

THE RA-TLOU BAROLONG

Ratlou was the senior son of King Tau of the Barolong nation. That is to say he was the eldest son of the king by his principal wife, and it does not necessarily mean that he was the first born of all the king's sons.

King Tau had four well recognised wives, namely Meshwana, Mechwaabangwe, Kabasana and Kgamana, married in that order at periods of about five years. In that way, the last-named, Kgamana would be married about fifteen years after the first-named - Meshwana, and all things being equal, her issue would be relatively younger. But child and baby betrothal was a universal practice among the primitive Boscwana, especially among the families of kings or chiefs, ^{among whom} where it had a political reason and significance. A king often arranged that his son should in time marry a daughter of some other king, chief, prince or influential, counsellor. The parties so arranged for might still be very young, they might be mere children or babies, and in fact they might be even still as yet unborn, but the ceremonies of betrothal and marriage would be gone through by the parents nevertheless be performed by the parents. Thus a "mekwele" or betrothal portion would be passed by the boy's father to the girl's parents. It was analogous to the engagement ring among European races. At a later time the "begadi" or marriage portion was similarly delivered by the boy's parents to the girl's parents. The begadi might be likened to the wedding ring. These portions, usually represented in sheep and cattle made the contract so mutually binding, and the betrothed children were regarded and called man and wife. This betrothal or marriage contract ^{as the case may be} would now take precedence to all other and subsequent betrothals or marriages, even if these others were actually consummated first, even if the young chief, for whom arrangements have thus been made, should as he grew love and marry some other woman and procreate with her. Such marriage and such issue were still regarded as secondary and inferior to the theoretical one arranged for by the parents, which determined the principal, or chief house or wife of the king, whose issue enjoyed priority or seniority, and therefore the first right to succession. The second wife or house, the third and subsequent wives or houses were similarly named after this manner and order

of betrothal or engagement, and not according, and not according to the time sequence or order of co-habitation. Thus it was that X Kgamane (Ratlou's) mother, though actually married many years after the other wives of Tau, was considered the principal or chief wife, and her house the principal or chief wife's house from which was to come Tau's successor. Thus it was that Ratlou, though some twenty-five years younger than the eldest of his half-brother Seleka, was nevertheless senior in status, and was the principal heir and immediate successor of the King Tau, their common father.

Ratlou was born at Taung about the year 1743, and succeeded to the kingship of the Bareleng nation on the death of his father Tau in 1760. As he was only about fifteen years old, however, his uncle Nthufha acted for him until the latter died at Lithakeng four or five years later. Seleka - Ratlou's eldest half-brother then became regent, and even after Ratlou was formally installed as King, Seleka still exercised the chief administrative authority, as being tutor and prime minister of the young king.

Ratlou died at Mesite about 1770. He was the last king of the Bareleng nation. After his death, his people became divided on the question of succession. The king had had five recognised wives, and by these several sons, of whom the chief were Seitshire, Mariba, Medirwagale, Mekalaka and Ephenethe Lopheretthe in about that order of seniority. But the king had never died than there was difficulty and disagreement as to his legitimate successor. The question was between Seitshire and Mariba, and the nation was nearly even^{ly} divided between them, some favouring the one, and some the other ^{but} ~~X~~ Seitshire had ^{the} a larger number of supporters. It was claimed for Seitshire that his mother was betrothed first, and the betrothal portion ^(mokwale) duly passed, and for Mariba that his mother's marriage portion (begadi) was paid first. It was claimed against Mariba, that though a natural son of Ratlou, he was ^{and his marriage} by law, the youngest son of Tau, who had engaged to ^(his mother) marry her shortly before his death. The half-brothers of the two claimants to the kingship were, like the rest of the nation, divided. Medirwagale supported Seitshire's claim, and had the assistance of the Tshidi, Makgetla, Seleka and ^{and their followers} Rapulana ^{and} while Mekalaka supported Mariba's claim, and had most of the Ratlou wards or families with him.

The Ratleu wards or families that supported Seitshire's claim, and those that supported Mariba's claim have ever since remained separate, each section claiming to be senior to the other, and to this day, the question is still debated between them with heat as to who are senior and issue the supporters/ of Seitshire, or those of Mariba.

Under these circumstances, when the majority of the nation recognised Seitshire rather than Mariba as the successor to Ratleu, and appointed Medirwagale as regent, Mokalaka was not satisfied, and he at once commenced a propaganda of dissension and opposition, and ~~in~~ after some years he took away the young Mariba to establish an independent dynasty. It is instructive and interesting to know that soon after this separation, Seitshire had a son, whom he called Kgesi (; King) that is the real king of the Barolong, and that Mariba also had a son after, who received the as if by way of retrib, received the name of Mosmogwa (; the despoiled one) that is one robbed of his inheritance, or cheated out of his rights.

divisions

The two divisions of the Ratleu Barolong, namely those who supported Seitshire, and those who supported Mariba will be studied under two separate headings.

A. The Seitshiresites or Ratleu Barolong who supported Seitshir

Soon after the followers of Mariba left Mosite, under the leadership of Mokalaka for Merokweng, ~~Setse~~ Seitshire died (about 1774) at Mosi of small pox, which was endemic in the country. Medirwagale ^{who} was new regent for Kgesi (Seitshire's son, then led his section of the Ratleu Barolong, in company with the Tshidi, Makgetla, Seleka and Rapulana

Barolong to Setlagele. Here they lived in peace for several years. Then Mokalaka came down with a large army from Merokweng, attacked Setlagele one early morning, but was repulsed. In about 1780, an unfortunate love affair brought about discord ^{and tragedy} at Setlagele. Rapulana was enamoured of Mma-Maremela, a young widow of the late King Ratleu. His attentions to this lady were, however however resented by several men of the Ratleu ward, especially by one Modisa, a younger brother of the late king's younger brother who wanted the lady for himself. ^{devised with} Modisa's jealousy, ^{arranged with his friends a pantomime + redade} urged him to insult Rapulana, and ^{the} insult provoked a civil strife in which the Ratleu ward was isolated - The Tshidi, Makgetla, Seleka and ^{the injured} Rapulana wards all supporting Rapulana.

In the skirmish that followed, Makgatla perforated Medisa with his spear. After this, the Tshidi, ^{the} Makgatla, ^{the} Seleka and ^{the} Rapulana branched of the ^{the} Bareleng withdrew from Setlagele, and went off in different directions. ^{the} Seithshire section under Medirwagale was thus isolated and left an easy prey to the vengeance of ^{the malevolent} Mokalaka, ^{of Morokweng} who soon-after-felt upon-them was already preparing to attack Setlagele again. Before this, however, Medirwagale, also burning with anger against the other sections of the Bareleng who had recently left him followed up the nearest of them, these were the Tshidi, ^{the} Makgatla and ^{the} Seleka Rapulana Bareleng, who were temporarily settled at Phitshane under Makgatla, the Seleka Bareleng having gone off in the south easterly direction towards Thabeng (or Buisfontein). Medirwagale attacked the three Bareleng sections under Makgatla (1779) at-Set at Phitshane to avenge Medisa's death, and in a great battle defeated them, slaying and slew Thutlwa, the young Tshidi prince for whom Makgatla was acting, and also Melekana, and-Kelebe, the ~~two sons~~ ^{son} of Rapulana's of highest rank who was due to succeed him as chief of the Rapulana ward, and also Kelebe, Melekane's brother. After this shocking defeat, Rapulana, crushed over the loss of his two sons of highest rank retired to ^{at} Methylakane, ^{where} he was followed by Makgatla and ^{while} Medirwagale the victorious Medirwagale returned to Setlagele. But during the following year or two (1781-3) he was attacked at Setlagele by Mokalaka at the head of a large army, ^{Mokalaka} who routed the Seithshire people ^{under Medirwagale} dispersed them, and over-ran the adjoining country along the Molepe River, and occupied Setlagele, establishing his military head quarters at Maijane, a hillock on the Setlagele spruit with a strategic position, ^{chosen over Smeel} and occupied by every military leader-black and white-as a point of vantage, ^{and observation} In the meantime, Medirwagale and his following went to Jaung to obtain military assistance from the Bathaping, but there he died (1790) Medirwagale was succeeded by Meshweu as regent for Kgesi, who was with his uncle Seleka at Thabeng. Thither Meshweu also went with his Seithshire following, and spent some time among the Seleka Bareleng, but after about five years, that is about 1805, they returned to Bechuanaland, and settled at Ga-Tshebethwane, as Disaneng was then called. ^{about 25 miles west of Mafeking}

Kgesi, for whom Meshweu was acting died in early youth, and thus Meshweu's regency extended never for a period of many years. In fact, he

was chief for the rest of his life, although he died at Disaneng 1812

full of years. Meshweu had even married and raised seed for Kgesi in Sekgere, / Matlhaku, Mengala and Nketsang, besides his own ^{four} children sons, the eldest of whom was Seitshire(b)

About 1808, the Seitshire section of the Ratlou Barolong were joined at Ga-Tshebethwane by the Tshidi Barolong under Lesheme. After their defeat by Medirwagale in 1808, this clan had followed the ^{Hapilana} clan and after the death of Makgela to Lotlhakane, but on the removal of the latter to Didibaneng/ they had attempted to re-settle at Phitshane (1808) / ^{under Lesheme} ~~but~~ ^{they were} ~~reshattered~~ and defeated by Mokalaka at Itlha-ja-Tau between Disaneng and Phitshane, and forced to fly to the Bangwaketse country, where they stayed at Mereane for about three years, and returning in 1808 to their own country, and after spending a few months with Meshweu, went to settle at Phitshane, Mokalaka whom they feared, having left that place.

Seven years after the arrival of the Tshidi Barolong, Meshweu died, and there were plots in-the--clan-of-the and rivalries among his people for the regency or chieftainship. The claimants for the chieftainship were Matlhaku, the reputed ^{su} eldest surviving son of Kgesi, ^{for} for whom Meshweu had been acting, and Seitshire(b) the eldest son of Meshweu. ^{Not to be confused with Seitshire, the son of King Khaton.} The-contest-was Romance and-interest was lent to the contest by the-fact interesting fact that the rivals also contended for the hand and favour of Tshadinnye, ^{daughter of} the/young and beautiful wife-of widow of Meshweu. There was, according to custom, nothing immoral in Seitshire desiring to marry his step mother (Molala le mmagwe ga belawe, e aba a itsalela be mennan (Kill him not who co-habits with his step mother, he seeks but to protect his younger brothers.) Both Matlhaku and Seitshire found warm supporters in the Tshidi Barolong clan at Phitshane -twenty miles further west. Lesheme, the Tshidi Barolong regent was for Matlhaku his friend and equal in years, while Tawana, the legitimate Tshidi chief for whom Lesheme was acting, supported Seitshire's claim. In the civil war that followed, Matlhaku who had the larger following ^{was} having the better of claim, was first forced to the Bahurutshe country ^{at} Matsakane, but he afterwards returned to be chief of the Ratlou people at their chief town Khunwana (1815). As for Seitshire(b) he first stayed for a few months with Tawana between Gatshebethwane (Disaneng) and Phitshane, He then went to ~~Thabeng among the S~~ ^{the Rapulana clan of the Barolong}

tot Didibaneng, accompanied by his valuable prize and enchantress -
 Tshadinnye. There the beauty of Tshadinnye excited too much unwelcome
 attention, and Seitshire had perforce to leave the place. He now went to
 live among the Seleka Barolong at Thabeng, but here again, the Seleka
 chief Sehunelo fell a victim to the bewitching beauty of this paragon,
 and so far forgot his duties as a host that he annexed Tshadinnye to his
 seraglio. The injured Seitshire now went to Lithakeng in
 the Batlhaping, when ^{he} gave many cattle, by way of returning a favour done
 him in earlier years by Moshweu, father of Seitshire. Many Ratlou Barol-
 -ong, hearing of Seitshire's royal reception among the Batlhaping, fol-
 lowed him to Lithakeng, among them being Seitshire's two brothers - Tshite
 and Medirwagale. Seitshire grew in wealth and influence, and finally
 died among them at Lithakeng (1825).

Most of the Ratlou Barolong of Gatshebethwane (the original followers of
 Seitshire) had now flocked to Mathaku's standard, and he became the
 recognised regent for Sekgere, the national or reputed son of Kgesi I
 of perityphlitis (18 years). Sekgere died soon after in his minority, and Mathaku continued in his
 regency, but now on behalf of Sekgere's son - Kgesi II.

While he was regent, Mathaku in 1818 commanded an expedition aga-
 inst the Bahurutshe of Manyana, but was defeated and slain with his bre-
 ther Nketsang, and his cousin Metlhabane.

Mengala, Mathaku's eldest surviving brother for a short time filled
 the breach caused by Mathaku's death, and acted as regent. He was a tall
 man of well-cut features, commanding appearance, and superior intellect-
 ual powers. In 1821 he was visiting the Seleka Barolong at Thabeng when
 he and his party were attacked on the way by a band of Griqua rebbers,
 overpowered and murdered by a band of Griqua rebbers. Kgesi II for
 whom Mathaku and Mengala had been regents was still a young man of twenty
 years, but his grand uncle - Mekoto - at this time about eighty-five years
 old, put him through the initiation school (begwana), and then invested him
 with a tiger skin as the insignia of chiefly office, himself acting as
 tutor and chief administrative officer. The young chief Kgesi was a man
 of small stature and unimposing appearance. Behind this insignificant exter-
 ior, however, were hidden virtues and qualities of the highest order -
 bravery, patriotism and determination.

He had once visited Methibi, chief of the Batlhaping at Lethakeng, and had there met the Rev John Campbell, and Robert Moffat. After the latter whom he much admired he named his eldest son Meshwete (~~≠~~ Moffat) the future chief of the Ratlou Baraleng at Khunwana, who was destined to figure so prominently in the Bechuanaland and Transvaal border disturbances of 1880 to 1885.

While Kgosi ii was chief of the Ratlou Baraleng at Khunwana in 1820, the Rev John Campbell visited Khunwana on his way from the Batlhaping capital of Lethakeng under Methibi to the Bahurutshe town of Kadichwene (Kurrechane) under their chief Diutluleng. At this time the Tshidi Baraleng were ruled by Tawana, and had their headquarters at Phitshane, while the Bangwaketse were under Makaba, and the Bakwena under Mowasele

It was at this time that the Man Batlekwa (Mantatisi) herds, sweeping like a devastating pestilence from the north east attacked Khunwana, and reduced it to ashes. Kgosi ii did his best to stem the savage onslaught but was overcome by superior numbers, and lost his life 1823. He was succeeded-by-Gentse-his-cousin by his son, Meshwete, but his cousin Gentse ^{succeeded} ~~succeeded as~~ ^{was appointed} regent for the young chief. The Batlekwa (Mantatisi) army passed on to the Batlhaping country, and the Ratlou Baraleng under Gentse, and the Tshidi Baraleng under Tawana swung back to Phitshane in June 1823, where they were able in the following year to beat off the Bataung under Mophetse and Moletsane, but subsequently (1825) suffered a rude shock from the Bafekeng (Makelele) of Sebeteane. The Ratlou Baraleng and the Tshidi Baraleng lived together at Phitshane until 1826, when the former left under Gentse for Merkweng (Gwaing), where the Rev Moffat found them at the end of that year, and Tawana returned to Khunwana.

When the Tshidi Baraleng fled from the Matebele of Mziligazi in 1832, they were joined again by the Ratlou Baraleng of Gentse, and later on by the Kalulana Baraleng of Matlaba, and these three sections joined the Seleka Baraleng at Metlhana-wa-pitse in 1832, and proceeded with them to Thaba Nche, where they were later on joined by the Kaperana Baraleng of Makaba.

A considerable number of the Ratlou Baraleng that had in earlier years (1816) gone off with Seitshire(b) to Lithakeng still remained among the Batlhaping. This number was increased by new refugees, and after Seitshirthe death of Seitshire(b), they recognised his

son Letsapa as their leader. They moved with the Batlhaping from Lithakeng and settled first at Shudintlhe, and later at Medimeng near Taung. None of them went with Gentse to Metlhana-wa-pitse (Plateberg -Vaal), much less to Thaba Nche. They lived continuously among ^{the} Batlhaping first under Methibi, then under Mahura, until 1845, when, on the return of Gentse and his people from Thaba Nche. At this time, Gentse and his people, together with other sections of the Bareleng had returned from Thaba Nche, and were moving from Matlwang (Machaviestad) on the Meei River to Mecwiwapetlwana (Laapfentein and Kafferskraal) on the Scheen Spruit). These followers of Seitshire(b) now under Letsapa, at Shudintlhe were fetched by Gentse and Masisi, and joined the other Ratleu Bareleng at Mecwi-wa-petlwana (Laapfentein).

Since the death of Kgesi~~X~~ ii in 1823, Gentse had been regent for the young prince Meshwete. The latter was now old enough to assume his office, but was not about. He had gone with Gentse's party to Thaba Nche in 1832, but had~~X~~ remained there when they returned in 1841. He then went into service under some Europeans at Petchefstroom, and after some years rejoined his people at Medimeng near Taung in 1866, but during the famine that prevailed among the Batlhaping after the ^{ir} Gaebeuwe war between the Beers and-Gaebeuwe (1858) he went again to Petchefstroom to seek employment.

Though Gentse was now old and feeble, he still clung tenaciously to the regency, but as Masisi, the son of Matlhaku was nearer to the ruling house, and full grown, through the instrumentality of Letsapa, the destinities of the Ratleu Bareleng were now entrusted to him (Masisi) and was made regent for the absentee Meshwete. This happened at Mecwi-wa-petlwana in 1848.

At this time the Tshidi Bareleng under Tawanawere at Mucwana or Platberg on the Scheen Spruit, where they had halted temporarily in their migration from Matlwang (Machaviestad) on the Meei River to Letlhakane on the Molepe River. As they continued their march in the north westerly direction, they were followed in 1849 by the Ratleu Bareleng from Mecwi-wa-petlwana through Leuputsana (Lameenfentein) Tshengwe (Paardeplaas) ^{Kopala} Mhuhuce and Khunwana. Some of these people stopped under Masisi and his brother Megawane with the Tshidi Bareleng of Tawana at Letlhakane, while others passed on under Gentse and Letsapa to getlagole (1849)

Two years later (1851 to 1852), Beer farmers were away from Rustenburg on commande against the Bakwena of Sechele, and the Ratleu-Bareleng went from Setlagoale and Letlhakane to steal cattle in the Rustenburg districts. First an expedition was organised by Mekete Menchesi and Segae Motlhalamme of the Ratleu from Setlagoale. They had no sooner returned with immense herds than Gwadibe Seitshire headed another raiding party of the Ratleu Bareleng, while Tlhemedi Makgetla led a party of the Tshidi Bareleng from Letlhakane, and also brought much spoil. Now some of these people resided at Letlhakane where Mentshiwa was paramount. To this place the Beers on their return from the commande against Sechele traced their cattle, and as Mentshiwa could not deliver the thieves, and could not return the cattle, this furnished an additional reason for why he and his Tshidi people and Masisi and his Ratleu Bareleng had to leave Letlhakane. (Sept 1852) They went to Setlagoale to join the Ratleu people under Gentse, but when they got there they found that Gentse had run away at the first inkling of trouble. He however came back after a few weeks as the expected attack by the Beers did not come off. The Ratleu and Tshidi Bareleng were lived together for some months at Setlagoale, but under a cloud of fear for their misdeeds and the expected punitive expedition from the Beers of Rustenburg and Lichtenburg. This came in February 1853 when Andries Preterius and Paul Kruger attacked them. The two sections of the Bareleng retired before the advancing Beer commande and then separated. The Ratleu section, under its leaders Gentse, Masisi Letsapa and Meepe went southwards towards Vryburg, while the Tshidi section under its leaders Mentshiwa, Melema and Mekgweetsi went in the westward direction towards Mesite, where they gave battle to the pursuing Beer commande.

The Ratleu Mariba section of the Ratleu Bareleng were then at Merekweng (Cwaing), where they had settled for many years now, under their chiefs Mochware and Maikese. To them the Tshidi Bareleng went, and there sojourned for a season - until October 1853. The Seitshire section of the Ratleu Bareleng, on the other hand, continued from Vryburg southward to the Batlhaping country, and found an asylum under the chief Mahura. ^{where they}

MA BEKING C.P

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May 1938

MeTelong,

Erile ka ngwaga wa 1873, Kgosi Molema Tawana a aga ntlo ea thuto mo Mafhikeng, ele ntlo ea thuto le tirelo Modinmo

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Mahura settled them at Shudintlha, where he had settled Letsapa sometime before. 2 years after their arrival here, Letsapa, the Hester of their party, died (1858). He was seen followed by Gentse (1858) who died in 1858 at an advanced age. He had been regent for about thirty-two years. Masisi was now the sole arbiter of the Ratleu Seitshire branch of the Ratleu Barelong. In 1856, Meshwete for whom Masisi was acting/turned up among his people at Shudintlha. He was a man of thirty-five years of age, was married and childless, and yet in spite of all this, he was not installed as chief in his place as chief. Masisi was permitted still to act for him. The Ratleu people now moved from Shudintlha to Modimeng on the north east of Laung.

In 1867, war broke out between the Boers of the Orange Free State and the Bathaping of Gasebenwe. The Ratleu Barelong took up arms under Makete Menchesi, Gentse's nephew, in defence of their homes and in support of their Bathaping hosts and protectors.

After this war, there was a great scarcity of food in the country, amounting almost to a famine, as the people had not been able to plough their garden lands. It was then that Meshwete left his people again, and went to Petchefstroom to seek employment. Ten years later, when diamonds were discovered on the Vaal, and Orange rivers, hundreds of the Ratleu young men left in company with greater numbers of the Bathaping youth to seek labour on the diggings.

At the end of 1870, the acting chief Masisi died at Modimeng. Within a few months of his death, Loepe, his chief adviser was also gathered to his fathers. It was shortly before this that an important conference was held at Buurmansdrift between the Bechwana chiefs and a commission of the Transvaal Republic to come to an understanding on the question of boundaries. To this conference (August 1870) Masisi had sent Phei to represent his section of the Ratleu Barelong. Then came the Bleemhof Inquiry (April 1871) shortly after Masisi's death, and Phei again represented the Ratleu Barelong.

The people now clamoured to have their rightful chief Meshwete installed, and Metlhabani was commissioned by the tribe to find him and bring him back. In the meantime, Mesetlhi, a brother of Masisi was placed at the head of affairs, and appointment which Mentshiwa made much fun of,

told the Ratleus in a public meeting that for he said Meshwete was a hunter and soldier of the type that could not even kill a fowl .

After some seeking ,
the Rev.

Meshwete was found in Petchefstroom, and in 1872/ Thomas F. Burgers the new and clever president of the Transvaal displayed an unusual interest in him, and a (Meshwete's) Meshwete the new est/and remarkable solicitude for his/office . He released Him from his indenture to his (Meshwete's) master , and sent back a free man to Medimong where he was duly installed as chief of/Ratleu branch of the Barelong. President Burgers went further. He spoke many soft and soothing words to Meshwete which ended by Meshwete becoming-an-ally entering into an agreement of amity, and an alliance with the South African Republic, In return for these favours, Meshwete was pronounced as the and ceding his territorial rights to that government./ and-being under its special protection/ of the Transvaal, and President Burgers recognised him as "Paramount Chief " of all the Barelong tribes. That is to say the president pronounced him chief of all the chiefs of the Ratleu, Tshidi, Seleka and Mapulana tribes. He gave him a beautifully carved stick, a kind of a sceptre, emblematic of his chiefly office and paramountcy. To this seniority or paramountcy most barelong agree, and most still agree. But this concurrence only means that they recognise Meshwete as being the senior or highest in rank in point of royal descent among the Barelong clan chiefs. The highest practical recognition of this principle of seniority would occur in a meeting of chiefs or tribes, when the chief of highest rank in point of birth is addressed as my chief or "my senior" (megelele) by other chiefs, and in a piece or general assembly of such chiefs, he naturally presides, and in an inter-tribal dispute, he is the natural adjudicator, and has the last word. And there the paramountcy ends. It gives Meshwete no right of interference with any chief's rule.

After the death of their-Mahura their host and protector -Chief Mahura of the Batlhaping in 1869, the Ratleu Barelong considered the advisability of returning to their home, and from 1871, in separate parties, in 1873, they turned their backs on the Batlhaping country, and went to their hereditary home round about Khunwana. First Chwele Motlhabane was the first to leave, and he settled at Motlhekaditse (Dedeheusekraal) 1871, then Kgesiethata (or Ramaisho) went next and settled at Khunwana in 1872, then finally Meshwete and Phei brought up the rear. Meshwete joined Kgesiethata and Seleka at Khunwana, while Phei went to settle at Metsitlone in 1873. Later on Kgesiethata left Khunwana, and settled at Kraaipan

Ⓞ Mokimakhumo and Senwamatama left Khunwana and settled at Setlagole.

White-Senwamadi-Mekete and was joined by Loope's sons, while Senwamadi Mekete went from Khunwana to settle at Maribige.

By the middle of 1873, President ^{Burgers} had made futile attempts to induce Mentshiwa to forego the line-of-the-Keate-Award boundary line between the Transvaal and Bechuanaland as determined by Governor Keate in the so-called Keate Award. The President had, after meeting a flat refusal from Mentshiwa resorted to intrigue, with a view to over-riding and nullifying the terms of the Award. It was for this reason that he made an alliance with Meshwete so that, if possible, he might force his shady territorial agreements with that chief down the throats of other independent Barolong chiefs. For the same reason, Burgers entered into a treaty of amity with Matlaba, ^{the} chief of the Kapulana Barolong

About September 1873, President Burgers directed Meshwete to occupy Keesedumana (Grwetfontein) a powerful spring just to the south of the source of Molepe River near its source. At the same time Matlaba was directed to occupy Bodibe (Polfontein), another spring further south. Both these fountains the Tshidi Barolong of Mentshiwa claimed as their own, and had had had settlements and lands here for over ten years. The coming of Meshwete ^{to} the one place, and ^{the coming} of Matlaba to the other led to a lifelong quarrel between these chiefs on the one hand and Mentshiwa on the other. It is not unfair to say that the flames of this feud were fanned, as the original fire was kindled by the authorities of the South African Republic, who from the start preferred their patronage and protection over Meshwete and Matlaba, and esp sponsored their claims irrespective of their merits. In fact the two chiefs were the ^{the} Republican catspaw in this land sharp practice and territorialphagia, and were used as convenient tools for extending the western border of the Transvaal, and reversing the findings of the Bloemhof Inquiry, and ^{the} defeating Governor Keate's judgment.

Meshwete and Matlaba came so much under the influence of the Transvaal, and yet the alliance between them and that state was so unequal that they must be regarded rather as creatures and henchmen, than as allies of the South African Republic. The hostility between them and the Tshidi Barolong of Mentshiwa was so active that it expressed itself in deeds of spoliation and plunder, followed by endless reprisals and acts of violence. In all these differences, quarrels and bickerings, Meshwete and Matlaba were always in the same camp, and always had the overt or covert backing of

the Transvaal authorities, so that the conclusion is inescapable that the two chiefs were acting under the instigation of the South African Republic Government.

The history of Moshwete's political evolution fall into five sharply demarcated periods, namely (1) 1820 to 1871 ^{that is} From the birth of Moshwete to the Bloemhof ^{corresponding to} inquiry, the first fifty years of Moshwete's life, the years of obscurity, when Moshwete was but little known to his own people, and completely unknown either to the Beers or to the British people.

(2) 1872 to 1877: the first five years of the Rev Thomas Burger's tenure of office as president of the Transvaal, and also the first five years of Moshwete's tenure of office as chief of the Ratlou ^Barelong; the years when Moshwete was discovered by Burgers, and made the special object of Transvaal solicitude, placed under ^{suita-}tutelage, and by intrigue and propaganda fashioned into a ^{con-}venient instrument for destroying ^{the} inconvenient south-western boundary of the Transvaal as laid down by the Lt-Governor Keate

(3) 1877 to 1880 The years of the annexation of the Transvaal to the British Empire ^{being}; the years of comparative quiescence in Bechuanaland.

(4) 1881 to 1884 : Years of the Pretoria and the London Conventions: Years of war and strife on the Transvaal -Bechuanaland border:

^{Being} Years of military activity, when Moshwete, as a Transvaal puppet, carried out the Transvaal lessons ^{and behests} and side by side with Matlaba, and with the assistance of Kreebeeters, fought the British-enameured Mentshiwa, and his (Moshwete's) name was affixed to victorious treaties and annexations made by Gey Van Pittius and his Gesheites

(5) 1885 to 1902 The last seventeen years of Moshwete's life : years of disillusionment when he discovered, at last ^{and too late} the hollowness of Transvaal promises, and the duplicity of Transvaal authorities,

^{Years} When Moshwete repudiated Transvaal friendship, and denounced the regime of Paul Kruger ^{not favour}, and became disliked in the Transvaal. He now sought British friendship and help, and finally in the Anglo-Beer War he helped the British against the Beers.

Of these five periods, the first and the third are unimportant, because uneventful, the second and third periods have been dealt with above (pp R 1 to 13), and ~~there~~ in other parts of this book (pp 50 to 82). Only the fifth period now demands ^{further} elaboration.

During the years 1872 to 1882, the chief Meshwete was a good Transvaaler. His faith in the authorities of the South African Republic was unbounded, ^{and unshakable,} and he honestly believed that he was going to be made the greatest chief in Bechuanaland by their help. He had been told that Mentshiwa craved for this position. Mentshiwa who was universally admitted to be of lower rank than him: Mentshiwa the descendant of Tshidi, the second son of Tau, while he, Meshwete traced his origin to Ratleu, the son by the principal house of Tau. Rather than be ruled by Mentshiwa, he would go to war and die like a man for his rights. It was, therefore with good reason ^{reason} and with natural and pardonable self-interest and pardonable ambition that Meshwete prepared for war. The English people, he was told were supporting Mentshiwa in his preposterous claim. He Meshwete, therefore accepted the help of the Boers to defeat defeat Mentshiwa, and put him in his place, that is below Meshwete. As he was the chief of highest rank among the Barelong, so he was determined to be the biggest chief among them.

The meeting of the 2nd ¹⁸⁸¹ February/at Letlhakane, when Mentshiwa

called together all the chiefs of Bechuanaland - The Ratleu chiefs: Bonekwane, Makgebi and Meshwete himself, the Rapulana chief Matlaba, ^{when} he proposed closer union - Now it was clear to Meshwete that Mentshiwa was ambitious, and designed to be the greatest chief. He must be opposed. His wings must be clipped; he must be made to fly an ordinary pitch.

Meshwete therefore entered into the war that commenced on the 2nd May 1881 in ^{in support} of the Rapulana Barelong. It was perfectly natural that he should accept gun help in guns and ammunition from the Transvaal in 1881, and that he should avail himself of armed reinforcements from the Transvaal in 1882, especially when he was assured that Mentshiwa had expert military advice from ^{some} English people resident-amongst such as Christopher Bethel and N. Walker, resident among the Tshidi Barelong at Mafeking. These European armed reinforcements ^{supporting Meshwete} from the Transvaal called themselves "Meshwete's Volunteers" and before long, in a few weeks, in

fact, they assumed the chief direction and policy of the war against Mentshiwa, and Meshwete and his generals, were not only given a very secondary place, but were hardly ever consulted as to plans and operations, while Meshwete's aims and grievances were enlarged and exaggerated, and Meshwete's name was freely and fully used, mouthed, quoted, flourished and forged as the origin and fountain of all authority, ^{and as} the reason and excuse for all the deeds and misdeeds of the Meshwete's volunteers from the Transvaal.

Now, Meshwete was, like all the chiefs of Bechuanaland of the time, totally uneducated, but in addition to this no-blessing, he did not possess the ^{natural} shrewdness or cunning which, among his contemporary chiefs, made up for the definite lack of education. Meshwete was, in fact a rather dull and comparatively raw Mereleng. But even he began to see that there was ^{something rotten in the state of the Transvaal} something far wrong. The Ratlou and the Tshidi Bareleng had had quarrels before, but they had never been so completely pretracted, never characterized by so much hostility, vindictiveness and bloodshed. These new and foreign ^{and fatal} features were imported into their contest by ^{interested} European assistants or volunteers.

The also, Meshwete was receiving nothing of the ^{large} booty in cattle captured from Mentshiwa's people - One of the chief reasons why his people ^{the traditional one} went to war was to increase their cattle and improve their condition by "gaaping" or seizing the cattle of their enemies, and commandeered were ~~in~~ worse than useless unless they meant trophies and spoils, commensurate with the hardships incurred, and, and also fully compensatory of the losses in life involved. The thousands of cattle seized from the Tshidi Bareleng were all apportioned between the Beers, and Meshwete got nothing. This was a serious grievance. Already by the end of 1882, Meshwete saw things in a different light. The war gave him nothing. He was losing everything. His own relations on the Tshidi side were being killed by the merciless and vindictive methods of European warfare, and his human nature was rebelling against this endless warfare. In October 1882, when the Beers said "peace", he was pleased, and grasped Mentshiwa's hand with a sincere desire for peace. But he was surprised at the ~~clause~~ surreptitious clause which expropriated land from him, as well as from ^{which} Mentshiwa, and ^{to} was afterwards given out as an agreement whereby he had ceded that ^{to} land the Transvaal Government.

After the 24th October 1882, when peace had been concluded between Moshwete and Mentshiwa, their people fraternised as before. This very much displeased the Beers, who thus saw their game thus being spoilt, and they warned Moshwete in vain, to keep his people from having any dealing with Mentshiwa's people. The result was that some friction, impatience or irritation developed between Moshwete and his Transvaal allies or volunteers.

When John Mackenzie came to British Bechuanaland as Deputy Commissioner in May and June 1884, and visited all the Bechwana chief except Moshwete, that chief made a formal application to the Deputy Commissioner to be also taken under British protection, and repudiated Fra the Transvaal and abjured Paul Kruger whom he said were endeavouring to make profit of him, and to sell him.

On 15th July 1885, Moshwete went to Setlagoale to meet Sir Charles Warren as he was returning after his successful expedition in Bechuanaland. The chief renewed his request to be taken with other Bechuanaland chiefs under British protection. He realised that besides Matlaba he was the only Bechuanaland chief that was under the Transvaal protection, and that he was the worst off, ^{and} that he had lost everything. Now he realised his folly full that he had been duped, or as he said, he had been sold and re-sold many times over by the Transvaal.

When Capt. C.R. Gendler defined the western boundary of the Transvaal, Moshwete was very much displeased at the new line, and strongly objected to his country being included in the Transvaal, and he actually knocked down the beacons with the hope that they would be re-erected in the east of Khunwana, so as to include that town in the British side of Bechuanaland, but of course this violent protest was too late, ^{infantile and futile} and was in any case deliberately and ingeniously misrepresented by the Transvaal Beers, as meaning that Moshwete was displeased at the line dividing his country, and wished more of it included in the Transvaal.

Matters came to a head in December 1885. ^{in command of the Staats artillery} Piet Joubert, was commissioned by the Transvaal Government to destroy Moshwete and his Keranas of Mamusa, who like Moshwete had been allies of the Transvaal, and who, like Moshwete had awakened too late to the fact that he was a mere tool. Joubert commanded Moshwete to supply a hundred armed and mounted men to help him in the campaign against Moshwete. Moshwete refused point blank,

and said Meshwete was his friend and that he had no quarrel with him. As *Commandant* Scheltz had threatened Mentshiwa in 1852 when he refused to help him again at Sechele, so now *Commandant* Jeubert threatened Meshwete. He would make him rue his disobedience, and pay for his refusal to help. After Jeubert had massacred the Keranas, he turned his attention to Meshwete, and at the point of a cannon demanded of him the immediate payment of a fine of in a hundred head of cattle, which Meshwete collected in desperate haste, and paid over to his humble volunteers to save himself and his people from the sad fate of Meshwete and his Keranas.

If there had been a shadow of doubt in Meshwete's mind as to who was supreme in this border war, he had now the full assurance, demonstration to him in a seriously practical manner.

At the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War in 1899, Meshwete and his people were so harassed by the Transvaal Boers, their cattle and wagons commandeered, and their labour so conscripted that they left their town Khunwana in the Transvaal, and took refuge on the British side of the boundary line at Kraaipan. But even here, many of his people were had, willy-nilly to do much manual labour for the Boers. Thus they were employed to destroy or dismantle the railway line at Kraaipan. Many of them offered themselves and were employed by the British as messengers and dispatch carriers, and displayed much courage and originality in that undertaking *to elude the Boers.*

After the termination of the war in 1902, the chief and his people returned to Khunwana, and realised at last, rejoiced in the realisation of their wish to have Khunwana within the limits of British territory, the Transvaal being proclaimed a British colony.

Chief Meshwete died in 1902 at the age of seventy-seven years. He had been *by* nature rather quiet and retiring. He had no initiative, and his mental processes were so slow that he always took very long to grasp the essentials in any vexed issue. He was therefore, slow to decide, and slower to act. These traits were so conspicuous that his Tshidi rivals and opponents of the Tshidi Barolong, *-Mentshiwa in fact-* gave him the sobriquet of "the ex-chief" (kgosi ea kgeme). Meshwete's mind and opinions were largely made for him by his powerful and energetic counsellor Kgosiethata (or Ramaishe, who was the exact antithesis of the chief - quick, candid and vitriolic in temper, a man much hated by the Transvaal authorities as

THE RATLOU BRANCH OF THE BA-ROLONG.

Eatlou, the titular founder of this clan of the Ba-Rolong was the senior son of king Tau of the Ba-Rolong nation. That is to say he was the eldest son of the king by his 'great' or principal wife, and it does not necessarily imply that he was the first born of all the king's sons.

King Tau had, as stated already, four well recognised wives namely Moshwaana, Mochwaabangwe, Kabasana and Kgamana, married in that order at periods of about five years. In that order, the last named, namely Kgamana, would be married about fifteen years or more after the first named, that is Moshwaana, and all things being equal, her issue would be relatively younger.

But child and baby betrothal was a very common practice among the primitive Ba-Tswana, especially among ~~the nobility~~ the aristocracy - the families of kings, chieftains and noblemen - among whom it had both social and political motives and significance. A king would arrange that, in time, his son should marry a daughter of another king, chieftain, prince or some influential and opulent counsellor - within the ethnic group. The arrangements were initiated and completed by the parents of the parties concerned, (J.T. Brown: Among the Bantu Nomads: p 59), while the parties themselves - the future bride and bridegroom - were hardly ever consulted. The parties arranged for might still be very young, they might be mere children or babies, and in fact they might be even as yet unborn; but the ceremony of betrothal would nevertheless be performed by the parents (In the case of unborn children, the woman who was expected to give birth to the future bride had the ceremony of "percussion" of the belly or womb" (go opa mpa) performed upon her, if she was actually gravid, otherwise she was "garlanded with a sheep's omentum" (go apesa lomipi). Thus the "molele" or betrothal, would be passed by the young man's father to the girl's parents. This was a sign of the bona fides of the future groom as represented by his parents. It has some analogy to the engagement ring among European

At a later time, to seal the union, the marriage-portion (or "bosed" commonly known by the Xhosa term of "lobola") would

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