba Nche, and at last found comparative peace. As soon as he knew of this, Matlaba at once eluded his Matebele suzerains and escaped to his kinsmen. He arrived with his people at Thaba Nche in 1835.

During the years 1834 to 1836, Moletsane wandered about with the remnants of his tribe, and hiding in ^{the} mountains ^{of} what is now the Orange Free State. He was now destitute and fugitive. At last he made it his mind to place himself in vassalage under Meshweshwe. On his way to Basuteland he had ~~to~~ to pass near Thaba Nche, and Matlaba, recently arrived at Thaba Nche, and yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the Bataung in general and Moletsane in particular, went out with intention to destroy them and their chief. This, however, Moreka, the enlightened chief of the Seleka Barolong would not permit. He pointed out to Matlaba that killing was only justifiable in war, and that a brave man who had tried and lost is worthy of admiration and respect, but such reasoning did not avail on Matlaba. Ultimately Moletsane reached Basuteland, and placed himself and his tribe under Meshweshwe, who located them at Mekwatleng (or Koranaberg).

The Rapulana people lived their life with other Barolong at Thaba Nche. They took part in all the activities and events of that place, helped to receive the Trek Beers under ~~Potgieter~~ Hendrik Potgieter after they had been despoiled by the Matebele. In January 1837, Matlaba guided the Beer commands under Potgieter and Maritz and their Becwana allies under Tshipinaze and Metshegare northward across the Vaal River to the Matebele military headquarters at Mosega. In the early morning of the 17th January 1837 the Matebele were overpowered. Some four hundred of them were killed, their huts set on fire, and their cattle to the number of 6,000 captured.

In November 1837, a second expedition proceeded against the Matebele under Hendrik Potgieter and Peter Uys. Matlaba again direc-

ected them and sent about twenty of his people under his brother Mongala to guide the expedition northward beyond Mosaga. There, after hunting down the Matebele for nine days, the commands forced them to abandon their military villages, and retire further northward, leaving five hundred of their number dead on the battle field, and about seven hundred head of cattle in the hands of the victorious invaders.

In 1841 about August, the Rapulana people moved in a body with the other Barolong from Thaba Nche and went northwards across the Vaal Vaal. They halted at Matlwang (Machaviestad) on the Moei River a few miles to the west of Petchefestroom. A large section of the Rapulana people, however, remained behind at Thaba Nche under with Merikam with Merika under Seathele and Motuba, two younger brothers of Matlaba. At Matlwang, Matlaba was as restless as ever. He was always on the move. He visited Mahura, chief of the Bathaping several times, and also made a few trips back to and from Thaba Nche.

In 1846, there was a quarrel between the Beers and the Bapedi of Sekwati. Matlaba at once called out his Rapulana warriors, and supported Hendrik Potgieter who was in command of the Beers. The Bapedi were defeated, and some 8,000 head of cattle, and 6,000 goats seized from them, Matlaba being paid with some of this booty for his services.

When the other sections of the Barolong under Gontse and Tawana, respectively left Matlwang in 1845 and 1848 respectively, Matlaba and his Rapulana people stayed behind, and the site of their settlement has ever since been known as Machaviestad, that is Matkaba stad or the town of Matlaba.

Also see end of 1846, Hendrik Potgieter had left the Southern Transvaal for Ohrigstad and the Zoutpansberg. After this the district along the Moei River fell into a state of disorder and lawlessness. There were quarrels and dissensions between the burghers, there was strife between the Beer occupants on the one side, and the British authorities on the other. Adam Kok was at loggerheads with the Beer settlers whom he considered as intruders in his territory. Robbery and theft were prevalent, and the Rapulana of Matlaba were in constant trouble in connection with stolen and straying cattle, and disputes became

between became frequent, the Rapulana and the Beers. Under these circumstances Commandant Scheeman directed Matlaba, in 1849 to leave Machaviestad, and seek some other habitation. Accordingly, Matlaba and his people abandoned their village and went first to Haartebeestfontein (Tigane), where they lived for a few months, or perhaps a year or two. They then went to Shudintlhe near Taung to live among the Bathaping of Mahira. Within the first year of Matlaba's arrival at Shudintlhe his second son was born, and he named him "Shudintlhe" after his new place of abode. Matlaba's first son, Lekgethe having died in 1843 at Matlwang (Machaviestad), Shudintlhe was now the heir and ^{apparent} successor of Matlaba, and future chief of the Rapulana.

Matlaba stayed among the Bathaping for nearly ten years. After the Bathaping war with the Beers, and the cruel murder of Gasebenwe by them in 1858, there was tolerable tranquillity, and President Marthinus W. Preterius allowed Matlaba and his people to return to Matlwang (Machaviestad).

In 1873, President Burgers of the Transvaal having failed to induce Mentshiwa to forego the line of the Keate Award, and thus having failed also to obtain by just and honest means the territory which comprises Bedibe (Pelfontein), ^{it by force and fraud,} determined to annex it by placing his subjects, the Rapulana Barelong of Matlaba in it, and thus crowding out Mentshiwa's people. At the invitation of President Burgers, therefore, Matlaba left Matlwang (Machaviestad) in 1874, and went ^{with his people} north west. Passing by Lekgephu (Buffelsdeeras), Platberg on the Vaascheenspruit (Mucwana) Lemawe (Gegevend) (Goedgevend), they crossed the Khing (Scheenspruit) and went to Taelengwe (Paardeplaas) and passing by Ga-Maleka (Reeijantjesfontein) they finally arrived at Bedibe (Pelfontein.) Matlaba's people came in two large batches, one in April, and the other in August 1874. Altogether they were about seven to eight thousand in number, and although they were not very wealthy, they drove a fair number of cattle and sheep, and possessed several wagons. A few months after Matlaba left Matlwang, the Rapulana Barelong, who had remained at Thaba Nche under Seathele and Ned Metuba, also left their home of adoption at the command of Matlaba to join their chief and kinsmen at Bedibe. Leaving Thaba Nche They left Thaba Nche after a stay of exactly forty years. Seathele, their

senior headman had died at Thaba Nche about 1865, and they were now under the command of Metuba. With a car cavalcade of some thirty-nine wagens, immense herds of cattle, large flocks of sheep and goats and a large number of horses, this party on leaving Thaba Nche went towards Maje-mashweu, where Brandford now stands. They crossed the Vaal River close to Bloemhof (Thamagane), went past by Mamusa (Schweizer-Reneke), Legadigadi (Barberspan), and finally arrived at Bedibe (Pel-fenstein) on the 15th April 1875.

Before the arrival of Matlaba and Mptuba, and thiertheir their respective followers at Bedibe, some-Ra a small party of the Rapulana Barelong under Mekgesi a Makgera - chief Matlaba's cousin- had come from Matlwang (Machaviestad) and settled at Letlhakane or Reitfentein towards the end of 1873 1874. They were followed by Methupi Mesikare and another small party, who came from Bedibe to settle at Letlhakane in April 1875. Methupi Mesikare acted as petty chief at-Letlhakanever the two parties until the arrival of Goutlwecwe (Abraham Metuba) in January 1881.

~~In 1878, the chief Matlaba died at Bedibe at the age of seven-ty-eight years-~~ From this last date, the residence of the Rapulana people at Be Letlhakane became something of a thorn in the flesh to the Tshidi Barelong of Mentshiwa. This caused a bitter strife that led to much bloodshed and hostility lasting up to very recent years.

While the Rapulana headquarters have been at Bedibe (Reifentein) since 1874 in the Transvaal since 1874, a considerable number of them has almost from the same date always lived at Letlhakane in the Cape Province, as already mentioned, the first party of them having come under Mekgesi a Makgera.

When a section of the Rapulana Barelong came to Letlhakane under Methupi Mesikare in April 1875, Mentshiwa and most of his Tshidi Barelong were at Meshaneng in the Bangwaketse country. Melema, the younger brother of Mentshiwa, was however already settled at Mafeking ten miles to the north of Letlhakane. To him Methupi Mesikare went and paid respects before settling at Letlhakane and Melema acquainted him with his intention of settling down at Letlhakane. It may here be mentioned that the two men, Methupi and Melema, were first cousins. The arrival of the Rapulana people was also made known to Mentshiwa

merely as an act of courtesy, since he and his TshTshidi Barelong were senior in ^{tribal} tribal rank to the Rapulana Barelong. It is possible that Methupi asked for permission to settle, but this would be a pure formality. It is certain that they could not have been effectively refused such permission, and that they had a perfect right to settle at Letlhakane without its asking or obtaining it. On the division of the great Barelong nation about 1890, into four sections, the Rapulana section had been the first to choose and settle at Letlhakane as their tribal headquarters. The Tshidi Barelong had come later, and located themselves at Ga-Schuba - five miles to the north east, and of Letlhakane, and later still (18) the Seleka section had come to settle at Dithakeng - three miles to the north west of Letlhakane. So when the Rapulanas came to Letlhakane again in 1854-1874, they were returning to their ancestral and hereditary home (or marope), exactly as the Tshidi Barelong were doing in returning to Ga-Schuba in 1877. These facts are important in view of the disputes and litigation that commenced in after years, about overlordship, su subordinate occupancy, and land rights as between the Tshidi Barelong and the Rapulana Barelong, when the former, wrongfully and unsuccessfully claimed jurisdiction over the land and persons of the latter. But of this, more anon.

The Rapulana people at Letlhakane owed allegiance, and remained loyal to their chief Matlaba at Bedibe - twelve miles away, and the more they increased in number at Letlhakane, the more they looked to Bedibe for inspiration and direction.

Now, the clever and elusive Rapulana chief Matlaba had made himself very agreeable to the Transvaal Beers in the same proportion as Mentshiwa, the Tshidi chief had made himself disagreeable. Mentshiwa's people had been displaced from choice watering places like Bedibe in the western Transvaal, and were replaced by Matlaba's people. Mentshiwa and Melema remonstrated with Matlaba, and pointed out to him that he should have occupied the country as of inherent right, and not, as he boasted, by permission of the Beers, thus giving colour to their claim of ownership or jurisdiction over some lands including Bedibe, which belonged to the Barelong. But these arguments did not commend

themselves to Matlaba, who was nothing if not stubborn by nature. And ^{so} as the gulf between the Tahidi and the Rapulana Barolong grew wider and wider. Stock thefts became common between the two sister tribes.

In March 1877, Mentshiwa and his people having relinquished Meshaneng arrived and settled at Schub Ga-Schuba, five or six miles from Letlhakane. In the same year, in fact during the following month, the Transvaal was greedily annexed by the British Government, and disputes between the Rapulana of Matlaba in the Transvaal and the Tahidi people of Mentshiwa in the Cape Bechuanaland abated considerably, and order was re-established. This episode proved that Matlaba's unreasonableness and intractability had been due to Transvaal Government influence. In the following year, ⁽¹⁸⁷⁸⁾ chief Matlaba died, ^{at the age of 75} and was buried at Keifentse Bedibe.

In 1879, the clouds of war between the Transvaal and the British Government began to gather, and finally burst in the storm of 1880, culminating in the disastrous defeat of the British troops at Laing's Nek, Ingoge and Majuba in 1881. Peace was then concluded in the Pretoria Convention, when the Transvaal was 'given back' to the Boers.

Chief Matlaba was succeeded by his son of highest rank Shudintlhe, but the chief administrative powers were vested in Metuba the youngest brother of Matlaba and therefore uncle of the new chief. (All the other brothers had died.)

Shudintlhe the new chief was not long at the head of affairs when trouble commenced afresh between the Rapulana and the Tahidi Barolong. For it was at this time, on the 5th February 1881 the chief Mentshiwa of the Tahidi Barolong called a meeting of all the chiefs of all sections of the Barolong people, resident in Bechuanaland - the Ratlou Ratlou of Meshwete, - Bonekwane at Khumwana, of Bonekwane at Merokweng, and of Makgebi at Phitshane; the Tahidi and Makgetla people sections represented by Mentshiwa himself, and the Rapulana section, recently under Matlaba but now under Shudintlhe and Metuba at Bedibe, and administered at Letlhakane by Goutlweewe Abraham Metuba. The meeting was called at a little rise ever since called named "Nwana ja Pice" (or The Conference Hillcock) situated nearly halfway between Mentsh-

Mentshiwa's village of Ga-Schuba and the Rapulana village of Lethakane. At this meeting Mentshiwa proposed - harangued the other chiefs on the momentous question of 'collective security', and proposed that all sections of the Barelong tribes should there and then bind themselves to act in concert for defensive, and if necessary offensive purposes against the Transvaal Beers, who were up to then engaged in the struggle for their independence in the Transvaal war, for now that they had regained their independence, said Mentshiwa in his impassioned appeal, they would, as before seek to encroach upon Barelong territory.

After several speeches, mostly in support of Mentshiwa's motion, Megetsi, son of Meilwa - one of Matlaba's younger brothers - attacked Mentshiwa in a harsh and virulent speech accusing him of duplicity and overbearing ^{and} ambitions, and desire to make himself chief over his traditional seniors - Meshwete, Bonekwane and Makgebi, and finishing up by saying that he (Megetsi) was a Dutchman or Beer, and not English like Mentshiwa, and that Bra the Transvaal was his mother and his nurse whom he would sooner protect with his life than raise a finger against it. It was evident that the Rapulana chiefs and people of Bedibe (Pelfente in- and Lethakane (Reitfentsin) agreed with Megetsi. Mentshiwa was naturally exasperated and demanded an apology and compensation, and receiving no satisfaction gave the Rapulana people notice to leave Lethakane which he claimed as his territory. After a few days, Meshwete tried to placate Mentshiwa by giving him a white ox, but things had now gone too far. Mentshiwa returned the ox and sent numerous ominous threats messages clothed in mystic and poetical language, embodying a threat to punish the Rapulana people.

A series of raids and reprisals followed in March and April 1881. The Bahidi went to pull down the huts of the Rapulanas, and molesting them at the corn fields. The Rapulanas responded by destroying the corn in the ploughlands of the Bahidi Barelong, and finally poured fat on the fire by laying violent hands on Mekhelekele Metshegare, a nephew of Chief Mentshiwa. There was now a mere than sufficient 'casus belli', and nothing less than the blood of the impudent Rapulana clan was considered by Mentshiwa as sufficient to wipe off the indignities that had been so deliberately heaped upon his person.

~~In December 1880 and in January 1881, Goutlweewe Abraham Metuba came to Letlhakane with about eighteen people~~

In January 1881, Goutlweewe Abraham Metuba came from Bedibe (Pelfenstein) with about eighteen people to Letlhakane to settle at Letlhakane. It is said that he was invited by Methupi Mesikare who had been there for nearly six years, but as a matter of fact, he was sent by Letlhakane by his father Paul Metuba, the chief State minister of the Repulana at Bedibe. Mentshiwa was already at Ga-Schuba, newly come from Meshaneng, and to him Goutlweewe A. Metuba went to pay his respects, just as Methupi Mesikare had done before to Melema. He received, at least, the tacit consent of Mentshiwa to dwell at Letlhakane, but it is unlikely that any actual permission was asked or considered necessary.

Being senior of senior rank to Methupi, Abraham Goutlweewe superseded him, and automatically became the principal person and petty chief at Letlhakane. But it is apparent that Methupi gave up his position of leadership with natural reluctance, and not only was there a separation in dwelling between the old campers of Methupi and the new campers of Goutlweewe, but there was also a difference, and almost an antagonism of spirit, and this division was almost from the commencement of Goutlweewe's settlement. The latter's attachment to their chief at Bedibe was also much more demonstrative, and so they were seen in bad odour with the Tshidi Barelang who already looked with necessities long upon Letlhakane, and began to regard it and its people as falling under the Tshidi sway and jurisdiction dominion.

Methupi and his following had settled on the southwest side of the fountain which gives Letlhakane its Secwana and also its Dutch name. Goutlweewe and his followers built their homes on the north east side of the fountain and the streamlet issuing from it. Relations between them and the Tshidi Barelang were not so amicable as between the latter and the people under the chief elder campers under Methupi.

In 1880, Col Mayne was commissioned to define the boundary line between Bechuanaland and the Transvaal. The line of boundary, confirmed by the Pretoria Convention placed Bedibe in the Transvaal, and Letlhakane in Bechuanaland. The Tshidi Barelang concluded rashly that this was a recognition of the fact that Letlhakane and its people belonged to them (the Tshidis and Mentshiwa) and that the rights and heritage of the Repulanas were at Bedibe (Pelfenstein) in the Transvaal.

his prestige and his people, And so on the early-morning-of the 2nd ^{Feb} May 1881, the Tahidi Barelongfakh on their Rapulana kinsmen at the favourite hour of attack in the early morning. In this battle, the Tahidi clan routed the Rapulana clan. although the latter were supported by two Regiments under Seleka Letsapa, sent by Meshwete. The Rapulana clan lost seventy three men, killed, including several princes of the royal house of Rapulana - thus Mengala and Legatlwana, young-er brothers of Matlaba, and-also Thupacamere, Matlabas son, and also the-abusive-Megetsi Leburu and the abusive Megetsi, both nephews of Matlaba

Barelong mystics adorn this sordid tale by relating that, after insulting Mentshiwa, Megetsi went to Petchefstrsem to find work, but that a few days before the gathbeingended attack on the 2nd May, Mentshiwa ordered his personal magician -Matlhare Nkgwang- to magically call back Megetsi so that he would be present and take part in the battle in which he was thus killed to expiate to the full his churlishness.

On the 8th May, Metuba approached Mentshiwa, acknowledged that he was defeated, and asked for peace, and also that his people at Letl-hakane be allowed to reap their corn now ripening in the fields. At Meshwete, Pheinand Metuba resolved to revenge themselves on Mentshiwa the same time ~~some~~ members of the-Royal-Commission-then-sitting-at-
 Before the end of ^{the} May (Major Butler and General Joubert) of the Royal Commission then sitting at New Castle to conclude peace between the Transvaal and the British Government after the Transvaal War of Independence, were sent to inquire into the disturbances, and establish peace between Meshwete and Matlaba on the one hand, and Mentshiwa on the other, until such time as the Commission would fully investigate the matters in dispute and decide. But the Royal Commission never investigated, and of course never gave a decision. In the spring of 1881, Metuba commenced recruiting a heterogeneous army consisting of the Rapulana clan, Ratleu Barelong, Basetho, Griquas from Manusa (Schweizer Reneke) and other elements from the Transvaal. He was supplied with guns and ammunition, and given military advice by the Boers of the Western Transvaal, notably those of Zeerust and Lichtenburg districts.

On the 17th October, Metuba and Meshwete declared war against Mentshiwa, and on the 23rd they captured cattle from the Tahidi cattle

posts, and drove them into the Transvaal. On the 25th October, the combined army of Metuba made a determined attack upon Mentshiwa's town Ga-Schuba. The enemy advanced from the south and south east, in the early morning, penetrated the town and set it on fire. There was panic among Mentshiwa's people, and most of the fighting men ran to flight together with the women and children in the north westerly direction to Mafeking. The chief M^untshiwa, however, would not flee. With a few veterans he took his stand in his cattle pen, and soon, several of the men of the elder regiments collected round him, and they defied enemy. Israel Molema then collected the younger regiments which had fled so precipitately, and when he saw, seeing their chief so determined, and withal in such imminent danger, rushed back upon the invading enemy with such impetuosity that the latter fell back, ^{and} retreated ~~and then took to flight~~ towards their town Bedibe (Reitfentein). The battle continued there from morning till the late afternoon, when the invaders were repulsed. At the very last, when the battle was won, Mentshiwa's brother - Selere - was killed by a Griqua whom he was chasing. Mentshiwa's people who witnessed this event caught hold of the Griqua and literally cut him up into pieces in their futile anger. In all, the Tshidi Barelang lost nineteen men, while the Rapulana lost thirty-one men, including their real ruler Paul Metuba.

~~Two days after this battle, the Tshidi-Barelang~~ Realising that Ga-Schuba was difficult to defend, and also that its water supply came from fountains which the enemy could easily control, evacuated the Tshidi Barelang evacuated their town two days after this battle, and went to Molema's town - Mafeking -. There, from the the 13th November 1881 till the 11th March 1885, when the Watt Warren Expedition arrived at Mafeking, they defended themselves against the combined forces of the Rapulana Barelang, the ^Hatleu Barelang and the Transvaal Beers. This period of history is treated in full detail in the chapters under the Tshidi Barelang.

⁴
~~In 1881, a batch of the Rapulana Barelang under Goutlweewe or Abraham Metuba came from Bedibe, and settled at Letlhakane (Reitfentein)~~

After the battle of ~~Ex~~ and the rather severe Rapulana reverse of the 2nd May 1881, the Rapulana people had evacuated Letlhakane, but after Mentshiwa moved from Ga-Schuba to Mafeking in October, some of them

...and drove them into the ... On the 23rd October, the ... combined army of ... made a determined attack upon ... The enemy advanced from the south and soon ... in the ... penetrated the ... and set it on fire. There was ... among ... people, and most of the ... was ...

At about the time that this exchange was ended, Chief ... life also ended under tragic circumstances. He was fatally struck by lightning at ... early in 1885. He was succeeded by a son Makqwa (Israel Makaba) who thus became the Chief of the Rapulanas, but as he was still a minor, his uncle Mokothen, a son of ... and an uncle of the young chief, was appointed regent. But the old regent Mokothen still wielded considerable power right up to his death in 1893 and then Mokothen became the virtual ruler of the Rapulanas until his capture and death in 1902.

... was killed by a ... the people who witnessed this event ... the ... out his ... while the ... In all, the ... lost ... last thirty ... including their ... Tuesday ... the ... was difficult to ... and also ... came from ... which the ... could easily ... the ... evacuated their ... after this ... and went to ... There, from the ... after 1881 till the 11th March 1883, when the ... arrived at ... they ... themselves against the ... force of the ... the ... and the ... This period of history is ... in the ... under the ... In 1881, a ... of the ... under ... and settled at ... After the ... and the ... people had ... but after ... in October, some of them

had come back to Letlhakane from Bedibe, and others followed as the Mentshiwa in 1882, 1883 and 1884, as Mentshiwa was besieged in Mafeking by the combined Rapulana, Ratlou and Beer forces. In 1884, a large batch of the Rapulana people came again under Goutlweewe A Metuba and re-occupied their plots and gardens of 1881. The Rapulana of Methupi's ward also re-occupied their old plots on the west side of the Reitspruit or the Letlhakane stream. Goutlweewe was still the recognised petty chief, but a latent spirit of irritation still existed between the two Rapulana parties.

In 1886, the members of the Land Commission expressed their opinion in clear terms that the Rapulana people at Letlhakane were a distinct tribe, separate from the Tshidi, and the Commission allocated them Letlhakane as their own tribal reserve, free from the Tshidi claim. If there had been any doubt that the Rapulanas at Letlhakane were a distinct tribe and self-determining relative to the Tshidis, *it was now dispelled* they were now so created by this Land Court beyond the possibility of doubt. And yet, among the Tshidi Tshidi Babeleng, their legal advisers and their magistrates, old chief Mentshiwa alone appreciated fully the import of this ruling, and tried very hard, but in vain, to reverse it.

Soon after Mentshiwa's death in 1896, the coolness that existed between the two sections of the Rapulanas (Methupi's and Goutlweewe's) of the Rapulanas at Letlhakane developed into an open quarrel about the ownership of arable lands along the Reitspruit. This division in the Rapulana camp gave the ambitious Tshidi clan the much longed-for opportunity of exercising their questioned powers as suzerains, and as Besele (or Wessels) the successor of Mentshiwa at Mafeking tried to adjudicate between the two disputants - Methupi and Goutlweewe - in March 1897, made a boundary line between them, and sharply cautioned Goutlweewe (Abraham) that unless he behaved better, and showed more obedience to the Tshidi rule and chieftainship, he would expel him from Letlhakane. In this, Chief Besele was strongly supported by the then magistrate at Mafeking, Mr C.H. Bell. But Goutlweewe repudiated the authority of Besele or any Tshidi chief.

Then came the Anglo-Beer War of 1899 to 1902. The Rapulana people always partial to the Transvaal, where their principal chief and their headquarters still were, took sides with the Beers, as the Tshidi people fought on the British side.

With the defeat of the Beers, the Rapulana acting chief Mekgethu and chief counsellor Mochesi were arrested at Bedibe, while at Letlhakane the petty chief Goutlweewe (Abraham) and his counsellors Sejeshe Methibi and Maseng Ditheke were also arrested, and all were detained in gaol at Mafeking, and later tried for high treason. Mekgethu died in gaol at Mafeking, while his fellow prisoners were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment at Tekai - Goutlweewe was given five years varying from five years, as in the case of Goutlweewe (Abraham) to two years as in the case of Sejeshe Methibi.

In May 1900, Paul Mentshiwa, a nephew of the old chief Mentshiwa was sent by the ruling Tshidi chief Besele of the Tshidi Barelong, with the approval of Magistrate Bell, to Letlhakane as his vice rei.

The Tshidi tribe seemed to have at last realized their dear dream to incorporate the Rapulanas under their hegemony. And to put the matter beyond all doubt or question, they petitioned the Colonial Secretary - Mr Joseph Chamberlain, during his visit to South Africa in 1902, to grant them Bedibe (Pelfontein), which once their province was now the centre and metropolis of the rebellious Rapulanas. This petition was however refused.

But meantime, the Rapulana clan at Letlhakane fretted and groaned under the harsh rule of Paul Mentshiwa, who was confirmed as headman at Letlhakane successively by the Tshidi Chiefs Besele/Mentshiwa (1897 to 1903) Mentshiwa died in 1903, Badirile/(1904 to 1911) Lekoke Mentshiwa (1911 to 1915) and Bakelapang Mombhiwa (1915 to 1918). He was confirmed also by the magistrates of that period at Mafeking - Charles Bell, E. Graham Greene, Edward C.A. Welach, Rupert G. Lloyd and C.R. Chalmers, as well as by the Union Government through its Native Affairs Department.

Meantime the Rapulana chiefs and headmen who had been imprisoned for treason served their sentences and returned home to Bedibe and Letlhakane respectively. The Acting chief Mekgethu having died in gaol in 1902, and the rightful Rapulana chief ~~Stu~~ ^{Makgwa II (Israel Matlaba)} ~~Stu~~ being still immature, Mochesi the youngest son of chief Matlaba and a brother of the late acting chief Mekgethu was appointed regent. The new regent was a man of indefatigable energy, profound knowledge of Beowana history and laws, and a consummate diplomatist. He was the virtual ruler of the Rapulana tribe until his death in 1934.

having a pernicious influence over Meshwete, and constantly advising him to abjure that Republic.

Chief Meshwete was of such a light complexion that all kinds of ridiculous stories have been circulated believed and circulated by his calumniators, among them the Rev J Mackenzie and C. Bethel, as to his irregular birth. But he was a full-blooded Moreleng, and had no drop of Dutch or any foreign blood in his veins.

He was succeeded by his son Kgesi ii, one of these men, whose number is increasing so rapidly, who do not shed much credit on the institution of modern chieftainship, and who in the earlier years of Bechwana autonomy and self determination, would certainly not have been allowed to rule, and might have perished mysteriously: chiefs who are tenderly nursed and propagated in hot houses by paternal European governments in the same way as imbeciles, menstrosities, and a host of other misfits and encumbrances are inflicted upon the long suffering civilised states, where in primitive society they would have been left to the rigorous exactions of nature, to prove their right to live or perish.

36 In tribal states, the people condition of a people is often a reflection of their chief. A remarkable index of his abilities generally a prosperous, progressive tribe is generally found to have a wise, sober and industrious man as their chief and conversely a degraded, ignorant tribe has usually a drunken self centered or unprincipled chief. The chief sets the pace of progress. He is a pattern, and example of a man of character and if he passes the tribe passes with him. If he falls he pulls them up - slowly but surely. If he is a man of no character and he falls, the tribe sinks with him - quickly.

The hope of the Ration Boundary was in Sekgogo (Reuben) Moshale - the eldest son of chief Kgosi's heir apparent to the Ration Chieftainship. Sekgogo was a steady young man of some education, suave manners, of firm disposition. He was taken suddenly ill one night and died so suddenly in 1935.

Collection Number: A979

Silas T MOLEMA and Solomon T PLAATJE Papers

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand

Location:- Johannesburg

©2012

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: Copyright for all materials on the Historical Papers website is owned by The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and is protected by South African copyright law. Material may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of a collection owned by the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and deposited at Historical Papers at The University of the Witwatersrand.
