

In the course of their travels, Van der Graaff and Lichtenstein visited Lithakong. The latter was an accurate observer, and afterwards gave a clear description of the Ba-Tswana, their country and their ~~xxx~~ manners. His ethnological observations led him to believe, even at that early date, that the Ba-Tswana belong to the same ethnic group as the Xhosa tribes, and he was the first to adumbrate the hypothesis of a Bantu family group. Lichtenstein has left a monument to his industry and skill in his book -Travels in the Interior of South Africa.

In 1808 Dr Cameron and Lieutenant Donovan came next in an extremely well-equipped expedition under the aegis of Lord Caledon, Governor of the Cape Colony. They were directed to explore the country of the Ba-Tswana, and if possible to penetrate to Mozambique. They traversed ~~the xxxxxxxx~~ countries of the Bathaping, the Ba-Rolong, the Ba-Ngwaketse and the Ba-Kwena. They ~~had~~ penetrated the northern Transvaal, and travelled in the north-easterly direction and ~~then~~ then disappeared as mysteriously and completely as if the earth had gaped and swallowed them up, somewhere near the lower course of the Limpopo River. It is generally supposed that they perished from Malarial fever, though some people think that they were murdered by savage tribes, the Ba-Ngwaketse of Makaba, who had an evil reputation among his neighbours being often accused of this unusual thing among the Ba-Tswana.

Next followed the illustrious naturalist William Burchell, who ~~in~~ in 1811 and 1812 visited and resided for some time in Lithakong, and travelled as far north-west as Tsoe (Heuning Vlei) 250 miles west of Lithakong. His anthropological observations, botanical notes, graphic descriptions and faithful drawings of people and animals remain unchallenged after the lapse of a century and a quarter, and in fact, so far from being superseded, are actually esteemed more highly for their scientific value.

In 1813, the Rev. John Campbell <sup>a director</sup> of the London Missionary Society, accompanied by the Rev James Read of Bethelsdorp also came to Lithakong on a visit of observation on behalf of their Society. The story and results of this visit are contained in Campbell's Travels in South Africa (1813)

The missionaries John Evans and Robert Hamilton, of the London Missionary Society were the next to come to Lithakong in 1816. Fired with evangelistic enthusiasm, they had left England as a direct result of Campbell's visit, expressly to labour among the Ba-Tlhaping, but the latter snubbed them, and Mofhibi, the chief told them that they were on no account to teach his people (Moffat: Missionary Labours pp 229, 230).

In 1820, John Campbell, accompanied by Robert Moffat paid the country of the Ba-Tswana a second visit. On this occasion, he and James Read travelled through the territories of the Ba-Tlhaping of Chief Mofhibi, and the Ba-Bolong of Chief Kgosi <sup>whom he estimated to number about 10 to 12,000</sup> now at Kuruman, and the Ba-Bolong of Chief Kgosi at Moshweu or Khunwana, <sup>country</sup> then penetrated as far north-east as the <sup>(Liqueling)</sup> capital of the Ba-Hurutshe of Diutluleng <sup>at</sup> and spent two weeks in their capital of Kadichwene, or as he spells it ~~Kurreechane~~ Kurreechane. Campbell estimated the population of Kadichwene to be 16,000.

The next few years brought a still larger army of missionaries; men like Dr John Philip and George Thompson, Government agents like Sir Andries Stockenström, scientists and travellers like Dr Andrew Smith and Capt. William C. Harris, and explorers like Dr David Livingstone, Andrew Anderson, Thomas Baines and several others. These men traversed Bechuanaland ~~from~~ south to north, and east to west, and completed its geographical exploration.

Nearly all these early missionaries, traders, travellers, scientists and explorers were men of Anglo-Saxon extraction, and all of them followed, more or less, the same route northwards beyond the Orange River, and still more northward beyond Lithakong, these coming last going a little further than their predecessors, until Dr Livingstone blazed the route right up to Lake Ngami and the Zambesi River in 1849. This route was that, which after crossing the Orange River at its elbow (Prieska drift) below the confluence of the Vaal river, runs along the west of the Hart river, and closely hugs the present western border of the Transvaal, touches Lithakong, crosses the Molepo river near its source at Mafeking, and continues northwards along the western side of the Limpopo river affluents.

of the Bantu race both in the east and the west of the sub-continent. (Ibid p.103)

DISTINCTNESS:

Members of the Bantu race as are the Ba-Tswana, they are nevertheless a well-defined group, a distinct entity, a homogeneous section, and a composite or division of closely allied tribes giving the natural (not necessarily the political) concept of nationality.

The Ba-Tswana are thus distinguished by certain outstanding characteristics

constitute a distinct entity

The Ba-Tswana are a well-defined group of the Bantu race. They  
~~XX~~ DISTINCTNESS:

(Ibid p.103)

of the Bantu race, both in the east and the west of sub-continent.

of the Bantu race, both in the east and the west of sub-continent.

(Ibid. p.103)

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ DISTINCTNESS:

The Ba-Tswana are a well-defined group of the Bantu race. They constitute a distinct entity

XXXXXXXXXXXX

The Ba-Tswana are distinguished by certain characteristics

of the Bantu race (not necessarily the Bantu) of the region and a composite in relation of closely allied peoples

members of the Bantu race in the Ba-Tswana area

DISTINCTNESS:

(Ibid. p.103)

of the Bantu race in the east and the west of the sub-continent

it (go bina), as if contact with it would (to use a familiar colloquialism) give them the creeps; they venerated or even deified it (seboko) while at the same time they regarded it with holy fear (go ila). They looked upon it as exercising a subtle inscrutable influence, which could either be protective or destructive, beneficent or malicious.

The Totem had a spiritual or immaterial significance, and thus became a quasi religious symbol or idol - a sort of tutelary deity of the tribe. At the same time, it was regarded as one - a senior member of the tribe, and the tribesmen invoked it, appealed to it, and swore by it.

There were certain sanctions and taboos connected with the Totem. To touch it was a sin, comparable to incest in its heinousness, and one that was calculated to bring dire misfortune to the offender; to destroy it was patricide and high treason, only to be expiated by the occurrence of some shocking calamity to the tribe, while to eat its flesh was cannibalism and sacrilege, which could only spell irreparable perdition. (J.F. Brown: Among the Bantu Nomads, Chap III)

But totemism in this severe light must now be regarded as largely a thing of the past, and a symbolism of primitive humanity. Most of this supernatural awe, reverence and idolatry with which the Totem was regarded has now disappeared, and there remains only the formality - bare, empty, and meaningless, and many tribes, for trivial or for no apparent reasons, have changed their Totems. Thus the Ba-Ngwato who originally had the crocodile (kwena) as their Totem in common with the Ba-Ngwaketse and the Ba-Kwena, have now substituted for it the duiker (phuthi).

Some Ba-Tswana tribes are called, or call themselves exclusively after their ancient kings or founders, thus the Ba-Rolong and the Ba-Ngwaketse after their ancient kings Morolong and Ngwaketse respectively. Others are called or call themselves ~~after~~ exclusively by their Totems, thus the Ba-Tleung, the Ba-Mogong, the Ba-Taung/and the Ba-Phiring after their Totems 'tlou' (the elephant), 'noga' (the snake), 'tau' (the lion)/and 'phiri' (the wolf), respectively, some other tribes, again, are called alternatively ~~kykhaak~~ after their founder king, or by their Totem, thus the Ba-Murutshe may be so called after their founder king Murutshe, or they may be alternatively called the Ba-Tshweneng after their Totem 'tshwene' (the baboon).

Again, some tribes are known by names, which were originally intended to be contemptuous, being connected with some disgusting(?) event in their history, for instance the Ba-Tlhaping, from the loathsomeness (according to the Ba-Tswana) <sup>practice</sup> of eating fish 'tlhapi', and also the Ba-Kaa, who are said to have absconded (go ya-to vanish) from their Ba-Rolong progenitors. Finally, some tribal appellations have obscure origins such for instance are the names Ba-Pedi, Ba-Tlokwa, and as already mentioned before, the general name Ba-Tswana. (N.J. van Warmelo: Bantu Tribes p.96).

In all cases, the Totem is often used as an honorific in salutation and address. The totem being, as already stated, regarded as an invisible or immaterial senior member of the tribe, the Chief of the tribe, who is a visible senior member is often called by the totem. He is the personified Totem; he is the Totem par excellence. The name of the Totem, in this way, becomes a title of honour, to whomsoever applied.

The Totem of the Ba-Tswana, then is analogous to ~~an~~ an emblem, a crest, or a coat-of arms among the Europeans, and is, in fact being so adapted and used by the modern civilised Ba-Tswana chiefs and tribes.

The original Totem of the Ba-Rolong was the 'tholo' (Koodoo) and several old people and others who claim expert knowledge insist on calling this tribe the 'Ba-Tholong', from which one must infer that according to them, ~~the~~ the name 'ba-rolong' is a corruption or a euphonised form of the word 'ba-tholong', and also that the tribe was called after its Totem 'tholo' (the koodoo), and not after its founder king -Morolong, and further that if it in fact named after its founder king, he was regarded, like every other Ba-Tswana chief is today, as the personified representative of the tribal Totem, and was thus himself called 'Tholo'. Who can deny that there is profound reasoning and much weight in that argument?

The ~~tholo~~ 'tholo' (koodoo) has been largely superseded by the 'tshipi' (iron) as a totem among the Ba-Rolong. It cannot be determined when the change was made. It must be several centuries ago now, because ~~the~~ 'tshipi' (the iron) is ~~firmly~~ often connected with or referred to the present king Mote, the son and successor of Morolong.

They cultivated small garden plots, moved about a great deal always within easy reach of the desert in the event of another assault by a powerful enemy. At the same time, they kept as close as was compatible with safety to their ruined homes of Phitshane along the Banks of the Molopo river. It was here that Andrew Baines the traveller visited Tawana in 1826, and found him at one of his outstations, as he says; "living in a miserable condition by a filthy pool in the bed of the Molopo". He describes Tawana as a "sedate-faced old fellow, wrapped up in a dirty buckskin kaross, with a very flat nose, and a remarkably projecting under lip." Apparently, Tawana did not have a prepossessing exterior or personality. Even the reverend Moffat, who saw him in 1824 speaks of him as ~~an imbecile~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ "a weak, imbecile-looking man", and does not give him much credit for courage or originality. The Bechwana old men, who knew Tawana, and whom they regard as one of the bravest and wisest men of his generation in Beowanaland laugh at, or resent these statements as gross caricatures. It must be remembered, of course, that both Bain and Moffat saw Tawana when his spirit was crushed by a succession of calamities.

After the winter of 1827, the Tshidi Barolong of Tawana left the country round Phitshane, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ where they had suffered so much. They betook themselves further down the Molopo river, and <sup>westward</sup> nearer the Kgalagadi desert. They halted for short periods at Dikhukhung, Mosite, Boopelakoma Tlakgameng and Taung. In these movements, they were not free from molestation. ~~xxx~~ They were frequently attacked and despoiled by marauding bands of Koranas. From Taung they went to Maretsana, and thence to ga-Khunwana, where they arrived in 1828, and intended to rebuild their town which had been destroyed <sup>and from which they had been driven</sup> by the Batlokwa in 1823. But unhappy Tawana: unhappy Tshidi Barolong: Their resettlement at ga-Khunwana synchronised with the arrival of the Matebele of Umzilikazi (or Moselekahae) in these parts.

The M a t e b e l e

The origin of the Matebele is well known. ~~Mzilikazi~~ Mzilikazi was the son of Matshobana, one of the tributary chiefs to Tshaka. By his bravery, he impressed Tshaka, rose in the army, and was given command over an important division. After a big battle, he failed to deliver all the spoil ~~xxx~~ the irate ~~dispatched~~ dispatched an army ~~xxxx~~ whereupon Tshaka ~~xxxx~~ to destroy him and his regiments. ~~Mzilikazi~~ Mzilikazi and his regiments ~~xxxx~~ and women folk ~~xxx~~ all numbering several thousands, fled, crossed the Drakensberg mountains, and settled in ~~what is~~ ~~now the T.~~

and capturing about 600 head of cattle, forced Mziligazi to flee northwards . The fear of the combined danger from Dingana and the Dutch emigrants decided him to cross the Limpopo River, and enter what is now Southern Rhodesia .



into the wildest confusion, slew four hundred of them, and put the rest to flight, set the huts on fire, siezed about seven hundred cattle and several wagons, and returned without a single casualty.

Three American missionaries - Dr Wilson and Messrs Lindley and Venable who had unsuccessfully tried to establish a mission station among the Matebele since April 1836, returned with the expedition.

After the return of the commando to Thaba Ncho, Potgieter and the other Dutch emigrants bade adieu to ~~Thaba Ncho~~ the Barolong, and went to the Vet river, where they built the town of Winburg to commemorate their victory over Mzilikazi. A few months later, Pieter Retief, who was elected governor and commandant-general of the emigrants, visited Moroka, Tawana and Gontse at Thaba Ncho, and entered into <sup>an</sup> agreements of mutual assistance and friendly alliance with them. This was unquestionably an alliance in the strictest sense of the word. In these days of perfect security of Europeans from attacks of African tribes, such an alliance *and indeed has been described as* might appear a fictitious absurdity, but anyone who will try to visualise the conditions in 1837, when Xosa wars, Zulu campaigns, Matebele expeditions, Griqua and Korana raids were a sinister and frightful reality will realise that an alliance between a group of poor white emigrants, and settled & powerful African tribes, need be neither an absurdity nor a fiction.

In August (1837) Dingana again sent a powerful army ~~against~~ ~~his~~ ~~alliance~~ ~~was~~ ~~presumably~~ ~~of~~ ~~a~~ ~~military~~ ~~nature~~ ~~against~~ Mzilikazi. The Matebele were completely routed by the Zulus who destroyed whole regiments, and withdrew with an immense booty in cattle.

The alliance between Pieter Retief and the Barolong chiefs was presumably of a military character, for the emigrants were contemplating another attack upon Mzilikazi. In the meantime, the number of emigrants increased considerably, and at the end of October 1837, another commando ~~proceeded~~ ~~against~~ ~~the~~ ~~Matebele~~ under Potgieter and Pieter Uys proceeded against the Matebele. Again the Barolong of Gontse, Tawana, Moroka and Matlaba formed a corps to join the commando. Several Barolong lost their lives in this campaign, but the expedition after hunting the Matebele for nine days, slaying some 500 of them, and capturing about 6000 herd of cattle, forced Mzilikazi to flee northward.

Again the spoil was divided between the allies. It was after this expedition that Potgieter issued a proclamation, claiming the Transvaal, Orange Free State, Bechuanaland as far north and south as the limits

and  
The Ratleu / the Tshidi Barelong stayed altogether seven and a half years among the Seleka Barelong at Thaba Nche . Their life there will be more fully treated in that part of this history, which is devoted to the Seleka Barelong (Chapter ) . Suffice it here to say that each section of the Barelong had its own 'kgetla or clan ward , under its hereditary chief .

The fact that Gentse , the chief of the Ratleu ward, and Tawana, the chief of the Tshidi clan were both of higher tribal rank than Mereka, the chief of the Seleka often led to friction among their people - the descendants of Tshidi, and still more those of Ratleu chafing at their subservience to the territorial authority of their juniors - the Seleka Bhan as represented by Mereka (11) .

Whenever a dispute, arising from such irritation arose, Mereka was ~~xxxxxxx~~ went to ~~xxxx~~ remind Gentse and Tawana of their true position by saying ' It is I who have kindled this fire ; You are here only to warm yourselves, the fire is mine . '

Matlaba, the chief of the Rapulana clan, being of lower tribal rank to Mereka and the Seleka clan did not have the rebuke administered to him . His people were more at home among the Seleka Barelong, and when the Ratleu and the Tshidi people left Thaba Nche for their homes ~~xxxx~~ in Bechuanaland, several of the Rapulana people stayed behind in Thaba Nche for a further period of thirty-three years .

When the Dutch emigrants under Hendrik Potgieter arrived at Thaba Nche in 1836, the Ratleu and the Tshidi Barelong were there, and they took part in giving assistance to the emigrants after they were robbed of their cattle by the Matebele . They also played a prominent part in the commandoes that Potgieter organised to attack the Matebele at Mesega . Mention may be made of Metshegare, Tawana's eldest surviving son, who was given the command over the Barelong contingent, while Matlaba was the chief scout of the entire commando .

When the Tshidi and the Ratleu Barelong came among the Seleka clan at Motlhana-ea Pitse (Platberg on the Vaal) they found that Christianity had made some progress among them . Some of the Tshidi Barelong soon joined the religious classes conducted by Messrs Archbell and Jenkins . After the arrival of the Barelong at Thaba Nche, they

29

In 1841 the Barolong under Gontse, Tawana and Matlaba, that is, the Ra-Tlou, the Tshidi and the Ra-Pulana sections, left Thaba Ncho to return to Bechuanaland. Their route northwards lay through some lands already occupied by the Dutch immigrants. The march of a migrating mass of people of both sexes and all ages with their possessions and live stock is necessarily a slow progress, requiring as it does several halts of varying duration. Their pace is that of the slowest member. But this difficult task was made easy by the amicable relations that subsisted between the Barolong people and the Dutch immigrants in the surrounding country. The latter still remembered with gratitude the friendly help of these Barolong to the stranded immigrants in 1836. The memory of the recent victorious alliance was fresh in everybody's mind, and not least in that of Potgieter, the Commandant-General. The Barolong therefore were given free passage and shown much kindness as they traversed lands occupied by Dutch farmers; and when they reached Potchefstroom and expressed a desire to settle here for some time, Potgieter willingly allocated them ground at Matlwang (Machaviestad) on the west of Potchefstroom. Here they settled and governed themselves according to their laws, lived in peace and tranquillity and increased in numbers and in wealth. Their relations with Dutch farmers were of the most cordial nature and as time passed on, their numbers were swelled by landless and destitute clans of Becwana and Basotho stock from the surrounding country. Some of these people went under labour contracts with the farmers and in after years lost all contact with tribal conditions, adopted Dutch as their home language, so that their children knew <sup>not</sup> their mother tongue nor their tribal connections.

In 1845 Gontse and his Ra-Tlou Barolong moved from Machaviestad to Plaatberg (Transvaal) (Mucwana) and then to Laapfontein (Mocwi-wa-Petlwana) north of Klerksdorp. Here they lived for four years. During his stay at the latter place, Gontse gave asylum to Montshiwa, the son

attended the classes on larger numbers, and several of them were converted to Christianity . Among these may be mentioned Melema Tawana, Cupaneng and ~~Har~~ Rapulana Makgetla , Leahomme Mesetlhi and ~~SakhaaxMawmat~~ last but not least, Galebee Mecumi . While the rest of the converts were men whose ages ranged from twenty five to thirty years, Galebee was an elderly man of over fifty years. He had ~~been~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~converted~~ been to Grigua country, where he had come into contact with, and had been converted to Christianity by the missionaries of the London Missionary Society . In after years, when the Tshidi separated from the other Barelong, this old gentleman used to blow a horn to call the believers to prayer , and both the blowing of the horn and prayer or religious service came to be known ~~among the Tshidi~~ among the Tshidi Barelong as the thing of Raphiricopa', the last being the alternative name of Galebee , after his ~~son~~ eldest son - Phiricopa .

During their stay at Thaba Nche, the Tshidi Barelong also joined the Seleka people in their several cattle ferays and wars against the Basetho of Mesheeshee . Their activity <sup>and</sup> industry as cattle thieves became so conspicuous that Tawana-their chief - became the pet aversion of the Basetho chief Mesheeshee .

The travellers James Backhouse and George Walker who visited Thaba Nche about this time, have left much valuable information about the life and condition of the Barelong tribes in these distant years .

of Tawana, who had eloped with Thari-ca-Uhwe, the wife of his uncle, Mokgwetsi. The Eshidi Barolong at this time became uneasy about the conditions in Bechuanaland. The Dutch immigrants were extending more and more northwards, and it became evident that some of them would soon be settling on the Molopo river and would be in occupation of the best lands and fountains of the Barolong. Under these circumstances Tawana prepared himself to return to Bechuanaland. So after reaping and gathering in their grain, they started northwards. It was about September, 1848 that they commenced their long journey to the Molopo. Tawana, now grown old in years, said that he felt his end was near and he wished his bones to have their last resting place in his native land. The Barolong had been away since 1833, when they were dispersed by the Matebele of Mzilikazi from Khunwana. Their journey back was by a different route to that by which they had travelled to Thaba Ncho, fifteen years earlier. It was even more different in other respects. Then they were refugees fleeing from the assegai of the Matebele, now there was joy and hope in their hearts. The direction of their journey lay northwest from Potchefstroom and coincided with the shortest route to the watershed of the Molopo and Limpopo rivers. In this course they traversed Buffelsdoorn (Lokgopu), Laatberg (Mucwana), crossed the Schoenspruit (Khing), passed by Taaiboschspruit (Mogodiring), Coligny (Matlape) and to the south of Lichtenburg (Dicobotla) to Polfontein (Bodibe) and after about six weeks arrived at Rietfontein (Lotlhakane), the birth-place of Tawana, at the beginning of 1849. When Tawana and his people reached Polfontein, they entered what they considered their own country, the land of Tau, their ancestor, and as they proceeded to Lotlhakane the transport of joy in their hearts was such as is given to few to realise. Yes, the country was still theirs. There was a great stillness, and except for the Bakgalagadi who had returned from the desert as the Matebele danger lifted, there were no other people. Best of all the immigrant Dutch had not come even as far as Polfontein. Tawana settled at Lotlhakane and soon the Barolong resumed their full tribal life under normal conditions. They occupied the country as its original owners of inherent right and not by the permission of the Dutch or any other government. The country was not assigned to them by Potgieter or by anybody else as Theal repeatedly misstates. They were perfectly free and had no king except Tawana. They paid tribute to none but Tawana and knew no government except Tawana's. It was exactly as in the days of old.

At the end of 1849 Tawana was gathered to his fathers. He was nearly 80 years old when he died. He had had a full life, mostly troubled.

of the Kgalagadi to fall within the dominion of the ~~last~~ Dutch immigrants. The Barolong on the other hand claimed that they entered the alliance against Mzilikagand raised a corps to attack Mosiga on the express understanding that they were to enjoy the full and undisturbed possession of the country of the forefathers on the expulsion of the Matebele. They therefore expected to re-occupy it as its original owners and as co-victors over Mzilikazi.

**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.

---