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Dr S. Modiri Molema (1891-1965) : The making of an historian

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CHAPTER TWO: "'THE GENTRY IN TOP HATS': SILAS THELESHO MOLEMA, 'A PROGRESSIVE BAROLONG CHIEF'"[1]



Prologue:

Twenty years after Chief Molema's death, the town he had founded was a key trading centre, and a gateway for colonialists dreaming of land-conquests further north. Molema died in January 1882, during a Tshidi crisis. With their Ratlou and Rapulana allies, *Vrywilligers* (freebooters) were storming the town with Mauser and cannon.[2] They aimed to ensconce a renegade Boer republic there, and envassal Molema's people as their labourers. In 1885, British intervention delivered the Tshidi from this fate.

This historic pattern appeared to repeat itself when Mafikeng's citizens were again besieged in 1899. This time, it was no parochial war between the smallish Tshidi polity and SAR expansionists. Mafikeng became part of countrywide fighting, ostensibly between British Empire and Boers, but really involving all southern Africans and international volunteers, and played out in the world's media. Mafikeng was one of several towns besieged between 1899 and 1902. By then, partly as a result of siege-time military tactics, colonial segregation was imprinted on the town's geography: Molema's original settlement was now a "native stadt", peripheral to the newer white trading town on its northeast.

Mafikeng was besieged as the war began and immediately, British military commander, Colonel Robert Baden-Powell mustered an African guard to provide basic defence and military labour. Leading this guard with his brother-in-law, Tshidi Regent Chief Lekoko, was chief Molema's fifth son, Silas Thelesho.[3] Previously, Silas Molema's achievements have been discussed tangentially, with regard to his partnership with Sol Plaatje. This chapter, the second in this three-generational biography of Dr Molema, his father and his grandfather, relates aspects of his life, and the chain of historical continuity to which it belongs.

In His Own Hand — Silas Molema as the Tshidi's Unacknowledged Historian:

Silas Molema was an exceptional man, whose story is only partly told in this chapter. This is because his life and accomplishments deserve a thesis of their own, to explore more fully the immense network of friends and opponents he acquired in his almost seventy-seven years. Historians have, mostly, dealt with his life in respect of his partnership with Sol Plaatje. In this thesis, he represents the second generation of a remarkably forceful family. His father had founded Mafikeng in a region in which the Rolong dominance was now challenged by the growing power of the South African Republic. Silas, in turn, would help to negotiate the terms on which his people eluded the Boers to become part of the British Empire in 1885. He and they continued asserting their loyalty to Britain during the South African War and, after 1910, in the face of the segregationist Union Government.

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[1] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 17 Nov 1919, "Minutes of meeting held at Court House, Mafeking between the Minister of Native Affairs [MNA] and Ratsili Barolong": during acrimonious debates over Chief Bakolopang Montshiwa's leadership Tshidi elder, William Tawana, used the phrase "the gentry in top hats", disparaging the educated Molema family's middle-class aspirations. (See *infra*, p.161*)*. Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 81-82, 31 Dec 1899) noted during the Siege of Mafikeng that Silas' relations with the reigning Montshiwa chiefs were often adversarial. In 1927, Plaatje ("The Late Chief Silas Molema: Passing of a Baralong Chief". In *Cape Times*, 13 Sep 1927) entitled his obituary of Silas a "Progressive Baralong Chief". "Progressive", in educated African circles, then meant middle class.

[2] See Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 35, 05 Nov 1899) on the cannon used. On the *Vrywilligers*, see *supra*, pp.94-95 & fn.411.

[3] Interviews with the Molema family made it clear that Silas Molema was known as "Thelesho", meaning "hospitality", "giver of food", and "one who nourishes". Nationally, he was "Chief Silas Molema" or "Chief Silas Thelesho Molema".

When Silas Molema's papers were lodged in the University of the Witwatersrand's Historical Papers Archive, they contained many letters to and about him, but little *by* him.[4] A notebook and his accounts, the few documents containing his own script, tabulated his meticulous personal and chiefly financial dealings. Paper shortages in the Mafikeng Stadt compelled him to use fragments of paper repeatedly as palimpsests[5], to record hut tax returns and other accounts, evidencing Tshidi participation in the colonial economy.[6] He also played a vital role in the Tshidi's communication with the outside world. These accounts placed him in the vanguard of an emerging African elite, deriving power through both "tribal" consensus and the colonial government's command.[7] Several records date from his years as Montshiwa's headman at Lotlhakana, a town that had and would again cause conflict for the Tshidi. Montshiwa appointed him as a Tshidi councillor he returned from Healdtown in 1878 and sent him on important missions over the next two decades. Like Lefenya, he possessed that commodity then rare among the Rolong — literacy — and used it to translate and negotiate at vital encounters between the Tshidi and the Imperial authorities. Silas was a moving force, often behind the scenes, recording and later testifying to the Tshidi's historic annexation.[8]

His vast array of correspondents indicate that he belonged to — and often led — a network of Tswana intellectuals, businessmen and politicians, striving to promote their culture, education, commercial interests, and religion.[9] For example, his 1908-1925 notebooks contain Silas' logged evidence of the Tshidi's gradual absorption into the capitalist economy, being the careful records of their stock sales. His 1897 edition of "The Churchman's Pocket Book", published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, was turned to practical uses: he noted that his fellow Stadt-dwellers were gradually disposing of their beasts. Among many others, on 26 February 1923, Mathakgong Kepadisa, a hero of the Siege of Mafikeng, took one ox to town. On 2 March, Daniel Kgosietsile took one goat. The Tshidi's oxen, cows, sheep, goats and donkeys were recorded in the various diaries of their meticulous Headman. He logged their taxes, contributions to the Barolong National Fund, their births and deaths. Water was the region's most precious resource and he registered the numbers of dams built during each chief's reign. He mediated in disputes — and jotted down the outcomes.[10]

As the father of an historian, Silas is thought to have written at least two documents about the past. His Notebooks contained a brief history of Tshidi Chiefs, which he is thought to have authored. Plaatje

[4] Jacobson's catalogue of *The Silas T Molema and Solomon T Plaatje Papers* ([MPP], UW, Historical Papers, 1978) outlined the finding and archiving of the Molema-Plaatje papers.

[5] *OED*, vol. II: palimpsest (Greek, *palumpsēstus*), Sense B, 1: "(Applied to a manuscript), written over again, of which the original writing has been erased and superseded by a later".

[6] MPP A979 Ca1.2, Special Hut Tax Receipts, Issued by the Inland Revenue Department (for 2 shillings per hut per annum) under Section 25, Act 30 0f 1899. This is a sample of family records. Silas Molema's from 1 Sep 1907-14 Apr 1925. The receipts listed the date, registration number, government tax receipt number plus year of receipt, person's name, town and collector. Family records include those of Ephraim, Officer (Oposiri), Sebopiwa and Joshua Molema, and James Plaatje (Solomon's brother). A979 Ca1.3 contained lists of Hut Tax paid to Silas, Tshidi Headman at Mafikeng, 1919, 1920, 1923/24, plus Hut Tax on the various Barolong Farms for 1916, including that for Silas' farm, Mabete. A979 Ca1.5.1, contained Silas' copies changes to "Native" Hut Tax Legislation being prepared for January 1926. This Bill proposed consolidating the various laws for the Cape, Natal, Transvaal, Orange Free State and the Union. A979 Cc11.2 contains miscellaneous hut tax receipts for Mafikeng and Mabete. KAB NA 632(a) No.2153, "Dividing fence between farm Knowle Park and Molopo Native Reserve 1903-4". 26 March 1904, E Graham Green, Civil Commissioner (CC), Maf to SNA, Cape Town: in 1904, the Molopo Native Reserve, one of the areas for which Silas Molema collected tax, had 990 Hut Tax payers.

[7] MPP A979 Ca1, "Hut Tax Receipts", 188 items, 1907-1926: on each receipt, Silas recorded the date, amount of tax, registration number, place of payment, year and collector. He repeatedly used copies of an advertisement for patent cure-all Sacco Herb Extract, for notes, or to draft letters, for example, to the Mafikeng Magistrate (07 July 1915), attached to MPP A979 Be1, 10 July 1915, to RM, Maf, "Death of Chief Lekoko".

[8] See *infra*, pp.105, 132-33, 143ff, 162, on Silas' role. See Silas' evidence in Lekoko Montsioa v. The Government of the Union of South Africa (MPP A979 Bd3.2, Affidavit of Silas Molema), stating when Chief Montshiwa appointed him.

[9] MPP, A979 Aa1-Aa4 contain some of this correspondence in Setswana and English. Most of the letters were written *to* STM; he also kept copies of letters he wrote to others. See A979 Aa5, "Silas Molema's Notebooks" (1908-1925).

[10] MPP A979 Aa5.2, last entry for 23 Feb 1923. See *infra*, pp.117, 137, for Mathakgong's siege-time role. MPP A979 Aa5.1 is Silas' copy of Walker's No.4 Daily Diary (1896) (London: John Walker & Co, Farringdon House, Warwick Lane, E.C.) reflecting Tax contributions for 1911, his own included. After these, he recorded "Permits to sell small & Big Stock", 1923-1925. On pages marked "Cash Accounts — October", he logged the community's contributions to the Barolong National Fund, stating that he "Handed this amount to the Kgotla, on 9 Feb 1918". One page records the Dams built (dimensions included), some before the Rinderpest, and 4 made "during Chief Lekoko's Life". The disputes dated from 1917 at Seoding.

hinted that Silas experimented with biography as well. In 1913, he objected that Silas had still not sent him the sketch he had written of his late mother, Baetlhoi's life.[11] This sketch has not been located.

Silas Molema was not someone to offend; he had a long memory and formidable ledgers. He knew who had taken what from whom, in matters great and small. He knew exactly which Boers and their Rolong allies had wrongfully appropriated Tshidi land and — as several governments, the Rapulana and the Ratlou learned to their cost — fought resolutely to have it returned. Relatives, chiefs and family crossed him at their peril. Yet his generosity was proverbial. Friends far and near addressed him as "Morolong" because he was one of them and embodied the spirit of their fourteenth-century founder, Chief Morolong. He lent money to help people, sold his own cattle to educate his expanding family, and travelled the country to try and build an effective black opposition to the Union Government. His generosity to fellow Barolong, Batswana and, in later years, SANNC members, suggest that he lived by the Setswana proverb, "*Lecôgô le tlhapisa je lengoe*" or "One hand must wash the other".[12] He represented the Rolong on numerous occasions, perhaps most importantly during the formation of the South Africa Natives National Congress.[13]

He was a kind but stern father, as his son, Modiri, found. Silas set strict examples for his children to follow. Modiri occasionally disagreed with his father, but admired and respected him. Modiri succeeded him as family and community leader. This chapter explores Silas' life as a prelude to examining, in Chapters Three and Four, its later impact on his eldest son, the future historian. The evidence leads one to three signal events in Silas' life. His siege-time bravery (past the mid-point of his life) best evoked the man and his position at Mafikeng, and forms this chapter's starting point. His distinguished wartime conduct, including founding a Setswana newspaper, prompts enquiry into his education at Healdtown and later training for political leadership under Montshiwa's ægis. His experience as Montshiwa's secretary and the advance of formal colonisation, taught him how axiomatic land was to Tshidi survival. Land was also so vital to his growing affluence as a farmer and a businessman, that his own and the community's prosperity often became enmeshed. Two "land cases" illustrating Silas's mounting influence among the Tshidi and his anger at the effects of colonial interference in Rolong land disputes are discussed.

Which Silas Molema?

A Silas Molema concluded Peter Warwick's chapter on the Siege of Mafikeng during the Anglo-Boer War:

> [f]or two men in particular, memories of the [Anglo-Boer] war and its significance for black people were to remain especially strong for the rest of their lives. Both Sol Plaatje and Silas Molema were Mafeking veterans, men who had witnessed the hardships of life and death of the Barolong people during the seven-month siege, and both referred back to the events of the war in their later writings. Of the implications of the 1913 Land Act for the black defenders of Mafeking, Plaatje wrote, "what must be the feelings of these people...now that it is decreed that their sons and daughters can no longer have any claim to the country for which they bled". Writing in 1920, Molema also concluded that the support given to the British by black people during the war had been in vain: "It is a fact...the position of the Bantu after the South African War was worse than before it...their condition has grown worse and worse every year, their rights, never many, nor mighty, have been curtailed systematically from then to now; and the future is dark and dreary".[14]

[11] MPP A979 Cc1: "Historical Notice," (See Genealogical Tables behind). From "Chief's Letter Book". As the history was written in Silas' notebook in handwriting resembling his, he was probably the author. MPP A979 Da28 [10-12?] March 1913 mentioned the biographical sketch of "Ma Siako's", the name Baetlhoi was called after the birth of Israel *Mosiako*.

[12] Plaatje, 1916b: 49, Proverb 279: in modern orthography, "*Letsôgô le tlhapisa ye lengwe*".

[13] See MPP A979 Cc9, Letters between John Dube, FZ Fenyang, John Tengo Jabavu, H Selby Msimang and Pixley Ka I Seme. See MPP A979 Da51, 6 Nov 1918, STP, Kmb, to "Morolong", viz. STM.

[14] Warwick, 1983: 184. Plaatje (1916: 252) and Molema (1920: 292). Molema (1920: vii) stated that wartime paper-shortages delayed *The Bantu*'s publication. Warwick was not alone in conflating Silas with others family members. Jean Comaroff (1985: 37) attributed some of Silas' deeds to elder brother Joshua whom, she said, "inherited his father's mantle as leader of the 'people of the word', and founded the first Tswana newspaper in Mafikeng in 1900! His daughter married Sol Plaatje, court interpreter and siege diarist; the latter was of Seleka origin and he and SM Molema (Joshua's brother's son)

However, this soldier-scholar "Silas Molema" who allegedly both helped raise the Siege of Mafikeng in May 1900 and penned *The Bantu* did not exist! Warwick's composite character was a fairly common error, denying the father and son's respective individual achievements. During the Siege, Modiri Molema was a child of eight, and its historic import inspired much of his later writing.

Modiri, Silas's first-born son, was often called "Silas" among the Tswana, who may honour a son with his father's name.[15] Chief Molema's son and grandson embodied two generations of modernism in South Africa: two phases of the accommodation between indigenous and global notions of daily life, leadership and spirituality. This chapter's study of Modiri's father explores some of the ways in which the colonised contributed to shaping societies on the periphery of Empire. For, if the building of Empire involved disseminating global forms of knowledge, it also entailed the creation of specific, sometimes stereotypic, ways of knowing Africa. Very often, colonial writings *about* the colonised excluded knowledge of the particular in Africa, replacing it with generalised descriptions that distorted or even mythologised colonised peoples. Rarely did the views of the colonised at the Empire's periphery find representation. Yet, with reference to an argument that Atmore and Marks and the Comaroffs furthered, local communities on the margins interacted dialectically with imperial agents (bureaucrats, missionaries, traders) in making colonial discourse. Dr Molema offered rare analyses of the historic and contemporary situation of the colonised, writing as one of this group, "a member of the race".[16]

Molema challenged such stereotypic thinking forcefully and creatively. His writings evaluated the colonial discourses about Africans, while he occasionally found it hard to transcend their purview. Historiographers using generic notions of race as their analytic paradigm have often dismissed Molema's work cursorily because his treatment of race and civilisation is so philosophically complex.[17] Re-conceptualising Molema's writings entails revisiting that border world of Mafikeng/Mafeking and the man probably most influential in inducting him into early twentieth-century South Africa: his father.

In 1917, Modiri analysed a past he felt was slipping away from the descendants of those who had lived it. He belonged to the new elite who inserted themselves into diverse roles and occupations to meet their own and their communities' needs.[18] But it was Silas' generation, who began operating in this polymathic manner. The tentacles of imperialism and modernism that clawed their way up to Mafikeng, interrupted what might otherwise have been for Silas a life spent farming and running tribal affairs.

How he came to study at Healdtown is still unknown. There was a prior Wesleyan connection to the Eastern Cape, as Molema's eldest son, Israel, and their relative Stephen Lefenya, had made the long journey there in the late 1860s to attend Salem Mission. Whether, in the 1870s, Rev. Webb (given the timing) or an older, perhaps Thaba 'Nchu, tie of Molema's, arranged for Silas to attend Healdtown is unclear. In any event, with his father aging, the need for a new *moruti* (teacher-pastor) to continue the Molema leadership of the Tshidi *ba Wesele* evidently arose. Chief Molema had had little formal training, as Webb lamented, so Silas joined another Tshidi relative, Elisha Leshomo, on the long journey to Healdtown, the Cape's leading Methodist institution.[19] These nearly four years away would

became the first published authors and historians among the Barolong". Joshua assumed some leadership roles on his father and brother Israel's deaths, but *Silas* co-founded *Koranta ea Becoana* (1901!) [henceforth, *Koranta*]. *His* son, Morara married the Violet, daughter of Plaatje, who was of the Modibooa-Rolong line, not the Seleka. See Willan (1984: 13, 100) and Schapera (1943a).

[15] Silas called his first-born son "Seetsele", presumably in tribute to his father, Molema's eldest brother, who had been betrothed to Silas' mother, before dying young. See *supra*, pp.50-51, 63 fn.149, 84 fn.323.

[16] The Comaroffs (1997) saw colonialism as a process that actors in both "metropole" and "periphery" made. They extended Atmore and Marks's 1974 emphasis upon the dialectic between local "collaborators" and imperial administrators. Molema (1920: viii) cited in full, *supra*, p.18.

[17] Saunders (1988: 109) and Smith (1988: 132).

[18] Comaroff & Comaroff (1997: 18) described Plaatje and SM Molema as "articulate 'native' voices who spoke about the contradictory experience of being colonised — consciousness, culture, and all — in very different terms; often much darker, more concretely political, more concerned with what it meant to be acted upon".

[19] "Silas Molema's Notebooks" (Unisa, ACC142, MV, [Np]) listed John Leshomo of Lotlhakana as Elisha's father. Molema (1951: 33, 57): Chief Molema's mother, Mosela, was Regent Leshomo's daughter. John Leshomo, and early Christian

transform Silas' life substantially, laying the foundations for his and his son's innovative methods of representing African experiences of colonisation, both politically and culturally.

Young Silas — "*Thakána ea gómpiěnó, banónā ba ka moshó*" "Today's boys are tomorrow's men":[20]

This may be the first attempt to reconstruct Silas Thelesho Molema's early years. Before he entered Healdtown Industrial Training Institution, relatively little is known of the man who later became a power broker at Mafikeng and helped to shape the course of his historian son's life.

Estimations of Silas' birth date vary. Willan stated that he was born in 1852 and died in 1927.[21] The latter date is certain; the former more vague. Partner and lifelong friend, Plaatje maintained that Silas was 78 on his death, which places his birth in 1849. In that key year, his grandfather, Chief Tawana, passed away and the Tshidi re-settled at Lotlhakana after almost sixteen years at Thaba 'Nchu and Matlwang.[22] Healdtown registered him as 23 in 1874 on joining the school, making his birthdate 1851 during Ludorf's Lotlhakana residence and the emergence of conflict between his father, Molema, and new chief, Montshiwa. Evidently thinking he was younger than these estimates, Silas gave his age as 56 in 1912, making 1856 the year of his birth.[23]

Nor does Silas' Serolong name, *Thelesho* (hospitality or provider of food) hint at his birthdate, although both names emphasised his father's Christian piety. "Thelesho" accurately predicted some characteristics of the future parent and leader, who laboured to educate his children, succour his community, and welcome relative strangers, like Plaatje, to Mafikeng. He also welcomed new political and social ideas, often courting conflict with his traditionalist Rolong community. His and Plaatje's founding of *Koranta ea Becoana* (1901), the first Tswana-English weekly, epitomised this innovative streak, as did his quest for political unity among all black South Africans.[24] His pursuit of historic Tshidi land claims also revealed a stubborn desire for justice and (critics have hinted) his own power.

His childhood and youth would have included Serolong and Christian socialisation to prepare him for leadership. Schapera emphasised that Tswana communities from the Rolong to the Ngwato favoured male children. This held true despite the Setswana proverb, "*Go tshêgo eó o tsetseng ngoaná oá mosétsāna; oá mosímané morwá mogógadiagoe*" — "Happy is she whom the gods have given a daughter, for a boy is the son of his mother-in-law"![25] Israel, Palo, Tawana and Joshua, and even the fifth Molema brother (Silas), almost certainly took precedence over their parents' female children, from

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convert, may have been her brother or the son of one of her brothers, and Elisha, John's son. See Matthews (1945: 13) on Elisha. Methodist Preacher, Stephen Lefenya, married Elisha and Margaret Seatlolo in July 1883, Silas' Notebooks recorded while he was Lotlhakana Headman (mid-1890s). CA, CCP 11/13 and CCP 11/1/3, "Cape Voters' Lists of 1895 & 1897", notes Lefenya's profession as "Local Preacher" on the 1897 voters' roll. MPP A979 Bc1, 20 Nov 1905, E Graham Green, RM, Maf, complained to Badirile that Elisha was not practising segregation at Mapachoe; according to the Inspector of Native Reserves, he was letting "white people…reside within his Stadt". Schapera, 1943b: 30: Elisha is also listed as the original owner of a Barolong Farm, Malokaganyane, diagonally adjacent to Silas' Mabete. See Map, *infr*a, pp.128-29.

[20] Plaatje (1916b: 90, Proverb 655): in modern orthography, "*ea*" would be "*ya*" and "*mosho*", "*mosó*".

[21] Edward Ross, 1980. *Diary of the Siege of Mafeking October 1899 to May 1900*. (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society), p.95 fn.19, 23 Jan 1900.

[22] Plaatje had a sweeping attitude to dates. Cf. MPP A979 Cc1: "Historical Notice," (See Genealogical Tables behind). From "Chief's Letter Book", the writer, probably Silas, dated the return to Lotlhakana as 1848. See *supra*, pp.72-73. On the Tshidi's stay at Matlwang, see *supra*, p.73-74, 81.

[23] See *supra*, p.82ff, for Ludorf's stay at Lotlhakana with Chief Montshiwa. MPP A979 Bd3.2, "Chief Lekoko Disputes", Silas Molema's Affidavit. The undated Affidavit was attached to a document dated 30 Nov 1912. With respect to the above dates for Silas' birth, the Affidavit may have been taken earlier, c.1908.

[24] Standard Bank Archives, *Standard Bank Archive Inspection Reports*, Maf, 24 Nov 1903: The Inspector of Mafikeng's Standard Bank's praised Silas' "exceedingly good credit", as *Koranta*'s establishment illustrated. The Bank's approval prompted Mayor de Kock to loan him £1,000 to establish the press. In *Vukani Bantu! The Beginnings of Black Protest in South Africa to 1912*. ([Cape Town: David Philip, 1984], pp.275-76), André Odendaal outlined Silas' political involvements.

[25] Schapera, 1953 & 1979: 37. Plaatje, 1916b: 42, Proverb 213: in modern orthography "*eo*" becomes "*yó*", "*ngoaná eá*" is "*ngwana wa*" and "*moroa mogógadiagoe*" is "*morwá mogógadiagwe*".

the eldest, Ngwanakabo, to the youngest, Mafikeng.[26] In politics, the Molema sons would have been expected to adopt a dominant voice by addressing other men in the *lekgotla*. More domestic roles awaited the daughters. Tswana women were, traditionally, "...perpetual minors...subject for life to the authority of male guardians", and generally remained so in nineteenth — and many twentieth-century Tswana households.[27] Silas' wife, Molalanyane seemed to devote herself to domestic and religious issues; however, he insisted on educating all their children, sons and daughters, alike.[28]

Molema's sons' names alluded to the religious allegory woven into his family's lives. His own Christian name being "Isaac" (the "chosen people's" patriarch), he followed Biblical example by calling his first-born Mosiako was baptised Israel; second son, Palo, was named for the first gospel-writer, Matthew. Fourth son, Moshwela was baptised Joshua, after the trusty Israelite leader who resettled Canaan after a long absence — Moshwela was born during the Tshidi's return to the Molopo. Perhaps again considering his own evangelical labours among traditional Rolong believers, he named Thelesho, his fifth son, after Silas, the acolyte of St Paul, who helped him to evangelise pagan Greece.[29]

For Chiefs' sons, public and private roles often merged: chiefs educated their sons to take responsibility for women, their clans and the whole community. Future chiefs (which Molema's five sons hoped to become) learned the economic side of chiefship early: cattle-husbandry, hunting and trading. In addition, young Silas learned to exercise social and political judgement to "...decide questions of public policy, promulgate new laws and amend or abolish others, organise regimental and other large-scale activities, and [taking] whatever action seemed appropriate in case of war, pestilence, famine or some other calamity".[30] Like their father, the Molema sons adopted missionary "work" ethics and began crop- and stock-farming for market purposes.[31] A chief's role could, at any time of life, be military, as Silas' elder brothers, Israel and Tawana learned. During the Siege of Mafikeng, Silas (then in his forties) took arms to defend his town.[32]

Chief Molema's conversion to Christianity was momentous, and meant that Silas would have trained for a chiefship modified from that which his father's brother, Montshiwa, practised. Christian chiefship substituted allegiance to the Christian God for some of the "religious and magical activities" of Tshidi chiefs. Silas and his older brothers grew up during the Tshidi power struggles over religion. Montshiwa was particularly anxious that children observe all the customary ceremonies of growing up.[33] Significantly, Molema and Montshiwa disagreed most over observances marking fundamental transitional periods in the lives of children: *bogwera* and *bojale*. These ceremonies, often crudely reduced in English to "initiation", were intended to educate male and female children respectively into *Serolong* adulthood. The Wesleyans forbade these practices, while Montshiwa and followers insisted upon them. It is not known whether Molema's children underwent these ceremonies.

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[26] Plaatje (1973 & 1999:102, 25 Jan 1900): knowing Plaatje's wife was elsewhere, Mafikeng (Mayikeng) Montshiwa took care of his diet during the Siege. Mafikeng's marriage to Tshidi Regent Lekoko elevated her standing in the town whose name she bore.

[27] Schapera (1953 & 1979: 37): by omitting women from his Tshidi Royal genealogy, Matthews (1945: 26 & 27) implied their perceived insignificance in Rolong society. Although he may have been trying to save space, the fact that they *could* be omitted, showed Tshidi society's patriarchal nature. Matthews based his table on Schapera, 1943a. Matthews' omissions obscured the power relations conducted via the marriage of women: Silas' sister, Mafikeng, married her father's brother Marumolwa's son, Lekoko, and Silas strategically married his daughter, Harriet, to reigning i Chief Bakolopang, his father's brother's son (see *infra*, p.158). Both marriages cemented Silas and Joshua's relationships with the Tshidi chiefdom.

[28] Chapter Three discusses their education. See *infra*, p.190 fn.164.

[29] See *Holy Bible,* King James Version, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), *Acts* 15-18. Together, St Paul and Silas preached to various communities throughout the "wilds" of Greece and Asia Minor. Silas (derived from the Roman Silvanus) may have helped to write or at least send the First and Second Epistle to the Thessalonians.

[30] Schapera, 1953 & 1979: 52.

[31] See Comaroff, 1997: II, 122-129, 195-96 & 208.

[32] Molema (1966: 140-41): Tawana died in the Siege of Tigele (1884), where Israel was badly wounded. The chief's senior sons led their age-regiments (*mephato*), as Montshiwa had at Khunwana (1832). See *supra*, pp.51 fn.66 & 63.

[33] Schapera & Goodwin (1937 & 1966: 136-37) discussed chiefly powers of rainmaking and doctoring of seeds among the Tswana and Pedi. On the socialisation of children in Tswana societies, see *supra*, pp.63-64 & *infra*, pp.166-169, 300-04.

As a fifth son, Silas was slated to be one of the chief's *dintona* or *dikala tsa kgosi*.[34] But it is neither known how he was selected for professional schooling along *sekgoa* lines, nor why his father chose this son particularly. Was it coincidental that Molema sent him to Healdtown in the year that Webb arrived in Mafikeng? Did Molema see an educated son as an alternative to direct missionary intervention? Both he and Montshiwa understood how much they needed an intelligent, trustworthy scribe and negotiator, who could communicate fluently with the missionaries and British administrators. Molema's specific reasons for sending the adult Silas (in his twenties) to Healdtown are not yet known.

Furthermore, educating his son was a means of protecting the power base he had established. Molema had made himself the Tshidi's Wesleyan chief and opposed white missionary, Webb's permanent presence among them. While his older sons could assume the *Ba Wesele*'s political leadership, an educated son might continue his own didactic and religious role and avert the need for a resident missionary at Mafikeng. If this was so, then Silas' education may have been a move to control the Christianising process and resist the missionaries and their wholesale importation of colonial process into stations they established.

As it happened, Silas was one of three Molema brothers (with Israel and Joshua) who became Montshiwa's right-hand men.[35] Silas' pre-eminence came from the new communication technologies he studied at Healdtown: reading and writing. He also mastered the colonists' spoken discourse, acting as Montshiwa's translator between 1882 and 1896. Several letter-writers and translators had served Montshiwa: Ludorf and Webb were Wesleyan "imports", whereas Stephen Lefenya joined the family on marrying his daughter to Montshiwa's brother's son. After Molema's death in 1882, his sons held the key to controlling Mafikeng, especially as Boer encroachment intensified.[36]

In 1877, as the Ninth Frontier War ended, Silas returned to Mafikeng to teach English, reading and writing in the Wesleyan chapel his father had built. He and Israel then built the village's first day-school, still part of Stadt life. Silas ran it until the Wesleyan Mission took over, appointing him Head Teacher. In 1885, Rev Owen Watkins, Chairman of the Methodists' Transvaal region, praised the numbers of young scholars converted under Silas.[37] Silas fulfilled this role until his sister's son, Rev Molema Moshoela, took over.[38]

Especially after Montshiwa returned to Mafikeng, Silas had to balance teaching with his duties as councillor and translator. He grew so close to the chief that his name was often second to Montshiwa's on documents. In 1896, when Montshiwa fell desperately ill, it was Silas who took the initiative of calling in JW de Kock, Mafikeng's perennial mayor and a local solicitor, to draw up a will for the failing Chief.[39] As further sign of his seniority among the Tshidi ruling class, Silas' name was second on the list of nominators, behind that of Montshiwa's able "adopted son", Lekoko, when the Tshidi met

[34] Schapera (1953 & 1979: 53): *dintona* are high-ranking servants, or "headmen". *Dikala tsa kgosi* are the chief's right-hand men. Israel, Joshua and Silas played major roles in Tshidi politics from the 1870s. Palo was less mentioned, and Tawana died in the 1884 Siege of Tigele (Molema, 1966: 140). Schapera (1943a: 16): the youngest, Theleshwane, died young.

[35] Molema (1966: 196): Israel passed away in 1896, just before Montshiwa, who paid tribute to him. Israel wrote some of Montshiwa's letters, eg. MPP A979 Ba7 02.11.1881, *Chief Montsioa, [Maf]*, *to Henry Nourse [Bechuanaland]* noted Montshiwa's grievances against "Moshette" [Moswete]. Lefenya witnessed the letter. Joshua and Silas continued their dominant role *vis-à-vis* Montshiwa's descendants until the reign of Chief Bakolopang (1915-1919).

[36] See *supra*, pp.82-87 & *infra*, pp.118-19 fns.111-113. Molema ("Barolong", 98-99): all the Molema brothers could read and write. Israel was "the first Mocwana [Motswana] to receive school (literary) education....an apostle of hard work, he first taught the Barolong people the method of conservation of water by dams, and demonstrated farming by irrigation".

[37] Potter, [Nd]: 64.

[38] See Plaatje, 1916b: 6. Interviews with Solomon and Elisabeth Molema, Nov 1991 [*Solomon and Elisabeth Molema Interviews, 1991*]: the school, the Israel Molema School, is near Silas' home, which became, Modiri's home, *Maratiwa* (place of lovers). "The Latest from Mafeking". In *The Foreign Field*, v.II, 1905-6, p.418: Molema Moshoela, Silas' eldest sister, Ngwanakabo's son, and Modiri's future father-in-law, was one of 3 African ministers in the Methodist circuit.

[39] KAB, 1/MFK 1/4/2/1, DIR764 and MPP A979 Be4, 17 Feb 1925, "Application concerning the estates of the late Badirile Montsioa and John Bakolopang Montsioa", Account of JW de Kock, MLA, Attorney, for £10.10s, 18 Oct 1896, lodged in "Estate Montsioa". This Application submitted a codicil to Montshiwa's will. Some of Tawana's sons had signed the will after Silas.

to nominate Montshiwa's successor.[40] On 29 October 1896, Mafikeng Magistrate, George Boyes, announced that Tshidi chiefs and headmen had declared that the community had chosen Besele (or Wessels) Montshiwa, to succeed his father.[41]

Lekoko, son of Montshiwa's brother Marumolwa, and Silas shared a talent for leadership; despite not being directly in line to succeed, this talent assured their prominence in Tshidi politics.[42] The chief favoured him, despite having many sons himself. Silas did not let being a fifth son stop him becoming an assertive councillor and political force regionally. Both men's personal stature and command of the new communication networks (particularly Silas') equipped them to negotiate Tshidi needs in the colonial era.

Healdtown — Silas in the House of Wisdom: "*Botlhále ga bóna ntlo eá joné*" "Wisdom has no dwelling house of its own":[43]

In 1917, Silas' eldest son, Modiri wrote:

> [t]he Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society has also done much for the *education* of the Bantu. The Society has established several large institutions for the education of the Bantu youth and their instruction in civilised arts. The largest and best known of these are Healdtown, Bensonvale, and Clarke[n]bury.[44]

The establishment of missionary houses of learning educated young African students, and returned them to their communities as teachers of western learning and culture, in order to transform African societies. Earlier anthropologists have tended to downplay the existence of indigenous knowledge systems in Tswana societies, rather subsuming such systems under the category of culture. A Tswana proverb that has survived from precolonial days indicates a very different attitude to learning: "wisdom has no dwelling house of its own". That the Tswana did not build institutions of learning did not mean they undervalued it; the proverb implies that every occasion was an opportunity to learn. Knowledge could not be "penned in".

As Dr Molema's work showed, African societies may not have codified their learning, but still disseminated their knowledge of the arts, of agriculture, ceramics, iron-working, hunting, and warfare down the generations. He conceded that African communities' "devotion to war" played a large part in disrupting societies and inhibiting the quest for other forms of knowledge.[45] He also identified situations in which children and young adults acquired knowledge of the natural world: the cattlepost, the initiation school, and before marrying and childbirth. Had his father, Silas, been born into a non-Christian family, his education would have taken this course. Even so, Silas apparently underwent a form of traditional initiation, as he was, Plaatje stated, the head of his regiment. His teaching duties were often interrupted by "active service at the head of his regiment".[46] However, with Molema as his

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[40] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, "Minutes of a Meeting of the Barolong Chiefs held in the Court room at Mafeking", 29 Oct 1896: Elisha Leshomo, Silas' Healdtown classmate, is number 20 on the list. CA, CCP 11/13 and CCP 11/1/3, "Cape Voters' Lists of 1895 & 1897": on the 1897 Voters' Roll for "Mafeking", Ward 1, Chief Tawana's descendants, Silas and Joshua Molema, Lekoko and Badirile Montshiwa, Josiah Motshegare, and Molema Moshoela are listed as "farmers".

[41] MPP A979 Bb1, "Tribal Papers", 29 Oct 1896, GJ Boyes, Civil Commissioner, Maf, to James Rose-Innes, Under-SNA, expressed "great regret at the loss of this faithful old Chief, his deeds greatly assisted the settlement and development of this and the Northern Territories…[and] always…a loyal subject of the Government, [and whose] name has become historical". He confirmed that Besele would receive half of his father's annual pension, i.e.£150. Cf. *infra*, p.124, A979 Bb1, 5 March 1897, notice No.A/65, the Native Affairs Office, Cape Town, confirmed Besele's [Wessels'] appointment.

[42] MPP A979 Bd3.2, "Chief Lekoko Disputes": in this undated, now tattered Affidavit made during his 1911-1915 regency, Chief Lekoko stated, "[I am] about 67 years old…and the son of a younger brother of old Montsioa, Marumoloa. I was born at Potchefstroom at the time the Baralongs were trekking back to the Molopo after the war against Masilikatse".

[43] Plaatje (1916b: 25, Proverb 62): in modern orthography, "*eá*" would be "*yá*" and "*joné*", "*yoné*".

[44] Molema, 1920: 216.

[45] Molema (1920: 120) discussed the "stagnation and stereotypy of the Bantu" because of unabated warfare. Cf. *infra*, pp.297, 300. See the discussion of precolonial knowledge and education in Chapters Five and Six.

[46] Plaatje, 1927 ("Late Chief Silas"). Post-Union, Silas resorted to military action at least once. See *infra*, pp.149ff.

father, and with the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society behind *him*, Silas and his brothers could not avoid formal schooling.

Silas' education has been hailed, but eldest brother, Israel, and their father's sister's son, Lefenya, were perhaps the first Barolong to journey to the Eastern Cape to Salem Mission School, near Grahamstown. Little is known of their experience there, but both returned home after their baptisms on 14 November 1858, during a tumultuous period in which Molema defended his fledgling town against other Rolong groupings and their Boer allies. The two men's education enabled them to play strongly supportive roles to both Molema and, particularly in Lefenya's case, to Montshiwa. Lefenya later stated that he had "also learned some English [and] on my return I was appointed by Montsioa to be his Secretary".[47]

Healdtown, to which Molema sent Silas, was part of a chain of educational institutions that missionaries were founding throughout the Eastern Cape. In giving a "house" to wisdom, mission schools could take children of various African communities out of their local environment and, in peaceful surroundings (they hoped), educate them according to Christian principles in order to play useful roles in society.

In 1844, Rev Calderwood of the London Missionary Society founded the Healdtown Industrial Training Institution at Fort Beaufort near Adelaide, Eastern Cape. It was transferred to the Wesleyan Methodists in 1852. Like other contemporary mission schools, Healdtown imparted agricultural and industrial training and religious instruction. Many schools separated industrial training from academic education. "Industrial" meant practical trades education (carpentry for male students; needlework for female) to train the students for work as artisans or servants.[48] In 1867, Healdtown was overhauled; its new three-tiered training system aimed to produce "native" ministers, evangelists and teachers. Silas Molema entered in the third category.

Healdtown, at Fort Beaufort, in the rather lush eastern *Koloni* must have come as a climatic shock to a visitor from the dry Molopo. Dr Molema recalled its beauty, some fifty years after first going there:

> Healdtown is beautifully, and even poetically situated on a high plateau ringed by mountains, and ending on the west side in a sharp rocky precipice, the bottom of which receives on each side a cascade from a descending stream, and is continued for five miles in a narrow undulating corridor formed by olive-, aloe- and euphorbia-covered mountains on either side, running parallel, densely wooded, and traversed by a peaceful stream formed of the united mountain streamlets, which meanders along and winds in and out eleven times in a distance of 6 miles before it empties itself into the Kat River.
>
> From Fort Beaufort, the buildings of the school can be seen at a distance of six miles perched high on their pedestal, and shining white across the skyline like a lighthouse.[49]

Water flows through Molema's first paragraph, figuratively extending the school's moral and educational fertility. In the second, Healdtown was a beacon of light, its man-made buildings transfiguring the natural beauty to convey missionary morality's superiority to the chaos preceding it.[50]

Missionary input alone could not sustain Healdtown. In 1853, Representative Government gave the Cape limited economic and political sovereignty. Sir George Grey's arrival at the Cape in 1854, just after the Bloemfontein and Sand River Conventions' signing, salvaged the school. His mid-Victorian

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[47] Rhodes University [RU], Cory Library, MS 15 869, p.128 no.1017, Salem Baptismal Records, for Molima [sic], Israel M, and Lefenya, Stephen S, baptised 14.11.1858. The Salem missionaries were, like Healdtown's, Methodist. MPP A979 Bd3.2, "Chief Lekoko Disputes": Lefenya's Affidavit [date c.1912, if Lefenya was born .c.1835].

[48] Leslie A Hewson, 1959. *Healdtown: a Study of a Methodist Experiment in African Education*. (PhD Thesis, Rhodes University), vol.I, 175-79): all pupils were encouraged to practise the artisanal trades they acquired to benefit the Healdtown community, or to enter Fort Beaufort's white community as servants.

[49] Molema (1955: 3-4): water drew LMS missionary Calderwood to the Healdtown site: "[t]he founding of Healdtown begins with a spring of living water upon a hill". Hewson (1959: I, 106) cited H Calderwood, 1858. *Caffres and Caffre Missions*, (N.Pub) p.90.

[50] Molema's (1920: 232) description of Lovedale was remarkably similar.

rationalism embodied a particular phase of British imperialism.[51] With Colonial Office superiors, he aimed to create a common society at the Cape, rationalising segregation by "civilising" indigenous peoples and incorporating them into settler society via "constructive measures [like] schools, hospitals and public works".[52]

Dr Molema thought Grey's notion of "civilisation" supremely fair. It depended on training Africans in diverse trades, building hospitals and weaning them from "their superstition".[53] Yet, Healdtown's founding exemplified the contradictory nature of Grey's policies. Revisionist historian, Peires believed that Grey deserved his New Zealand nickname, "the Artful Dodger of Governors". He came to the Cape determined to civilise the "natives" by extending British rule of law and yoking them to the colony through the disciplines of Christianity and industrial education.[54] In *The Bantu*, Molema, like the missionaries (and possibly his own father), succumbed to the grand Grey illusion.

Healdtown formed part of the missionisation of the Eastern Cape. Any contemporary Frontier mission faced the curse of times so volatile that only a missionary statesman like the Wesleyan, William Shaw could steer Healdtown through its troubled early years. His many missionary heirs united piety to pragmatism in agreeing that education was crucial to evangelisation.[55]

Mr James Heald, MP lay treasurer of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society [WMMS] (1861-1874), a great believer in Missions was Healdtown's namesake.[56] Its establishment, west of Mfenguland, inserted Wesleyan policies into the tension between the Cape government and the Xhosa. Silas entered a school struggling for funds, while bravely emulating Lovedale, the Cape's foremost mission school. In the 1870s, Silas' journey south to Fort Beaufort transported him into the colonial engagement between Mfengu and Missionaries. Methodists, staunchly promoting social change in the region, contributed greatly to the "chain of stations" that included Anglican and Scottish stations.[57] Bundy found that:

> [a]s far as missionaries and class formation are concerned, it is clear that missionaries set out consciously and actively to promote economic differentiation and the formation of social classes, and that the mission stations provided auspiciously positioned vantage points, or pioneer columns, in this process. The strategy for ensuring conversions in "savage" lands involved an explicit need to "tame", to alter such societies to a degree whereby their members would be receptive to the Gospel as well as to the benefits of western civilization. Only by restructuring African societies in the rough likeness of their own European society could the necessary links be forged that would attach the African community securely to the Home country, and permit all the benefits of religious, economic and social intercourse to flow between the two. From the conjunction of these processes — the establishing of the cash nexus and the restructuring of "savage" society —

[51] In 1854, Silas (at most 5) was perhaps a cadet cattle-herd, untroubled by Grey's nascent school system. His youth coincided with Britain's retreat from the interior and his Cape years with Britain's renewed interest in the region. Phyllis Lewsen (1982: 15) stated, "[t]he Mid-Victorian Empire was a nuisance; even Disraeli called colonies millstones and deadweight...".

[52] JB Peires, 1989. *The Dead Will Arise: Nongquawuse and the great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-7*. (JHB: Ravan), p.51: Grey had been governor of South Australia (1841-45) and New Zealand (1845-54). One superior, James Stephen, Colonial Office Permanent Under-Secretary, hoped Representative Government would lessen the colonial burden on Britain's exchequer.

[53] Molema's (1955: 3-4) views perturbed his liberal and postcolonial critics. (See Smith, 1988: 132; Saunders, 1988: 190.)

[54] Peires (1989: 51-52): Grey's New Zealand activities wavered between vicious (grabbing Maori land and shooting their chiefs) and benignly incorporative. Shepherd (1942: 104) cited *The Christian Express*, (Lovedale's newspaper), Oct 1898, p.157, stating that Cape critics dubbed Grey: "'The King of the Cannibal Islands'". Lewsen (1982: 17-18): for Merriman, Cape Prime Minister, 1908-10, Grey was one of the "most imaginative and constructive" Cape governors. His education policies were part of a larger scheme to incorporate the frontier's white and black communities to federate southern Africa. See *supra*, p.91 fn.379.

[55] Hewson's thesis (1959: I, 39, 43: 111) was somewhat uncritical of South African Wesleyan mission history. He cited the first region's Methodist Missionary, Barnabas Shaw's "Memorial to Somerset", (C.O.3904, 269, 02 Aug. 1816): "Your Lordship is well aware that Industry and attention to business are no small part of the Christian Religion; for if the Heathen are not rescued from Indolence as well as Vice, they are but little benefitted by their instructions".

[56] Hewson (1959: I, 137): Heald was MP for Parrs Wood, Stockport, near Manchester. Molema, 1955: 5.

[57] Nosipho Majeke [Dora Taylor]'s monograph, *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest*. (APDUSA: Unity Movement History Series, 1952 & 1986), p.34, used the term "chain of [mission] stations".

> missionaries believed that a whole constellation of beneficial results would flow. These were: a stimulated demand for the consumption of British goods, the increase of commerce, of civilization and of learning, the spread of Christianity and the defeat of heathenism, polygamy, and barbarism — in short, the extension of British control, protection, culture, economy, religion and language.[58]

These "beneficial results" formed a set of metonymies for the overlapping arcs of missionary and British imperialist discourse encircling the Mfengu. Molema's *The Bantu* (1920) articulated these values robustly; these are discussed elsewhere, as the history of Healdtown and the Mfengu deserves closer attention, but is not quite relevant to Silas Molema's three years at the school. Suffice to say, that the Xhosa generally resented the cooperation between Mfengu and missionaries, especially as stations multiplied in number and size. Bundy noted that some chiefs regarded missionaries as:

> ...political allies, go-betweens, diplomatic agents and the like. Co-operation with a missionary might assist in coming to terms with external powers such as the British government, Boer republics, or rival kingdoms. Entire communities or clans that were clients, refugees, or in other ways subordinated in the existing political structure, would attach themselves to missionaries (the Mfengu, Thembu, and Barolong all did this).[59]

The Mfengu's missionary supporters have been blamed for the rising antagonism between them and Xhosa chiefs, which lead to the Sixth Frontier War (1834/5). Calderwood recorded one Chief's saying: "when my people become Christians, they cease to be my people".[60] Many Mfengu welcomed the missionaries' arrival as a chance to escape servitude to the Xhosa, and swore loyalty to the " English king" in return for British protection.[61] Most of Healdtown's early converts were Mfengu, like Charles Pamla, its first ordained minister. Healdtown bred loyalty to the Empire, Modiri's centenary tribute noted.[62] Mission stations were sites of ambiguity: they encouraged converts to leave traditional belief-systems, but many converts left voluntarily to escape forms of government they found oppressive. Mission stations were:

> ...vital centres for the imparting of agricultural and industrial skills, they served as a crucial educational link in the economic and trading relationship forged by mercantile capitalism in the Cape between a white commercial and trading bourgeoisie and the eastern Cape peasantry.[63]

Stations like Healdtown and Lovedale created small colonies of English and Scottish culture in the Eastern Cape. Calderwood had established Healdtown Mission Station in 1844 and, after the 1852 war, transferred it to the Wesleyan Methodists under John Ayliff, resident among the Mfengu since 1835.[64] These men's joint vision began as a cooperative effort between the Free Church of Scotland, whose

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[58] Colin Bundy, 1979. *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*. (London: Heinemann), p.38.

[59] Bundy, 1979: 42. See W Beinart & C Bundy, 1987. *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa*. (JHB: Ravan), p.5. For Hewson (1959: I, *passim*), the Mfengu "origins" and enslavement to the Gcaleka were not debatable. Hewson's missionary sources portrayed the Mfengu as victims, alienated from powerful Xhosa communities, yet virtually enslaved to them.

[60] See Majeke, 1952 & 1986: 34-40. Peires (1989: 85): Majeke, representing an anti-missionary phase of left-wing historiography, ascribed the souring of Mfengu-Gcaleka relations to Ayliff (a man of "Jesuitical cunning") having "driven a wedge" between them. Bundy (1979: 41) cited H Calderwood, 1858: 210.

[61] Hewson (1959: I, 98) cited Ayliff & Whiteside, 1912: 34. These pleas for protection were made post-war. At the first ceremony to celebrate a grant of land from the British and their freedom from Xhosa bondage, the Mfengu promised "...to be loyal to the English king and to do all in their power to support their missionaries and educate their children".

[62] J Milliard, "Pamla, Charles, 1834 to 1917 Methodist South Africa", see www.dacb.org/stories/southafrica/pamla_charles.html, Pamla claimed descent from Mfengu chief, Zulu. Charles Pamla was one of Healdtown's first ministerial graduates in 1871. He was Californian evangelist, Rev Charles Taylor's interpreter to the Xhosa during his southern African stay. See W Taylor, 1895. *The Story of My Life*. (New York: Eaton & Mains). In *Methodist Missionaries no 2*. (Cape Town: Methodist Missionary Department, 1958), G Mears noted that when Ayliff proposed founding a mission for the Gcaleka, Chief Hintsa told him "'go to the Mfengu; those are the men for whom such a Gospel is fit'". One of Ayliff's first Mfengu converts was Pamla's grandmother, Mbuya. Molema, 1920: 279. See *infra*, p.176, Molema's tribute to Healdtown (1955).

[63] Paul B Rich, 1987. "The Appeal of Tuskegee: James Henderson, Lovedale, and the Fortunes of South African Liberalism, 1906-1930", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 20, 2: 271. Also Bundy, 1979: 36.

[64] Molema (1955: 4): in 1912, President of the Fort Beaufort Native Teachers' Association, Modiri's former teacher, Cornelius Moikangoa stated that Ayliff's name would "never be forgotten by the Fingoes because of what he did for them". See *infra*, pp.178-79, 183-84 on Moikangoa.

Lovedale station had already begun industrial education, and Shaw's Wesleyans.[65] Grey rescued Healdtown from its initial failure, incorporating it into his scheme for subduing simmering Mfengu-Xhosa conflict.

Once open, the finance-strapped school struggled more than many missionary institutions. Compared to Lovedale, Healdtown was failing, the 1863 Cape Education Report affirmed: while the Free Church institutions succeeded, Methodist institutions faced closure by 1867.[66] A year later, Dr (later Sir) Langham Dale, powerful SGE, declared Healdtown an educational disaster, but partially successful as an industrial institution. Novelist Olive Schreiner recalled that her father, Rev Gottlöb Schreiner, took the school to new depths.[67] Despite having produced some African preachers — like Charles Pamla — Healdtown faced closure. Again, Healdtown was saved: together, Rev William Impey's intervention and the eponymous Heald's further £500 donation restarted the school on Lovedale lines in 1867.[68] This time, its three-tier training plan for "native" ministers had some success.[69]

Impey and colleagues established a set of student requirements and curricula, which were not always pursued in the three streams. Despite Healdtown's strict entrance requirements, it did not record ministerial graduates.[70] In the second category, Native Evangelists, the Institute sought married men demonstrating "earnest piety and zeal", fluency in home languages, and dedication to evangelising the heathen. Clearly, a Healdtown education was intended (in theory), to create, via qualified students, a foothold for Methodism in the Eastern Cape's small villages and beyond.[71] Healdtown's overhaul impressed Dr Dale: in1869 he praised it as one of "four Aborigines Institutions that unite industrial training with day school instruction".[72] African mission schools were low on Dale's agenda and received minimal state funding; their function was social control and pacification of the border areas, he admitted: "...the spread of civilisation, by school-instruction and the encouragement of industrial habits among the Natives…is of importance to the political security and social progress of the Colony.[73]

Dale thought Africans mentally and physically unready for educational and artisanal work. To occupy idle "Native" hands, he requested a larger subsidy for handicrafts' teaching: carpentry, printing and shoemaking (for young men) and needlework (young women), to develop them as blacksmiths,

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[65] Hewson (1959: I, 124, 132 & 139) enclosed Calderwood's and Shaw's Memoranda to Sir George Cathcart, Cape Governor, from the governor's 11 Feb 1853 response to Grey. District minutes recorded that in 1854, the mission was fully active, with 3 paid teachers in 3 schools, 123 day school pupils, 3 Sunday schools (17 teachers and 166 members), a total of 206 pupils.

[66] Hewson (1959: I, 162): on opening in 1855, Healdtown's pupils numbered 32, all Mfengu, (20 boys, 12 girls). Hewson (1959: II, 197-208 & 210-11): Lieut-Col. RH Wynyard, who led the inquiry into Industrial institutions, presented his report on 23 Feb 1863, G24-'63, paragraphs 154-67, stating he found Lovedale's "educational arrangements…excellent".

[67] Hewson (1959: II, 219) cited G.29-'64, [Np] and (II: 222-24) cited Olive Schreiner's *Reminiscences* (1883): Rev Schreiner departed in 1865.

[68] Hewson, 1959: II, 234-41.

[69] Molema, 1955: 5.

[70] Hewson (1959: II, 257-260) described student requirements and enrolments: 5 in 1867, 8 in 1868 (the maximum), and 6 in 1876. By 1880, there was only 1 student and none in 1881/2. When Rev G Chapman moved to Lesseyton (1883), the training of African Methodist Ministers continued there. In 1916, the newly-established Native College of Fort Hare took over ministerial training.

[71] Hewson (1959: II, 251, 257): the "calibre" of ministerial candidates frustrated missionaries. American missionary, Charles Taylor gave two services at Healdtown (June 1866) while touring the Cape. He criticised Lovedale's "classical education" programme and the poor standard of African education and thought it pointless to teach "Kaffirs" Latin and Greek, as these would not improve their grasp of western culture. "Of course we would not object to the multiplication of such men as Rev Tyo [*sic*] Soga but shall the car of salvation stand still and millions of heathen perish while we are waiting for the schools to turn out such agents as he?" Lovedale scholar, Soga (1829-1871) matriculated at Glasgow University and, after studying at the Theological Hall of the United Presbyterian Church, was ordained by Glasgow's United Presbytery on 23 Dec 1856. (See T. Soga, 1983. *The Journal and Selected Writings of the Rev Tiyo Soga*. Ed Donovan Williams. (Cape Town: AA Balkema), pp.1-8.

[72] Hewson (1959, II: 253, G.4-'69, paras. 7 & 8): other schools were Lovedale, West Hill (Grahamstown) and St Matthews.

[73] Frank Molteno, 1983 & 1987. "The Origins of Black Education: The Historical Foundations of the schooling of Black South Africans". In Peter Kallaway (ed) 1987. *Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans*. (JHB: Ravan), pp.49-58, cited Dr Langham Dale, from UG 29 (1936), p.12 para.25.

gardeners and servants. To the educated elite, only preaching, teaching and lower-ranking civil service jobs were open.[74]

Healdtown's largest output was "Native Schoolmasters"; on enrolment, Silas had to meet strict conditions: being unmarried, over 16 (often waived) and literate. His classmates' youth revealed that he was one of the oldest in this category. Silas and Elisha needed to know some English and the first four rules of Arithmetic. Their local missionary had to testify to their good characters and their yearlong Church membership. Coming from "Beyond the Free State" (the Vice-Principal's vague designation) made Silas and Elisha special cases, as Healdtown's students from furthest away. Applicants sat preliminary English or Xhosa examinations, with Silas probably choosing the English test. After evaluation, applicants sat another competitive examination. If successful, they had six months' trial before paying a £5 full admission fee.[75] Teachers and preachers continued as Healdtown's chief export to the Eastern Cape and, by 1878, areas "beyond the Free State", as it resisted introducing "industrial training".[76]

Through these policies, Healdtown taught the Methodist gospel of everyday life, but in general, missionary education with ambiguous effects. While empowering Africans with saleable skills, such schools channelled colonial indigènes into the servile classes, racially-based since the advent of slavery and the Khoikhoi's seventeenth-century subjugation. One may hear the doors of colonial opportunity clang shut behind mission-educated pupils, but African students chose these schools, and contributed to their changing infrastructures and, through them, to the transformation of their societies of origin.[77]

Mission-taught Africans (especially those under Wesleyan eyes, argued the Comaroffs) were drawn into the mercantile capitalist ethos of everyday life in southern Africa. By serving their masters, as they had been trained, or by pursuing independent trades, this new class of servants contributed to the colony's material production and to the class and racial character of its cultural reproduction.[78]

Healdtown was part of the Eastern Cape's 1870s' educational boom. Nearby, Lovedale found increasing numbers a rising "tide in the direction of education among the native people".[79] From 1865 to 1891 numbers of African pupils in Eastern Cape mission schools rose from 2,827 to 25,000. Yet, settlers resented the upsurge in "educated natives", believing Africans fit only for servile labour and avoided hiring them. For that reason, Rev Mountain, writing in Lovedale's *Christian Express* (1884), warned Africans that education might be a career-limiting move. The only available occupations were as telegraph messengers, policemen, railway porters, interpreters, schoolteachers, and religious ministers — and demand for all had greatly contracted.[80] Fortunately, Silas lived beyond these physical and political confines.

In 1874, Silas and Elisha entered a newly-expanded Healdtown for their first year. Impey asked Dale (in Cape Town) for a capitation allowance for all 40 students as of mid-1874. Healdtown's numbers

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[74] Molteno (1983 & 1987: 49-58) cited Dale, from B Rose & R Tunmer, 1975. *Documents in South African Education*. (JHB), p.206. See *infra*, pp.321ff, on Molema's discussion of missionaries, education and labour.

[75] Records of Chief Molema's payments to Healdtown were not available, though Silas later earned headmaster Hornabrook's displeasure by not paying his children's fees. See *infra*, pp.178, 192-94.

[76] SGE, 1/51, 01 Feb 1878, Barton to Dale: a decade later, Vice-Principal Barton noted that Healdtown's committee would not allow any minister to teach practical courses, as they interfered with "training teachers for Educational work".

[77] In "Missionary Imperialism: The Case of Bechuanaland" (In *JAH*, 1972, 4: 659), Anthony Dachs prefigured Beinart & Bundy's point (1987: .8), that "[t]he colony did not always choose its African allies, some chose themselves", and "...missionary policy in Africa was determined not so much by what the home societies or consciences suggested it ought to be, as by the roles in African society and its leaders chose to allocate to them".

[78] Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997: II, 31. Molteno, 1983 & 1987: 49-58.

[79] Molteno (1983 & 1987: 57) cited *The Kafir (later Christian) Express*, III (36) 06 Sep 1873, p.1 & IV (45) 01 June 1874, p.1.

[80] Molteno, 1987: 55. Mountain's article appeared in *Christian Express* XIV (165), 01 Apr 1884, pp.60-61.

hardly compared with Lovedale's 393 students that year, but evidenced a gradual revival. Almost certainly Silas joined 19 new boarders in the enlarged buildings opened that year and worshipped in the new Church.[81]

Impey recorded that Silas (22) was one of 18 in the first-year, verifying Willan's estimate of his birthdate, but not Plaatje's. Silas was the fourth oldest after Thomas Palama, 25, Luke Tantu, 24 and Jacob Mgomani, 23. James (14) and Charles (15) Pamla, perhaps Charles' sons, were two of the youngest.[82] Interestingly, Silas went to school at almost the same age at which his father had undertaken the long journey to Thaba 'Nchu — and, ultimately, Christianity. In those forty years, the Eastern Cape had become an educational heartland for African students, and the Tshidi polity had evolved into a permanent entity on the perimeter of two colonial states: the Cape Colony and the Transvaal.

Though seven years Silas' junior, *Imvo Zabantsundu*'s future editor, John Tengo Jabavu, was already in second year, while James, relative of Meshack Pelem, and Boyce Skota, father of TD Mweli Skota (*The African Yearly Register*'s editor), were in third year.[83] Although small, Healdtown had an intimacy that later translated into a network of contacts among its educated elite graduands. Silas came under the influence of Healdtown's Vice-Principals. Revs Theophilus Chubb, BA (1871-73), Henry Barton (1873-75), George Chapman (1875-78) and William Hunter (1877-88), who ran the institution in Impey's absence, when circuit business preoccupied him.[84]

Most of Silas' education was in English, as the principal teachers were English-speaking. His vernacular language would have been either Isixhosa or Sesotho. Xhosa classes probably had a religious flavour, given secular texts' scarcity. Students would have profited from Methodist missionaries' construction of a Xhosa grammar, in which Liturgy, Hymn Book and Bible, and Catechism were issued by 1834. Soga's contribution was his inspired Xhosa translation of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (*Uhambo Lomhambi*).[85]

1874 was precarious for the school. Senior teacher, George Baker's sudden departure left a costly absence at Healdtown. In December 1874, Impey had to concede that his students were entirely unready to sit the Cape Elementary Teacher's Examination the next March.[86] Cape Town, the Colony's administrative centre, strove to manage far-flung frontier mission schools. Even when needing more paper for March 1875's weekly examinations, Vice Principal Barton had to apply to Dale's august personage, in Cape Town.[87] The precious item was kept for examinations; daily work was done on

[81] KAB GSE [later SGE] 1/32, 12 Dec 1874, Rev W Impey to Dr Langham Dale, SGE, Cape Town. On 28 Feb 1874, Rev James Stewart, Lovedale, forwarded Lovedale's 1873 Report to Dr Dale. Lovedale classified its 393 students as "Europeans" and "Natives". Its numbers were: male students —Native Boarders (206), Native Apprentices (35); European Boarders (32) and Day Scholars (33); female students —Native Boarders (51), Native Work Departments (10), Infant school (12) and Day Scholars (Native and European) (14). SGE 1/51, "Miscellaneous Letters: Ft Beaufort", 01 Feb 1879, Barton to Dale: Healdtown received no government aid towards female students' education, and only a small capitation fee towards males. Hewson (1959: II, 255): the new chapel was erected in 1870. By 1874, the now enlarged school buildings housed 20 more boarders. In 1878, 2 further classrooms and 3 ministerial cottages were added. (Also Molema, 1955: 5).

[82] SGE 1/35 Wesleyan Training Institution Heald Town. "List of Students...year ending 1873": JT Jabavu and James Pelem were 14 and 16 respectively on joining Healdtown in 1873.

[83] Couzens (1985: 1-37) analysed Mweli Skota's *The African Yearly Register*.

[84] GSE 1/32, 12 Dec 1874, Impey to Dale, "List of Students…Healdtown Institution", July 1874. Hewson (1959: II, 280-82), Healdtown's 1906 Jubilee Brochure noted 139 graduates: (17 women included), 27 ministers, 24 teaching and preaching, 49 teachers, 10 interpreters, 2 evangelists, 2 agents-at-law, and 1 editor (Jabavu). Hewson (1959: II, 255): Hunter served while Chapman was in England. Molema (1955: 6) believed that Barton really carried the Institution and the Circuit.

[85] See *infra*, p.183 fn.120: Setswana did not enter the Cape curriculum until 1912. Hewson (1959: II, 260): Healdtown ministers produced some of the translations. Rev W Boyce produced a Xhosa grammar (1834), which Revs WJ Davis and JW Appleyard augmented to translate the Bible and many hymns. Rev John Bennie's (d.1869) extensive work on Xhosa grammar won him Charles Brownlee's title "the father of Xhosa Literature". Hewson, (1959: I, 44): Soga translated the first half of *Uhambo Lohambi*, which Silas may have read at school. (See Tiyo Soga, 1983: 7.)

[86] GSE 1/32, 05 Dec 1874, Impey to Dale: Baker had come from Thaba 'Nchu in 1867 and left to open a "European" boys' school at Lesseyton. Hewson, 1959: II, 252-53, "1869 Report of [SGE], Appendix I — Tours of Inspection": Dale had commented that Baker conducted most of Healdtown's teaching "admirably", ably aided by "native" assistants. Baker's £200 annual salary had been costly for Impey, but his departure was even costlier.

[87] The distance is roughly 1000km (± 625 miles). Silas' routes and modes of transport are not known. SGE 1/35,

washable slates. Despite Impey's fears, Barton assured Dale that students sat a government examination out of 1700 marks.[88]

It perturbed Barton constantly that poor resources lowered Healdtown's educational standards. Baker's successor offered some respite: HW Graham, BA (Trinity College, Cambridge), arrived from England in April 1875. He introduced "many new books" claiming these would raise students to "the standards fixed by the Government". On the colonial frontier, books were exceedingly scarce. Lovedale charitably assisted its embattled neighbour, providing some books at half-price (£10). With youthful enthusiasm, Graham battled bureaucratic reluctance, even spending his own money to buy "modern" Geography books.[89]

The school enjoyed some success. In 1875, Mtimkulu passed the Government year-end examinations First Class; four others gained Seconds, and two, Thirds. The school also sent qualified teachers to spread learning and the gospel in Eastern Cape and Transkei centres: Kingwilliamstown, Newtondale, Buffalo River, Butterworth, Tsomo, and Bathurst.[90] How different would be Silas' task on returning to Mafikeng: he had to build his school, seek pupils, and run it without colonial subvention. He remained deeply religious all his life. In middle-age, he contributed his own hymn collection to an anthology that the Rev Sharp (Mafikeng's missionary, 1891-98) was making before departing for Bulawayo.[91]

Healdtown qualifications were acquiring prestige and Graham expressed delight at the stimulating effect examinations had on students and at some students' eagerness to study beyond their teacher's certificate. Barton pointed out the prodigious demand for teachers in the increasingly missionised Cape; Healdtown's numbers were increasingly markedly by late-1877, a measure of this demand.[92]

Testing Time — Silas Molema's Examination Papers:

Before the year's end, came the 1877 mid-year examinations, which grilled Silas and compeers thoroughly. Surviving papers make it possible to deduce aspects of that year's syllabus, which tested the gamut of subjects from translation to "Euclid" [geometry]. The translations, English to "Kafir" (the term for Xhosa) and *vice versa* were no mere technical exercise. Colonial examiners lost no opportunity to implant their own importance into African history. This passage more than any Healdtown document embodied the Methodist ethos of daily work, humility and due reward:[93]

"Miscellaneous Correspondence", 10 March 1875, HS Barton to Dale.

[88] SGE 1/35, 30 June 1875, Barton to Dale. In early 1887, Barton requested Dale to approve funding for slates from Howse Reynolds & Co. 06 March 1877, Barton to Dale: top scholar in these examinations, James Mtimkulu (final year), obtained 1394 marks (82%); even the lowest, Boyce Skota [Sikota], attained 880 marks (52%), a sign of some success.

[89] SGE 1/35, 30 June 1875, Barton to Dale, 10 Sep 1875, Barton to Dale and 15 Nov 1875, HW Graham to Dale: Graham wrote that he had his own money (in advance) on books for scholars. Dale notified Barton (Feb 1876) that he had approved £10 for the books bought from Lovedale. (Also SGE 1/39, 09 Feb 1876, Barton to Dale.) The contrast between Graham's impetuosity and Dale's disinterest revealed the Cape government's neglectful attitude to African education.

[90] SGE 1/35, 31 Dec 1875, "List of Students in the Heald Town [*sic*] Training Institution [1875]": the list gave Silas' age as 23 and Meschack Pelem's as 16, stressing that that all on the list were trainee schoolmasters. Of the 1875 class, Mtimukulu and Pearse Magaba went to Kingwilliamstown district; Silas Molamolele to Newtondale, John Mba to Butterworth, Duncan Makohliso to Tsomo, and Gilbert Sicina to Kamastown; even Boyce Sikota won a place in Bathurst! (See SGE 1/43, Miscellaneous Letters Received, Eastern Division, I, 1877. 02 Feb 1877, Barton to Dale.)

[91] Potter (Nd: 70) cited Sharp to Hartley, 27 Sep 1897. Cf. *infra*, p.201 fn.21, for Silas' contributions to Rev Motshumi's hymnbook, 1913.

[92] SGE 1/39, 06 Aug 1876, Graham to Dale & 08 Nov 1876, Barton to Dale.

[93] SGE 1/43, Examination Papers for Heald Town Training Institution 22 June 1877: included in SGE 1/35, 15 Nov 1875, Graham to Dale.

Translate into Kafir [Xhosa]
Some years ago, a little black boy was stolen from his home in Africa and carried away captive into the Yeroba [sic] country. After enduring much suffering he was, when about sixteen years of age, sold to the Portuguese. No one can describe the horrors of the slave ship into which he was forced with hundreds of other slaves. After being some days at sea the slave ship was seen by a British man-of-war, pursued and captured. It was taken to Sierra Leone, and the slaves were liberated. The poor boy, to whom we refer, was apprenticed to an English merchant. By diligence and perseverance he became a valuable servant to his master, and afterwards was employed by other merchants. He sought and found Divine help and guidance. Through the kindness of the Rev Thos Dove he was enabled to set up a store on his own, and God has prospered the work of his hands. He is now one of the most influential of the Sierra Leone merchants, and imports into Africa every year many thousands of pounds worth of English manufactures. J Ezzidio, Esq, the gentleman of whom we speak, is also using his influence and his money in extending the blessings of the Gospel amongst his countrymen.

The setter could have chosen no more fitting *exemplum* of Methodist missionary purpose in Africa. Ostensibly, the text stated that missionaries liberated slaves to return their continent to them. Yet, the subtext implied that they salvaged African souls and able bodies for a subtler bondage (termed "freedom") to European mercantile capitalism. This message was clear, despite the West African context. The writer saw no irony (as a twenty-first-century might) in representing the British navy, imperialism's indispensable agent, as righteously restoring the subject's freedom, not abrogating it. Nor was their irony in the boy's release to an ambiguous liberty: he still laboured hard, was a servant and had a "master", albeit *English*. This qualifier had established its reputation as a synonym for fairness.

"Our" African Everyman embodied two cardinal Methodist virtues: diligence and perseverance, only realising these through Rev *Dove*'s agency — his name betokening his divine mission. Sustained by this trinity — Divine Helper, Dove, and English mercantilism — Ezzidio prospered spiritually and materially. Happily, he humbly used his wealth to spread the Gospel. The story climaxes twice, more obviously in the hero's material accomplishments. Less strikingly, his individual identity is revealed only at the end. This formerly "miserable" heathen slave's new name is Hispanic, not African, proclaiming thereby evangelical church *and* Empire's dual interventions.

In asking Healdtown students to translate this story, Graham and Barton urged them to infuse Christian signification into Xhosa. Such cultural transliteration, ongoing since 1834, was an exercise in indigenising imported concepts via the intimacy of mother-tongue language. One may only guess at the double strangeness this involved for Serolong-speakers, Molema and Leshomo, who must reproduce Methodist discourse via English into Xhosa.[94]

Such examinations would lead students to a recognised teaching certificate after three or four years. It was a standard qualification for African students, few of whom had the opportunity to matriculate at this time. Silas also sat papers in Catechism, English Grammar, Geography, Mathematics (one examination each in Euclid, Algebra and Arithmetic), School Management, and History. All questions aimed to test the candidate's ability to impart the subject to future students.

The examination questions tested memory (rote-learning), literacy and numeracy. Reasoning and logic were limited to theoretical subjects like Algebra and Euclid. However, the fact that Silas was studying at the height of Britain's resurgent interest in its southern African possessions, gave several questions a distinctly "empire" savour. History teaching revolved around the British royal lineages, focusing on the births, deaths and reigns of monarchs. As far as may be discerned, no precolonial African history was taught. While History inculcated European concepts of time, Geography dealt with space. Questions tested physical and political knowledge, asking them to recite principal rivers, mountain ranges and towns, tides and temperatures. Only two out of nine questions touched local Geography.

[94] SGE 1/43, 26 June 1877, Barton to Dale: mentioned most students were "Fingoes and Kaffirs. Two only are Barolongs".

Silas' class, the Third Year, faced detailed Catechism questions with moral intent, based on Biblical genealogy and God's commandments to Moses. School Management questions required little argumentative skill, but tested students' ability to construct basic lesson plans. However, the three Mathematics papers probed more searchingly: Arithmetic questions were applied to trading situations, while Euclid tested the rhetoric of spatial relations. Could students apply the correct theorem to a given problem? In Paper Three, they had to show understanding of conceptual thinking, the relativity of quantities and the linguistic rules of Algebra via their handling of polynomial expressions.

The English Grammar Paper also tested learning and application. Candidates were expected to have learned parts of speech, tenses, plurals, degrees of comparison, passives, dictation and parsing by rote. Not only did they have to identify complex noun cases and verbal declension, but students like Silas, Jabavu and Enoch Mamba (who arrived in 1877, Silas' final year) also needed to know the Latin roots of English words![95]

Leading Methodist statesman, Rev John Kilner, censured Healdtown's failure to produce more candidates for the African ministry in his landmark assessment of Methodist Missionary Institutions (1881).[96] But the school had defenders: Rev G Chapman refuted Kilner's criticism of Healdtown:

> ...the Institution has sent out since 1869 about 100 trained and certificated young men as teachers, and during the last few years 74 young women for the same work. These are irrespective of those who for various causes have been unable to obtain certificates, but some of whom have become very good teachers....[97]

One of those young men was Silas (25-28 years old in 1877). He returned to Mafikeng to become one of the first two teachers among the Rolong — some say, among the Tswana.[98]

He might have returned even better qualified to Mafikeng, but late in 1877 recurrent Eastern Cape violence ended his student career abruptly.[99] The Healdtown community were embroiled in the Ninth Frontier War, which dragged on disastrously for the Xhosa, into 1878. The war affected Eastern Cape students and prevented Silas and Elisha from returning to school. In late-June 1878, Barton reported to Dr Cameron, Acting- Superintendent General of Education [SGE] that the war had "delay[ed]" some "up country" students' return to school.[100] No record of Silas' having returned to school in 1878 exists, and the fighting continued all year. Barton stated in the 1877-78 Healdtown Report that Silas (aged 25) had gone home, after 3½ years' training, with a 3rd Class Certificate. It was not uncommon for scholars to commence teaching at this stage, though Healdtown preferred them to complete the 4-year course.

Silas' classmates were dispersed to Eastern Cape schools. Top students, Kingwilliamstown's Shadrack Sopela (19), and Lesseyton's Elias Frans (20) (First Class and Government Diplomas) secured posts at Grahamstown and Healdtown. Of the Second Class and Government diplomates, Amshaw's Joel Tele (18) went to Mount Coke, Healdtown's Samson Malimba (20), to the Coi School, and Lesseyton's

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[95] SGE 1/43, "Examination Papers for Heald Town Training Institution June 1877". In 22 June 1877, Graham to Dale. For Mamba, see C Bundy, "A Voice in the Big House: The Career of Headman Enoch Mamba". In Beinart & Bundy, 1987: 78-105.

[96] Hewson (1959: II, 275): Kilner's importance in South African Methodist history was that he presided over the Third Triennial at Queenstown, June 1880, and created the South African Conference (1884) and drafted its Constitution.

[97] Hewson (1959: II, 269): G Chapman to Dr M Punshon, 3 March 1881, addendum to Appendix C — The Kilner Report.

[98] Molema ("Barolong": 111) stated that his father founded the first school in 1879.

[99] Noël Mostert, 1992. *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People*. (London: Pimlico), pp.1249-54: war erupted on 3 Aug 1877 as a Gcaleka-Mfengu conflict, but later involved the Cape, under Sir Bartle Frere, in an "imperial war" until 1878. ±3,680 Xhosa died in the war; 193 British officers and men were slain.

[100] SGE 1/47, Miscellaneous Letters, Eastern Region, "The Healdtown Messenger", v.1, no.6, Nov. 01 1877 (Price 3d.), "The War with Sarili". The school newspaper commented: "war is always a calamity, and this war on the frontier has brought much suffering on the Colony and the Fingoes over the Kei…". Sarhili, senior Gcaleka chief, claimed kingship over all the Xhosa, even those in British Kaffraria. (Also, Peires, 1989: xv & 135.) SGE 1/47, 28 June 1878, Barton to Rev Dr Cameron, Ag-SGE, Cape Town. "Up country" was used vaguely in SGE letters for territory beyond eastern and northern colonial borders.

George Hlakula (20) (Government Certificate), to Queenstown. Silas and Elisha (22) broke that pattern. Barton believed Elisha went to an existing institution "in his own country". Healdtown authorities merely stated that Silas was going to parts unknown; the words "own country" simply appeared beside his name. Perhaps Barton did not know that Silas would have to build his own school before proceeding with lesson plans![101]

The Difficulty of Reconstructing Silas — "*Monna ga ipolele, o boleloa ke ba bangoe*" "It is not for a man to praise himself; he lets others do it for him":[102]

The years between Silas' return from school and his participation in the Second Siege of Mafikeng are, from a writer's point of view, frustrating, as documentation is sparse. The leanness of the outline it generates tells only some aspects of the man's political and commercial transactions, largely excluding the reader from his family dealings. The surviving documents tell only part of his story, but much of the substance of Silas' life remains elusive, because many crucial events of his life were not documented.

Two photographs of Silas Thelesho Molema record his adult person for posterity, yet confirm the difficulty of knowing the past. The first is a Mafikeng Siege group; Silas sits on Chief Besele's right, and Lekoko on the Chief's left. Together, Lekoko and Silas ran the Mafikeng Stadt during the chief's wartime deposition.[103] Silas looks straight ahead with an unreadable expression, partly avoiding the camera. His collar is open and he, like the others, wears an improvised guard's uniform. The broad-brimmed white hat on his right knee contrasts with Besele's solar-topee. His face is gaunt, even exhausted, though his high cheekbones, the camera angle and siege-time famine may create this impression. Although Mathakgong (back right) carries a rifle and bandolier, Silas and the others seem unarmed. Though weary, if action came along, all would be ready for it. Another medium, the *Mafeking Mail*, contributes Silas' motivation: in May 1900, he will fight almost to the death to defend the town his father built.[104]

Perhaps the second picture is better known. Silas sits with the staff of *Koranta ea Becoana*. Here, dress is a distinguishing feature, apparently separating the intellectual workers (also the bosses) from the artisans. Plaatje, his wife Elisabeth, and Silas hold their heads high, while the manual workers regard the camera less confidently. Plaatje and Molema, wearing formal suits, high collars and ties, look their respective roles of editor and proprietor; the other staff wear shirt-sleeves, some rolled to the elbow. The picture's theme appears to be that Molema and the Plaatjes are, in dress and bearing, modern Edwardian gentlefolk, intellectual leaders and makers of public opinion.

But these photographs cannot explain why Silas funded the newspaper and the part he played in its production. As Plaatje's biographer, Willan commented:

> [e]xactly what part Silas Molema played in the day-to-day affairs of *Koranta ea Becoana* once Plaatje was installed as editor is unclear. His financial backing of course remained vital to the success of the venture, but in view of his many other commitments it is likely that he left the running of the office, and decisions over the content of each edition of the paper, to Plaatje: certainly when Plaatje was asked, several years later, who wrote the editorial matter in the paper, he said that he did all of this himself.[105]

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[101] SGE 1/47, 27 Apr 1878, Barton to Cameron, "Students Residing in Healdtown...Institution, July 1877 to June 1878".

[102] Plaatje (1916b: 66, Proverb No.430): in the new orthography, "*boleloa*" is spelled "*bolelwa*" and "*bangoe*", "*bangwe*".

[103] In "The Siege of Mafeking" (In Peter Warwick (ed), 1980. *The South African War: The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*. [Harlow: Longman], p.150), Brian Willan noted that during the Siege, the British administration deposed Besele (Wessels), Montshiwa's successor, as he did not support them fully, and made Lekoko regent for the duration. See *infra*, p.125 fn.159.

[104] *SS*, 142: 14 May 1900, 214th Day, "[w]e end the Seventh Month: The Baralongs rose to the Occasion".

[105] *South African Native Affairs Commission* IV, [*SANAC*] Minutes of Evidence, vol. 4, evidence of ST Plaatje, p.267. Also in Willan, 1984: 109.

How does a biographer represent a man who left few personal records? Written documentation yields little on Silas' rise to eminence, although evidence attested to his vital role in Tshidi and national politics. Montshiwa, whom he served as secretary, spoke volumes through his script, yet few of Silas' own words remain. Though Silas' children wrote letters from their many travels, as did Plaatje, few of his replies survive. Only the copious Hut Tax Receipts and Promissory Notes he wrote for his community indicate his meticulous attention to the detail of his own and Tshidi affairs. This chapter relies on their words all these documents and on allusions to Silas in official papers, as the subject's own voice proves elusive.

About four years after returning to teach at Mafikeng, Silas found additional employment: to use his writing and translation skills in defending the Tshidi polity. His senior model, Stephen Lefenya, Montshiwa's long-term secretary and translator, helped him hone these skills.[106] Silas' elder brother, Israel, had also played a diplomatic role in Montshiwa's service.[107] By the mid-1880s, these secretarial services had increased Silas' eminence.[108] These statesmanlike activities and illustrious conduct in the South African War added to his national prominence by 1907, when African unity negotiations began.

From colonial rule's commencement, statesmen of all colonised communities needed to hone the art of representation. Montshiwa's 1880s' correspondence with the British government was often Lefenya's and Silas' work, and frequently contested the representation of Tshidi history. After annexing British Bechuanaland in 1885, the new British overlords desired to learn Rolong country's history in order to shape government policy. This often meant adapting to their own ends the historical accounts with which their new subjects and sympathetic missionaries petitioned them. Even though Silas did not sign every letter, he was one of three literate Tshidi councillors, and his services were in demand. As a senior adviser and *lekgotla* member, he would have been involved in representing the Tshidi past to the British Administration. His attempts at writing Rolong genealogies at this time seem to support this argument.[109] Earlier, in 1881, Montshiwa had trusted his knowledge of Tshidi land claims highly enough to send him to advise Lieutenant-Colonel Moysey on drawing the border between the Tshidi and the Transvaal.[110]

After the 1884 London Convention and Britain's annexation of British Bechuanaland, Silas' name featured on documents about Boer invasions of Tshidi land, and his involvement in conflicts leading to the first Siege of Mafikeng.[111] The new colony's administrator, Sir Sidney Shippard, represented to his Colonial Office superiors some of Mafikeng's most notable inhabitants:

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[106] MPP A979 Cb4, 05/06/1903, Lefenya's signature is on Montshiwa's will. Lefenya's ties with Montshiwa were professional and later familial. Said to be Motlaro or Mokubung (Schapera, 1943a: 9), he was born at Thaba 'Nchu and, Willan (1984: 94) noted, educated there in the 1850s. How he came to be Montshiwa's secretary and translator is unclear, though between Tshidi /Boers tensions created a role for him. He later married his daughter, Buile Segalo to Nche, son of Montshiwa's brother, Montshiwana (a *seantlho* child — fathered by Tawana). Buile and Nche's son was Montshiwa Junior, or George Montshiwa, the lawyer. Plaatje included a photograph of George Montshiwa in *Sechuana Proverbs* (1916b: 16) captioned: "Mr Geo. D Montsioa, the first Mochuana called to the English Bar, now…a solicitor at Pietersburg, Transvaal).

[107] See MPP A979 Ba7 02.11.1881, "Chief Montsioa, Maf. To Henry Nourse [Bechuanaland]", for a sample of Israel Molema's writing. Another is in Ba9 22.05.1884, "Treaty between paramount Chief Montsioa, his sons and councillors and the Imperial Government, Maf". See *supra*, pp.52, 87, 94, 98.

[108] Willan (1984: 94-95): Lefenya nearing 60 by the 1890s and "less able to comprehend the world around him". Silas believed that Plaatje, who moved to Mafikeng in 1898, might play a role as chiefly adviser and secretary. The complex legal and political structure imposed on the Rolong made Silas seek somebody unquestionably loyal to Tshidi interests, like Lefenya, with the knowledge and expertise to guide them through this mass of laws and regulations.

[109] See MPP A979 Cc1. "Historical Notice...from Chief's Letter Book." As an example of the Colonial authorities' "re-cycling" of Tshidi history, see *infra*, p.119 fn.112.

[110] MPP A979 Ba3 07.02.1880, *Moysey, Charles John to Chief Montsioa,* [Maf], mentions the services that the Chief's men provided him. See *supra*, pp.94, 96.

[111] MPP A979 Ba8(a): Montshiwa's threat of falling land prices showed he knew the changing value of land in the exchange economy. He protested to Gey van Pittius repeatedly, as on 09 May 1883, "Mr N Gay [*sic*], My Friend, I wish to inform you that this country is the Barolongs Inheritance and I have told you already that the boundry [*sic*] line was made by the two Governments English and Boer…and the Country this side of the Convention line is Barolong Country for us Bechuanas that is the Inheritance of our Forefathers.....I want you to remove from our Bechuana Country, and those that buy farms will be losing their money if they buy them in Barolong Country". See also *IBB*, C.4890, Transvaal, 29 July 1886, Minute on Correspondence relative to a Letter from the Chief Montsioa to the Rev John Mackenzie, p.40.

> [t]he native ploughing lands near Mafeking are the property of the widow of the late Molemma [*sic*] and her sons, Israel and Silas Molemma, and the latter, unlike Montsioa, are Wesleyan converts. Montsioa, of whom as a native Chief all who know him appear to entertain a favourable opinion, has been used as a stalking horse throughout these unseemly attacks.…[112]

Montshiwa's people favoured British rule over Boer domination. In a letter to Queen Victoria and witnessed by his Israel Molema and Lefenya, Montshiwa stressed the Tshidi's desire "to be governed from England", and not by the perfidious Cape as: "I learned from the two Honourable Ministers Upington and Sprigg, when they came to speak concerning my country, that they intended to take my country from me and give it to the Freebooters". The Cape negotiators "proposed" leaving just "ten farms" to the Tshidi.[113]

In 1884, at the height of the Transvaal's attempts to annex Tshidi country, Israel and Joshua Molema and Lefenya were the only 3 of 12 Rolong witnesses to sign their names in full on a Montshiwa document. The others left their marks, verifying the understandably limited literacy of Tshidi councillors. This treaty gave Queen Victoria's Representative rights to "rule in my country over white men and black men" and to establish a bureaucracy for this purpose. The chief formally acknowledged British supremacy with the approval of his most influential councillors.[114] These letters recounted Montshiwa's increasing dependence on the Empire, also showing his uninterrupted reliance on literate advisers, especially Lefenya and the Molema. Initially, as Molema's heir, Israel took pride of place with Joshua following.[115] Three years later, Silas, now about 35, joined Lefenya as councillor and interpreter. He attended but did not address an audience between the Lord Bishop of Bloemfontein and Montshiwa (January 1887), where the Tshidi expressed outrage over two Tshidi women's abduction and abuse by white men from nearby "Maritzani" [Mareetsane].[116] These documents recorded Silas' voice at a time when Mafikeng's independence was hotly contended. The event is not in doubt: the meeting with representatives of the Cape government occurred in Mafikeng's stone *lekgotla*. However, the date is in question: AA Jurgens gave it as 15 October 1888. If this were correct, it would have occurred during Prime Minister Sprigg's campaign to annex British Bechuanaland to the Cape and extend the railway from across the Orange and Vaal Rivers, an extension that would eventually enter Bechuanaland. Sprigg's aim was to have President Paul Kruger accept a Cape-Transvaal connection.[117]

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[112] *IBB*, C.5070. Bechuanaland. *Further Correspondence [re] the Affairs of Bechuanaland*, Encl. Doc. 39, pp.87-88, Shippard, Administrator, British Bechuanaland [BB] to…the Governor, Cape Town, condensed 30 years of Tshidi history elliptically: "...the Barolong village of Mafeking...erroneously described as Montsioa's village…is a small native village belonging not to Montsioa, except…as he is Chief over the whole Barolong country, but to the family of his late brother, Molemma. Montsioa's own town Sehuba was totally destroyed by freebooters…and Montsioa fled to his father-in-law, Gaseitsiwe, at [Kanye], whence he was brought back to the Molemmas' village…by Sir Charles Warren. The old Chief has resided at Mafeking ever since, but he claims no arable land here as his own…". See following page for the Map from Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997: II, 284.

[113] Anthony J Dachs (ed), 1975. *Papers of John Mackenzie*. (JHB: WUP), p.184 & fn.10, Doc. UW, 1067, Montsioa, Chief of the Barolong to Her Gracious Majesty, the Great Queen of the English, 13 July 1885 (Trans. Mackenzie). Trying to avert Warren's expedition, Cape Prime Minister, Upington, and Colonial Treasurer, Gordon Sprigg, visited Montshiwa to urge him to "petition for Cape annexation". Montshiwa wrote many letters on this matter, to the authorities and the Freebooters, such as, MPP A979 Ba 8 02.06.1883, Chief Montsioa, Maf, to the British Resident of the Transvaal [George Hudson],and Ba 8(a) 09.05.1883, *Chief Montsioa, Mafeking To N Gay [Nicolaas Claudius Gey van Pittius], Freebooters' Laager*.

[114] MPP, A979 Ba9, 22 May 1884: "Treaty between paramount Chief Montsioa…and councillors and the Imperial Government".

[115] Lefenya's pivotal role as councillor and Montshiwa's scribe is evident in the many key meetings between the Chief and the British that he attended; other councilors did not. See *IBB*, C.5070, Bechuanaland, Maf, 15 Feb 1887, "Minutes of…Interview between…[Shippard] and…Montsioa", on border policemen's abuse of Mafikeng women, and occupation of Montshiwa's land. Other followers of Montshiwa attended, but only Silas and Israel Molema and Lefanler [Lefenya] were named. Shippard said, "[s]ometime ago I received a letter written by Stephen Lefanen, dated 6th December 1886, and purporting to be signed by Montsioa". In *IBB*, C.4890, Transvaal, 1886, Shippard called Lefenya Montshiwa's secretary and English interpreter. See Appendix A, Molema Family Genealogical Table.

[116] *IBB*, C.5070, Bechuanaland, p.46. 28 Jan 1887, Maf. "Minutes of an Interview between the…Lord Bishop of Bloemfontein and the Chief Montsioa": Montshiwa said he could not identify the women's assailants as, "I do not know their names, because a native cannot distinguish easily between white men".

[117] Maylam (1980: 32, 78 & 37): British Bechuanaland chiefs may have believed the Cape would annex them; Shippard misled them on this matter, for which the Colonial Office reproved him. SP Kruger (1825-1904) became SAR's president in 1883.

Internal evidence in Silas' address (below) may support the later date: he placed Sprigg's name first, perhaps alluding to his current premiership (1888).

However, Dr Molema placed the event in late-1884, just after the Transvaal freebooters' attack on Mafikeng and attempt to force Montshiwa into signing his land over to them.[118] The *then*-Prime Minister, Upington is known to have travelled to Rooigrond and Mafikeng in November 1884 to avert British military intervention. He agreed with the Goshenites to implement an 1882 treaty compelling Montshiwa to acknowledge Moswete as Rolong paramount and giving most Tshidi land to the Transvaal. Yet, in Montshiwa, "Upington had met his match"; the chief refused to negotiate with the Cape ministers.[119] Silas and eminent Tshidi councillors, Israel Molema and Lekoko Marumolwa, may have taken *this* opportunity, in early December 1884, to address the ministers rather than the later date. Internal evidence in Silas' speech also supported this date: he referred passionately to a combined Boer/Ratlou patrol's seizure of 19 of Tlharo Chief Jan Masibi's followers at Disaneng. The Tlharo were strong supporters of Montshiwa and Jan's close relative, Rali Masibi, was married to Silas' brother Palo (Matthew). The Tlharo surrendered willingly, but the patrol still abducted them to Rooigrond. En route thence to Khunwana, 15 Batlharo were murdered. This brutal event occurred in January 1882, just after Chief Molema's death, and Silas' speech indicated that it was fresh in his memory, which would support the 1884 date.[120]

Whether Silas spoke in 1884 or 1888, his people faced the same conditions. He voiced Montshiwa's protests against annexing British Bechuanaland to the Cape and not to Britain. Israel and Lekoko uttered general suspicions of the ministers' negotiations with the Transvalers. Yet, Silas condemned these outright, indicating that he could differentiate between a well-dressed murderer and a real gentleman:

> I do not want the Government of the Cape for two heads of that Government [meaning Gordon Sprigg and Thomas Upington] told the Boers who were fighting against us that they were good people and gentlemen equal to those at the Cape, so I saw that they took the part of our enemies. During the war these men took some of our people under Jan Masibi [Tlaro chief owing allegiance to Montshiwa] tied them together with reims and shot them without mercy and others who were bearers of letters were shot by them in like manner. Men who do these things are murderers and yet Messieurs Sprigg and Upington said that these murderers and thieves were equal to and like unto people at the Cape, they were gentlemen, I fear therefore the Cape.[121]

Then, the Cape ministers had praised the freebooters' diligence at Rooigrond and endorsed the Transvalers' attempts to force Montshiwa to relinquish his land to them. The Tshidi deemed "quicksilver"-minded Premier Thomas Upington and more plodding once and future premier, Gordon Sprigg, notorious for espousing the Stellalanders' and Goshenites' cause in 1884.[122] Though English-speaking, Upington's support for the Republican cause arose through his government's reliance on the Afrikaner Bond's parliamentary backing.[123] This was the unholy alliance to which Silas had referred. As Lewsen stated:

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[118] In "Barolong" (71), Dr Molema reported that Silas referred here to Upington and Sprigg's 1884 attempt to keep out the Imperial factor...and to annex Bechuanaland to the Cape Colony.

[119] Agar-Hamilton, 1937: 211-12, 381. Shillington, 1985: 168-70.

[120] Molema, 1966: 70-71, 120, 130.

[121] In *The Bechualands: A Brief History of the countries…to 1895*. (London: Royal Philatelic Society, 1946), p.44, AA Jurgens, cited individual speeches in the *lekgotla*. Israel's address likened Sprigg and Upington to "fierce lions seeking food".

[122] Shillington (1985: 136): the "Republic of Goshen" was really the territory around Rooigrond, its "capital". Lewsen (1982: 76, 122-24): Cape MLA, Sprigg, was a four-time Prime Minister: 1878-79, 1886-89, 1896-97 and 1900-01.

[123] Agar-Hamilton (1937: 321, 364): in mid-1884, Mackenzie asked High Commissioner Robinson for 100 Cape policemen to combat Transvaal insurgents in Stellaland and Goshen. Upington's ministry held office through Hofmeyr and the Bond's support, which Robinson ignored. Since TC Scanlen's premiership (1881-84), Hofmeyr had held the balance of power in the Cape parliament: "no administration could exist without him; Upington was his puppet, Rhodes had to pay the price of his support, while the withdrawal of his favour meant the end of an administration".

> ...the government was totally subservient to [JH] Hofmeyr and was prepared to appease not only the most blatant of the Stellaland freebooters but also the violent men of Goschen, who were still raiding Montshiwa.[124]

They had tried to intercept the Warren Expedition in early 1885, which Britain had despatched to annex British Bechuanaland, granting the Tshidi imperial protection. Silas realised that the dangers of 1884 would linger: annexation to the Cape would further embroil the Tshidi in the Cape politicians' devious dealings.[125]

One of the Warren's first acts in Mafikeng was to offer Montshiwa the Royal Engineers' help in building the Tshidi a new Methodist Chapel to replace Molema's original one, destroyed by the freebooters. Rev Owen Watkins, Transvaal Region Chairman, arrived in Mafikeng at Montshiwa's behest to plan the Chapel. He was very moved to find, in April 1885, that Montshiwa — not a Methodist — had chosen a site and joined in preparations alongside three Rolong regiments: the Mogodu, under Silas' brother, Tawana, the Mapetu and the Matlhaselwa. The regiments made bricks and provided unskilled labour, while the Warren's Royal Engineers under Colonel Durnford undertook the masonry. On 9 May, Watkins witnessed

> "…the great chief, Montshiwa, an old man, with his sons and nephews, all with their coats off and their shirt sleeves turned up hard at work clearing out the rocks and stones to make a place for the house of God".[126]

This church building stood "...without a crack in its massive walls — 23 inches thick and 12 feet high" some 75 years after being rebuilt", throughout Dr Molema's life and still stands.[127]

Resurrecting the church was a brief respite from Cape and Imperial politics. Around this time, Silas married Molalanyane [spellings vary], daughter of Chief Choele [Tshwele] of Wodehouse Kraal (Mohukubung, Setlagole Reserve). The first of their six children, Seleje, was probably born in 1888; their first son, Seetsele Modiri, followed in 1891. Molalanyane remains a shadowy presence, though her letters to Modiri in Glasgow attest to her gentle, caring nature and strong Christian beliefs. Plaatje's references to her in his diary and later in his obituary of Silas are among the few that survive.[128] She and Silas had four more children, Harriet Tshadinyana, perhaps Modiri's closest family ally, Morara Rex (b.1900) and Sefetoge (b.1902). Motshidi Stella followed in 1907.

Yet, Silas's personal life and Modiri's early years remain largely veiled from history. While alluding to his father's actions, Dr Molema concentrated on public events in the Tshidi chiefdom. Although Montshiwa and his articulate secretary had sent a Cape Premier packing, they could not repel all would-be local imperialists: Upington, Sprigg and Rhodes promoted the Cape as British Bechuanaland's colonising power, whereas Mackenzie envisaged an alliance of the British government, humanitarians and missionaries in this role.[129] In 1884, after campaigning abroad for direct British intervention,

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[124] Lewsen, 1982: 76, 122-24.

[125] Molema ("Barolong": 62) noted Tshidi reactions to annexation: "[t]he coming of McKenzie…as her Majesty's Ambassador was thus the consummation of a long deferred hope and an answer to an old prayer. It was therefore an occasion of great rejoicing among the Barolong, …a welcome transition from the protracted period of war and insecurity…".

[126] Potter ([Nd]: 61-64) cited Wesleyan Methodist Notices, Sep 1885, p.13: the chapel was opened on 5 Dec 1885: ±1,500 Rolong attended. Molema (1966: 162): 3 Rolong *mephato*, the *Magodu* (under Paul Montshiwa), *Mapetu* (under Tshaoka Seru Tawana) and *Matlhaselwa* (under Badirile), provided unskilled labour. See Breutz (1955: 202, para.575) on *mephato*.

[127] Molema (1966: 138, 162-63): "[t]he chapel was opened for divine worship of Saturday the [5] December 1885 before a vast assembly...". Montshiwa led the Rolong contingent in these proceedings despite the fact that he still resisted conversion.

[128] Plaatje, 1927 ("Late Chief Silas") and Jacobson, 1978: xv). Molalanyane died in 1918. (See MPP A979 Ad1 for her letter to Modiri). Silas and his second wife, Rebecca Leepo, had 2 children, Robert Ratlou and Keleo, whom Modiri cared for after Silas' death. See *infra*, p.168 & fn.28.

[129] Molema (1966: 113, 189, 192) mentioned Silas. Molema (1966: 144): while Rhodes and Upington backed Kruger and Hofmeyr's republicanism to further their own colonialism, "…Kruger, Hofmeyr and the Bond generally, consciously and consistently supported Colonialism as a step to Republicanism". Molema implied that Kruger's republicanism was at odds with his less overt aims.

Mackenzie became Deputy Commissioner in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, seeing "no conflict" between this office and "his missionary work".[130] His opponents (rebel republicans, Kruger's Transvalers, the Cape Afrikaner Bond and Cape English-speaking parliamentarians) contested his advocacy of the vulnerable Tswana.[131]

Yet, on 19 August, Mackenzie resigned, "after assiduous misrepresentations by Rhodes", who duly replaced him as Deputy Commissioner on 30 July, thereupon enlarging his interests in southern Africa's northwest.[132] After annexation, British relations with the Tshidi ruling elite were still haunted by the spectre of future appropriation by the Cape.[133] Rhodes's ambitions were tied to those of the Stellaland, Goshen and Transvaal politicians — Mackenzie dubbed them a "sort of political and administrative firm".[134] Over the next five years, Rhodes gained enough local and imperial backing to create his British South Africa Company [BSAC], chartered in 1889 "to develop Zambesia and Bechuanaland".[135] He next struck an agreement with Matabele Chief Lobengula that enabled him to exploit Matabeleland's mineral resources.[136]

Rhodes knew Mafikeng well; for him it straddled the road to the north and his capitalist and imperialist ambitions. He launched his northern operations there, and came to secure Montshiwa's agreement to his projects for enlarging the BSAC's land base. Rhodes was just one difficulty facing the Tshidi, as Montshiwa and his councillors (among whom Silas featured notably) discovered. Silas' eminence grew through his own acumen and ability, and sadly because Montshiwa's other mainstays were passing on. While the Tshidi's political landscape underwent major change, three senior advisers died within a year: Mokgweetsi Phetlhu (11 June 1890), his principal Queen, Majang (January 1891), and Kebalepile, his heir (May 1891). Mokgweetsi, his maternal uncle (*malómê*), was the Tshidi's "the unrobed ruler", counselling Montshiwa throughout his reign.[137] Losing Majang and Mokgweetsi distressed Montshiwa deeply, but losing Kebalepile had devastating consequences for him and for the Tshidi.

Kebalepile (meaning " I have observed"), born in 1850, was an age-mate of Silas and Montshiwa's eldest and favourite son. Given his father's age — nearly 82 — Kebalepile had been the Tshidi's administrator for years, like Israel Molema playing a diplomatic role. His death after a short illness left the succession to his uterine brother, Besele, perhaps less equal to the task, and later to Majang's till

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[130] Dachs (1975: xi, 65, 151): in 1884, Mackenzie quit the LMS for political life, having first advocated Imperial intervention in Bechuanaland in 1868. In 1891, he rejoined the LMS in the Eastern Cape. He died at Kimberley in 1899. Maylam (1980: 23): Mackenzie held that "only a British administration could protect the Tswana against Boer filibusters and colonial exploitation".

[131] Dachs (1975: 169-70): High Commissioner, Hercules Robinson conveyed these views to Mackenzie, while claiming to be his sole supporter — an amazing claim given his close ties to Rhodes, Upington and Sprigg! Molema (1966: 144) charitably noted that Robinson emerged from all the "double-crossing of this controversy with his lance broken …as a man of rather feeble will-power".

[132] Molema, 1966: 142. Dachs (1975: 151-52) cited *Hansard*, Ser.3, CCXCII, 614-41, 12 Aug 1884: the South African Committee in Britain, representing humanitarian interests, abhorred Mackenzie's resignation. Lord Randolph Churchill stated: Mackenzie was "'the only and great guarantee' that 'Tswana interests would be safeguarded under the Convention of London'".

[133] Dachs (1975:186 & fn.13), Doc. UW 1258: "Montsioa" (12 March 1886) begged Mackenzie to help him secure British protection against "[r]ulers from the Cape in taking my country and apportioning it to the white people of Stellaland" in terms of Sir Sidney Shippard's Bechuanaland Land Commission rulings (Oct 1885).

[134] Dachs (1975: 191 & 168 fn.7): the "firm" included Robinson, his Secretary, Graham Bower, and Rhodes. Rhodes's doctor (Mackenzie's son, Dr JE Mackenzie), called him "fearfully rich, getting…about £100 a day….He is very willing to act straight, but if…benefited in another way he does not at all object to make the crooked straight".

[135] Dachs (1975: 153, 243, 211 fn.9): in 1890, Rhodes was BSAC Managing Director and Cape Prime Minister. On 10 July 1889, Birmingham MP Joseph Chamberlain, a member of the South Africa Committee, told its chair, HO Arnold-Forster, that the BSAC would get its charter but not full control of the Protectorate. On Rhodes's financial and political ambitions, see Blainey, "Lost Causes of the Jameson Raid". In *EHR,* 1964-65, XVII: 350-66, and C Newbury, 1981. "Out of the pit: The capital accumulation of Cecil Rhodes". In *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, X, 1, Oct. 25-43. Molema, 1966: 172.

[136] For Rhodes's treaty with Lobengula, see Maylam, 1980: 25ff.

[137] Molema, 1966: 175. On Mokgweetsi's bravery at Khunwana in 1832, see *supra*, p.67 & fn.180.

less able sons, Badirile and Bakolopang. His death meant that Montshiwa relied more heavily on Israel and Silas Molema.[138]

Tshidi destiny had always been tied to the region geographically, but was, from 1885, bound to the two Bechuanalands in a new political configuration: the vast area above the Ramatlabama Spruit became the Protectorate. The smaller area to its south became the Crown Colony, British Bechuanaland, whose administrator had to settle its contentious land titles from 1885 to 1895. His improvident administration and limited decision-making undermined indigenous inhabitants, leading him into conflict with the Treasury's aim of avoiding new liabilities; eventually, Britain decided to disannex the Colony.[139] Shippard's Land Commission alienated African inhabitants by opposing their individual tenure; in the Crown Colony, it recognized tribal tenure only, and created rural and urban segregation that endured into the apartheid era.[140]

Shippard's closeness to Rhodes earned him the Setswana nickname "'Morena Maka'" [Lord Lies].[141] His patron, Rhodes's struggles to rule the Bechuanalands and Matabeleland are narrated elsewhere; this thesis examines their effects on Silas and the Tshidi. Rhodes's allies in the Cape parliament tried to revive the annexation question in September 1885, but the majority defeated it, fearing confrontation with the Transvaal.[142] Over the next decade, the lure of mineral discoveries and land access encouraged white settlement in the Bechuanalands and Matabeleland, after 1890. Concomitantly, Rhodes and his collaborators gradually promoted British Bechuanaland's annexation to the Cape.[143]

In 1884, Montshiwa was unaware that Rhodes's political aims, while extensive, served his capitalist interests. Yet, Rhodes's departure from Mafikeng with 184 men to occupy the chartered territory, Matabeleland, in May 1890, clarified his motives to the Chief. He found it ironic that "the Matebele, his enemies and objects of his utter detestation of yesterday (1832) were today (1890-1893) victims of imperialism like him and objects of his sincere commiseration".[144] The Ndebele's fate made Tswana chiefs' aware that British rule over the Bechuanalands might be impermanent. At first, Britain tried to clarify the Protectorate's administration. Despite controlling its foreign affairs, the Imperial Government needed an order-in-council (July 1890) to enable the High Commissioner "to legislate by proclamation". This affirmed Britain's internal authority over white inhabitants, although theoretically,

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[138] Kebalepile was born in 1850 (Molema, 1966: 175) or 1849 (Breutz, 1955: 194). Molema (1966: 175, 71, 91) praised Kebalepile as "richly endowed by nature with lovable, and rare qualities…finely chiseled features" and "bravery in the field". See *infra*, pp.153ff. More disputes over chiefly succession arose after Badirile's death in 1911. On Besele, see *supra*, pp.107, 117 & *infra*, pp.125, 129, 134, 138, 141-43, 152; on Badirile, *infra*, pp.141, 152-58, 162, and on Bakolopang, *infra*, pp.145, 141-56, 158-63. Molema (1966: 195-96): Majang (Molema's full sister) had a daughter, Buku. Having no sons, she chose a further "wife" for Montshiwa — her brother, Motshegare's daughter, Gaeshele — whose sons, Badirile and Bakolopang, counted as hers.

[139] Shippard was Administrator for both Bechuanalands, 1885-87. Maylam (1980: 28 & 34) cited CW de Kiewiet (*The Imperial Factor in South Africa*. [New York: Russell, 1966], p.9): "'the British Government made it almost a rule of conduct to pay only for disasters'". In C.O.417/55, p.210 (Minute by Webb, 6 Apr 1891), Fabian socialist Sidney Webb (Colonial Office clerk, 1881-91) stated that key administrators like Shippard, Sir F. Carrington (Bechuanaland Border Police Commandant, 1885-93) and Francis Newton (British Bechuanaland bureaucrat, 1888-95) mismanaged Bechuanaland finances.

[140] *IBB*, C.4252, *Report of the [BB] Land Commission of 1886*, p.12, ruled that all "native" land be held as reserves owned by the chiefs and dispensed for usage, but not for individual ownership as chiefs saw fit. They termed individual title a "better system" towards which they hoped "natives" would develop, but could not advocate it "at present". Dr Molema (1966: 166-67) cited C.4929: 2 (no Blue Book title), but called Shippard's decision worthy of the "Transvaal Land Laws relating to Natives". He outlined how the devastating verdict fed into South Africa's later segregationist laws.

[141] Neil Parsons, 1988. "Charles Rey and Previous Commissioners of the Bechuanaland Protectorate". Illustrated talk given to the Botswana Society, Gaborone, 1988. University of Botswana History Department, http://ubh.tripod.com/colad/colad2.htm.

[142] See Maylam (1980) and Shillington (1985). Molema (1966: Chapters 10-16) explained these events in relation to the Rolong. Molema (1966: 168): when the Commission concluded, Robinson declared the Tshidi better off than other South African "natives" as they had 3,690 acres per head! Molema scorned this figure, as there had been no census of the region.

[143] Molema (1966: 170): English and Boers dominated among the settler population. On Rhodes's "firm", see *supra*, p.122.

[144] The quotation is from Molema, 1966: 174. Molema (1966: 146-47) cited C.4213: 107 (no title given): Montshiwa naively thought Rhodes's aims identical to the British government's and begged him to take the Tshidi's part against the Goshenites.

it had no jurisdiction over Tswana chiefs, despite frequent infringements that alarmed Montshiwa and other chiefs.[145]

Perhaps foreseeing Montshiwa's indignation, Shippard granted him £300 per annum, both recognising his loyalty to the Crown and in compensation for the offending white "Mafeking" on his doorstep.[146] Shippard's ingratiating memorandum hinted that the "pension" was a sweetener: its granting hinged on Montshiwa's accepting British Bechuanaland's annexation to the Cape. He added that Montshiwa's successor would receive just half the amount (£150). Possibly, High Commissioner Hercules Robinson hoped to have secured any advantage accruing from Montshiwa's endorsement before his death.[147]

In late-1895, the Tshidi learned the impossibility of resisting Rhodes. In May, both Cape parliamentary houses approved British Bechuanaland's annexation.[148] This suited the Imperial Government, already disenchanted with Shippard's extravagance in the Crown Colony: "'for almost every year up to 1895, expenditure was at least two or three times the 1885-1886 figure of £52,762'".[149] Thus, Britain accepted Rhodes's prime-ministerial offer of annexation. Yet, the Colonial Office could not fathom why he desired the transfer so urgently. Finances were uppermost in Rhodes's mind: through annexation, the BSAC could offload the second half of the Bechuanaland railway to the Cape for £300,000. He needed ready funding to extend the line through Gaborone in order to justify his demand to annex the Protectorate's strategic eastern areas to the company! Thus, he could gain two Bechuanalands, on different terms, but both profitably.[150]

In May, chiefs Montshiwa and Mankurwane robustly rejected the Cape Parliament's decision and petitioned Robinson to continue "imperial rule". Realising their demands counted far less with the Colonial Office than in 1888, they withdrew.[151] Humanitarian sympathy, once orchestrated by Mackenzie, had now abated. Shippard still promised the chiefs safeguards: "the inalienability of their reserves, the preservation of their jurisdiction, and the continued prohibition of liquor". Had they not agreed, they might have been forced by a police patrol into accepting Cape rule, like Tlaro Chief, Toto, who resisted militantly.[152]

Legal disannexation, which new Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain managed, was a "shabby transaction". British Bechuanaland's formal annexation to the Cape, in November 1895, paid "mere lip-service…to Tswana rights and interests".[153] Changing his mind often during the six-month process,

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[145] Maylam (1980: 26, 39) cited C.O.879/32/392, p.268. Knutsford to Loch, 17 July 1890: the order also gave Britain control over Bechuanaland's Border police and BSAC police. Both Shippard and Sir Henry Loch (HC, 1889-93) doubted Britain's internal jurisdiction. Loch believed that "legal rights of jurisdiction could only be acquired by annexation, treaty, or conquest", none of which applied to the Bechuanaland Protectorate. See Molema (1966: 174) on the order-in-council.

[146] Molema (1966: 164-65): Robinson pre-empted Shippard's decisions by approving "the planting of the European township within a mile of the Barolong village" in Nov 1885. MPP A979 Ba16 [1895?], *Chief Montsioa…to HM the Queen*, begged HM to prevent imminent Cape annexation, as "[i]t will destroy us….Please hold fast the hands of the Cape so that Brandy may never be allowed in our country". He also wanted the whites to leave Tshidi women alone. MPP A979 Ba11 contains a draft of this letter, possibly because Silas Molema helped to draft it.

[147] MPP A979 Ba13, 03.08.1895, *Shippard, Sidney, Administrator, British Bechuanaland to Chief Montsioa, [Mafikeng]*, made it clear that Robinson had granted the pension in the Queen's name.

[148] Maylam (1980: 153) cited C.O.879/43/495, p.8. Robinson to Ripon, 12 June 1895. Dachs (1975: 264 fn.10): in Dec 1892, Lord Ripon (Col. Sec., 1892-95) stated that from 1889, Britain planned to transfer the Protectorate to the BSAC.

[149] Maylam (1980: 34) cited Antony Sillery, 1965. *Founding a Protectorate* (The Hague: Mouton), pp.242-43. Overlooking C.O criticism of Loch's extravagance, Molema (1966: 177-79) regarded him as a protector of African independence, unlike Rhodes and Robinson. Maylam (1980: 33) cited C.O.417/55, pp.332-3, Knutsford to Loch, 13 Nov 1891, "men-on-the-spot" (Shippard, Milner and Loch) promoted imperialism to the Treasury's cost. Lord Knutsford (Tory Colonial Secretary, 1887-92) reprimanded Loch severely for expenditure on his 1890 tour of the Protectorate.

[150] Maylam, 1980: 153. Shillington, 1985: 183.

[151] Maylam (1980: 154) cited C.O.879/43/495, pp.5-6, 7-8. Rolong and Tlhaping petitions, May 1895: Montshiwa, Mankurwane and Toto were all British Bechuanaland chiefs.

[152] Maylam (1980: 153) cited C.O.879/43/495, p.9. [*WMMS*] to C.O., 19 June 1895, the WMMS voiced the only opposition inside Britain annexation. Maylam (1980: 164-65 & 154) cited C.O.879/43/495, pp.19, 21. Robinson to Chamberlain, 15 Aug 1895; Shippard to Robinson, 31 July 1895. Shillington, 1985: 184-85.

[153] Maylam (1980: 154): Chamberlain (1836-1914) succeeded Ripon in June 1895. Shillington (1985: 185): Chamberlain,

Montshiwa and the Tshidi feared political and economic ruin. Even with younger, intelligent advisers like Silas and Lekoko, and the wise, older Lefenya, Montshiwa fell under Shippard and Robinson's blandishing, coercive spell. Trained primarily as a warrior, both his biographers emphasized, he defined his world in terms of friends and enemies and had, since the 1880s, hoped the former (the British) would save him from the latter (the Boers). Thus, when apparently rejected by his British "allies", confusion reigned. After meeting Shippard, he recalled his petition, but then withdrew the withdrawal! Shippard lost patience.[154]

Unknown to Shippard, Montshiwa quietly sent Besele and Lefenya to England with Protectorate Chiefs Khama (Ngwato), Sebele (Kwena) and Bathoeng (Ngwaketse), to beg the Queen, "'not [to] give my people's land in the Protectorate to the Company'".[155] His fervent letter indicated his belief that Tshidi loyalty and work in the mining sector merited British protection.[156] Robinson, livid over Montshiwa's ploy, despatched a "rocket" to Shippard: "'I understand Lefenya, Montshiwa's representative accompanied Khama's party to England". Robinson and Shippard demanded the envoys' recall. Montshiwa refused. Shippard then ordered Mafikeng Magistrate George Boyes to compel Montshiwa's obedience and explain how his case differed from the Chiefs': they paid no hut tax, being "protected chiefs", not the Queen's subjects. Then the Tshidi envoys missed the boat; the Chiefs had sailed on 20 August without them. Thereafter, Robinson ignored Montshiwa's petitions and annexation ensued.[157]

Dr Molema wrote sparingly of Silas' deeds at this period, but indicated that Montshiwa assigned him increasingly to tackle problems. Silas, Besele and Lekoko had represented the Tshidi in their November 1892 boundary dispute with the Ngwaketse. It dated back to Keate's 1871 ruling that the Ngwaketse's eastern border: "should be conterminus with the present boundary of the Transvaal from Ramabatlhama northwards to the junction of the Taung and Ngotwane Rivers".[158] In 1892, JS Moffat's commission drew the boundary favouring the Tshidi: west from Silas' farm Mabete to Macheng. When Bathoeng protested, Moffat and WH Surmon redrew it to please the Ngwaketse![159] Incensed, Montshiwa sent his brother Motshegare's son, Josiah, Silas and Lefenya to protest to Sir Henry Loch. Silas' presence on both missions verified Montshiwa's trust in him. If, then, with information unavailing, one conjectures about the 1895 petition's organisation and the delegation's funding, it probably involved Silas (Montshiwa's secretary, *mokwaledi*) and other advisers. Exactly who converted his cattle into ready cash is unknown, but given Silas' very healthy finances six years later, he may have assisted.[160] But this is, of course, speculation.

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part of Lord Salisbury's new Conservative and Unionist cabinet, was a dedicated imperialist and protectionist. Maylam (1980: 154) cited C.O.879/43/495, p.13. Robinson to Chamberlain, 23 July 1895: the Act, maintaining the 3 safeguards Shippard had used to persuade Montshiwa and Mankurwane, did not extend the Glen Grey Act to the region. Shillington (1985: 185): Rhodes's centrality to the annexation raised fears of this Act's extension, as was its principal promoter.

[154] Molema, 1966: 21-22. Plaatje, 1932: 418. MPP A979 Ba16 [16 Aug 1895], *Chief Montsioa…[t]o the Queen [and] her ministers [London]*. Maylam (1980: 154) cited C.O.879/43/495, pp.43-44. Montshiwa to the Queen, 16 Aug 1895.

[155] MPP A979 Ba16, 16 Aug 1895, *Montsioa [t]o the Queen*. Maylam (1980: 164-65) cited *Parliamentary Papers*, IX, 311, p.408 & C.O.879/44/498, p.94-95, Khama, Sebele and Bathoeng to C.O., 24 Sep 1895: humanitarian groups protested (Aug 1895) in sympathy, when the Protectorate Chiefs protested to Chamberlain at the Colonial Office. At first, they "agree[d] to the transfer of the Protectorate if their own territories were reserved to them under imperial supervision". They then feared the BSAC would "take their land and fill their country with liquor stores; they [wished] to remain under the government for another ten years"

[156] MPP A979 Ba16 [Nov] 1895, *Montsioa [t]o the Queen*: "[w]e keep all the laws of the Great Queen. We have fought for her… Our people go 'to work in the Gold Fields' Why do you want to throw us any? Why are you tired of governing us?"

[157] Dachs (1975: 184 fn.1): Lefenya accompanied a "Rolong delegation" to London to contest their annexation to the Cape, but did not mention that he got no further than Cape Town and was obliged to return as Khama et al had sailed without him. Molema (1966: 183) cited C.7972, pp.32-33, Robinson to Shippard: "[Montshiwa] first petitioned against annexation, then withdrew his petition; then he repudiated his withdrawal, and then ratified his withdrawal. Finally I learn by today's press telegrams that he has sent two men to England to petition against annexation, and that he has done this without consultation with me. I feel that it is difficult to place any reliance on any engagement made by him, and I must refuse to make any contract or bargain with him in regard to annexation of the Crown Colony beyond what is embodied in the Annexation Act."

[158] Schapera, 1943b: 1-2.

[159] Maylam (1980: 25, 35): ex-Cape Supreme Court Judge, JS Moffat (1835-1902), was the Protectorate's deputy commissioner 1885-95; Surmon was assistant commissioner. Lekoko was Besele's siege-time regent.

[160] For Loch, see *supra*, p.124 fn.145. For Josiah Motshegare, see Appendix A, pp.I & V. On Silas' finances, see *supra*, p.104 fn.24. "*Mokwaledi*", a scribe or secretary, derives from the verb "to write", *ho kwala*.

During Montshiwa's vacillation, Rhodes believed Mafikeng was pivotal to his Bechuanaland acquisitions, but the Protectorate Chiefs' absence in England temporarily thwarted his attempts to gain land grants from them to build his railway. Rhodes tried using friends in high places — the Colonial Office — to persuade Chamberlain to grant the BSAC a 640km land block round Gaborone and a 3.2km strip along the railway. Rhodes needed leverage, as he and Chamberlain approached the problem from opposing angles: "Chamberlain wanted to strengthen the empire at the center; Rhodes wanted to devolve power to the periphery".[161] Although the Colonial Office might gain from Rhodes's offer to assume the Protectorate's administrative costs, yet, Chamberlain felt responsible for safeguarding its African communities.[162]

Lengthy negotiations with the Chiefs and their spokesmen eventually required arbitration. Finally, Chamberlain forced a compromise: the Chiefs would keep their reserves, but yield a 10-mile-wide strip bordering the Transvaal. To the BSAC fell the rest of the Protectorate (some 160,000km²), plus the railway strip. The BSAC would control the border *and* the Border Police so vital to Rhodes's Transvaal ambitions.[163] His anger over the compromise exposed his attitude to his future empire's black inhabitants. He raved to well-connected friends against "these niggers" and "…being beaten by three canting natives": these Tswana were not sufficiently civilised to deserve their county. "'Who are these people?'" he asked the Duke of Fife, Queen Victoria's son-in-law, rhetorically. "'They are only sixty thousand in number and the worst specimens of humanity — certainly in Africa — and perhaps in the whole world….And why was this done? Simply to please the temperance and the missionary section of the English people'". [164]

Rhodes was furious at losing to Sebele the Gaborone land from which he plotted to strike the Transvaal. He turned to "friends" in lower places, opening "dialogue" with two Protectorate chiefs to whom Chamberlain had made no guarantees: Lete Chief, Ikaneng, and Montshiwa, whose "Barolong Farms" spanned the Protectorate border. Rhodes sent brother Frank with Shippard to Ramotswa to persuade Ikaneng to cede his administration to the BSAC. Although Robinson and Chamberlain had only allowed the Ikaneng meeting, Frank and Shippard began "a similar, but more extensive, transaction with Montshiwa" on 30 September.[165] Shippard implied to both chiefs that Britain had yielded the Protectorate to the BSAC.

Dr Molema found the chiefs' compliance puzzling, when "all the Tswana chiefs from the Orange River to the Zambesi were apprehensive and suspicious of the Chartered Company…". Shippard's negotiating role confused Montshiwa, who knew him as the Imperial Government representative. He was juggling roles: occasionally "beating the Imperial drum", Shippard and Robinson "were in fact playing the

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[161] Maylam (1980: 164 &162) cited C.O.879/44/498, p.66. Chamberlain to Robinson, 3 Sep 1895: one friend was BSAC secretary, Frank R. Harris, whose "mission was to induce Chamberlain to transfer the Protectorate to the company". Chamberlain also disliked Robinson, the recently re-appointed HC, one of Rhodes's chief allies in the annexation.

[162] Maylam (1980: 162) cited JC 10/6/3/1. Rhodes to Chamberlain, 9 July & JC 10/6/3/2. Chamberlain to Rhodes, 31 July 1895: Rhodes broached finances bluntly: "'I am anxious to take over the Bechuanaland protectorate at once. It will save you £80,000 a year, and if you give it me I promise to build the Railway from Mafeking to Bulawayo in four years and to begin the Railway a month after the transfer'". Chamberlain seemed agreeable, "'as sensible men of business we shall be able to give and take, and so come to an understanding'". Maylam (1980: 163-65) cited LMS/Africa/Odds/26, Fairfield to Willoughby, 6 Nov 1895: the Chiefs won public sympathy. Yet, at the arbitration, Chamberlain's Asst. Undersecretary, Edward Fairfield, demeaningly attempted an "African idiom", by advising their representative, Rev Willoughby, that they should "'not to open their mouths too wide and not to stick out for any and every old cattle post where some old cow my have wandered off in search of grass during a year of scarcity".

[163] Maylam (1980: 167-68) cited JC 10/1/13. Fairfield to Chamberlain, 4 Nov 1895; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1897, IX, 311, p.519, & C.O.879/44/498, p.131, C.O. to Khama, Sebele, and Bathoeng, 5 Nov 1895, and BNA s.466/3. Meeting Notes by HF Wilson, Chamberlain's private secretary, enclosed in a letter from the HC to the Resident Commissioner, 27 July 1936. Khama and Bathoeng attended, but Sebele was ill. Also C.O.879/44/498, pp.132-34 & C.O.879/44/498, p.147: Chamberlain to Robinson, 14 Nov 1895.

[164] Maylam (1980: 169) cited Parliamentary Papers, 1897, IX, 311, p.665. Rhodes to Harris, 23 November 1895.

[165] Maylam (1980: 170): "…chiefs who stayed behind in the Protectorate were given no such security". Ramotswa was just inside the Protectorate. Also C.O.879/44/498, p.98. Rhodes to Robinson, 8 Sep 1895 & C.O.879/44/498, p.87, 102. Robinson to Chamberlain, 9 Sep 1895. Chamberlain to Robinson, 12 Sep 1895 & Robinson to Shippard, 14 Sep 1895. Maylam (1980: 171) cited C.O.879/44/498, pp.126-27: Frank Rhodes operated as the BSAC's representative.

Rhodesian rhapsody".[166] Shippard's "forked tongue" delivered messages so misleading that Montshiwa often kept silent, which was construed as consent. Rhodes concluded that Montshiwa had surrendered Protectorate land for "a police camp and a magisterial seat" (in return for land inside the Transvaal).

Rhodes's right-hand man, Dr Jameson wanted to camp near Pitsane Potloko on Mabete, the farm of cattle rancher, Silas Molema who, distrusting Rhodes' motives, did not want his farming interrupted. He refused to surrender this Barolong Farm, given him by Montshiwa; Jameson promptly offered *two* farms if the "conspirators" could only use Mabete, so opportunely close to the Transvaal.[167] Perhaps this hasty action made Silas' son, Modiri, call Jameson "impulsive" in a later article on Mafikeng. Schapera thought that, as a Barolong Farm lessee, Silas might have foreseen a way to exploit this "alliance" with the BSAC to gain recognition for his title to the land.[168] While Willan thought that Silas willingly struck a deal with the British ("a typical combination of the man's entrepreneurial instinct and loyalty to the British"), Dr Molema argued that he did so under sufferance.[169] Why Silas eventually accepted Wolwedraai and £300 for Mabete's lease is unknown. Had he declined, the history of December 1895 might have read differently.[170] From mid-October, Jameson used Mabete to train the mounted police force that, in December, tried to unseat Kruger's regime.[171] Dr Molema described the disparity between Rhodes and Jameson's stated and actual interests ironically: "fired by a strange mania to invade Johannesburg, and relieve suffering humanity, the troops of the conspirators left Pitsana at sunset on 29 December 1895…".[172]

Writing in his latter years (1965-66) and in the country once called "the land of Tau", Dr Molema explained that land occupation in Montshiwa and Molema's youth had been loose and communal. Owing to imperial intervention, in particular to Rhodes's acceleration of colonisation, the nature of land-holding had changed; chiefs lost their independent control over land distribution and became answerable first to the imperial, then to the Cape and finally to the South African government.

Silas played a small yet significant role in his son's biography of Montshiwa. At 1895, in his mid-forties, Silas was already a wise councillor, an intellectual and businessman, in a society that valued age. Within five years, he would play a more traditionally "warrior" role under unusual circumstances.[173] Silas' role in this daring coup to capture the Transvaal's goldfields was merely

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[166] Molema, 1966: 190.

[167] Pitsane is about 46km N of Mafikeng, on the Ramatlhabama Spruit, near the former Transvaal border. Molema ("Mafikeng": 3) used the Setswana name "Pitsana". I Schapera, 1943b. "Report on the System of Land-Tenure on the Barolong Farms in the Bechuanaland Protectorate". (Report submitted to the Bechuanaland Protectorate Government). After acquiring farming land in the southern Protectorate in terms of the land settlement during Annexation (1885), Montshiwa had divided it into 41 farms he bestowed on his own family and councillors.

[168] Molema ("Mafeking": 3) is a draft essay, written around the time of Dr Molema's 1949 article on The Siege. The words "the impulsive" are pencilled over Dr Jameson's name. Schapera (1943b: 6-8, 10-15): Rhodes, Jameson and their BSAC strove to gain total control of the Protectorate's untapped mineral supplies. To this end, Rhodes secured rights via the short-lived Proclamation 10 of 18 Oct 1895, to administer Tshidi lands north of the Ramatlabama Spruit, including the Barolong Farms.

[169] Willan (1984: 630), Schapera (1943b: 6) & Davenport (1991: 560): despite the Raid, Jameson went on become Cape Prime Minister, 1904-08. Dr Molema inherited Mabete on Silas' death (1927). Had the young Modiri been present at Mabete during Jameson's visit? In UW, AD2186, Fa51, "Barolong Farms", (rough draft), [Nd], p.4, Molema stated, "...the Barolong lands were entangled in the web of Rhodes's gigantic and doubtful schemes as a tasty morsel for the Charted [*sic*] Company and Rhodes['s] lieutenant Dr Jameson duly <u>came</u> to Mabete...and from there launched his fatuous raid into the Transvaal in December 1895". "Came" suggests that 5-year old Modiri may have been at Mabete during this visit. Cf. *infra*, p.169.

[170] Plaatje, 1927. "Late Chief Silas": Silas received the payment despite the Raid's failure. Molema (1966: 188-90): on 18 October 1895, Robinson's Proclamation confirming the agreements between Shippard, the BSAC [Frank Rhodes] and the Chiefs had 3 main clauses about BSAC powers over the Tshidi and the Lete. Molema, "Barolong": 71, 95.

[171] Maylam (1980: 172): 250 Mashonaland police reached camp in late November; 120 recruits came from Cape Town. Newton, (see *supra*, p.123 fn.139) moved ±122 Border Police to Jameson's force in mid-December. Of the Rhodesian mounted police, Rhodes's creations, Thomas Pakenham (*The Boer War*. [London: McDonald, 1982], p.2) noted that, despite these men's colonial appearance and "swagger", they had only one regiment against the entire Boer army.

[172] Molema, "Mafeking": 3.

[173] See *infra*, pp.133ff, for Silas' role in raising the Siege of Mafikeng.

incidental: Rhodes and Jameson needed a springboard for their invading force, and Mabete, on the Bechuanaland/Transvaal border was it.

Although botched, the raid was a financial break for Silas, still disappointed by the failure to overthrow the Tshidi's ongoing enemies, the Transvalers. Failure meant that he did not receive his promised Transvaal land, which rankled. Under the circumstances, his later remark that it had been "very difficult to get on" since "his late lamented friends" Jameson and Rhodes's departure was probably only partly ironic.[174] Kruger's government took the Raid very seriously, captured and jailed Jameson's disheartened raiders, and thenceforth regarded Rhodes, the English on the Rand ("Uitlanders") and Chamberlain, as hostile.[175]

Silas as strategist — "*Ga ke tháta ke le nósi, ke tháta ká ba bangoe*"
"'By myself I am not strong', but I am strong in a crowd":[176]

Standard Bank report showed that Silas' investments were spread, balancing Tswana economic values (cattle and some crops) with modern interests (property, media, stocks).[177] Yet, seeing his assets as split between "traditional" and "modern" economies is simplistic. Tswana preferences for cattle over other forms of wealth did indicate their determination to retain an independent landed base, but were not exclusive. Many Tswana also acquired other forms of capital introduced under colonisation, like Chief Molema's cultivation of winter wheat for Kimberley markets. This allowed the Tshidi to commodify agriculture to their own ends, and evade the labour market for longer. Modiri Molema emulated Silas financially, later expanding his local holdings: he offered trading facilities to rural location-dwellers by leasing trading stores in some impoverished reserves, where agents even sold traditional medicines.[178]

Silas and other Tshidi landowners felt that, by the 1896, they were operating in a captive environment. With their rights to own land increasingly defined under Cape rule, and with land claims against the Transvaal still unresolved, many Tshidi leaders felt indignant at colonial manipulation (both British and Boer). This long-term resentment culminated twenty years later in protracted legal actions, ostensibly between Tshidi and Rapulana, but more insidiously involving both colonising powers' machinations.

Lieut-Governor Keate's shadow loomed over the Tshidi, even on Silas' farm, Mabete. As one of the Barolong Farms Montshiwa received in 1892, and part of the divisive land dispute with the Ngwaketse mentioned earlier.[179] After compromise was reached, a new boundary placed Mabete on the Transvaal border and Tshidi-Ngwaketse antagonism abated. However, a new dispute arose, with the South African government, over the legality of individual native title to land.

Two authorities on the Barolong Farms controversy are Dr Molema (whose family faced financial hardship if denied title to Mabete) and anthropologist Isaac Schapera, who compiled a detailed report on the Farms for the Bechuanaland Government. Both explained that the controversy involved claims and debates about whether African customary law entertained the concept of individual title, and about the right to occupation through historical possession. Dr Molema's understanding of the Barolong Farms claims differed from Schapera's, being based on territorial occupation, cattle grazing, and

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[174] Willan (1984: 63) cited Archives of De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd, Kimberley [Kmb]. Lyndhurst Road Estate File, "Silas Molema to Sol Plaatje", 25 May 1918.

[175] Pakenham (1982: 1-5): Jameson and his party were captured at Doornkop, south of Johannesburg. MC van Zyl, "The Cape Colony, 1853-1902". In Muller (1969 & 1981: 193): Transvalers saw the Colonial Secretary as an "accomplice" in the Raid. Rhodes had to resign as Cape Premier and lost the Afrikaner Bond's support.

[176] Plaatje, 1916b: 35, Proverb 150: in the modern orthography, "*bangoe*" is spelled "*bangwe*".

[177] MPP A979 Ac1, 29 June 1916. SJM, Mauñ, to STM, Maf, showed that Silas continued to trade in cattle. Sebopiwa offered to buy him 70 or 80 heifers at 25/- each during the Hut Tax season (when local residents paid their tax in cattle).

[178] Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997: II, 122, 195, 208.

[179] See *supra*, p.125.

ancestral authority. Tshidi land possession in what became the southeastern Protectorate predated Tawana's reign: "[w]hen the Barolong lived at Setlagole and Phitshane (c.1770-1780) they established cattle posts on both sides of the Molopo…those on the north being probably as far as Tsoaneng and possibly Moselebe".[180]

He emphasised the age-old occupation of the area by the Tshidi, whose ancestors had settled many cattle posts places north of the Molopo and Ramatlabama. In the 1900s, Tshidi concepts of landowning changed markedly, which he blamed on colonial settlement ("the self-assertiveness of civilisation"), as Boer and other settlers overran the Molopo region. Before the 1870s, land had no "intrinsic value to the Batswana" and the notion of landownership was ill-defined:

> [a]nywhere you or your vassals pitched a wattle-and daub shelter for however short a season, anywhere you raised your melons...or had your relative or vassal buried was your land. Thus the land for miles north, south, east and west of Mafikeng was Montshiwa's land, as much as anybody else's….[181]

On hearing of Robinson's grant, Montshiwa had the land surveyed and divided into 41 farms (each 3,000 morgen). He gave faithful supporters individual title to 25 of these, following his former host, Chief Moroka of Thaba 'Nchu's model.[182] Both chiefs tried to create individual rather than communal land titles for colonised Africans, a central aspect of the larger issue: "how black South Africans should be allowed to live in a colonial world in which others sought to appropriate their land and labor".[183] Inflexible colonial officials instantly rejected "individual native title", judging "natives" ready for communal title only. They feared too that "individual native title" would exclude white settlers, retard the Protectorate's progress and, worse, that other chiefs would emulate Montshiwa, making "that territory…one huge Native Reserve".[184]

Robinson's 1892 arbitration compromised between Tshidi calls to reinstate precolonial chiefly rights to dispense land, and Shippard's refusal to do so. A unique form of land alienation resulted, still operating in 1943, when Schapera reviewed the Barolong Farms' history. Under the "compromise", Montshiwa gave relatives and councillors leases of occupation, not certificates of full title, provided that these leases were transferred to Morolongs only — a remnant of tribal tenure spliced to individual occupation. On the occupant's demise, the farm must revert to the chief or his successor(s). Silas benefitted from the compromise. The original lease granted him pastoral and agricultural rights over Mabete (Farm 34) in return for a perpetual life quitrent of £1.10s. Silas' signature followed third behind the heir, Besele's. Silas had another form of authority at Mabete: after 1910, he had to administer the country's first Census on the Barolong Farms to white *and* residents black, an interesting racial anomaly under the new white regime.[185]

The Barolong Farms somewhat shored up Montshiwa's endangered chiefly independence after Rolong country became colonial space in 1885. He bestowed 25 farms on his extended family; even Lefenya received one, indicating that family relationship and loyal service merited the chief's gift.[186] Over the

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[180] Molema ("Barolong Farms": 1): the modern spelling is "Tswaneng".

[181] Molema (1966: 192) updating the same passage in Molema, [Nd], "Barolong Farms": 1 — a sign that the latter text predated the former in many respects.

[182] Schapera, 1943b: 3, and Molema, [Nd], "Barolong Farms", p.2. Moroka had subdivided Thaba 'Nchu similarly, hoping thereby to avoid losing land to white colonisation.

[183] Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997: II, 376.

[184] Minute 145E of 28 Dec 1893, African South 461, no. 212. In Schapera, 1943b: 3.

[185] Matthews (1945: 24): Silas was also entitled to erect a dwelling on Mabete. MPP A979 Aa3, 26 May 1911, STM wrote no formal address, suggesting that this was a copy of his letter requesting more "Census Forms for white people" on farms near Ramabatlhama. A979 Aa3, 24 May 1911, M Williams, Regional Commissioner, confirmed Silas' authority. Correspondence in MPP shows that he had several long relationships with white men in the Protectorate: R Rowland, General Merchant, Kanye, and his tenant, Phoebus Fincham, which will be dealt with in a separated paper.

[186] Schapera (1943b: 13-17): Montshiwa shared the farms among extended family and council, keeping 4 farms (numbers 2, 37, 39 & 41) himself. Besele received 2 (9 &18); Badirile and a younger son had 1 each, as did Tawana's surviving sons: Seru (25), Saane (40) and Rabodietsho (17). 13 farms went to Montshiwa's brothers' sons. Lekoko received no.36.

next thirty-five years, Silas and other occupants tried to gain full title to their farms, by registering claims at the deeds office. Each was denied. In 1924, the Government Secretary cited Robinson's 1892 despatch directly, confirming the occupants' leases, but that "the title to the land remains…with Montsioa and the Barolong tribe".[187] In 1927, Silas and co-occupants clarified their intentions when petitioning Leo Amery, Secretary of State for the Dominions, to recognise their titles. With the Protectorate's destiny insecure, the Tshidi feared that under South African rule, their farms would suffer its proscriptions on native title.[188] To Silas and other Tswana chiefs, the problem of the Barolong Farms represented a larger erosion of chiefly rule. He defended land rights and chiefly independence throughout his life. Just before his death, Silas left his family in Mafikeng to lead a Tswana Chiefs' deputation to Cape Town. Though in his mid-seventies, he was still educating his younger children. While Modiri battled institutionalised racism at the Victoria Hospital, his brothers were just discovering their life's vocations. Although Modiri was one of the country's best-qualified doctors, he faced white nurses' resistance to his orders. Silas' younger sons, Morara (25) and Sefetoge (23) were still at school when he departed on what would be his final public mission.[189] In 1927, he confronted Prime Minister Hertzog over his Native Administration Bill, which proposed the further abrogation of Tswana land rights and chiefly jurisdiction in British Bechuanaland.[190]

Peregrino, Cape-based editor of *The South African Spectator*, and a friend of Silas, had noted in 1912:

> [n]o branch of the Government of United South Africa presents to-day so many difficult problems for the solution of the statesman and the student of sociology alike, as does that…known as the Department of Native Affairs.[191]

The comment on "sociology" and the phrase "known as" imply that Peregrino censured the "united" South Africa for having just one department for the majority race, who had no government representation outside the Cape He foretold the NAD's potential for inertia. In 1924, Hertzog, chief representative of assertive Afrikaner Nationalism, blamed NAD weakness on his predecessor Smuts's lack of post-union native policy. Only two years later, Hertzog introduced four parliamentary Bills aimed at creating a uniform South African "Native policy". The Native Land (Amendment) Bill aimed to cut African land occupation from 11.2 to 10 million morgen on tribal lands in reserves, decrease African landowning rights outside reserves, and limit the jurisdiction of British Bechuanaland chiefs.[192]

Molema's sons each received one: Israel, Joshua, Silas and Palo. CA, CCP 11/1/48, "Electoral Division of Mafeking: Native Reserves", Silas, Joshua, and Lefenya were listed as "sole tenants" of their farm property, while Lefenya the "owner", evidence of the confused occupancy rights on the Barolong Farms.

[187] Schapera (1943b: 55): after Montshiwa's death, his successors retained the honorary title "Chief Montshiwa".

[188] Schapera, 1943b: 55. Willan (1984: 232-36): the second SANNC delegation had met Amery (the Under-Secretary) in London 1919; unwilling to challenge the *status quo*, he upheld the "principle of responsible government".

[189] MPP A979 Ae3, 11 July 1927AR Welch, Principal, School of Agriculture, Tsolo, East Griqualand, "Term Report for Morara Molema": this showed Morara's excellent results in Veterinary Science (92% for theory), Botany & Entomology (93%), and Physical Geography (85%). He later became a Veterinarian. MPP A979 Ae3, ? 1926, James Henderson, Principal, Lovedale [to Dr SM Molema, Maf], Report of Sefetoge Molema: Sefetoge's strengths lay in Biology and English, with History and Physics/Chemistry as his next best subjects. Henderson commended his "good" conduct, but noted hat his "algebra…require[d] thorough revision". With Modiri's help, Sefetoge later qualified as a medical doctor in Edinburgh. *Leloba Molema* (1992) stated: "Modiri educated his younger brothers and sisters and even some of their children. He paid for his third brother and sometime partner, Sefetoge's medical education in Edinburgh and for Sefetoge's three daughters' education at a convent in Aliwal North". See MPP A979 Ae3, ? 1926, James Henderson, Principal, Lovedale [to Dr SM Molema, Maf], Standard VIII June Report for Sefetoge Molema.

[190] Davenport (1991: 266): the Representation of Natives in Parliament Bill aimed to remove the Cape Native Franchise and restrict Africans to 7 *white* representatives in the Lower House. MPP A979 Aa4, Tribal Affairs, STM [to] DH Wessels. This memo headed "DH Wessels", signed, but not written by STM, summarised SAP parliamentary candidate Wessels' address to the Tshidi, many of whom were voters. Silas showed his and their dislike of Hertzog. Wessels stressed Botha's support for the imperial connection and Britain's good treatment of the Tshidi, who must now choose Hertzog or Botha

[191] *MM*, 05 Dec 1912: FSZ Peregrino, "The Native Question". Accra-born Peregrino (1853-1919), *The South African Spectator*'s influential black Cape editor, backed Silas and testified to *SANAC* (v.II, Evidence 3919, pp.325-36) on the topic.

[192] Walshe (1970 & 1987: 111): in July 1926, Hertzog introduced 4 "inter-dependent" bills, later reduced to 2. Eventually the "Representation of Natives in Parliament Act" (1937) would create indirect representation the country's Africans, who would have 7 MPs, all European. The Native Land and Trust Act (1936) would grant Africans occupation of the areas that the Beaumont Commission (1916) had recommended (just 13% of South African land). Davenport (1994: 265-66 & 280-87): public and parliamentary resistance delayed the Bills' passing for a decade.

Evidence suggests that Silas and Plaatje had been discussing the Nationalists' plans to dilute chiefly power since 1919. As an ANC Honorary Vice President, Silas could have addressed land issues on behalf of all Africans, but confined himself to Tshidi land and judicial freedom.[193] A youngish man at the time of annexation to Britain, Silas' life spanned the diminution of Rolong independence. Taking Hertzog's measure, Silas protested to him over his Bills' threat to the 1924 Native Chiefs Jurisdiction (Transvaal and British Bechuanaland) Act, which "streamlined" the justice system for British Bechuanaland, enabling Africans to appeal to the Supreme Court of South Africa.[194] According to Plaatje, Chief Silas' eloquence so "impressed general Hertzog…that [he] acceded to their request and retained on our Statutes the peculiar jurisdiction of Bechuana Chiefs".[195]

This brief leap forward thirty years exhibits Silas' lifelong battle against injustice. Linking smaller to greater concerns, he related the Farms and other land issues to the unfolding of segregation after 1910. One can only imagine the frustration and anger all these confrontations over land caused him. Modiri alluded to his father's financial burdens in 1920: "I feel that the many misfortunes that have befallen us during the last few years have become a heavy burden upon you in your increasing age".[196]

"In the Brains of the Molema Family" — Silas Molema and the Tshidi-Rapulana Land War:

The Boer colonists and their allies began encircling the Tshidi before Silas' birth. This section examines why how the legacy of this conflict flared into open warfare after 1910, and Silas' part in the clash. This section has two parts: the Siege of Mafikeng, and the ensuing escalation of the Land Claims. The Barolong Farms dispute heralded a larger conflict, elucidating his ambitions in the battle for land and the Tshidi polity's leadership. Silas resorted to armed combat in reclaiming Tshidi land alienated by the Keate Award. His ancestors had regarded the land around Lotlhakana as Chief Tau's legacy since the 1770s, and Tawana had returned there from Thaba 'Nchu exile. For Silas, Montshiwa's Lotlhakana headman in the 1890s, the area was privileged in Tshidi history and should be returned to them.[197] Sceptical white authorities believed that Tshidi land claims plagued the town. In 1910, Mafeking Magistrate Welsh commented caustically:

> [t]he Molemas are staunch supporters of all the pretentious claims that the Barolong have from time to time presented to the Government; in fact, I do not think I would be wrong if I stated that a good many of them originated in the brains of this family.[198]

This biased claim revealed both Welsh's irritation with the Tshidi elite's most eloquent member and the Justice Department's inability to brook a well-argued militarily defended challenge. At another level, Welsh's comment had social and even historiographical significance, prefiguring Schapera's 1943

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[193] MPP A979 Da55, 14 March 1919, STP, Kmb, to STM, Maf. *TsalaBC*, 13 Jan 1912, "Kopano ea Bancho": He became one of 7 SANNC honorary vice-presidents (1912). Cf. *supra*, p.41.

[194] SAB, GG 380, 7/3329, 27 March 1924, L(?) du Plessis, Secretary to Prime Minister, "Legislation: Native Chiefs Jurisdiction (Transvaal &) Act of 1924". Before 1924, British Bechuanaland Africans had to appeal to Griqualand West's Supreme Court.

[195] Plaatje, 1927, "Late Chief Silas": other ANC leaders would not engage the National-Labour Pact over Hertzog's Bills. Selope Thema, journalist and SANNC delegate to the Congress of Versailles, analysed this refusal in *Umteteli wa Bantu*, 07 May 1927: "[in the ANC leaders'] laudable desire to secure direct representation of the Bantu people in Parliament they appear to have lost their mental balance…think[ing] that short of the franchise the Bantu should no[t] in any way be asked to participate in the affairs of this country. Briefly this seems to be their attitude: 'If we cannot get a whole loaf, we are prepared to starve'".

[196] MPP A979 Ad1, 27 Apr 1920, SMM, Glasgow, to STM, Maf: apart from the upheavals in the Tshidi chiefdom and the land war against the Rapulana, Molalanyane, Silas' wife and Modiri's mother died suddenly in 1918.

[197] On the claims laid down during the Tshidi's return from Thaba 'Nchu, see *supra*, pp.73ff & fn.241. MPP A979 Cc1. "Chief's Letter Book", pp.5-6 & Hut Tax Notes.

[198] SAB, GG 1182, 28/1-28/28: 27 July 1910, EC Welsh, RM Maf to SNA: "Re Joshua Molema: Proposal to article his son [Sebopiwa] to a firm of Solicitors in England". Welsh reluctantly declared Joshua of "sober habits liv[ing] in a respectable sort of house". All magistrates were asked to distinguish between "civilised" and "uncivilised" natives in their jurisdiction. He commended Joshua's temperance, compared to the late Chief Besele and, now, Badirile's drinking. "[Sebopiwa's] father, Joshua Molema, is a petty chief where he and his brothers command a considerable following. They are closely related to Chief Badirile…over whom they have, I think, considerable influence". See Molema ("Barolong": 99) on Besele's drinking.

accusation of aristocratic selfishness.[199] At issue were the land claims' provenance, the Molema's class position and even the ideological basis of Modiri Molema's historical writing. Chapters Five and Six study the extent to which aristocratic or chiefly prerogatives may have sustained the land claims and his histories.

The land claims arose during the complex colonial encounter between the Rolong and the Trekkers. While settling the Transgariep and Transvaal, Trekkers formed alliances with indigenous groups, especially the Western Transvaal Rapulana, to repel mutual enemies. Three events clarified the dispute's colonial nature for the Tshidi: 1852's combined Boer-Rapulana attack on Lotlhakana to expel Montshiwa; his November 1881 defeat at Sehuba, and his failed retaliations (1882-84). The drawing of one boundary after another stoked the conflict.[200] Boer attempts (1881-85), with Rapulana and Ratlou backing, to manufacture an instant "republic" on Tshidi land, reinforced the Tshidi's sense of alienation from their fellow Rolong.

Despite having secured his people at Mafikeng in 1882, Montshiwa and the Tshidi recalled their erstwhile ownership of Lotlhakana, inside the Transvaal border. In 1895, the Rhodeses and Jameson exploited their long-harboured anti-Rapulana sentiment, promising Silas to restore Transvaal Tshidi territory if he leased Mabete to the BSAC. Their promise to defeat "traditional" Tshidi enemies (the freebooters) clinched the deal. The Raid's failure and the Tshidi's sense of injustice welded the memory of repeated land alienation into all-embracing rage against their encroaching Rolong neighbours plus their governmental allies. After 1903, Tshidi resentment against the British for defaulting on promised rewards for services during the South African War joined Silas and his community's already seething land grievances.[201]

To British and Boer military strategists, the world's media, and most historians of the South African War, the relief of Mafikeng was a breakthrough for the imperial forces.[202] For many of Mafikeng's African residents, siege-time struggles continued the land war among the Tshidi, Rapulana and Ratlou.

Silas Molema, a Hero of Mafikeng — *"Lo itatlhèle fa fátshe mmé lo lébe korolo félā"* "Lie Flat on the Ground and Take Aim" (Chief Montshiwa):[203]

In mid-October 1899, when the Boers besieged Mafikeng, Modiri was confined in the Molema home near the famed stone *lekgotla*, with his parents, sisters, Seleje and Harriet, and Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, who authored the first Stadt-dwellers' diary. Plaatje did not mention young Modiri in his diary, but the two formed a strong friendship. Modiri later credited Plaatje's assistance with *The Bantu*.[204] It is impossible to quantify the extent to which Plaatje kindled Modiri's passion for history in their months together. One of the child's lasting impressions of war was how colonial "Mafeking" and precolonial Mafikeng relied on common resources during the seven-month siege. As an historian, he highlighted the African contribution to the war sixty years before white historians did:

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[199] Schapera (1943b: 69-70) considered the attempt to create a form of individual title for Africans had been mistaken. In the 1940s, Schapera recommended to government that they refuse the present tenants' applications to gain complete ownership of their farms, as they would use the land as a source of "personal income" and not care for the inhabitants of the farms.

[200] Molema (1966: 46, 116-18): Chapter One mentions several other possibly less crucial Boer-Tshidi encounters. For earlier boundary lines, see *supra*, pp.57, 74-81, 86, 91-92, 96-98.

[201] NTS, 209 1/44 Pt 2, 23 Jan 1917, E Barrett to SNA, Cape Town.

[202] "Mafeking" was one of the wars three major sieges. See Pakenham, 1982: 155, 169 & Chapter 23, for the Siege of Ladysmith, and for the Siege of Kimberley, see pp.118, 156, 159 & 175.

[203] Molema (1966: 214-15) attached 6 of Montshiwa's sayings to his biography. This advice comes from: "Remember also that a horse cannot be outrun by a man, So when the enemy's horses (cavalry) rush you, Life flat on the ground and take aim at them".

[204] Molema (1920: 279), Chapter on "Bantu in the South African War".

> [i]t is not generally known, beyond the shores of South Africa, that the South African War...was not fought exclusively between the Boers and the British, but that...very many Bantu people — the natives of South Africa — participated in it, fighting side by side with the British forces, in the same or separate regiments, winning battles and relieving besieged towns.[205]

Modiri watched while his father and *his* brothers, all Tshidi chiefs, regularly defended the Empire of the elderly Queen, who personified its control of this far-off territory. Thus, in the British media, "Mafeking" symbolised the Empire's war-effort. By contrast, Silas, Lekoko, the Tshidi elders and their followers subsisted unheralded on the Empire's frontline, yet waged its war, and acted as its representatives against the Boers. One can only conjecture, on the basis of his later memoir (1949), how far the child Modiri grasped his father's siege-time role.[206]

Across the trenches Mafikeng's besiegers found it triply attractive: agriculturally, commercially and militarily. The Boers had long coveted its fertile soil and Tshidi labour. They recognised the town's economic importance in British Bechuanaland, and its access to untold northern prospects. In 1899, they captured Mafikeng (garrisoning 500 men of "Colonel Baden-Powell's irregulars" on the Transvaal border), to block the British advance northward and give the Boers access to Kimberley.[207] For Lord Milner, leading British protagonist of the war, the vital aim of fighting was to create "'a self-governing White Community, supported by well-treated and justly governed black labour from Cape Town to the Zambesi'". In late 1899, Smuts, Kruger's pre-war strategist, was less certain: "the Volk" might emerge from the looming "blood-bath" either as "hewers of wood and drawers of water for a hated race" or as "'an Afrikaner republic in South Africa stretching form Table Bay to the Zambezi'".[208]

At 5pm on 11 October, war was declared after the SAR's ultimatum to Britain expired. The declaration ended several months' negotiations (half-hearted on Milner's part) to avert conflict. Early in the War, two Boer generals attacked key points to the Transvaal's southeast and southwest. The war's major "theatre" appeared to be Northern Natal: there, Cmdt-General Joubert and 16,560 soldiers marched into Newcastle, provoking clashes at Talana (20 October), and Ladysmith (30 October), later besieged. Meanwhile, southwest hostilities were unfolding: after General JH de la Rey seized a British armoured train at Kraaipan, General Cronjé and 5,000 soldiers swooped down from Ottoshoop to besiege Mafikeng on 13 October. Afrikaner Historian WJ de Kock called Baden-Powell's seven-month defence of Mafikeng "masterly"; it locked up the thousands of Boer soldiers, who might have been better occupied elsewhere.[209]

Mafikeng was a small part of the larger battle to create a British-led, eventually self-governing union of colonies in southern Africa. While Milner's remark revealed that Britain's objectives were segregationist from the outset, the sum of Boer and British ambitions does not exactly account for the War's outbreak.[210] Explaining the causes of the War has engaged historians in many a battle. In the 1970s, emphasis shifted from "racial" explanations (Brits versus Boers) and "strategic" issues (Brits

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[205] Molema, 1920: 279. Warwick (1983) opened the debate on African participation what had previously been called "The Anglo-Boer War" or, as in Pakenham, "the Boer War".

[206] Unisa, ACC142, MV, Essays. SM Molema, [1949]. "Fifty Years Ago", (Draft), p.2. [Hereafter, SMM, 1949].

[207] Pakenham (1982: 105): other garrisons close to the Boer Republics were Kimberley (500 regulars) NW Cape, and Ladysmith and Dundee (2,000 men) in NW Natal. See WJ de Kock, "The Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902". In Muller, 1969 & 1981: 328 Pakenham (1982: 117) cited C Headlam (ed), 1932. *The Milner Papers Vol I: South Africa, 1897-1899*. (London: Cassell), p.521: in October 1899, Milner expressed concern to Chamberlain over strategic border towns like Mafikeng ("the [Jameson] Raiders' old base, due west of Johannesburg) and Kimberley (Rhodes's diamond capital, west of Bloemfontein)".

[208] Pakenham (1982: 117) cited Headlam (1935: 35), Lord Milner to Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, 28 Nov 1899. Milner (1854-1925) was High Commissioner for South Africa and Governor of the Cape Colony from 1897-1901. Pakenham (1982: 100) cited WK Hancock & J van der Poel (eds), 1966. *Selections from the Smuts Papers*. (Cambridge: CUP), v. I, 322-29, 4 Sep 1899, Smuts (Secret memorandum to Transvaal Executive) added that South Africa could become "one of the great empires [*rijken*] of the world…", expressing colonialist sentiments that rivalled Milner's.

[209] WJ de Kock, in Muller, 1969 & 1981: 333-34. Kraaipan, Modiri's mother's home, was the Setlagole of Rolong history.

[210] Pakenham (1982: 25) cited Chamberlain (*Hansard*, XL/914-15, May 1896), who was less hopeful than Milner, foreseeing in 1896, that a South African war "would be in the nature of a Civil War', "long", "bitter", and "costly", with lasting consequences.

plucking the Transvaal from under the Kaiser's whiskers), to highlight imperial designs on the Transvaal's mineral wealth.[211]

Like many Africans involved in the war, Silas Molema and the African residents of Mafikeng fought *only in part* for the Empire. For them, this was *not* a "white man's war" as Baden-Powell and Cronjé trumpeted. As Bill Nasson observed, "[I]t is in the lived experiences of black people in the Cape Colony that a sense of the complex actualities, courses and meanings of this civil war between black communities and a fractured settler population can best be grasped".[212] Apart from the imperial glory it generated, the second Siege of Mafikeng also gave the Molemas and their Tshidi supporters the chance to settle some scores with old enemies among the Rapulana, the Ratlou and their Boer allies.[213] The Tshidi and other African communities disputed the war's "whiteness" from the onset, and offered to participate. Tshidi leaders feared that the English commanders of Mafikeng might underrate Boer audacity — which, they knew to their cost.[214] By contrast, and contradicting Cronjé's "whiteness" assertions, the Rapulana fought on the Boer side. In *The Bantu*, Dr Molema cited the Rapulana's participation as a grave example of the long-running Tshidi-Rapulana dispute: "...the Barolong of Rapulana and those of Tshidi were on such hostile relations that the former gladly flocked to the Transvaal standard when the Boer War broke out in 1899. In this they saw the hope of avenging their former defeats. Their hopes were disappointed when the Boers were beaten".[215]

Though Silas was just a bit-player in this epic clash of Empire, Republic, military strategy and financial avarice, his role was highly significant in his own life, in Tshidi affairs, and in his eldest son's memory.

Before war erupted, Tshidi leaders expressed their willingness to aid in the town's defence and their fears that the Boers would flout all codes of military propriety to Charles Bell, Mafikeng Magistrate since British Bechuanaland's annexation to the Cape (1896). These leaders included Chief Besele, Silas' elder brother, Joshua Molema, and one "Chief" Motshegare, who graphically stripped to show Bell an old bullet wound from the early 1880s' Boer-Tshidi wars.[216] He announced his intention to defend his family himself, "unless you can satisfy me that Her Majesty's white troops are impervious to bullets".[217] Like many of Mafikeng's African residents, he did not trust the white soldiers to manage this war without their help.

Recognising their extreme vulnerability as Africans, perilously close to their old SAR enemies' borders, they wanted to learn *their* position should war erupt. Bell blustered that they had nothing to fear; the Boers would not stray across boundaries into British territory and that "Her Majesty's white troops would do all the fighting and protect the territories of the chiefs" assurance that this would be a "white

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[211] A developing line of thinking about imperialist interventions in South Africa moved from Robinson & Gallagher (1961 & 1988) on the significance of "local crises" and bureaucratic ("official") responses to them, to Blainey (1964-65, *passim)*'s economic re-interpretation of the Jameson Raid and, thence, to Atmore & Marks's (1974) and Marks & Trapido's ("Lord Milner and the South African state", Philip Bonner (ed), 1981. *Working Papers in Southern African Studies* [JHB: Ravan, 1981], v.II, p.54) elaboration of the magnetic attraction emergent African economies held for an empire struggling to modernise production, while cutting administrative costs to the British Treasury.

[212] Bill Nasson, 1991. *Abram Esau's War: A Black South African War in the Cape, 1899-1902*. (Cambridge: CUP), p.3. On the "white man's war", Pakenham (1982: 396) cited B Weil, British Museum Add. MSS, 46848/659, Gen Cronjé's message to Baden-Powell [B-P], 29 Oct 1899: "'[i]t is understood that you have armed Bastards, Fingos and Baralongs against us…an enormous act of wickedness…reconsider the matter, even if it cost you the loss of Mafeking…disarm your blacks and thereby act the part of a white man in a white man's war'".

[213] Matthews (1945: 24). Warwick (1983: 28) located the origins of the Molopo's simmering conflict in Mafikeng's first Siege, Britain's rout of Stellaland and Goshen Boers, and the annexation of the two Bechuanalands. He believed Mafikeng's strategic position made it a "theatre of military operations" during the South African War.

[214] Plaatje, 1916a: 278-79.

[215] Molema, 1920: 49. See also Molema, "Barolong': 100.

[216] Plaatje, 1916a & 1982: 279. Willan, 1984: 61. Jacobson's genealogy (1978: xiii): Joshua (d. 1918) was 2 years Silas' senior. The first Chief Motshegare was the fourth son of Tawana's second house, Chief Molema's older brother. Plaatje did not mention which of his sons — Bathobatho, Josiah or Thatinyane — attended this meeting. See Appendix A, p.V.

[217] Plaatje, 1916a & 1982: 279.

man's war".[218] At this, Tshidi leaders saw his naivety. Crouching behind Bell's seat, Joshua Molema said with biting sarcasm:

> [l]et us say, for the sake of argument, that your assurances are genuine, and that when the trouble begins we hide behind your back like this, and, rifle in hand, you do all the fighting because you are white; let us say, further, that some Dutchmen appear on the scene and they outnumber and shoot you: what would be our course of action then? Are we to run home, put on skirts and hoist the white flag?[219]

Joshua and the others present had little faith in the colonial tableau Mafikeng's leading white spokesman proffered.[220] The Tshidi Chiefs indicated that they believed they had a wealth of experience in dealing with the Transvalers and that they hoped the British would not be too arrogant to ignore it.

Early in the Siege, Stadt residents showed which side they were on. In these first days, a white Mafikeng resident estimated that General Cronjé had 6,000 Boers surrounding the town. Dr Molema supported these figures, showing that in many ways the siege was part of the Western Transvaal campaign, into which Cronjé ("the hero of Potchefstroom") led Rustenburg, Marico, Potchefstroom, Lichtenburg and Wolmaransstad commandos, assisted by Generals De la Rey of Lichtenburg and Snyman of Zeerust.[221] Boer commandos around Mafikeng destroyed communication (railways and telegraph poles) and seized Rooigrond, where they had defeated Montshiwa in 1884. They aimed to "isolate Mafeking from the south...[t]he first shots of war were fired at Kraaipan, 40 miles...south of Mafeking". At Kraaipan, General de la Rey captured Capt. Nesbitt of Vryburg's relief force, trying to take two 27lb guns and a Maxim to Mafikeng's defence. This unblocked the Boer route to Mafikeng.[222]

On 13 October, Cronjé began building Boer "laagers" around the besieged town: at Jackal Tree, 2km southwest of Canon Kopje; at Game Tree (north), at MacMillans Farm (east), at Signal Hill (northeast), and at Magogwe (west). Dr Molema rebutted criticism (like De Kock's) that Cronjé should have "over-run and crushed Mafeking at once", freeing 6,000 soldiers for other duties: "as if Cronjé could possibly know the unknowable before hand".[223]

Within weeks, Boer numbers shrank to 2,000, as men left for other combat zones.[224] On 8 December, self-appointed Siege hero Baden-Powell wrote boldly to Snyman "as one white man to another", that this was an all white war, and that most "Natives" remained neutral, "excepting in the case of the Mafeking Barolongs, who had to defend their homes in consequence of your unjustifiable invasion". Mafikeng "Natives" were "extremely incensed at your stealing their cattle, and the wanton burning of their Kraals". Although he had asked "Natives" not to fight, he warned Snyman that they were champing at the bit.[225] For their part, Stadt-dwellers indicated which side they were on by joining troops stationed in the Stadt in showing little mercy toward the Boers:

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[218] Plaatje (1916a & 1982: 279) mistakenly wrote "His Majesty" in the original, perhaps influenced by the fact that George V was the king at the time of publication. Molema (1920: 280) alludes to this incident.

[219] Willan, in Warwick, 1980: 139.

[220] Willan, in Warwick (1980: 139): whether *The Times* included Joshua and Mafikeng's other African citizens as "the common man of the Empire, the fundamental stuff of which it is made" in its summation of the town's Relief, is unknown. Plaatje, 1916a & 1982: 279. Molema (1920: 280) summarised the incident.

[221] Boer War Room Notes, Mafikeng Museum, state that Cronjé's laager was on the southern face of the town. SMM (1949: 2): Jacobus "Kotie" Snyman took over from Cronjé after his departure for Natal.

[222] Boer War Room Notes, Mafikeng Museum: Lieut RH Nesbitt was in charge of a train taking two 27lb guns and other arms to Mafikeng on 12 Oct 1899. At Kraaipan, the pilot engine halted as Boers had removed a section of rail. Before midnight, Boers fired again on the armoured truck. Veldkornet Coetzee fired the war's first shot. Early on the 13th, Kaptein van der Merwe's shell disabled the engine. Nesbitt, 16 men of the Protectorate regiment and 13 Africans, plus 11 other surrendered to the Boers.

[223] SMM, 1949: 2. See Maps of besieged Mafikeng from Plaatje's Diary on *infra*, pp. 138-39.

[224] Willan (1980: 142). SMM (1949: 4): Cronjé took with him "3,000 burghers...leaving about the same number around Mafeking, and Snyman in charge. The investment now degenerated into a…monotonous affair of promiscuous bombardments".

[225] State Library, Pretoria, *MM*: *Siege Slips*, [*SS*], 30: 11 Dec 1899: "A Letter to the Boers", 08 Dec 1899, from B-P to Snyman, nr Maf) warned the Boers again in a general notice (*SS*, 31: 12 Dec 1899; see *infra*, p.136 fn.229) of his earlier

> [The Boers] are very annoyed at what the call the Barolong treachery on the 26th October. It may be remembered that the enemy advanced to attack the western position and the Native stadt. They say that, relying on the Barolong in the Stadt to be friendly, they advanced in that direction to attract our attention, while they made a real attack further west and northwest. But to their surprise a heavy fire was opened upon them from the stadt, which caused great havoc, amongst their front line...and they fell back dismayed. They had not reckoned on finding some of the Protectorate Regiment there.[226]

This report illustrated the Stat's importance to the town's defences and especially to the complexity of enmity in Baden-Powell's "whites-only" war: Briton against Boer, Boer against Tshidi, Rapulana-Ratlou against Briton, and Tshidi against Rapulana and Ratlou. Baden-Powell blamed the intra-Rolong fighting on Boer aggression, but this was disingenuous.[227] As the Siege dragged on, the *Mafeking Mail* highlighted Snyman's exploitation of Rapulana-Tshidi enmity, but underplayed Baden-Powell's:

> [i]t is commonly known in town that Snyman has armed the whole of the rebel Bar longs numbering about 3000 men and that he will use them for attacking the town if the slightest opportunity rises. They would be pushed in front as a buttress for the Boers to make some more of their half-hearted attacks, and will be far harder to drive off than double the number of Boers.[228]

Baden-Powell used the handy term "kafirs" for all Africans and kept aloof from the Rolong land war.[229] But, he rethought his "whites-only" strategy after Boers bombarded the town and armed some 500 Tshidi with Snider rifles to defend both black and white Mafikeng; he included the Stadt because its proximity to the Boers imperilled the town. On 25 October, the Boers tried to storm the Stadt, but Tshidi fire repelled them.[230] Young Modiri experienced that day's fire with a child's onomatopoeic clarity: "the boom of heavy artillery and the growl of smaller guns, accompanied by the ri-ti-ti-ti-ti of maxims, the rustle of musketry, the whir-r-r- of balls in their flight, the shrieking of bullets, the explosion of shells…".[231]

During December, residents in the Stadt's western section were stormed at with shot and shell.[232] Yet, Mafikeng's white residents depended on Stadt-dwellers for military aid and provisions. In this month, "the enemy" tried to cut off the Tshidi (and thus white "Mafeking" access) to meat by raiding cattle on the Barolong Farms of Chiefs Rabodietso and Lekoko. Reports circulated that "[m]any Boers are begging horses from Natives to get away to the Transvaal". In January, the *Mail* sniped sarcastically

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warning to Cronjé. Willan (1980: 139) commented that B-P capitalised, post-siege, on his heroism, often distorting the facts. *SS*, 24: 02 Dec 1899: B-P may have referred to *MM* report "Latest News": "Natives...commandeered to wait on the Boers, make their coffee, carry their food, ammunition...are complaining bitterly of the treatment they receive and run away whenever they get a chance. They say the Boers will not stir out from the trenches all day, but send the wretched boys on errands of numerous kinds".

[226] *SS*, no. 30: 11 Dec 1899: "Latest News (items of news received from Natives)".

[227] Matthews' (1945: 24): *MM* siege-time reports challenged claims of Rapulana and Ratlou wartime neutrality. Some Hurutshe also supported the Boers, according to Tshidi fighting on for the British. *SS*, No 114: 10 Apr 1900, 180th Day: "Natives Say", claimed that Motsiakhuno, Ratlou Chief (Pitsani) was "in league with the Boers". He was later tried under the Indemnity and Special Tribunals Act, 1900 at Mafikeng. (See KAB, 1/MFK 12/1, "Calendar of Cases to be tried at the Special Court".) Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 122-23): on 14 Apr, Lotlhakana "natives" joined some Boers to attack a Stadt party who had gone out to retrieve cattle that Col. Plumer had brought to feed Mafikeng.

[228] Ross (1980: 109, 23 Jan 1900): by "rebel Baralong", Ross and the British meant Rapulana and Ratlou fighting for the Boers.

[229] *SS*, No 31: 12 Dec 1899: "Notice to the Burghers of the ZAR at present under arms near Mafeking", signed B-P: "'Your leaders have caused the invasion of kafir territory…. As one white man to another, I warned General Cronjé on the 14th November what would occur, and yesterday I heard that more Kafirs are rising, and are contemplating similar moves, and…warned Snyman accordingly'". Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 63-65) cited the Notice (11 Dec 1899). Cronjé's departure from the siege to avert Methuen's northward advance disappointed many Tshidi, who recalled his actions in the first siege of Mafikeng and thought him their "traditional" enemy. Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 439-40 & 176 fn.59): Silas doubtless knew Cronjé's derogatory Setswana name, *Rantho'akgale* (roughly "an old sore") given that Plaatje, living in his home, did.

[230] Molema, 1920: 281-82. See Mafeking Municipality Notice, 34, 30 Oct. 1899. In Warwick (1983: 33). Also Plaatje, 1973 & 1999: 27 & 170 fn.2.

[231] SMM (1949: 3): "[t]he Boers had 12 different kinds of artillery…and on that day's…threw in more than 400 shells".

[232] SS, 35: 20 Dec 1899, "Mafeking Garrison/ General Orders". Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 71): Mafikeng's summer heat (over 100°F [38°C] and not Au Sanna's shells forced the Molemas and their guest, to retreat from the homestead to an outside hut for the night of the 19th. (Temperature details, *MM*, 12 Nov & 23 July 1912.)

about Boer exploitation of "Natives" as decoys. "British natives", like the Molemas and followers, also found their daily lives controlled "from above"; their rations were often cut to feed white Mafikeng. On 30 December, as Mafikeng's resources dwindled, CM Ryan, Capt, DAAG, sternly ordered white masters to ration their servants strictly: "1lb to 1½ lbs of Mealie Meal or Grain, proportionate deduction being made when Natives women or children have to be fed, such as ½ to ¾ lb per diem".[233]

The Stadt had the worst and least of the rations; many were so famished that they exhumed and ate dead horses and picked over festering rubbish heaps for edible scrap.[234] Ration cuts revealed Baden-Powell and the military hierarchy's conception of the colonial "natural order": white men were granted an extra 2oz (32g) of oatmeal. Plaatje noted that meat rations were also reduced on 13 January, proving that "there is a very great difference between white and black even in a besieged town".[235] Stadt-dwellers endured constant ration-cuts despite their regular beef-hunting for the whole town's larders. White Mafeking relied heavily on African foragers. On the night of 10 February, legendary cattle-raider Mathakgong was trying to enter the Stadt with 12 cattle and came under Boers fire. Silas or "Mr Raseleye", as Plaatje called him, "ran across and found the whole plain alive with armed men making for the scene…". Silas and others returned fire to cover the heroic rustler and he duly brought home the booty. "What do you think the lot of Boers did?" Plaatje asked his unseen reader, "[t]hey ran away". B-P encouraged African fighting and foraging, but later "forgot" Silas, Mathakgong and many others' many services in the "Empire's war".[236]

Not all the Stadt-dwellers starved equally: Plaatje described his comrades collapsing from inanition. However, Silas' family took turns in feeding this young, temporarily wifeless man:[237] "Raseleye [Silas] kept repeatedly saying that he wondered why we are so lucky with food to have it falling into my direction; as it was the second anniversary of my wedding we enjoyed it all the more".[238] The Molema household's irony and humour evidently withstood the Boers' large Creusot siege-guns.[239] By March cattle raiders (Silas, like most people, had to forage for food)[240], struggled to feed the Stadt's estimated

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[233] Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 39 & 176 fn.56): "[t]he enemy have gone to Kgoro and Phitshane, etc. to steal our cattle…". Born in the early 1830s, Rabodietso, Tawana's youngest son, by his wife Mmadiselo, was Saane's full brother. See Appendix A, p.I, *infra*. *SS*, 40: 28 Dec 1899, "Latest News" and *SS*, 53: 13 Jan 1900, 94th Day: "Fighting with Nas". *SS*, 41: 30 Dec 1899, Native rations diminished faster than white rations; in January, daily bread servings shrank from ¾lb. to ½lb. (See *SS*, 63: 31 Jan 1900: 111th day: "Rations".) 1lb = 500g; 1½lb = 750g; ½ to ¾ lb = 250g to 750g.

[234] Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 122, 27 Feb 1900): "I saw horseflesh for the first time being treated as human foodstuff". He described a huge exodus of people from the Stadt, "[i]t is doubtful if there ever was an exodus so momentous as the one on the day on which Israel came out of Egypt:...But if brother Moses was in Mafeking this evening he would himself admit that these people's exodus gave more work or thought, considering that they are flying from a common enemy, starvation, and they do not expect to travel three miles before being fired on by another enemy — the Boers".

[235] Warwick, 1983: 36. Willan (1980: 153) cited Plaatje's diary, no page: angry at these cuts, Plaatje thought junior officers like Ryan "[know as little about Natives and their mode of living as they know about the man on the moon and his mode of living". Plaatje, 1973 & 1999, 13 Jan 1900.

[236] *SS*, 72: 16 Feb 1900, "Our Beef Providers". Plaatje (1973 & 1999:110, 11 Feb 1900) eulogised Mathakgong's raiding skills. Willan (1980: 151) believed that Mathakgong's bravery in attacking the enemy under cover of cattle-raiding would have won him the Victoria Cross had he been white. Molema ("Barolong": 105): Mathakgong's family name was "Kepadisa". See *infra*, p.140 for Magistrate Bell's comments on the Tshidi's bravery during the Siege.

[237] Willan, 1980: 155. Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 109 & fn.25): Mrs Elizabeth Lilith Plaatje (née M'belle) stayed with relatives, first in Burghersdorp, Cape, then at Bethanie, Free State. Cf. *infra*, pp.170-71, for Plaatje's stay with the Molemas.

[238] Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 102, 192 fn.47, 25 Jan 1900) called Silas "Raseleye", father of his firstborn, Seleje. She later married Taolelo Tawana, Saane's son. Saane, who lived west of Mafikeng, sent spies into Boer territory. His capture by Abraham Motuba, Rapulana headman, Lotlhakana, was one of many Tshidi wartime grievances. (See *SS*, 3: 03 Nov 1899, "In the Boer Camp… /The Day of Cronjé's Downfall".) See Motuba's trial, *infra,* pp.143ff.

[239] Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 95-96, 13 Jan 1900): by January, white residents (very reliant on African foragers) insisted, on B-P's orders, that a quarter of all looted cattle be given them. Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 35, 05 Nov 1899 & 174 fn.39): Mafikeng insiders nicknamed the 94lb. Creusot gun, which Modiri mentioned (1920: 281), "Creechy", anglicising the Boer "Grietjie". In "Barolong" (104), Molema described eating locusts during the siege. SMM (1949: 2): Modiri later recalled the guns ("veritable monsters"), terrifying "the besieged" from "Jackal Tree, from whence it roared and belched, throwing that day 40 shells, now into the European, and now into the African town, and thus it performed intermittently for seven months".

[240] Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 43, 23 Oct 1899 & 14 Feb 1900): "Me and Mr Molema did our best to find a fatty sheep to slaughter in honour of the occasion [Plaatje's son, St Leger's first birthday] but like everything in a siege we only [found] one after a hot day's search". On 14 Feb, B-P alleged that Stadt-dwellers had slaughtered raided cattle before offering white "Mafeking" the pick. Lekoko retorted, "'[we] have given you a fourth of all the loot, and you said you did not care for it'".

7,000 people.[241] White authorities dealt harshly with raiders lest they collaborate with the Boers: "[a]nother native having been found guilty of spying was executed on Thursday", wrote the *Mail*, hinting at the same fate for anyone communing with the enemy. Baden-Powell continued his policy of treating "natives" firmly by sacking Chief Besele for "'want of energy'".[242]

The Stadt stood in Boer snipers and artillery's firing line. In early February, Chief Staff Officer, EH Cecil, ordered the policing of Molema's village: "Native Labourers in the employ of the Government will be engaged in the Stadt by one of the Overseers, daily at 5am for day work and at 6pm for the night".[243] The *Mail*, perhaps to ease white citizens' concerns, reported that Stadt "natives" had "chosen" to "see the Siege through with the rest of us. And whatever gossip may be said about the Chief Wessels, they may rest assured that he and his people intend defending Mafeking to the very last, as their respected old Chief, Montsioa did". For white "Mafeking", the Africans were a boon, manning most trenches around the town.[244] White diarist, Edward Ross, praised the gangs (200-300 men), who dug trenches and earthworks day and night. He saluted: "[n]o more loyal or deserving men could possibly be found than Lekoko and Silas Molema, the acting chiefs of the Baralong nation at Mafeking, godfearing and straightforward men both of them".[245] They were appointed, under Major Godley and Captain Marsh, to lead 600 Rolong soldiers' defence of Mafikeng's "frontiers on the west" (the Stadt) against Au Sanna's shelling.[246]

Throughout the turmoil, Silas was highly active administratively and militarily, as when he and Chief Lekoko were detailed to interrogate all African women entering Mafikeng. The Stadt was a security risk, Baden-Powell's blind spot "in military as well as human terms", lying in the path of the now desperate Boers.[247] British reinforcements had not yet arrived when Boers launched their first serious attack. Enthusiastic Boer Veldkornet Sarel Eloff, "an ambitious young man and a grandson of President Paul Kruger", planned to creep up on Mafikeng from the rear. This gave Silas his moment of glory on Saturday 12 May, precipitating the Siege's end. Stadt-dwellers, mostly led by Silas and Lekoko, helped break the standoff, but Eloff's daredevil attack was a close call. He might have succeeded, had reinforcements under General Snyman ("most stolid and supine of all the Boer generals") arrived.[248]

When Eloff's attack came, Silas put previous military experience to good use and, although nearly 50, rose up at 4 am to prevent "a special form of lunacy": the "poor, young gallant Eloff" and the Boers — their final direct assault on the town — were setting fire to over 40 huts in the Stadt:[249]

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[241] Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 104 & 193 fn.13): Plaatje counted 7,000; in March, a census he helped conduct found 5,448 inhabitants. Africans were forced out of the Stadt as supplies dwindled. In March, the Stadt "Baralongs" and Coloureds numbered 7,019 "defence natives". In B-P *Secret* South Africa Despatches [SD], War Office Library, London, I: 27 & 30 March & 04 Apr 1900. Mafikeng's population was 1,500 whites and 5,000 blacks in Oct 1899 (in Willan, in Warwick, 1980:141)

[242] *SS*, 61: 29 Jan 1900, 108th Day: "General Orders". Pakenham (1982: 402) cited B-P (SD: I, 342 & 346): aiming to convince Africans to serve as docile labour for the white war effort, B-P had starved Africans who stole food shot and 115 others flogged.

[243] SMM (1949: 3) recalled Lord Cecil, Colonel Vyvyan and Major Panzera as "exceptionally able" members of B-P's staff. Cecil was British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury's son, and Milner's personal friend. *SS*, 68: 08 Feb 1900, 119th Day, "Passes for Natives" and Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 107): Stadt "folk" (STP's term) were labelled "Class III" employees and had to carry a yellow ticket from Chief Lekoko, and surrender it to him every evening on returning from town.

[244] *SS*, 68: 8 Feb 1900, 119th Day, "Mems" and *SS*, 81: 27 Feb 1900, 138th Day, "Mems".

[245] Ross, 1980: 95. Willan (1980: 150): Montshiwa's heir, Besele refused to assist the British, leading to his deposition. Britain's later failure to honour promises of remuneration, proved correct Besele's prediction that the Tshidi would not be paid for their services correct. Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 82, 99-100) and others affirmed Besele's greater loyalty to brandy than to chiefly duty. B-P (SD: I, 342) stated that he was deposed for "his general lack of co-operation and for instigating Barolong labourers to refuse to work for the military authorities". In Besele's absence, Silas was second to Regent Lekoko, Montshiwa's nephew and adopted son.

[246] Plaatje, 1973 & 1999: 35.

[247] *SS*, 133: 2 May 1900, 202nd Day, "Outposts etc — Native Women passing through", mentioned Chiefs Lekoko and Silas frequently. After the war, Charles Bell, also thanked [Josiah] Motshegare, Badirile, and Mathakgong. Molema (1920: 284-85): Bell specially praised Saane, Tawana's youngest son (see *supra*, p.137 fns.238). Pakenham, 1982: 411.

[248] Molema, 1920: 283. Pakenham, 1982: 400, 411.

[249] Molema, 1920: 283. Plaatje, 1973 & 1999: 157.

> [a]lthough thus suddenly awakened, and thrown into the streets, to watch their homes burn, and witness the Boers shooting down unarmed boys [*sic*] who were trying to run away, Le Koko [*sic*] and Silas Molema did not lose their heads, but, rapidly gathering their men, commenced firing and assisted Lord Bentinck's men to cut off the stream of invaders. This was effected just as the leader of the vanguard, having finished superintending the setting fire to huts and killing five Baralongs [*sic*], strangely jumped at a most erroneous conclusion, for turning to his followers, he shouted, in Dutch, of course, "Hurrah! Today we have taken Mafeking".[250]

Resistance to this chaotic invasion of the Stadt lasted several hours, with Boers "throwing the aged and helpless native women and children" about randomly. Later on Saturday morning, the invaders regrouped:

> [t]he half of the stadt-burners were thus subdivided into [two] parties one of which tried to make a stand behind the large boulders, from which Mafeking took its name. But natives are as well up to that kind of warfare as are the Boers, so Le Koko [*sic*] and Molema's boys promptly followed and drove them, from what would have proved an easy place to hold to a koppie where Silas Molema rounded them up and kept them there till the afternoon; unable to show a nose above the stones, for fear of losing its tip. The remainder of the Boers succeeded in gaining the stone cattle kraal where they were well looked after by some more Protectorate men.[251]

Whether one of the Chief Montshiwa's proverbs consciously inspired Silas and Lekoko's tactics is not recorded; yet it summed up their strategy admirably: "*Lo itatlhele fa fatshe mme lo lebe korolo fela*".[252]

Pakenham thought Molema and fellow soldiers' ambush of the Boers far more crucial than the *Mail*'s account allowed. Although nominally Major Godley led the defence, it was:

> [i]n fact...the Africans, most of all, who bore the brunt of the fighting and saved the day. When Eloff's fire-raisers stormed though the Stadt, scattering the women and children, the 109 armed Baralongs did not try to bar their progress. They stood aside, as if a pride of lions was rampaging through a cattle-kraal. Then, once the lions were in the kraal, the Baralongs re-formed, waving their blunderbusses and shouting war cries. It was the turning-point, the time when the burning Stadt beckoned to Snyman. Now was the moment to pour in a stream of reinforcements. But the Baralongs barred the way — and cut off Eloff's line of retreat...Eloff's men were taken piecemeal: a party huddled behind the stone kraal six hundred yards beyond the police barracks; another on a kopje covered with that Stonehenge of limestone boulders; the third with Eloff in the barracks itself. The stone kraal was dealt with first. After a wave of bullets from two squadrons broke over the stone walls, a white flag was seen fluttering about the place. Then the Baralongs rushed forward, eager to pay off old scores. If Captain Marsh, of B Squadron, had not raced them to the kraal, there would not have been many Boers left to surrender.[253]

Based on the accounts of one participant in the fighting, Baden-Powell, and one witness, *Morning Post* journalist, Major Baillie, and the 1960s' Siege *reprise* by Gardner, this report's "first-hand" flavour is appealing. Plaatje had, alas, abandoned his *Diary* by then, so Pakenham had little autobiographical evidence from Stadt residents' viewpoint. Strange as it may seem, Pakenham had not read the *Mafeking Mail*, with its daily account of siege events, including Silas and Lekoko's heroic defence of the Stadt.[254]

Neither the *Mail* nor Pakenham's account mentioned the historical significance of the "stone kraal" where Silas helped to pen the Boers. These were the *mafika* (rocks), which had suggested the town's name to his father.[255] Pakenham dispelled the notion of a "whites-only" War as, but portrayed African

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[250] *SS*, 142: 14 May 1900, 214th Day, "[w]e end the Seventh Month: The Baralongs rose to the Occasion". Molema (1920: 283) described the battle, curiously omitting Silas' role in beginning the Relief of Mafikeng.

[251] *SS*, 142: 14 May 1900, 214th Day.

[252] Molema (1966: 215) provides Montshiwa's sayings; see *supra*, p.132 fn.203 for translation.

[253] Pakenham's account relied heavily on Major FD Baillie, 1900. *Mafeking: A Diary of the Siege*. 264-65; B-P, SD: I, 358-59, & Brian Gardner, 1966. *Mafeking: A Victorian Legend*, pp.186-7.

[254] Pakenham (1982: 413): the Boers captured *The Times* correspondent, Angus Hamilton, that day; Baillie narrowly escaped.

[255] Boer War Room Notes, Mafikeng Museum: Israel Molema's ruined homestead overlooks the battlefield.

Mafikeng's Siege experiences from a colonial viewpoint. He depicted Mafikeng almost as a "non-place": "Mafeking ('The Place of Stones', the Africans called it) was on the borders of nowhere: a railway siding, 250 miles [400km] north of Kimberley".[256] For Silas, Lekoko and the Tshidi, Mafikeng was *their* town and this was *their* war as much as anyone else's. They and many African soldiers, played major roles in Baden-Powell's military operation: trench-digging, tracking, spying, foraging, and undertaking guerilla forays, using their own rifles in the town's defence. Silas also defended his family: Molalanyane, Seleje, Modiri and Harriet were at home near the *mafika*. In one of three vivid accounts of the Siege, Modiri later wrote that he was one of the "terrified...children hurrying and scurrying to and fro" on 12 May.[257]

After the war was over and reconstruction had begun, some misrepresentations of the Siege began. Baden-Powell thanked the "Baralong" cursorily in dispatches, but did not recognise their contribution materially. None of Britain's reconstruction funding went to rebuild Mafikeng's African communities. Indeed, the two Mafikengs became a microcosm of the South Africa emerging from the war — segregated, as Milner had foreseen. Authorities believed that the poor, unreconstructed black town existed only to serve rapidly recovering white "Mafeking". Silas and the Tshidi learned, three years after helping to raise the siege, that verbal promises of land made during the war were not legally enforceable.[258] When the crowds throughout Britain "mafficked" after 17 May, Silas' contribution to lifting the Siege doubtless eluded them.[259] They probably knew little of pre-colonial history of this small town on the edge of "nowhere", which the Siege had catapulted into world headlines. Few outside Mafikeng knew that when not firing at Boer noses before breakfast of a Saturday morning, Silas dressed as an English gentleman, had his own carriage-driver, ran precise account-ledgers for all transactions, attended church rigorously each Sunday, and financed a newspaper. Nor could they have known how comfortable his assets at the Standard Bank looked, post-war, despite the rinderpest that attacked his cattle before the Siege.[260]

Immediately after the Siege, Magistrate Bell commended the Tshidi for indispensable assistance in the town's defence. But any appreciation the British showed the Tshidi was more cosmetic than substantive. Lord Roberts' congratulation of the Stadt-dwellers for rendering "invaluable services throughout the Siege and defend[ing] their posts with energy and courage", were just fine words.[261]

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[256] Pakenham (1982: 594) listed his newspaper sources, but omitted the *MM*. In *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism.* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.84, Sara Mills used the term "non-place".

[257] Molema, 1920: 282. Warwick, 1983: 33. Molema, "Barolong": 100-07. Molema, 1949. Molema, 1920: 280-92.

[258] Pakenham, 1982: 418. For Milner's remarks on segregation, see *supra*, p.133. Fanon (1963: 31) commented on colonialism's urban geography: "[t]he town belonging to the colonised people, or at least the native town, the Negro village…is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there…; they die there….It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire".

[259] SMM (1949: 6): "[o]n the 17th May 1900 the relieving force arrived. Col Mahon with a flying column of 1,000 men from Kimberley joined Col Plumer with his force from the north…forced the besiegers to withdraw eastward from whence they had come. Thus ended the siege which wrote the name MAFEKING in capital letters of gold across the page of history…which was celebrated in London with untrammelled enthusiasm which added the word 'mafficking' to the English language".

[260] Records of Silas Molema's transactions are stored in UW, MPP A979 Aa3, 3.1-3.6. Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 108, 194 fn.22): Silas' driver was Ganakoto Thomas Monyapeng, thought to have been Magistrate Bell's siege-time driver. Standard Bank Archives, *Archive Inspection Reports*, Maf, 24 Nov 1903. Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 91-92) on the rinderpest. Also, CA, 1/MFK 705/97, 06 Oct 1897, Alfred Sharp, Resident Missionary, Maf to CG Bell, Magistrate, Maf, showed that rinderpest and famine had long plagued Mafeking Reserve residents. *MM*, 18 July 1899, M Rushton, Inspector of Native Reserves to CG Bell, RM, Maf, "Starvation at Tshid[i]lamolomo" [±106km W of Mafikeng on the Molopo] reported, "the natives" were starving and their Stad was collapsing. Comaroff & Comaroff (1997: 210): rinderpest had an "unquestionably apocalyptic" impact of the Tswana: cattle farmers lost "millions of beasts". Also Molema, 1966: 198-97.

[261] CA, 1/MFK Letterbook D (Jan 1899-Oct 1900). Pakenham (1982: 244-45): Field Marshal Lord Frederick Sleigh Roberts of Kandahar (1832-1914) succeeded Gen. Redvers Buller in mid-December 1899. Plaatje (1916a: 291) cited Roberts' decorated address to the Tshidi leadership: "I, Frederick Sleigh Baron Roberts…hereby testify my approbation of the loyalty to HM Queen Victoria, and the good behaviour of the Barolongs under the leadership of Besele, Lekoko, and the headmen Silas Molema and Paul Montsioa, throughout the long and trying investment of Mafikeng by the Boers, … and I desire to congratulate these leaders and their people on the successful issue of their courageous defence of their homes and property against the invasion of the enemy". Pretoria, July 1, 1900. See also http://www.pinetreeweb.com/roberts-bio.htm.

Jubilation soon wore thin as it dawned on the Molemas, Plaatje and others, that more tangible recognition would not be forthcoming. On Roberts' later visit in September 1904, when the Tshidi expressed the wish to call upon him, officials directed correspondence to Silas. This suggested that he was continuing his role as secretary to the Chief, which grew stronger as Chief Badirile's grasp on administrative affairs weakened.[262] Sadly, the Programme of Events at the elaborate Reception of Lord Roberts revealed that Mafeking's colonial administration accorded an increasingly lowly place to the town's founders, the Rolong boo RaTshidi:

> [About 11 am]: "Lord Roberts will drive to the Recreation Ground …He will then present the medals to the Bechuanaland Rifles. All Inhabitants, European, Coloured, or Natives will be admitted — the Europeans will kindly assemble on the right hand side of the Volunteers and other nations on the left hand side."[263]

Resident Magistrate, E Graham Green provided a further indication of Silas' leading post-war role prior to the South African Native Affairs Commission's evidence-gathering mission to Mafikeng. Green invited Chief Badirile to provide evidence at the Town Hall and to bring "your leading Councillors… Lekoko Montsioa, Josiah Motshegare and Silas Molema".[264] Silas' leading status was also evident in 1910, during the Duke of Connaught's visit to "Mafeking" when he attended a ceremony in the Stadt, in the very cattle kraal Silas and Lekoko had defended in May 1900. The ceremony involved some re-enactment of that day, and Chiefs Joshua and Silas played a role in handing an address to the Duke.[265]

In 1903 evidence to the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, Baden-Powell (Hero of "Mafeking") denied the Rolong's defensive role: "we tried to make them defend their own town, but on the first attack they all ran away, so we did not rely on them at all". Plaatje voiced Stadt-dwellers' anger in a *Koranta* editorial: "[h]ere we have a man than whom few white men, dead or alive, have ever had greater reason to thank black men for honours received [now] coolly and deliberately lying" about events.[266]

Mere words in praise or anger got the Tshidi nowhere, so Silas, Plaatje and Chief Besele sought legal opinion. Meanwhile, the war had put Mafikeng on the route of post-war imperial travellers, paying homage to the Siege site: Silas met several famous (or perhaps notorious) men. He and Plaatje, with hope springing eternal, expressed Tshidi grievances to august imperial representative, Chamberlain, on his visit to "Mafeking".[267] He politely agreed to address the matter, but lodged the appeal and his undertaking in his back pocket. Plaatje's faith in the great man's promise was shattered. Upping the stakes, he fired a volley of verbal attacks in *Koranta* and helped assemble a party of chiefs to descend on Cape Town, to petition for the Tshidi's promised compensation. Three Montshiwa chiefs (Besele, Badirile and Lekoko) and Silas journeyed to Cape Town in August 1903 to plead their case to approachable politicians, like Henry Burton and Silas' old "friend", Jameson.[268] They even met the Attorney-General, but failed to convince him. Nevertheless, they did a sterling job of winning over Cape Town and "Mafeking's" white editors.[269]

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[262] Willan (1984: 88-89): Roberts' address of thanks, sent via Sir Charles Parsons, was presented at a moving and "unprecedented" ceremony and offered fleeting comfort (Bell). Cf. *infra*, p.145 fn.296, for Plaatje's *SANAC* evidence on Badirile's failing capacity. MPP A979 Bc1, 27 May 1904, KE [?illeg.]Bishop, Headquarters House, Maf to STM, Maf.

[263] MPP A979 Bc1, 27 Sep 1904: Reception of Lord Roberts, Programme. No Tshidi officials featured on the Reception Committees, which comprised the town's Mayor, JW de Kock, CC, EG Green, Col. Panzera and other Siege veterans, and various commercial worthies. A visit to the town in the afternoon was listed, but only as a possibility.

[264] MPP A979 Bc1, 12 Sep 1904, E Graham Green, RM, Maf, to Chief Badirile, The Stadt.

[265] MPP A979 Bc1, undated diagram of events during the Duke's 1910 visit, in handwriting resembling Silas'.

[266] *Koranta*, Editorial, 18 Nov 1903, also Willan, 1980: 160 and Willan, 1984: 89.

[267] Willan, 1984: 114. Matthews, 1945: 24. On other petitions Chamberlain received, see *infra*, p.334.

[268] Willan (1984: 47-48, 115): Plaatje and MP for Burghersdorp, Burton's friendship dated back to 1890s Kimberley, where the future politician was a barrister. Jameson became Cape Prime Minister in 1908.

[269] *Koranta*, 01 Aug & "*Koranta* Specials" 15 Aug 1903. CA, NA 7/B1907 (Barolong Claims), Misc. Corresp. between FZS Peregrino & WC Cummings, 20-29 Aug 1903. Also *MM*, 27 July 1911, "Query for Mr Sauer — Native Spokesman on 'Black Peril'": the *MM*'s editor lauded the delegates' rejection of ministerial poppycock (9 Sep 1903).

Behind the delegates' disappointment lay their belief that ignoring Tshidi participation in the war was deeply unjust. Much twentieth-century historiography (even Warwick's work on black participants) overlooked the extent to which the Rolong fought their own war under cover of white hostilities. Newspapers and diaries mentioned Tshidi forays against the Boers' Africans allies, but barely discussed the underlying purpose of cattle-raiding and capturing salient chiefs. The little-noted case of High Treason against Goutlwetswe Abraham Motuba, Lotlhakana's Rapulana headman, yields insights into Silas' role in the Rolong land war.[270]

High Treason — Another Vendetta and Its Consequences:

Transvaal President Burgers' support for Rapulana Chief Matlaba's occupation of Bodibe (Polfontein), where Motuba's Thaba 'Nchu branch of Rapulana joined them in 1874, was a catalyst of the Rolong land war. Some Tshidi notables, like Israel Molema and Lefenya, had land at Bodibe, from which the Rapulana evicted them.[271] Meanwhile, another Rapulana branch, under Mosikare Mothupi (Chief Molema's relative), moved from Bodibe to Lotlhakana, which the Tshidi still regarded as theirs. In 1875, Matlaba sent Motuba to Lotlhakana as headman. Chief Molema informed Montshiwa (still at Moshaneng) of Motuba's settlement at Bodibe; thenceforth, Montshiwa counted Motuba *his*" tributary", a large point of dispute in the Tshidi-Rapulana conflict.

Boer/Rapulana collaboration was no secret, but evidence at Motuba's trial exposed strategic reasons for Rapulana participation in this alliance, and for Tshidi reaction to its outcome. Mafikeng's chiefs had long doubted Motuba.[272] During his years as Bodibe headman, Silas knew Abraham and his father. Montshiwa and successors argued that Lotlhakana was under their jurisdiction, and that Motuba (though Rapulana) thus owed them allegiance. Motuba protested that he was Matlaba's headman.[273] Before 1899, both parties' discontents were such that Motuba could hardly wait to repay the Tshidi for trying to control him. In turn, they fumed through the Siege, seizing the first opening to punish his collaboration.

War-crimes charges accused Motuba and associate, Mokgothu, of repeatedly abducting Tshidi supporters and their cattle from Mafikeng's environs.[274] Motuba had audaciously abducted Saane, Montshiwa's younger half-brother, from his village, Modimola.[275] This affront to a chief angered the Tshidi, but Saane's services to the British made his abduction treasonable, a charge the Tshidi hailed. Saane had provisioned besieged Mafikeng with foodstuffs and vital information. Witnesses accused Abraham of wheedling Snyman into letting him arrest the aged Saane, imprison him at Lotlhakana and

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[270] Molema (1966: 74-76): Abraham Motuba, (c.1827/30, Thaba 'Nchu-1909), son of Moilwa, Matlaba's younger brother, took the name "Motuba" (after Matlaba and Moilwa's younger brother), "because he had lived with him from childhood, and succeeded him as elder of headman [of the junior Rapulana branch] at Thaba Ncho. This Goutlwetswe or Abraham Motuba...subsequently took Chief Moroka's daughter Nnana to wife". CA, CCP 11/13 and CCP 11/1/3, "Cape Voters' Lists...1895 & 1897": Motuba appeared on the Mafeking Electoral Roll as "Matula, Abraham R, Farmer, Rietfontein".

[271] *IBB*, C.4890, 1886, "Minute on Correspondence relative to a Letter from the Chief Montsioa to the Rev John Mackenzie", p.40: Shippard reported that Abraham Motuba had led Matlaba's people at Lotlhakana since 1874. See Molema, 1966: 75, 79. Using Dr Molema as a source, Breutz (1955: 262-63 & 34) stated: one Rapulana branch stayed at Thaba 'Nchu, under Motuba, after the main section under Matlaba (c.1810-97) returned to Matlwang.

[272] Breutz (1955: 264, 266): Tshidi mistrust of Motuba grew after the SAR bought Polfontein and Driefontein farms for his Rapulana. The 1880s' Tshidi-Transvaal wars involved clashes between Motuba and Montshiwa. See *supra*, pp.95ff.

[273] ACC142, MV, STM's Notebooks, [Nd], handwritten. An entry on the Motuba family is dated 22 Phatoe [Aug] [18]94. Silas even drew Motuba's will for him at that time and correspondents addressed him as "Chief of Polfontein" until 1902. (Also MPP A979 Aa4, 12 Sep 1902, GHF Pollock, Magistrate, Lichtenburg to STM). Molema (1966: 85): on 16 Dec 1876, Montshiwa wrote to Pres Burgers to ask why his followers were "encroach[ing] on my territory as you are doing at Bodibe?" Burgers replied that supreme chief Moswete had granted him the land, implying that the Ratlou chief's powers exceeded Montshiwa's. Polfontein is ± 63km (±39 miles) SE of Mafikeng, on the Lichtenburg road.

[274] Breutz (1955: 83, 783): Mokgothu was Matlaba's youngest son by his fifth wife.

[275] Matthews, 1945: Genealogical Table, and Schapera, (1943a): Saane was the elder son of Tawana's third. Saaniestad (Ga-Modimola) is 12½km from Mafikeng. Also LND 1/911 L17343, "Application by...Rev WO Barratt for a Church and School Site...Rietfontein, Molopo Reserve, Maf 1904", 10 Aug 1904. E Graham Greene, CC, Maf to SNA, Cape Town. "Site for School at Molimola". For Saane, see Appendix A-Genealogy, p.V.

abuse him.[276] This echoed an event in January 1875: some Boers had ejected Saane and Israel Molema from Bodibe. In the intervening 24 years, Saane had re-established his independence, to his enemies' annoyance. Old Tshidi–Boer-Rapulana grudges were re-fought under cover of the present "white man's war", a pattern emerging more clearly in the next two decades.[277]

In early February, the Boers boldly used Saane's name in seeking to subvert those Tshidi remaining in the Stadt. They sent Chief Besele a mysterious message, possibly hoping that his wartime deposition had made him a "weak link" in the British ranks. Two young men ("twee jongen") crept stealthily into the Stadt to inform him that "*het met my beter zal gaan indien ik myn volk uit Mafeking naar buiten neem om de hongersnood te myden*". In a letter in almost perfect Dutch, Besele called the Boer bluff and wrote to Snyman demanding written confirmation from him personally, and stating that he could not act without it as he was "*in die handen der Engelsche*". He further demanded Saane's return "*[i]k ben angstig om myne menschen naar hunne tuinene ongewapend terug te hebben*".[278] The letter's fluency and the fact that Besele signed with a cross, suggests that it was carefully constructed to goad the Boers into action.[279]

Soon after helping to raise the Siege (17 May 1900), Silas and a party of Tshidi soldiers entered Lotlhakana and Bodibe to arrest the offending Motuba. Silas' affidavit was one of the few records in his own "voice":

> I am a Barolong Chief. I was in Mafekeng [*sic*] during the siege.…When the siege was raised I went with others to arrest the Chief Mokgotu and his principal men on a charge of fighting against British subjects in this District....We arrested them as prisoners of War and handed them over to the British authorities.[280]

Several witnesses attested to Motuba's collaboration with Snyman in arresting Saane on Christmas Day, 1899. One witness claimed that Snyman had promised Motuba an alleged British spy's property for capturing and killing Saane.[281] Rabodiba Thoane, whose family were stewards on the Molema's Motsosa estates, testified that Motuba had told a Lotlhakana crowd he "would take all the Barolongs who were in favour of Montsioa and the British Government, and…clear all the Stadts so that many spoors were not to be seen".[282] Motuba was sentenced to 18-month's detention at Cape Town. He returned to find Paul Montshiwa installed as Lotlhakana chief.[283] Motuba demanded that Paul leave, but he refused. Abraham then requested NAD intervention but little was done; he died in 1909 before matters were resolved.

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[276] Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 122 & 197 fn.68): Saane supplied information even after his capture, which the British still called "an infringement of the informal agreement on 'native' neutrality". Plaatje (1916a: 290): "only those who suffered from news hunger at the time can understand the pleasure we experienced at the assistance continually rendered us by Saane".

[277] Molema (1966: 81): Montshiwa complained to Lieut-Governor Richard Southey on 12 Jan 1875 that the Boers had expelled Saane and Israel Molema from Bodibe (Polfontein) and Vleyfontein. Molema ("Barolong": 108) affirmed Saane's espionage.

[278] MPP A979 Bb2, 3 Feb 1900, Wessels Montsioa, Captijn van de Barolong to Zyne Edele, Jacobus Snyman, Beveelhebber Machten, ZAR, Maf, "that it will go better for me if I take my people out of Mafeking in order to avoid the famine". He added that he was "in the hands of the English" and was "anxious to have his men [i.e. Saane and those taken with him], returned to their gardens". "Gardens" was frequently used for the land cultivated by the Rolong.

[279] It is impossible now to say who wrote the letter, but the fact that it was filed in the Tribal Papers, which Silas kept in his home, suggests that its author may have been either himself or Plaatje (fluent in 8 languages).

[280] Willan, 1984: 47-48. Plaatje, 1973 & 1999: 160, Epilogue. Also KAB, 1/MFK 1/4/2/1, Regina v Abraham Motuba. 20 Aug 1900, "Affidavit of Silas Molema before me Charles Bell, RM". Motuba was admitted to the Mafikeng gaol, 19 May 1900, as a "Rebel chief" with 6 co-accused. Most other prisoners were white Boer rebels. KAB, 1/MFK 12/1, "Return showing number of prisoners in gaol at Mafeking August 1900". No secondary sources I have read mention this case.

[281] KAB, 1/MFK 1/4/2/1, R v Abraham Motuba, 23 July 1900, "Affidavit C": Mothupi Tlomelang and Leepile's Affidavits before Bell, 26 July 1900, included many charges of Tshidi stock and crop theft, and the shooting or capture of alleged spies.

[282] KAB, 1/MFK 1/4/2/1, R v Abraham Motuba, 23 July 1900, Rabodiba Thoane [father of Piriepa], Affidavit A, 23 July 1900, signed before S. Minchin, JP [father of Dr Molema's attorney]. I interviewed the younger Thwane (Rre Piriepa) and Minchin in 1991 & 1992.

[283] Schapera, 1943a: 2.

The Montshiwas had exploited Lotlhakana's leadership vacuum by installing Paul, (Lekoko Marumolwa's brother) who had taken Montshiwa's name on marrying his daughter, Kowakae. Motuba's son George resumed the fight through HJ Frost, Superintendent of Natives [SPN] (NAD's local Mafikeng "man").[284] The NAD removed Paul in 1912, replacing him with George. NAD reversed their decision a few months later and reimposed Paul, ignoring Polfontein's Rapulana Chief, Matlaba's repudiation of him.

Silas, it seems, returned to Mafikeng. Rather than resolve the dispute, he helped to stoke the Tshidi-Rapulana conflict for twenty years, culminating in the violent clash of 1917 and a major court case in which the two communities re-fought their history before the Native Affairs and Justice Departments. Ironically, Dr Molema's work, which many historical scholars have ignored, was "mined" by one Government Ethnographer: in 1955, PL Breutz published *The Tribes of the Mafeking District*, which bowdlerised and misquoted *Chief Moroka* in creating an "official version" of the district's history.[285]

The mound of evidence that convicted Motuba of High Treason undermined Boer denials of their reliance on black support in the war. Boers and British issued numerous indignant denials of white-black collaboration, with Baden-Powell's being the most extreme case of British amnesia. Boer strategist Jan Smuts rose to similar heights of calculated oblivion, avowing that: "[t]he leaders of the Boers have steadfastly refused to make use of coloured assistance in the course of the present war". "Incompetent Boer officer" Cronjé's arming of Africans at Mafikeng had been the only instance of Boers arming "Kaffirs". Nasson aptly remarked that Boer and British counteraccusations of respective use and abuse of the Black population, represented "little more than a dialogue of the deaf".[286]

The Motuba Affair illustrated the extent of Mafikeng Africans' alliance with a larger system of British beliefs to which they attached personal meanings, and not merely with British wartime patriotism. Nasson stated that Cape Africans particularly embraced "…the popular conception of natural rights; the very products of the duties and functions of understood and assumed British colonial 'freedoms'".[287] These meanings were articulated diversely in Silas and his sons' lives: in their dress code, British education, and their patriotism towards the Empire that had "rescued" them from Boer clutches.

Post-war, massive anti-Boer sentiment, plus the material gains some African peasant farmers made directly or indirectly at the Boers' expense, helped promote pro-British sentiments among Silas and his close associates.[288] However, the lustre of being a citizen of the Empire soon faded for many African Mafikengites as, in their eyes, the Empire failed to honour its own principles. Initially, Roberts and Chamberlain's words reassured them that their natural and political rights (like the Cape franchise) equalled any white citizen's and that their land rights (abrogated under the Keate Award) would soon be restored. When promises of land redress failed, Plaatje and others protested against the ambiguity of this accommodation with Empire. Silas clearly supported Plaatje, as his keenness to join the 1903 deputation to Cape Town showed.[289] Post-war enthusiasm had raised expectations, while later non-

[284] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 02 July 1913, H Frost, ISN, Maf to RM, Maf: Frost held "fact-finding" meetings at Mafikeng, sending NAD this information. At the 1913 meeting, Sebopiwa Molema, who had some legal training, accompanied Chief Lekoko. See Appendix A, pp.II & III. Plaatje (1973 & 1990: 36 & 135): Paul also risked his life foraging during the Siege. Schapera, 1943: 3

[285] Breutz (1955: 197, para.566) represented the NAD approach to the Case, by adopting the Rapulana and old SAR viewpoint. One example of Breutz's (1955: 186, para.537) misquoting Molema (1951: 149) claimed that the *Matebele* killed Chief Molema's elder brother, Tlala, in 1832. On Tlala's death, see *supra*, pp.51 fn.64, 68.

[286] JC Smuts, 04 Jan 1902, Van Rhynsdorp, Cape Colony to WT Stead, 04 Feb. 1902. In Hancock & Van der Poel (1966: I, 485, Document 169). Also in Nasson, 1991: 93-94. Smuts accused the British of arming all the "Native tribes in and around the South African Republic...and [they] have committed horrible atrocities on fugitive or peaceful women and children".

[287] While Nasson (1991: 166-67) dwelled on cases of Africans testifying against Boers in post-war treason trials, he did not comment on cases of Africans giving evidence against other Africans, such as Motuba's.

[288] Nasson (1991: 142-68) cited many cases of sharecroppers and tenants, who had occupied their "masters'" lands during the war, later expelling their returning masters. Moreover, many Africans cooperated with the British in helping to convict Boers of treason.

[289] *SANAC (*1905: II, 266): Plaatje told SANAC, the war had "put everything upside down…".

delivery made them fall that much harder.[290] The conflict with the Rapulana played out in the context of these ravaged hopes and a new phase of the Montshiwa-Molema struggle for political ascendancy over the Tshidi.[291]

In the Ratshidi/Rapulana case each party submitted its versions of nineteenth - and twentieth-century Rolong strife to the court as evidence. As the case dragged on, government amplified its "official version" of Rolong history from NAD and Justice Department correspondence.[292] This version (compellingly bearing these departments' imprimature) trapped both sides in its more powerful discourse, leaving neither particularly satisfied. Ultimately, the case was partly settled by the Minister of Native Affairs, sitting in the Mafikeng court house before the Tshidi chief, whose own word had proverbially once been law, and meting out the Union Government's justice, based on the NAD's grasp of Rolong history. The case came to represent another victory for NAD bureaucracy over once-independent British Bechuanaland chiefs.[293]

In the 1920 case, Motuba's family featured as plaintiffs: principally, Israel Matlaba, son of Polfontein's Rapulana chief in 1900 and Abraham's son, George. Bakolopang, current Tshidi Chief at Mafikeng and son of Montshiwa's second house, was the defendant. He stood accused of unlawfully removing agricultural implements, vehicles and livestock from the plaintiffs.[294] Bakolopang, known for spending recklessly and attacking neighbouring villages violently, was asked to return them. But the Rapulana sought far greater gains, demanding the Tshidi's formal acknowledgement that the "Rapulana at Lotlhakana are entitled to the exclusive use and occupation of all the land [around] Lotlhakana…". Plaintiffs also wished to restrain the Tshidi chief or his emissaries from "interfering in any way [with] the Plaintiffs or…the Rapulana Tribe" or preventing them from using the land beneficially.[295]

In court papers, the Secretary for Native Affairs [SNA] used a mid-1910 incident, led by Regent Lekoko, against the Ratlou to exemplify alleged Tshidi "aggression" against other Rolong groups, whom the SNA backed, apparently arguing the old Transvaal line.[296] He blamed the attack on the Molemas, whom the NAD termed "the dominant faction in [Lekoko's] council".[297] The SNA and Mafikeng's SPN evidently resented the Molemas for daring to contest government policy (witness their

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[290] MPP A979 Be1, 05 July 1916, "To the…Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa and [MNA], Cape Town", p.4: Tshidi avowals of loyalty to Britain became a refrain in later dealings with government. In 1916, the Mafikeng *lekgotla* took NAD's refusal to appoint Bakolopang as Chief as a violation of chiefly jurisdiction in BB, and petitioned Botha to expedite his installation. The petition's rhetoric stressed that: "[l]ong before our request to be allowed to come under and enjoy British rule we respected and loved that government and even before we became British subjects we fought in support of British interests...our loyalty was amply proved in 1899 and 1900". Silas was number 19 of the 61 signatories, Paul Montshiwa, number 1 and Lefenya, 25. See Eric Walker, 1928. *A History of Southern Africa*. (London: Longman), p.549 fn.2, on Botha's tenure as Minister of Native Affairs.

[291] Silas' presence on the delegation had a lighter side; it was used in a Setswana advertisement for "Dr Williams Pink Pills" (with a flattering sketch of the chief), in many editions of *Koranta* as a nostrum for all ailments, eg. 13 Apr 1904.

[292] NAD was initially the sole government department on the Rolong case, but by 1919, the Justice Department began assembling a narrative of the disputed occupation of Lotlhakana. For instance, such exhibits as NTS, 209 1/44 Pt 2, Department of Justice, Secretary Pienaar to SNA, "Montsioa v Government": "1.Letter from Israel Matlaba to SNA [Nd]. 2.Minutes of meeting of Barolong Chiefs, 29 Oct 1896. 3. Letter from SNA to RM, Maf, 15 Feb 1917. 4. Letter from RM, Maf to SNA, 29 Oct 1896. 5. Complaint of Chief Israel Matlaba and correspondence, Oct 1916. Report of Mr. Lloyd, 23 July 1913".

[293] MPP A979 E, contained *Diamond Fields Advertiser* [*DFA*], 13 Nov 1920, Ratshidi/Rapulana Dispute, indicating that Silas kept a weather-eye on the press during the trial.

[294] NTS, 209 1/44 Pt 2, "Ratshidi/Rapulana Dispute", pp.1-3: the goods were valued at £64.5s; plaintiffs claimed £700 damages. See *supra*, p.123 & fn.138, on arguments over the house to which Bakolopang belonged.

[295] NTS, 209 1/44 Pt 2, "Ratshidi/Rapulana Dispute", pp.1-3.

[296] *SANAC*, 1905: IV, 264, 15 Oct 1904, "Plaatje's Evidence": Lekoko was regent for Badirile (d.1911), whom alcoholism prevented from ruling. ...". CA, NA 752/f.718, 02 Apr 1911, Plaatje to SNA, Cape Town (also in Willan, 1984: 13) told the SNA that despite Badirile's promising early years, drink and women had made him "shockingly mismanage[d] the affairs of the tribe". MPP A979 Cb3, [nd] "Account from Attorneys De Kock & De Kock to The Baralong [*sic*] People": the Tshidi incurred legal costs of £82.14s.7d. in their 1910 case (eventually settled) against Motseokhuno and the Ratlou.

[297] NTS, 209 1/44 Pt 2, "Ratshidi/Rapulana Dispute": the SNA reached this conclusion in exchanges with Mafikeng's SN. Willan (Ross, 1980: 85 fn.3) mistakenly stated that Lekoko later became chief in his own right. From 1911 to 1915, he was regent for Besele's brothers Badirile and Bakolopang Montshiwa.

many delegations to local and national government) and for their linguistic skills, which often outdid local NAD officials'. Silas' own involvement was revealed in the large legal accounts he had to settle at this time.[298]

Behind the personal and political strife lay a far more insidious land hunger, to which Silas alluded in evidence to the Beaumont Commission in 1913:

> [w]ith regard to the question put as to whether we would welcome back into the reserves people who left, I think the speaker made a mistake in answering that question, because we are now more in number than when the reserve was made. We can only receive some of our people who went to work in the mines and on the farms, but those who went away along time ago I could not receive back because the land is only big enough for us. We are multiplying, and there is no other land to live on. We were born in this country, and we are accustomed to it. The number of the people is now more than before, and we are multiplying every year. At that time there was only one big stadt, but now we have a lot scattered about.[299]

Silas' answer to a question about the land's capacity to sustain present occupants *and* those whom hardening segregation policies were returning from urban centres, was remarkable in scope and pithiness. He explained the effects of major transformative processes: migrancy, urbanisation and rural population expansion. Previous speaker, Pima Makgobi had used the pronoun "we" to include all-comers, implying that Tshidi land still catered for even the longest-term migrants' return. Silas purposely redefined "we", reducing Makgobi's definition of community because of the reserve population's growth.

Because of this shortage, those formerly an automatic part of the community, must now be excluded. Pragmatically, Silas asserted the prior land claims of those who had "always" lived in the area, "*we* [the Tshidi] were born in this country, and *we* are accustomed to it". By 1918, his concerns had redoubled. He told the Native Land Commission (Western Transvaal) that overcrowding would "reduce our reserve to a dumping ground for the overflowing black population of the industrial centres...".[300]

Silas travelled widely, observing ongoing changes in town and countryside. This paragraph did not relate directly to the Rolong case, but clarified the context of land tension in which the case unfolded. It conveyed Silas' dedication to preserving his vision of natural justice: that particular people, for particular reasons were entitled to live on particular land, whether others agreed with him or not.

In early 1917, Under-SNA Barrett tried resolving matters by *again* re-appointing George Motuba at Lotlhakana, but insisted he report to Bakolopang and not to Matlaba at Bodibe.[301] The Rapulana rejected this order as it implied that chiefship was no longer "tribal" but territorial, another colonial redefinition of space and power. Welcoming the appointment, the Molemas thanked Barrett personally, saying they hoped now for peace with the Rapulana, whose thanks came much later.[302] Peace was not at hand. The Tshidi Chief complained to CR Chalmers, Mafikeng Magistrate, two months later that Motuba's people were flouting Mafikeng's authority by ploughing over Lotlhakana land that the Tshidi

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[298] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, "Ratshidi-Rapulana Dispute", 08 June 1910, SNA to MNA, "Conduct of Chief Lekoko and outstanding disputes between the Bo-Ra-Tsili and Bo-Ra-Polane ranches of the Baralong in Bechuanaland". MPP A979 Be1, July [Nd] 1920, Petition attached to Account of ME Rice, Attorney & Notary, to Mr. Silas Molema. Rice's account for drawing up Silas' Application in the Lotlhakana case *inter alia* came to £26.7s, which he settled on 01 March 1921. For the Motuba trial verdict, see KAB, 1/MFK 12/1, "Political Prisoners tried by RM at Mafeking".

[299] UG 19 (1914), *Natives Land Commission* v.1: Silas Molema's evidence, Maf, 04 Dec 1913. Cf. *supra*, p.27.

[300] UG 23 (1918), *Report of Natives Land Committee: Western Transvaal*, Annex. Bakolopang John Montsioa's letter (written by STM).

[301] MPP A979 Be1, 05 March 1917, John B[akolopang] Montsioa to Headman George Motuba, Rietfontein: see Chief Bakolopang's order to George Motuba that he, not Matlaba, was responsible for trying Lotlhakana cases.

[302] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 23 Jan 1917, E Barrett to SNA, Cape Town "Dispute regarding land at...Lotlhakana". NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 06 Apr 1917, "G Motuba & Councillors to SNA, Cape Town". In a comment indicating the NAD's emphasis on loyalty to the Empire, Barrett accepted Motuba's thanks, saying that if he really wanted to demonstrate gratitude, he could encourage his followers to join the Native Labour Contingent (20 Apr 1917, Barrett to RM, Maf).

claimed as their Chief's. Thereafter, Rapulana and Tshidi at Lotlhakana often clashed continually with their Mafikeng relatives.[303]

The NA and Justice Departments amassed copious evidence in the years before the court case, not all pertinent to this study of Silas. He was mentioned in two respects: for allegedly manipulating the inebriated Bakolopang and for desiring, like other Tshidi chiefs, greater independence. The NAD found the first association sinister and the second alarming. Officials contemplated curbing chiefly powers drastically. Closely involved in the sprawling dispute, by mid-1917 Barrett feared armed conflict. If so, government would be forced to "over-haul the administration of affairs in Bechuanaland...[and]...curtail the powers of the Chiefs the arbitrary exercise of which is calculated to involve serious disturbance of the peace".[304]

This policy "vacuum" (slated by parliament's opposition leader, Hertzog) reflected the fragmented Botha-Smuts approach to African administration (1910-1919). Effectively, the Union had inherited a patchwork of policies from the former colonies and republics. By 1917, little had been done to unite these into a workable common program. At the height of Tshidi-Rapulana hostilities, Smuts, then in the Imperial War Cabinet, struggled vainly to propel Botha's Native Administration Bill through parliament as the basis for its Native Affairs policy. The Bill's intensified segregation policies provoked massive opposition from Cape Africans (among others) who stood to lose the franchise.[305] To the horror of the *Rand Daily Mail*, then supportive of white mining magnates, Plaatje made "a most amazing speech on the Natives Land Bill, which was loudly cheered" to the SANNC's fifth annual conference:

> "They talk of segregation [said Plaatje]. It is a segregation where the blacks with a population of nearly 6,000,000 souls are forced to be content with 12,000,000 morgen, while the whites have 120,000,000 morgen." He alleged that the whole object of the bill was to erect huge reservoirs of servile labour for the Boers. The natives would have to come out of their little segregation plots or starve there. Economic conditions would force them to come out, and their labour would be sold at a cheap rate...". I am of this province, he continued, "and are we going to allow a Dutchman from Worcester to dictate to us where we shall live and how we shall exist?"....It was strange that the bill was only supported by the Dutch section of Parliament. The natives' loyalty to the King and the Empire should not be forgotten, and they must not be allowed to be robbed of their heritage by the Boers.[306]

During this heightened anxiety about impending land losses through further legislation, seemingly small disputes, like the Ratshidi-Rapulana case, raised in microcosm the dilemmas that induced NAD officials to demand more uniform policy. After a Supreme Court ruling upheld African land claims and voting rights by rendering the 1913 Natives Land Act's segregationist sections *ultra vires*, Botha had to withdraw the new bill.[307] British Bechuanaland officials thus had to deal with each phase of the Rolong case as it occurred, using thirty-year-old legislation. The two Rolong parties frequently became frustrated with waiting for administrative or judicial redress. Chiefs and powerful councillors began reinvoking precolonial forms of authority and literally took matters into their own hands.

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[303] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 29 June 1917, "CR Chalmers, Magistrate of Mafeking to SNA, Pretoria". Chalmers had accompanied Under-SNA Barrett on his recent peace-making visit to the Rolong. NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 05 July, "E Barrett to RM, Maf", and 5 July 1917, George Motuba and others to SNA, Pretoria. "Plowing [*sic*] of the watered Lands at Rietfontein by Booratsidi" [handwritten]: in late July, Motuba complained that Paul Montshiwa and 47 teams of oxen with 47 ploughs spent several days ploughing over land at Lotlhakana, demonstrating their symbolic ownership.

[304] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 05 July 1917, "E Barrett to RM, Maf".

[305] Davenport (1991: 235): Smuts tried to "sell" its stringent measures to a British audience at London's Savoy Hotel. Botha wanted the Bill to regularise government control in all African reserves scheduled in the 1913 NLA, to expedite rural segregation. The new Bill (discussed *infra,* p.312) aroused widespread protest. Only after the Appeal Court ruled that the NLA's section 8(2) was *ultra vires*, as it might disenfranchise Cape Africans, was the Bill recalled.

[306] Willan (1984: 212-13) cited *RDM*, 02 June 1917, "Come out or starve".

[307] NTS 7602, 17/328, Mr Sol T Plaatje, 1917-1924, 12 [month illeg.] 1917, AL Barrett, Inspector & Protector, Kmb, to Director of the Native Labour Bureau, JHB, "Re: Sol T Plaatje": Plaatje's attack on Smuts, the "Dutchman from Worcester", contributed to the NAD's labelling him "a troublesome professional agitator". NAD dogged his every move at this time. See Davenport (1991: 235) for the Case of Thomson and Stilwell v Kama.

Central to the Rolong case was confusion over the nature of chiefly rule in British Bechuanaland: a signal instance of the Union's inconsistent native affairs policies. Legislation enacted at the time of colonisation had sought to preserve the "tribal" principle of chiefly rule, meaning that persons of Tshidi descent regarded the Tshidi chief at Mafikeng as their leader and paid him Hut Tax under the 1884 Native Locations Act.[308] However, the Lotlhakana case confounded that principle: both Tshidi and Rapulana claimed the town historically, each asserting that they owed allegiance to their respective Mafikeng and Bodibe chiefs. Ostensibly, government was redefining chiefly jurisdiction as territorial, weighting land occupation more heavily than ethnicity as the basis of chiefly authority: all inhabitants of one reserve would, in theory, owe authority to *that* reserve's chief and not to an ethnically-related chief further away.

This policy disregarded the historical and ethnological reality that a "tribe" was by no means "ethnically pure". The Tshidi's composition changed greatly over time; some wards departed and others joined. By 1943, 12 of 84 Tshidi wards were of the "ruling line", descending either from Tawana, Tlhutlwa or Tshidi, the community's founder.[309] Four more wards descended from Tau the Great and his son, Makgetla. Five others included Ratlou and Sehuba Rolong, Motlhaku and Tloung and "miscellaneous". Many Setswana-speaking groups comprised the other 63 wards, the majority of the community called "Tshidi". Ethnic composition within wards could be eclectic. Ward 3, Lomanyana, included "foreigners" who had petitioned the chiefs for land: Eastern Cape Hlubi, 2 South Sotho groups, Transkei Thembu, Mfengu, and Ngqika.[310]

The lengthy process of redefining colonial space and chiefly power was part of a generalised assault on chiefly independence. In British Bechuanaland, specific legislation governing chiefly jurisdiction was based on British Bechuanaland Proclamation no. 2 of 1885, the 1886 Land Settlement Commission's proposals, and Act 41 of 1895. Throughout the country, a system was evolving whereby the NAD used the Chiefs to "run" their Stadts and reserves, administer justice to a particular level of crime, and collect taxes.[311] Thus, the chief's independence was officially circumscribed; his once independent state was subsumed into the new Union, which he served as a low-paid civil servant, taking orders from the new national bureaucracy. The NAD revoked Rapulana Chief Matlaba's authority to intercede in the case. Additionally, the NAD underlined that the Tshidi aristocracy were now government subordinates, by paying Chiefs Joshua Molema and Paul Montshiwa monthly allowances of £18 and £12.[312]

At Mafikeng, magistrate Chalmers, in charge of local justice, worried that Chief Bakolopang's suggestibility was causing dangerous political divisions in the Stadt and open conflict with the Rapulana. Chalmers also believed this a milestone case: if government did not support the Tshidi chief in this rebellion against him at Lotlhakana, the whole native affairs administration in South Africa might collapse. He told the SNA that government's weakness would "cause men, with a small following [to set] themselves up in opposition to the Chief" and cause chaos. He recommended that if government was not supporting the Chief, they should repeal Proclamation 2 BB 1885 and formulate new "native" policy.[313]

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[308] MPP A979 Be, 23 Dec 1920, Office of Magistrate Maf, Circ No. 7 to Chiefs & Headmen: Silas' Hut Tax correspondence revealed that even those Tshidi at Koster, near Rustenburg, paid him Hut Tax. Under the Natives Locations Act 37, 1884, Locations Inspectors had to collect tax under magisterial supervision. Proclamation of 32, 1887 empowered Chiefs and Headmen to collect tax.

[309] See the table of chiefly descent from Tau in *supra*, p.49.

[310] Schapera (1952: 31-36): the "tribal" origins of these 62 other groups illustrate the Mafikeng Stadt's diverse composition: Hurutshe, Tlhaping, Kwena, Ngwato, Nogeng, Kgatla, Tlôkwa, Phiring, Tsatsing, Tsopye, Tloung, Masiana, Madibana, Nompi, and Koba.

[311] MPP A979 Ca1, Hut Tax accounts. NTS, 209 1/44 Pt 2, 05 July 1917 & 10 July 1917, "E Barrett to Chalmers, RM, Maf".

[312] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 24 Jan 1917, "Dispute between Lekoko and Makgobi — Raids by Ratshidi on Disaneng and Pitsani", p.9. Breutz (1955: 200, para.571): Paul (b.1856) succeeded Silas as Mafikeng headman (1927) and went on pension, 30 June 1931.

[313] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 24 July 1917, Chalmers, RM, Maf to SNA, Pretoria. "Rietfontein Affairs — George Motuba".

Both Rolong factions' increasing implacability and the disarray of policy during World War I protracted the case. While local and national officials struggled to resolve the outbreak, Tshidi and Rapulana launched further skirmishes that illustrated the seriousness of intra-Rolong conflict. Their ongoing conflict places Schapera's two assertions about Tswana participation in warfare on doubt:

> [w]ith the abolition of inter-tribal warfare, their military functions have largely disappeared, although in both World Wars regiments from various tribes in the Protectorate were sent abroad by their chiefs to serve in the British army.[314]

Schapera did not mention the twentieth-century Tshidi-Rapulana conflict here, and passed over recruitment campaigns among Tswana communities during World War I. One strange incident occurred during 1917, while Modiri Molema struggled to survive in Glasgow while writing *The Bantu*. It jointly illuminates conflicts around "Native Administration", "Native" Recruitment and Tshidi chiefship. Meanwhile, in Mafikeng, Silas and Joshua Molema were in the thick of a long struggle over the Tshidi chiefship. During the ensuing incident — and with brilliant showmanship — the disputed chiefly incumbent, Bakolopang, and his Molema councillors, diverted the local NAD official's attention by inviting him to an alleged Native Labour Contingent [NLC] recruitment rally. It was actually the precursor to a raid on Lotlhakana.

This climactic early September Tshidi-Rapulana confrontation displayed their mutual animosity over Lotlhakana, rendering the "official version" of events farcical. That J Liefeldt, untested Molopo Deputy-Superintendent of Natives [DSPN], misread the situation should prompt historians to wonder how often government misjudged the political and cultural conditions they tried to "explain". *This* official, primed to exercise mastery over "uncivilised" Africans, suffered a neat reversal. The Tshidi ignored NAD orders under his nose, and he became their unwitting dupe, enacting the tribe's wishes.

Exactly who caused all the trouble by stage-managing the deception is unclear. On Friday 31 August, the Chief peremptorily invited Liefeldt to the "*Cohla*" or "*Kotla*".[315] Ignorant of the meeting's purpose, Liefeldt reported to Bakolopang and council next day. Surprisingly, he found 400 to 500 hundred "natives" arriving. However, he surmised through his limited Setswana (no-one interpreted, despite linguistically-skilled Silas' presence) that John and regent, Joshua Molema, were recruiting men for the NLC.[316] This delighted him, as government repeatedly urged Africans to enlist as patriotic servants to South Africa's white troops in Europe.[317] Invited to address the crowd, Liefeldt was puzzled to see hundreds of men still arriving, supposedly to hear him speak on the European war! About 800 had foregathered when he finished, proudly reckoning that the NLC would benefit from his moving oration.

The crowd's excitement swelled as Bakolopang formed them into four companies — for further training, decided Liefeldt. He was asked to speak again:

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[314] Schapera, 1953 & 1979: 29.

[315] Molema ("Barolong": 114) called this a "huge filibustering expedition against the Rapulanas", and noted an earlier raid on 26 June 1917. Liefeldt's spelling exhibited an older orthography or, perhaps, his shaky Setswana. "*Cohla*" would have been pronounced "*tsohla*", and may have easily been mistaken for "*tsotlhe*", meaning "all" for the animal class, and was thus quite distant from the intended "*kgotla*". At the time, the word closest in spelling and meaning to "*cohla*" was "*cohala*" — to become old! His shaky Setswana may have accounted for his misunderstanding of the *lekgotla* events.

[316] MPP A979 Aa4, Tribal Affairs. 26 July 1916, showed that Liefeldt had been in Mafikeng about a year before this event, and had had official corresponded with Silas, had visited him on the Tshidi Chief's behalf shortly after 01 July 1916. Comaroff (1978: 10-11): cited N.A.D. Letter no.675, F.718 of 25/9/15: NAD appointed Joshua regent for 2 years in 1915. Some came from as far as Disaneng and Mareetsane, ±55km (±34 miles) SW of Mafikeng. Liefeldt's description of the gathering and its outcome make it sound like a *letshóló* (collective hunting party). Schapera (1953 & 1979: 53): this is an event to which men are summoned from outside the community may be summoned "in case of serious internal disputes, there may even be compelled to attend….the men all come to it armed and ready for trouble".

[317] See Albert Grundlingh, 1987. *Fighting Their Own War: South African Blacks and the First World War*. (JHB: Ravan), pp.96-98. See also UNISA, ANC Papers, AD2186 Fc8, 24 Feb 1952, Dr SM Molema, "The Mendi Memorial Festival". Here Molema paid tribute to the "615 brothers who went down [in] the English Channel on the 21st of February 1917", and the "1600 others who perished in the various theatres of the First World War 1914-1918...".

> [t]his I did expressing…my appreciation in seeing that at last Chief Montsioa's people were prepared to help King and Empire….I informed them that I was prepared to render every assistance possible. They all appeared to be in high spirits, keen on going forward...I then called for three cheers for the King and left, reaching home at about 11.30 am feeling very proud of myself.[318]

The reactions of assembled Molopo Reserve inhabitants to the lone white proselytiser are not recorded. Perhaps they misjudged his intentions as much as he mistook theirs, for want of lucid interpretation. Probably, Liefeldt had not read pertinent sections of Plaatje's speech to the SANNC Congress, 2 June 1917, reported in the *Rand Daily Mail*. Plaatje attacked government's hypocritical policy of recruiting Africans for menial roles, but not letting them fight:

> ...[Plaatje] attacked…Smuts for his speech in London on the native question. General Smuts, he said, had done more harm to recruiting for the native labour battalion by that speech than it was possible to realise. [Smuts] had also said that he hoped no government would ever arm the blacks in South or Central Africa. Was this the way to talk of a loyal section of the people who…making the supreme sacrifice in this struggle? If it had not been for the black troops in France, who had perished in their tens of thousands…there would be a different story to write about the war….[T]he black man…had stood by the Englishman in this struggle. He was sure that that wonderful sense of British justice would not fail them in this terrible struggle in South Africa.[319]

The *RDM*'s hostile report perhaps amplified Plaatje's angry tone, but he imparted the SANNC's "line" on racial politics clearly: the Union government aimed to exclude Africans, while the British had favoured their inclusion in local and Empire affairs. Plaatje and Congress were also outraged at government's base assumption that Africans bearing arms would use these against white soldiers and the new government.[320]

Gladdened by Saturday morning's work, Liefeldt was relaxing when the Magistrate telephoned the truth: Bakolopang and a large "*impi*" were raiding Lotlhakana! Liefeldt swiftly drove the 29km there to find its men (unarmed but awaiting the volatile Bakolopang's attack) outside Paul Montshiwa's home. Indignant women were "armed with stones the size of cricket balls" to repulse attackers, who had already raided some houses.[321] Though vengeful, Bakolopang eventually agreed to return to Mafikeng after upon his councillors' advice. He declined Liefeldt's anxious offer of a ride in his car.[322]

Were these "machinations" begun "in the brains of the Molema family", as Magistrate Welsh had alleged in 1910?[323] While Liefeldt did not mention Silas, it is likely that, as one of Bakolopang's two key councillors, and his father-in-law, Silas participated in the deception if not the raid.[324] The motives

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[318] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 04 Sep 1917, J Liefeldt, DSPN to RM, Maf, for this account.

[319] *RDM*, 02 June 1917, "Come out or starve".

[320] Baden-Powell had expected Africans to use their own weapons to defend the Stadt during the Siege; they struggled to secure permits for their weapons, after 1903. MPP A979 Bc1, 22 May 1907, Barry May, Government Secretary, RM's Office, Maf, [on Bechuanaland Protectorate Letterhead], told Chief Badirile that Chief Silas Molema's letter to the Asst Comsr, Gaberones [*sic,* colonial spelling] seeking permission to buy ammunition for himself and other "Barolong" was out of order: "…any native applying for a permit to buy ammunition must produce a certificate from the Chief of their tribe".

[321] Liefeldt used the Zulu word for regiment; the Setswana is *mophato*. He also used the Afrikaans name for Lotlhakana, not unusual at the time. It is unclear how many regiments the ±800 represented, but they were a fraction of the total number of Tshidi: 9.03% of the 1886 figure (8,860) and 8.6% of the 1934 Census figure (9,256) cited in Breutz, 1955: 180. The 1886 figure is from *IBB*, C.4890, 1886, "Minute on Correspondence…from the Chief Montsioa to the Rev John Mackenzie", p.40.

[322] MPP A979 Be1, 05 Sep 1917, [unsigned], Kunana, to Chief John B Montsioa: internal evidence in this letter suggests it is from Ratlou Chief Moswete. He scolded John for the Lotlhakana raid under the pretext of NLC recruitment. Speaking also for Rapulana Chief Matlaba, he added: "was it [n]ever heard that a chief enters houses for the purposes of looting. You persecute this people for the simple reason that they are Borrapulana and that you want to restore your tribal headman at Rietfontein".

[323] See *supra*, p.131.

[324] MPP A979 Be, 11 Sep 1919, JB Montsioa to STM, Motsosa: Bakolopang, deferred to his father-in-law, Silas, as *rra eo ratang* (father whom I love), and signed himself *moroao* (your son). MPP A979 Ac1, 02 Sep 1916, SJM, Mauñ to STM, Maf: Bakolopang and Joshua often disagreed. Joshua's son, Sebopiwa, reported that they were "not working together, that Chief Joshua sometimes calls up a meeting and those persons that follow John do not attend and also when John calls a Pitso those that follow father Joshua also remain home & things & affairs go on in this manner at my home. How very painful it must be for you father [i.e, Silas] if that is the fact". A "*pitso*" is a full meeting of the community.

for deliberately entangling a NAD representative are obscure: had Bakolopang, or councillors acting in his name, invited Liefeldt? It seems unlikely that the invitation was issued innocently. NAD officials tried constantly to prevent Tshidi-Rapulana violence, so the councillors, if not Bakolopang, would have known that Liefeldt would halt the raid if forewarned. However, NLC recruitment would have been the one occasion not to arouse official suspicion. Joshua, Silas and other councillors may have known beforehand of Bakolopang's planned attack and, in support, invited Liefeldt as a "cover". Yet, it is likely that Bakolopang was unstoppable once enraged, and even his astute councillors could not control him. Joshua's regency ended in September 1917 and he gradually lost power over Bakolopang, although Silas retained some as the Chief's father-in-law. Bakolopang increasingly acted *without* his councillors' approval.[325]

Despite Liefeldt's ironic account of his own mismanagement, his ineptitude had serious consequences, galvanising the NAD into action. Soon, successions of senior personnel descended on Mafikeng to deal with the Tshidi's "insubordinate" settling of old scores. The NAD rejected Bakolopang, the Molemas and the Tshidi's attempt to bypass white officialdom and enact traditional justice. They did, nevertheless, begin to note John's mental instability and the possibility that Chiefs Silas and Joshua were trying to control him.

For Tshidi and Rapulana, the case illustrated the consequences of colonisation: land enclosure and fixed settlement patterns. A century earlier, Tswana polities' access to land had been open. By the late-1900s century, land congestion was escalating as communities expanded. Boer and British settlement, migrant labour (Silas noted), and capitalist farming, braced by the state's land-related legislation all sapped Tshidi land and labour. Schapera took 1870 as the baseline for this land-saturation:

> [b]y about 1870 virtually every portion of Bechuanaland was claimed as its territory by one or other of the existing tribes. Consequently, the only ways in which a seceding group could set up as an independent tribe were to move to some other country, or to occupy and hold by force land in the possession of another tribe.[326]

For the NAD, the Tshidi-Rapulana case raised the legal question of tribal composition. After perusing Proclamation 2 BB 1885, Section 31 Barrett and colleagues argued that a tribe was a group "the members of which acknowledge one common Native Chief".[327] But, Justice Secretary Pienaar doubted that the Tshidi, Rapulana and Ratlou Rolong could be deemed separate tribes as all spoke the same language. He also doubted that the 1886 Land Commission's pronouncements on Molopo landholding constituted hard evidence on the issue of ethnicity.[328]

The power behind the throne — "*Moragana teng oa baná ba mpa ga o tsènoe*"

"The secret conclaves of the members of a family are not to be meddled with":[329]

The proverb advises against meddling in a close family's secrets. When the NAD interfered in Molema-Montshiwa affairs, they initially met their match in the chief's father-in-law, Silas, although Bakolopang's downfall would mean the decline of Molema influence over the chiefdom for many years. The NAD tried to mediate the struggle for supremacy among the Rolong branches. Under-SNA

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[325] See *supra*, p.148, for NAD anger over Chief Lekoko's attempted raid on the Ratlou, allies of the Rapulana. Comaroff (1978: 8 & fn.15): within the Tawana faction, "Joshua and his younger brother, Silas, remained the outstanding figures…". The installation of Joshua was the first time government intervened to appoint a Tshidi chief.

[326] Schapera, 1952: 16.

[327] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 27 Nov 1917, "PW Mallett & Swift (Lawyers) to Secretary for Justice, Pretoria", enclosing Plea of Defendant Government refuting Israel Matlaba of the Rapulana's assertion that this tribe has jurisdiction over the Rapulana at Lotlhakana. NAD studied the gloss on Section 31 by a law officer (Minute No. 2/1665/12/300 of 25 November 1912).

[328] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 11 Feb 1918, "CI Pienaar, Secretary for Justice to Messrs PW Mallett and Swift, Kmb".

[329] Plaatje (1916b: 66, Proverb 433): "The secret conclaves of the members of a family are not to be meddled with". "*Bana ba mpa*" means "the children of one belly" literally, or family. In the modern orthography, "*oa*" is spelled "*wa*", and "*tsènoe*", "*tsènwe*".

Barrett wished to reverse Britain's tendency to "pamper" the Tshidi, by acknowledging Rapulana and Ratlou independence. Yet, the Tshidi claimed they and the Rapulana were one tribe, and that the Molopo Reserve's other Rolong recognised Tshidi paramountcy. In effect, the three northern Rolong branches all lived in proximity to each other and had much shared history, especially their Thaba 'Nchu exile. After their return to the Molopo, the Rolong encountered the new political geography created by the SAR's proclamation. New alliances between Rapulana, Ratlou and Boer settlers disrupted their once-friendly relations with the Tshidi, who formed alliances with Tswana groupings living further west, the Ngwaketse and the Tlharo.[330]

Tshidi claim of being "one tribe" with the Rapulana might have seemed devious, but related to their real anger over land losses to Matlaba's people under the Keate Award, and over what they considered the Rapulana and Ratlou's treacherous ties with the Boers. But the NAD saw these two Rolong groups "as a separate and distinct tribe from the Ratsili tribe and for the last fifty years the history of the Western Transvaal and British Bechuanaland is a record of disputes and conflicts between these three tribes".[331] After 1910, Government accepted the Transvaal definition of Rapulana/Ratlou tribal identity, and tried to impose it on the Tshidi.[332]

In this reading of the case, unstable Chief Bakolopang's questionable conduct complicated the Tshidi-Rapulana foray, inviting an interrogation of Silas' motives. These, this thesis argues, demonstrated that for some Tshidi rulers, chiefdom hinged on maintaining power through current institutions and historical legitimation.[333] At the time, however, the complicated history of Molema and Montshiwa rivalry became subject to the court's judgement and NAD policy decisions.

From 1915, one of the most heated modern *seantlho* battles for the chiefship rent the Tshidi polity. Tensions between the rival groups had seethed before this, but Regent Lekoko's death that year ignited them.[334] Montshiwa's longevity, then his death in 1896, had created a situation rather comparable to that affecting contemporaneous British sovereigns who followed Queen Victoria's 64-year reign and perhaps lacked the training or motivation to rule: Edward VII, George V, Edward VIII, and George VI. Yet, the effects of British sovereigns' longevity, dullness or caprice on their subjects could be limited constitutionally. Conversely, Tshidi monarchs' failings were less buffered by state power, exposing a weaker ruler to the influence of stronger relatives and councillors. Ultimately, Tawana and Montshiwa's long reigns (c.1818-1896) "had left the ruling group with few strong candidates of suitable age".[335]

For the Tshidi, the chief's personal qualities were all-important, as state power resided in him and, to an extent, his councillors. Montshiwa's three successors, Besele, Badirile and Bakolopang's personal

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[330] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 27 Nov 1917, "PW Mallett and Swift (Lawyers) to Secretary for Justice, Pretoria", enclosing Defendant's Plea, John Bakolopang Montsioa, indicating that the Ratlou also contemplated suing the Tshidi. NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 27 Nov 1917, "PW Mallett and Swift (Lawyers) to Secretary for Justice, Pretoria".

[331] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 12 & 14 Feb 1918 (cable), "Moffat, Umtata to SNA, Pretoria": trying to create a separate identity for each tribe, the NAD elicited the evidence of Rev JS Moffat, son of missionary Moffat. Yet, he held that Lotlhakana had belonged to Montshiwa, to whom minor Rapulana chiefs owed allegiance. His support of the "Tshidi" approach soon disappointed NAD.

[332] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 07 Oct 1919, Regina v Abraham Motuba, 23 July 1900, Nicholson, SPN to RM, Maf: "Re: Chieftainship of the Rapulana-Barolong". Government documents showing that Proc. 32 of 1889, Section 11 had exacerbated Lotlhakana-Mafikeng tensions by insisting that minor chiefs Motuba (Lotlhakana) and Masibi (Pitsani [Ratlou]) submit their headmen's names via Montshiwa. These chiefs' Tshidi subjects (once under Boer rule) were incorporated into the colonial administration *only* in order to collect the Hut Tax, with Silas as their tax collector. Yet, over the years, Lotlhakana chief, Paul Montshiwa, had assumed the role of land allocation, worsening tension between himself and Matlaba's supporters.

[333] This point is based on a reading of the mass of evidence in the Tshidi-Rapulana case and on Comaroff, 1978: *passim*.

[334] Lekoko (1842-1915) married two of Chief Molema's daughters: Amogelang (according to Schapera, 1943a: 16), who died childless, and then her younger sister, Mafikeng. Two of their children survived: Emang, who married Sebopiwa Molema, and Mmaditshukudu Dick, with Modiri at Lovedale. Breutz (1955: 196) gave Amogelang's name as "Keamogetse" and listed Joshua's children in para.571. (See Appendix A, p.I.)

[335] Comaroff, 1978: 8.

shortcomings led to the dilution of chiefly power. Indeed, power from Montshiwa's death to 1920 resided outside the direct line, with Lekoko Montshiwa and the Molemas. The long absence of strong chiefship led to a damaging power struggle between the Montshiwas and the Molemas after1903.[336]

Disputes over chiefly succession dated back to Montshiwa's death. Had his chosen heir survived, perhaps councillors would not have split into two factions, but in 1891 Kebalepile's death sparked disagreements over Montshiwa's surviving sons' suitability as rulers.[337] As John Comaroff explained, Tshidi rules of chiefship were then invoked and re-invoked frequently: three times from 1896 to 1919, a chief was installed in his own right but was, after political debate, deemed to have been a "regent". In retrospect, the conflict hinged on the relative status of Montshiwa's wives — or rather, on what their status was *believed to have been*. In other words, historical interpretation was recruited into each faction's ideological armoury: the "Tau" or Montshiwa bloc, led by Lekoko, and the Tawana (or Molema) bloc, under Joshua and Silas. Besele (1896-1903), Badirile (1903-1911) and Bakolopang (1915-1919) were all enthroned *as* chiefs. However, the evaluative process through which the community constantly assess a chief's performance in office led, in each case, to dissatisfaction with his rule and, thus, a reconsideration of his legitimacy:

> [a]s this suggests, the Tshidi hold that legitimacy is a negotiable value. Indeed, this underpins their theory of incumbency and is systematically expressed in a model which describes the relationship between the performance of a ruler and his legitimate power. According to it, the rights of an incumbent are not immutably predetermined; rather he and his subjects are constantly engaged in a transactional process in which the former discharges his duties and, in return, is delegated the authority to influence policy and people.[338]

The disputes (understood minimally by the NAD) drew on the Tshidi's democratic notions of chiefship, which value "consultation and participatory politics" highly. Judgements of the chief's success would have been "performance-related": "[t]he degree to which his performance is considered to be satisfactory is thought to determine the extent of the office-holder's legitimacy, expressed in the willingness of the public to execute his decisions". However, popular evaluation in terms of this "incumbency model" was not the only political process determining the chief's continued tenure. His hereditary right to rule and his own political will played a role: "chiefs do not watch impassively as their regimes are evaluated".[339]

The Tawana faction attached an "authoritative succession" in a petition to government, arguing that Badirile, of the first house (Queen Majang's), had been too young to be chief, in 1896.[340] Besele, his older brother of the second house (Queen Tshadinayane's), whom the British — and many Rolong — found problematic, had really ruled *for* him. After white Mafikeng's founding, he had patronised the liquor-peddling saloons Montshiwa had criticised. During Besele's siege-time dethronement Lekoko, Joshua and Silas had enhanced their power bases and, on his death (1903), had dominated his successor, Lovedale-educated Badirile. Installing Badirile meant that councillors argued that *Majang*, not Tshadinyane, had been Montshiwa's principal wife; thus, Besele had not been chief, but was merely regent for Badirile.[341]

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[336] Comaroff, 1978: 8-12.

[337] See *supra*, pp.145-46. Matthews, 1945: 24-25. Plaatje, *Koranta*, 16 Dec 1903, "The Late Chief Wessels Montsioa". In Willan, 1996: 78.

[338] Comaroff (1978: 6): that process of evaluation would have occurred at 3 levels: in "a close circle of advisers, a council (*lekgotla*) composed mainly of headmen, and the public assembly (*pitso*)".

[339] Comaroff (1978: 6) for all quotations in this paragraph.

[340] Schapera (1943a: 1-2) and Matthews (1945, Genealogy) placed him in the fifth, not the first house. MPP A979 Be4, 17 Feb 1925, "Application concerning the estates of the late Badirile…and John Bakolopang Montsioa": Silas' version of the Tshidi succession stated that both chiefs were the sons of Montshiwa and his wife Gaeshele (*seantlho* for chief wife, Majang), whom Schapera and Matthews listed as the Chief's fifth wife, perhaps overlooking the *seantlho* relationship. See Comaroff, 1978: 6-8.

[341] CA, 1/MFK 952/96, 28 Oct 1896, Councillors of the Barolong to G Boyes, CC and [RM], Maf, on the appointment of Chief Besele after Chief Montsioa's passing, Silas' signature was second on the list. See *supra*, p.106 fn.39 *Koranta*, 27 Feb

Though initially abstemious, Badirile sadly outdid his predecessor's alcoholism and "shockingly mismanaged the affairs of the tribe...[causing] considerable trouble to the Headmen of the tribe". The abler Lekoko often deputised for him.[342] Reports of the chiefship's weakness were not just Molemas disinformation, reflecting their long friction with the Montshiwas. Badirile's relapsing addiction so disquieted Mafikeng Civil Commissioner, E Graham Green that he complained to the SNA:

> [h]e is addicted to drink: he is frequently in financial difficulties and has often been sued for debt in this Court....When he succeeded to the Chieftainship he inherited several farms, but these have been gradually disposed of and now he is reduced to one whole farm and small portions of two others, and I do not think it will be many years before he parts with these. Taking everything into consideration I do not believe it would be possible to have a person more unfit for the position of Paramount Chief of the Baralongs [*sic*], as he claims to be, than this man.[343]

"Excessive drink" had placed Badirile in hospital, Green reported, after a "brain haemorrhage". Early in his reign Badirile "dispensed with his advisers, alienated tribal land and ran the Tshidi into debt"; it cost him the Tawanas' respect. Still, they backed him as chief, and opposed the Tau bloc's plan that Lekoko re-assume the regency, which Green also endorsed. Green's letter to the senior NAD administrator revealed that Badirile's chiefship troubled the Justice and NAD officials deeply. This hapless Chief died in the Stadt of "acute pneumonia" at noon on 1 April 1911, aged just 35. The *Mafeking Mail* assessed his chiefdom's human and geographical dimensions: the "Baralongs", then styled thus, numbered "14,400 souls" spread over 1,760km² in the Native Reserves and those problematic farms in the Protectorate. Directly after his death, the *Mail* reported, "Chief Lekoko will act as Regent for Badirile's eldest son, Tsipieareng, until he shall become of age". Within days, that innocent prediction gave way to dynastic combat.[344]

Lekoko's close ties to the Molemas (their sister was his wife) did not make him Silas and Joshua's ally. Silas and Lekoko had ruled the Stadt jointly during the Siege, but their political ambitions had divided them. Lekoko's descent and allegiance put him in the Tau faction and, reluctant to be more than a regent, he sought his own candidate among Montshiwa's available descendants.[345] Meantime, the Tawanas readied their own contender, the young, untested Bakolopang, Badirile's 18-year-old brother.

After Badirile's well-attended funeral (2 April 1911), the nomination of his successor began on Thursday, 6 April.[346] Emotions ran high at the *lekgotla*, but kept well in check. A sign of the likely outcome occurred at the start, when Lekoko, who had not yet found a suitable nominee, entered accompanied by little known John Bakolopang, until then studying in the Cape.[347] They occupied the

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1904, stated that Mafikeng CC, E Graham Green declared Badirile Tshidi chief in his deceased brother Besele's room, to the large crowd outside's evident joy. Molema ("Barolong": 113): Badirile soon yielded to Lekoko as Tshidi spokesman.

[342] Plaatje wrote this unsigned article as editor of *Tsala ea Becoana* [*TsalaBC*] for *MM*, 10 Apr 1911. *MM*, 13 May 1911: *The Spectator*'s Peregrino echoed STP's opinions more ornately, blaming Badirile's early death on undesirable friends who had lead him to "the shrine of Bacchus". Earlier, Plaatje printed Badirile's praise poem *Koranta*, 21 Dec 1904, a sign of his initial popularity.

[343] CA, 1/MFK 6/1/2/6, 07 Dec 1903, CC, Maf to SNA, Cape Town, "Conduct of Chief Badirile Montsioa".

[344] Comaroff, 1978: 6. CA, 1/MFK 6/1/2/6, 07 Dec 1903, CC, Maf to SNA, Cape Town, "Conduct of Chief Badirile Montsioa". *MM*, 01 & 03 Apr 1911, "Funeral of Chief Badirile", gave 1,100 square miles as the area. *MM*, 10 Apr 1911, Badirile was 35, Plaatje wrote in his very critical obituary.

[345] UW, A979 Be1, 10 July 1915, [illeg.], Maf to RM, Maf, "Death of Chief Lekoko". See *supra*, p.146 fn.298 & *infra*, p.159 fn.373. In addition to his having married two of Chief Molema's daughters, his own daughter, Emang, married Joshua's son, Sebopiwa. Comaroff (1978: 8): Mrs Emang Molema was Comaroff's informant. Elders in the Tau faction wished Lekoko to rule in his own right to prevent another "inexperienced" chief being installed. Yet, Lekoko foresaw that if he took office, it would eventually pass to his less able brother, Paul, the already controversial Lotlhakana headman.

[346] *MM*, 07 Apr 1911, "The Barolong Nation. Selection of a New Chief. Chief Lekoko appointed Regent". The funeral was in Chief Molema's Stadt church, since rebuilt by Israel. "Many Europeans were present...and such a gathering seldom seen as was assembled yesterday". Missionary stalwarts, Revs George Rolland (resident missionary) and AJ Wookey of Vryburg (LMS), who gave a "most sympathetic address in Secwana", conducted the service. *TsalaBC*, 09 Sep 1911, "Wesleyan Methodists and The Sechuana Bible": Wookey, a Wesleyan, translated parts of the Sechuana Bible.

[347] Molema ("Barolong": 114) called Bakolopang (also his brother-in-law) "a hilarious youth of some twenty-one summers", adding, "it did not require the gift of prophecy to see that his regime would not be characterised by peace and progress".

royal sofa. Silas and Joshua, apparently having a clear strategy then led in their trump cards, the two oldest councillors, Chiefs Seru Tau and Bathobatho Motshegare. The *Mail* emphasised their great age. Seru, Montshiwa's sole surviving brother, was easily 90. Bathobatho, Molema's older brother, Motshegare's son, was almost that.[348]

Invoking the authority of "native custom", Joshua explained the system of chiefly selection for the white guests: by virtue of seniority, these two ancient men could nominate the next chief. Had Silas and Joshua primed their two aged relatives beforehand, it was not reported. Joshua had ambitions himself, of becoming if not chief, then Bakolopang's regent. However, any argument for the former office would have been tenuous, and his "reputation for autocratic behaviour" rendered him unpopular, despite his great affluence. When their elders, Seru and Motshegare (age and decrepitude aside), very clearly and publicly nominated Bakolopang, with Lekoko as regent until his 25th birthday, both factions seemed content. But this decision turned out to be merely a "*pulamolomo*" (beginning to negotiations).[349]

Joshua declared his candidacy as regent, but Lekoko (at the Taus' urging) produced his own man: a migrant labourer, reputedly the late Kebalepile's son, Lotlamoreng, even younger than Bakolopang, and also requiring a regent.[350] Thus, Lekoko could retain his regent status, and provide a rival to the Molemas' Bakolopang. The Taus had two less likely, younger "reserves": Badirile's sons, Tshipieareng and Mokoto.[351] At this, the Molema brothers forcefully reasserted their understanding of "custom": Lekoko would act as a father to all three children, *and* to Bakolopang. That answer hardly resolved the embryonic argument. Promptly, another voice proposed that the European custom of voting be used to resolve deadlock, thereby implying that "native custom" had been breached. With consummate skill, Silas disrupted proceedings, prudently suggesting, "it might be inconvenient for the Europeans to remain any longer". Lengthy farewells to the guests postponed discussion long enough for the Civil Commissioner and government delegate on the Barolong Nation's board of Trustees, Mr Welsh, to approve Bakolopang's nomination and Lekoko's regency. Silas and Joshua Molema had temporarily achieved their purpose.[352]

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[348] *MM*, 08 Apr 1911, tried to clarify the complexities of chiefly succession by printing a limited genealogy of "The Barolong Ruling House". See Appendix A, pp.1 & V, for Seru and Motshegare. Breutz (1955: 192, para.553): on Montshiwa's return from Moshaneng, he sent Seru, who had been initiated as head of the *Maakathebe I mophato* at Matlwang (c.1845) to settle at Diswaing, near Rooigrond and later, in 1875, to prepare for war against the Rapulana.

[349] Breutz (1955: 196, para.564) gave Bakolopang's birthdate as 1893, which would explain why the Tshidi considered him a minor, as 25 was the customary age of chiefly majority, among the Tshidi. See Comaroff (1978: 8) on Joshua's reputation. In marriage negotiations (for *bogadi*, the money given to strengthen ties between the families of a future husband and wife), *pulamolomo* is the first money the groom's family place on the table, which allows talks to proceed. The expression is used metaphorically here, and with some irony, given the close, but stormy relations between the Molemas and the Montshiwas.

[350] Comaroff (1978: 8): Lotlamoreng was said to be under 20 and apolitical, but the Montshiwa-Tau faction convinced him to return to Mafikeng and assume the chiefship. Breutz (1955: 196, para.563): Tshipieareng was Badirile's first son by his second wife, and Mokoto the only son of his third wife, Khiba Rebecca Leepo, who married Silas after his first wife's death.

[351] Schapera (1952: 31) stated that Lotlamoreng Kebalepile, still Tshidi chief, headed the Kgosing ward. By 1918, he was recognised as a leader. He also headed the only *mophato* (*ma-Ikalagang*) of Bakolopang's reign. (Schapera, 1943a: 2).

[352] *MM*, 07 Apr 1911, "The Barolong Nation. Selection of a New Chief. Chief Lekoko appointed Regent". *MM*, 30 Nov 1911, "Montsioa's Stadt" and 07 Dec 1911, "The Native Scare" and *TsalaBC*, 13 Apr 1912, "Mass Meeting of the Barolong — Address of Mr Peregrino". Both newspapers placed Silas and Joshua Molema as next in importance to Lekoko at Tshidi meetings. MPP A979 Ab2, Joshua Molema Accounts &Receipts 1908-1918, contains many receipts indicating that Joshua and Silas' financial affairs were intertwined. Both involved in paying lawyers' fees for the Rapulana-Tshidi dispute. *TsalaBC*, 27 Apr 1912, "Tsa Bakoaledi" [From Correspondents], signed *Joshua Molema oa Mafika* [of Mafikeng]: Joshua wrote an article criticising how radically Tswana society had transformed, barely a century after his father's birth.

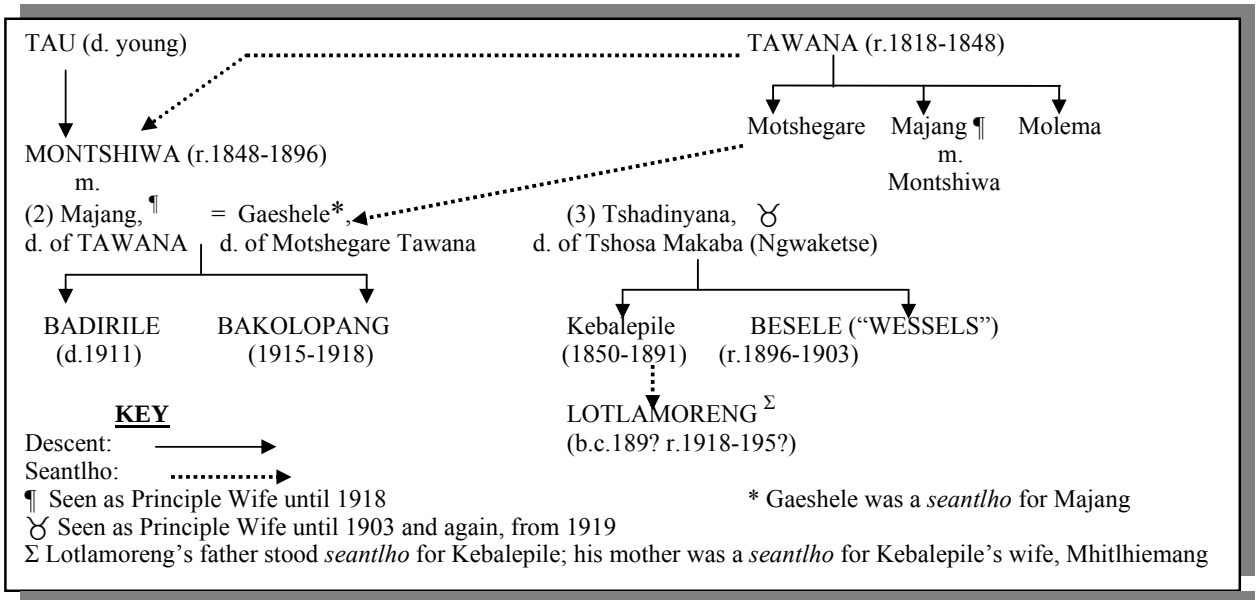


Table 3: The Revised (or Revisable) Tshidi Succession

The compromise proved uneasy and only deferred the leadership struggle until Bakolopang should reach his majority. Lekoko seemed pleased to be made regent, but not chief. In terms of the Tshidi's tacitly understood rules of chiefship (Rule 9), "[t]he regent enjoys all the rights and duties of office and may retain assets accruing to him while acting as incumbent".[353] A wise ruler, he carefully emphasised Silas and Joshua's status as councillors. Yet, while regent, Lekoko indicated that he, Lotlamoreng's sponsor, was overseeing the aspirant's education for chiefship. Equally, Joshua and Silas pressed Bakolopang's rights. Just after his installation, Lekoko and councillors fêted an analogous event in the macrocosm of Empire: King-Emperor, George V's coronation. This outpouring of ceremonial loyalty also symbolised the regent's subordination to the imperial crown, which contemporary commentators found fitting and not ironic.[354]

Dr Molema praised Lekoko's "brief but brilliant" rule: "[i]n patriotism and wisdom, he was a second edition of Montshiwa".[355] Peregrino reported that six months after Badirile's death, Lekoko (with the Molemas and Lefenya's backing) governed the Stadt and reserves with "stern and strict rules" and had "already wrought a surprising improvement in the general conditions of the tribe".[356] Lekoko regarded Silas as a trusted councillor and sent him as his personal representative to the region's headmen. Lekoko banned beer brewing in the Stadt to diminish drunkenness, and refurbished the Stadt, which Mafikeng's white rulers and the *Mail* called a major reversal of the previous chiefs' approach on "tribal" government. Had his regency lasted until Bakolopang was of age, further leadership-disputes

[353] Comaroff (1978: 3): *kgosi* is used for a chief in his own right and for a regent; the specific term for regent, *motshwareledi*, is reserved for procedural discussion, such as on 6 Apr 1911, when debating the status of rival claimants.

[354] *MM*, 23 June 1911, the event took place at the Mafikeng Drill Hall and the Bechuanaland Rifles performed full military honours, firing royal salutes as Mafikeng resounded with shouts of "His Majesty the King" from black citizens and white.

[355] Comaroff (1978: 9 in footnote): "Historical Pamphlet prepared for the 25th anniversary of Lotlamoreng's reign…drafted by SM Molema and approved by the *lekgotla*". MPP A979 10 Dec 1914, STP to Chief Lekoko: 6 months before Lekoko's death, Plaatje begged Lekoko to help him raise funds to publish *Native Life*. Willan (1984: 184, 187-88) Lekoko declined. Whether this related to tensions between the Molema and Tau factions is unclear. Also A979 Ab1 21 June 1915, Joshua Molema, Maf, Notice, "The Funeral of Chief Lekoko Montsioa will take place at the Royal cattle Kraal this afternoon (MONDAY …) at 3:00".

[356] *MM*, 24 Aug 1911, "The Baralongs". Also in *TsalaBC*, 03 Sep 1911, "The Barolongs". *TsalaBC*, 13 Apr 1912, "Mass Meeting of the Barolong – Address of Mr Peregrino": Lekoko declared publicly that he was Peregrino's close friend, having stayed several weeks in his Cape Town home. In his speech in the Stadt (11 Apr 1912), Peregrino praised Lekoko and the Rolong chiefs' wise rule over their people whom he advised to be "loyal and obedient to their Chiefs".

might have been avoided. However, the popular regent passed away in 1915, weakening "the Tau faction" seriously.[357]

Joshua again claimed the regency, to which the Tau faction held Lekoko's brother Paul Montshiwa had more title, though his limited capacity had also weakened their hand.[358] They pressed Lotlamoreng Frank's rights to chiefship strongly. Some claimed he was Kebalepile's son and thus direct heir to Montshiwa's chiefship. Yet, there had been almost five years between his birthdate and his putative father's death — which the Tawanas accentuated. This was no problem, argued Paul, leading the Tau faction; in terms of *seantlho* customs, a suitable male relative had raised seed for Kebalepile.[359] At this, the Molemas voiced surprise: Kebalepile's widow, Mhitlemang Makgetla was not Lotlamoreng's mother! Again, the Taus used *seantlho* to explain: Lotlamoreng's mother had been a *seantlho* for Mhitlemang. In this rationalisation, Lotlamoreng's "jural parents"(Kebalepile and Mhitlemang), mattered more than his biological ones.[360]

The Tshidi found baring such secrets in public very distressing. *Lekgotla* revelations grew evermore heated as they had a strongly performative aspect. Like any parliamentary debate, actors faced each other, voicing opinions directly and robustly. One of segregation's sad ironies was that they had limited ability to resolve such problems, as power ultimately lay with NAD officials who had minimal grasp of chiefly politics.

The Tawanas thought that Lotlamoreng was the Montshiwas' political tool and that his claims were very shaky. After returning to Mafikeng, he was hastily tutored in Setswana *mekgwa le melao* by Lekoko, and then in 1916 was sent to Rev Hornabrook at Healdtown for training.[361] Moreover, the Tawanas doubted the Tau claims of Lotlamoreng's *seantlho* origins and scandalously alleged that *Chief Montshiwa* had been the seed-bearer for Kebalepile, transforming "biological fatherhood into jural grandfatherhood".[362] Their accusation implied the violation of *seantlho* rules, for "a father cannot enter a house for his son", Joshua announced. The Taus asserted that one rule of chiefship might outweigh another: "every man must have an heir; it was not so important who the actual father was". They returned astutely to the complexity of Montshiwa's marriage: if Lotlamoreng really was Kebalepile's son, and the latter had been Montshiwa's heir, then *Kebalepile's* mother, Tshadinyana, and not Majang had been the chief's principal wife.

Government reports suggest that officials present may not have understood each speaker's political importance or that s*eantlho* was a secret custom. According to Under-SNA Barrett, one speaker (unnamed) stated that Kebalepile's widow "was taken away by Montsioa for the purpose and in due course he introduced to the people the child Lotlamoreng as their future chief". The speaker's name would have revealed the faction he represented. Barrett quoted the "venerable Stephen Lefenya" who

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[357] MPP A979 Bd1, 4 Feb 1915, Lekoko Montshiwa (typed by Sebopiwa Molema) to Chief William Letsapa, Kraaipan. *MM*, 06 Oct 1911, "Kaffer Beer". Since liberation in 1994, "Kaffir" is regarded as racially abusive and is now outlawed as hate speech. In 1911, it was an accepted colonial term for traditionally-brewed beer (*bojalwa*) until recently. MPP Bd1, 17 June 1915, SJ Molema to Rev George Weavind, Pretoria: as Lekoko's son-in-law, Sebopiwa sent Lekoko's best wishes to their former missionary. His was critically ill and Victoria Hospital doctors had sent him home for his final days.

[358] Comaroff (1978: 9). Jean Comaroff (1985: 37): this was the first of several Molema campaigns against Lotlamoreng, who broke the Methodist ascendancy at Mafikeng by opening his domain to other denominations.

[359] Breutz (1955: 197, para.567): Lotlamoreng was born on 18 Feb 1896. Molema (1966: 175): Kebalepile died in 1891 (see *supra*, pp.122-23,), but Breutz (para.559) said he had died "in a battle". A Bantu Methodist Church member, Lotlamoreng was only initiated in the Mailakgang regiment in 1918, after his nomination as chief. See Comaroff, 1978: 3, 10, Rule 3, *supra*, p.47.

[360] Comaroff, 1978: 9. Molema (1966: 70-71) and Breutz (1995: 194, para.559) provided details on Kebalepile's wife. Breutz just stated that Lotlamoreng was her son, as was Jan Masibi (son of her second marriage to Methusaleh Masibi, the Tlaro chief).

[361] Breutz (1955: 197, para.564): Lotlamoreng married 3 times, and was succeeded by his son, Kebalepile (b.1933). "*Mekgwa le melao*" are the laws and customs of a Setswana-speaking community. As Silas and Hornabrook had disagreed over an account for Modiri's education in 1910/11 (see *infra*, p.184), it is unclear who broached Healdtown on Lotlamoreng's behalf.

[362] Comaroff, 1978: 9.

"authoritatively expounded Barolong custom", but omitted his long ties to the Montshiwas. This might have explained Lefenya's claim that "if Montsioa had caused a younger son to raise up seed for his elder brother", Lotlamoreng was Kebalepile's son and the heir, or was else "illegitimate". Nche [son of Montshiwana, Lefenya's son-in-law], widely deemed Lotlamoreng's actual father, swore that he was "tribally" Kebalepile's son.[363]

Who could fathom the Chief's deeds of long ago? replied the Molemas. They had been too young then (Silas and Joshua would have been over forty, but were still "young men", in a gerontocratic society). They did know that Gaeshele was definitely taken as a *seantlho*; yet, Montshiwa had paid no *bogadi* for her. Being Majang's brother's child, her children were thus Majang's. By the same token, they were the Molemas' close relatives. Gaeshele's father Motshegare (c.1805-1852) had been Chief Molema's elder brother; Majang had been both of their sisters.[364] So, both Badirile and Bakolopang were indeed closely related to Silas and Joshua, their father's sister's sons (*bôrakgádiábôna*) or in *sekgoa* terms, "first cousins". Given that Majang had been Montshiwa's principal wife, as they saw it, Bakolopang was her eldest surviving son and should be the next chief.[365]

The Molemas, the Tawana faction's core, supported unstable Bakolopang for complex reasons: he could be chief in his own right, but if the claims of any of Badirile's sons were accepted, then Bakolopang might be made their regent. Besides, as Bakolopang's would be a minor until 1918, either Joshua or Silas would have to be his regent. Silas fortified his family's ties with Bakolopang and Badirile by twice playing the marriage card. He first negotiated his second daughter, Harriet's marriage to Bakolopang. This was a troubled union, Modiri hinted in letters to Harriet.[366] Bakolopang was stricken with drinking problems, violent tendencies and, some said, crippling periodic insanity![367] It became plain that he and Harriet would have no children. In this case, either Tshipieareng or Mokoto would inherit the chiefdom. Hence the second marriage card: Silas married Badirile's widow, Rebecca Khiba Leepo. Although Silas' sorrow over his wife Molalanyane's sudden death in 1918 cannot be doubted, Modiri's letters censured his father's re-marriage, less than a year later.[368] By marrying the mother of Badirile's young heir, Mokoto, Silas perhaps hoped both to strengthen ties with a future chiefly candidate and his own hand as a possible regent.[369]

Additionally, Joshua and Silas Molema were both wealthy farmers and businessmen, who "exploited their considerable control over economic resources to recruit followers at this time". Paul resented this

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[363] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 02 Feb 1917, E Barrett to SNA, Cape Town. SAB, GG 50/859, 10 June 1920, "Petition of the Headmen & members of the Ratshidi Branch of the Barolong Tribe…Mafeking", pp.1-4, for the Molema version. Schapera (1952: 31): Montshiwa Nche headed the Lefenya ward.

[364] Breutz (1955: 226, para.666) offered these dates for Motshegare.

[365] Comaroff, 1978: 9. The fact that Majang had been Montshiwa's biological half-sister (by Tawana) had been overlooked, as Tawana had not been Montshiwa's *jural* father, but had performed *seantlho* for his late brother Tau. See *supra* p.68.

[366] Comaroff (1978: 10) cited 8 Aug 1915, Paul Montshiwa to RM, Maf, mentioning that "a marriage between one of the Molema girls and John will be arranged — the obvious object is to get power into the Molema hands…". Cf. *supra*, p.105 fn.27 MPP A979 Be4, 17 Feb 1925, "Application concerning the estates of the late Badirile…& [JB] Montsioa", p.3. Harriet and Bakolopang divorced in 1923. He died in 1925, with no property other than the farm "Devondale".

[367] Schapera, 1943a: ZK Matthews' letter, 11 Oct 1944. MPP A979 Be1, 10 July 1915, Letter from [Silas' handwriting?] Maf, to RM, Maf, "Death of Chief Lekoko". NTS, 209 1/44 Pt 2, 24 Jan 1917, E Barrett to SNA, Cape Town: Joshua claimed he had suffered "personal violence at the hands of John Montsioa [&] serious loss of prestige... among the Barolong". MPP A979 Be1, 09 Nov 1916, STM to RM, Maf, the *lekgotla* heard the assault case in early Nov 1916. MPP A979 Be1, 23, 24 & 26 July 1920, C Nicholas, SPN, Maf to STM, Maf. John's mental condition worsened by mid-1920; he was hospitalised at the Government's pleasure in Pretoria for 2 years, and released to Horatio M'belle (Modiri's schoolfriend) in late-1922 (Also MPP A979 Be1, 29 Sep 1922, I Bud. M'belle to Richard [Lekoko/Marumolwa?], and Aa4, 11 May 1922, C Nicholls, SPN, Maf to STM, Maf).

[368] Schapera, 1943a: ZK Matthews' letter, 11 Oct 1944. Breutz (1955: 197, para.565): Bakolopang contracted a relationship with Ketshimile Setlhako Mautso, for whom *bogadi* was paid during Lotlamoreng's reign. MPP A979 Ad1, 30 November 1919, SMM, Dublin to STM, Maf. Breutz (1955: 135-36, paras.367-68) Rebecca was descended from Mokoto, Chief Ratlou's grandson; Gontse, Ratlou chief at Khunwana and Leepo were his sons.

[369] Silas was Executive Dative of Badirile and Bakolopang's estates, confirming their reliance on him. MPP A979 Be4, 17 Feb 1925, "Application [re] estates of the late Badirile…& [JB] Montsioa", pp.2-3: Rebecca was one of Badirile's two wives married under what courts termed "Native Custom". She and Silas married "according to Christian Rites". MPP A979 Ac1, 26 Apr 1916, SJM, Mauñ, N'gamiland, to STM, Maf, cryptically mentioned Silas' plans to control "the nation".

and complained to the Magistrate, who informed the NAD in August 1915. His letter discussed the Molemas' strategic marriage of Harriet and Bakolopang and the latter's anti-social behaviour: he drank, "consorted with the riff-raff of the town" and had little interest in "tribal" affairs.[370]

The Magistrate's communication of local concerns about the Tawanas' ambitions was one-sided; he did not mention the Tau faction's purpose in recruiting a little-known man. Indeed, Lotlamoreng's greenness and Paul's ineptness were Joshua's strongest cards, though his own candidate's frailties signalled to the Tshidi that backing Bakolopang meant backing the Molemas.[371] SNA Edward Dower (who had been Cape SNA in John X Merriman's government) rejected Paul's request that Bakolopang be allowed to rule in his own right.[372] He was not only unfit for office, opined local and national NAD administrators, but was unlikely to reverse his elder brothers' "serious mismanagement". Thus, Botha appointed Joshua Molema, "subject to good behaviour," and on the Magistrate's recommendation to the SNA.[373] Tshidi outrage at Joshua's promotion caused the NAD to withdraw from such appointments. Many Tshidi preferred Bakolopang, to Lotlamoreng but, Joshua realised, did not want him. The Molemas tried to ignore Tau faction leader, Paul's continued control of the *lekgotla*, which all attended to take leadership decisions — save them.[374]

Dower's attitude characterised much NAD correspondence at this time: chiefs and the "tribes" they governed lacked responsibility, justifying the intervention of high-handed white officials, like Dower (nationally) and local Mafikeng RMs. Apparently, they preferred dealing with little-educated chiefs, whom they could overrule and depose. The Molema brothers, fluent in English, whose life-styles and expectations closely resembled their own, deeply unsettled Barrett, Dower and Acting-Minister FS Malan, former Cape liberal and, eleven years before, a key proponent of Union.[375]

The petition that 61 senior *lekgotla* members forwarded to Prime Minister Botha was one example of the Tshidi elite's mettle. Writing as one set of leaders to another, they denied the government's suzerainty in selecting Tshidi chiefs. The petition's righteous tone and insistence on legalities hardly placated the NAD:

> [t]he Barolong take any appointment of a Paramount Chief…without the assent of the people as an infringement of the jurisdiction of the Native Chiefs over their own people, which was promised to them. Their minds are greatly exercised by the appointment of a Chief by the Government and they fear that the Government are contemplating legislation involving interference with the rights and privileges assured to the Barolong without previous consultation with them and without their knowledge.[376]

Whether responding to this petition or to their own imperatives, NAD recognised Bakolopang in February 1917, demoting Joshua as regent, until it heard Lotlamoreng's claims.[377] This followed Barrett and a large Tshidi assembly's fiery five-hour meeting. Barrett realised how few Tshidi approved of

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[370] Comaroff (1978: 10) cited a letter of 8 Aug 1915 from Paul Montshiwa to the RM, but gave no NTS reference.

[371] This view emerges from documents in the large NTS 209 file, and is supported by Comaroff's 1978 article.

[372] Lewsen, 1982:302.

[373] MPP A979 Be1, 04 Nov 1915. Dower, SNA to RM, Maf, "Death of Acting Chief Lekoko Montsioa: Appointment of Joshua Molema as Successor" & Aug 1915 [date illeg], RM, Maf to STM, "Death of…Chief Lekoko [&] Appointment of…Successor". MPP A979 Ac1, 09 Jan 1916, SJM, Mauñ, to STM, Maf, noted Joshua's appointment as Acting Chief for two years from Nov 1915. Contrary to Comaroff's (1978: 11) statement that this was the only time that government intervened in a Tshidi chiefly dispute, it was the first intervention; Acting-MNA Malan's removal of Bakolopang was the second occasion. (See *infra*, p.162.)

[374] Comaroff (1978: 10) cited NAD, Letter no.675, F.718 of 25/9/15, RM, Maf, to SNA. Molema ("Barolong": 114) argued that Joshua, though a "monarchist of the deepest dye", was not universally respected: "[d]uring his regency, ...the Tshidi Barolong were divided into two hostile parties — the small Government party of intellectuals, supporting Joshua Molema, and the much larger national party of traditionalists supporting the tribal nominee — Bakolopang Montshiwa".

[375] Lewsen, 1982: 293.

[376] MPP A979 Be1, 05 July 1916, "Petition To The Right Honourable, the Prime Minister for the Union of South Africa and Minister for Native Affairs", includes previous quotation.

[377] Comaroff (1978: 11): this was after Joshua's brief banishment of Bakolopang, to avert scandal over his behaviour.

Joshua's regency. Plus, they could not decide whether Bakolopang or Lotlamoreng was the rightful — and the abler — chief. Barrett observed that the first speaker was Silas Molema, promoting his son-in-law's appointment:

> [h]is attitude in the matter would appear to be dictated by selfish or personal considerations as all the speakers who followed him — with the exception of one or two who were non-committal — were asking for the appointment of John in an acting capacity — urged the claims to the Chieftainship of Lotlamoreng.[378]

At the meeting's end, Barrett recognised Bakolopang as chief only until Lotlamoreng could present his case.[379] But, Bakolopang's behaviour grew so erratic during his short rule that solicitor and senior SANNC politician Pixley ka I Seme warned that his mounting debt was causing the "Barolong Nation...very deep disgrace".[380] He was often arraigned for assault, even one on Joshua.[381] Bakolopang attracted trouble recorded his brother-in-law, Dr Molema, having "no conception of his duties to the tribe". He kept dissolute company "of black and white races", alienating public sympathy utterly.[382] He depended on Silas to run Tshidi business. Even in 1920, while recovering in Pietersburg, he begged Silas to summon the *lekgotla*, and petition for his reinstatement as chief — a large task, given the political and legal manoeuvring involved.[383]

But that pitiful request came after his deposition. Lotlamoreng's education began paying off and he protested to the Magistrate the injustice of Bakolopang's remaining "paramount chief and acting for nobody":

> "I deem myself to be the paramount chief of the Ratshidi Barolong by virtue of birth…I am a married man, I see no reason why the time should be prolonged, for I am quite capable to watch my interests, and John [Bakolopang] to act for me is absurd since he is my equal with the difference of one year…".[384]

The Tshidi councillors could not resolve matters within the *lekgotla*. Bakolopang clung to his rights, though was too unstable to rule. Lotlamoreng's prospects improved. He still encountered Tawana faction opposition, although many of their supporters had joined the Tau bloc, leaving it little more than a "Molema" faction.

On 17 November 1919, frustrated by this impasse, Acting-Minister of Native Affairs, FS Malan intervened personally. With an NAD hierarchy overseeing the case (Acting-SNA Barrett, Mafikeng RM, CR Chalmers, Mafikeng SPN, CA Nicholson, NAD's FP Courtney Clarke, and CT Loots, ministerial private secretary), Cape liberal Malan descended on Mafikeng's Court House.[385]

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[378] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 02 Feb 1917, E Barrett to SNA, Cape Town.

[379] NTS 81, 2112/164, "British Bechuanaland: Native Unrest", 09 Feb 1917, E Dower, SNA, Cape Town to Under-SNA, Pta.

[380] MPP A979 Aa4, 01 Feb 1918, Seme, Solicitor, Johannesburg, to STM. *TsalaBC,* 30 March 1912, mentioned Seme (of Jesus College, Oxford and BA, Columbia University) as initiating the movement to found the SANNC.

[381] *TsalaBT*, 17 July 1915, "Baralongs' Paramount Chief — Appeal in the Local Supreme Court". On 12 June 1915, Mafikeng's RM convicted him of assault and theft against Transvaal farmer Koert Grobler. The appeal set aside the theft sentence but upheld the assault charge, imposing a fine or prison term. For Joshua's assault, see NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 17 Nov 1919, Minutes of meeting,…Court House, Maf, between [MNA] and [Tshidi], Ag-Minister Malan's address to the Tshidi.

[382] Molema ("Barolong": 115) noted that Bakolopang ruined his health and that as a "pugnacious" man of "great physical strength, his fistic performances upon both black and white people did not help to earn for him too enviable a reputation".

[383] MPP A979 Be1, 08 Apr 1920, John Montsioa, Pietersburg (possibly written for him) to STM. Aa1, 26 Apr 1920, HTM, Pietersburg [now Polokwane], to STM, Maf, noted Bakolopang's improvement in the asylum, and Ad3, 28 July 1920, SMM to HTM.

[384] Comaroff (1978: 12) did not give a source for this letter.

[385] On Cape liberalism, see *infra*, pp.234-35, 248, 251-53, 289-90 & fn.384, 315-18 & fns.166-167, 327-30, 336-37, 340, 345-347 & fn.321, & 362-65.

Isaiah M'belle, once the Cape's highest-ranking African court interpreter, translated for 700 to 800 Molopo Reserve residents.[386] His former seniority probably earned him the officials' respect, but as Plaatje's brother-in-law, he may have supported the Molemas. Ostensibly, the main issue was Bakolopang's rampant raiding on neighbours. Accusation and counter-accusation flowed thick and fast. Leading Lotlamoreng supporter, Tiego Tawana (Selere Tau's son), opposed Bakolopang fiercely. Tiego was another Siege hero, having led "the younger corps", his *mophato*, the Maganelwa.[387] He accused Silas of being behind raids on Lotlhakana.[388] He had an old grievance against Silas. In April 1914, he had icily written to demand the return of £5-0-0 to him, declaring "*Karesebaka Sefelile Kgosi Keletile mogosena kagamadi*..." ("Because the delay is over, Chief, I have waited for it about the money…").[389]

Chief Saane's son, William Tawana also berated Silas, indicating how deeply the Tau faction resented those "advantages" that had given the Molemas their status among the Tshidi: "[i]t was the gentry in top hats [*Silas and Joshua*] here to-day that had led John astray. In their tribe there was one snake [in the garden] left who was Silas Molema". Silas had built his authority on his education and wealth, on assimilation of western dress codes and customs, and his ability to approach government; all these now served against him.[390] The "top hat", however metaphorical, was alienating him from his people.

Truly, the secret conclaves of these family members were hard to fathom: Tiego, William and Silas were all Tawana's grandsons. Yet, their antagonism showed how deeply the Tshidi's conflict ran, even while they faced a lawsuit against the Rapulana. William raised genealogical issues, about Lotlamoreng's legitimacy, Silas' father and the *seantlho* custom. Younger than Silas, William apologised for his language, but Silas had scandalised Montshiwa's memory. He hinted that even Silas' father had performed *seantlho* for his late brother Seetsela, making Silas a "weak link". William pressed Lotlamoreng's claims and wanted Bakolopang (Silas' creature) deposed: drunkards like Bakolopang could not settle Tshidi affairs![391]

Once cornered, Silas attacked, defiantly slating Malan for calling the meeting hastily; the Tshidi should have had six, even three months' warning, not a week's notice, less than "a kitchen servant" received! Perhaps alarmed by this angry, articulate black gentleman, Malan reminded the community how long their dispute had lasted. Bitterly, Silas accused Malan of deciding against Bakolopang before the meeting. He reinvoked Montshiwa's name and authority, stating that on Kebalepile's death, the chief had arranged that seed be raised to him. He hoped the Minister would let the Tshidi choose their chief *now*, by popular vote. Abruptly, Silas played safe: whatever decision Malan took, he said, he reserved his own opinion.[392]

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[386] See *infra*, p.199, for M'belle's dismissal from the Justice Department.

[387] Schapera (1943a: 2), "Barolong-booraTshidi: men's Regiments". Tiego (b.1874) belonged to the Tau faction, being Selere, Montshiwa's younger brother's son, but took the family name "Tawana", (see Appendix A, p.V). Breutz (1955: 212-14, paras.610-614): from Moshaneng, Montshiwa sent Selere to occupy Dithakong, while Molema settled Mafikeng. Selere was a key figure in the Rapulana war, in which he died (1881). Tiego headed the *maGanelwa mophato* in 1892, and was Lotlamoreng's deputy for many years, first at Mafikeng, then at Dithakong. Plaatje, 1973 & 1999: 63 & 182 fn.45.

[388] *DFA*, 13 Nov 1920, reported that the Silas-Tiego animosity had consequences: Tiego and Dinko Mooki later sued him, Goitsenna and Molokwane Lekoma, Tau Tawana, and Motshegare Motshegare for "stealing two head of cattle from each of them, or alternatively with malicious injury to property by shooting an ox, the property of Tiego Tawana and one heifer, the property of Dinko Mooki". The defence used the Ratshidi succession dispute and Silas' refusal to recognise Lotlamoreng. Judge Sir John Lange found for Tawana and Mooki, but discharged Molema and the Lekomas, while fining the other accused. This was another long case incurring Silas greatly in lawyers' fees.

[389] MPP A979 Aa2.55 [number missing], 25 Apr 1914, Chief Tiego Tawana, Maf, to Sillax [*sic*] Molema, Maf. That Tiego, a fellow Stadt-resident, wrote to Silas, rather than delivering his demand orally, suggests how long the debt was overdue. He also seems to have had the Superintendent of Natives overstamp the letter as a way of putting matters on record.

[390] Breutz (1955: 215-18, paras.617-25, 645): William Tawana (b.1868), Saane's third son and brother-in-law of Silas' daughter, Seleje, succeeded his brother Andrew as Modimola headman. As noted, Saane's capture (1899) had escalated Tshidi-Rapulana hostilities.

[391] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 17 Nov 1919, "Minutes of meeting...at Court House, Mafeking, between Hon. [MNA] and Ratsili Barolong": parts of the minutes are in reported speech. Lekomo was one of Chief John's drinking companions.

[392] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 17 Nov 1919, "Minutes of meeting...at Court House, Maf, between [MNA] and Ratsili Barolong".

Several speakers impressed upon the Molemas and the officials that Silas and family were a seed-bearer's sons and could not condemn Lotlamoreng's *seantlho* origins. Chief Molema had entered his late brother, Seetsela's hut to raise seed to him and, as evidence of his talents, there was Silas, the living proof.[393]

After these heated exchanges, former Cape liberal, Malan rose and via interpreter M'belle, barred debate. Although on Tshidi ground, he was not their guest. Indeed, his ministerial authority made him their critic. He coolly overrode the rival histories of Lotlamoreng's conception with his Department's claim to "know" the Tshidi past! In an intentionally didactic tirade, peppered with rhetorical questions, he stated that NAD was currently responsible for chiefly appointments. He contemptuously traced their rulers' decline from Montshiwa to the drunken "Wessels", Badirile and "John". Even Lekoko and Joshua were portrayed in the worst light. Referring to the politics of retrospective regency — deciding *post facto* that a chief had really been a regent — he said *all* the chiefs since Montshiwa other than "John" had acted for Lotlamoreng.[394]

After vilifying the Tshidi, he gave Bakolopang no chance to reply and deposed him. No one defended him. Just as summarily, Malan appointed Lotlamoreng chief. He closed the meeting by openly rebuking Silas, in a tone usually reserved for the "kitchen boys" Silas had cited:

> I wish that Silas Molema who is a man of influence among you will not go away and oppose the new chief. I cannot force him to have a new opinion but I expect him to carry on the affairs of the tribe.[395]

Here, Malan avoided accusing Silas of malign influence over Tshidi affairs, by warning him to keep the peace. He was sufficiently threatening for both Silas and the Tshidi to feel that, as the highest NAD official, he would personally watch over potential Molema machinations. Silas' faction — three-quarters of the Tshidi, they claimed — made a last-ditch attempt to regain influence. Six months later, they petitioned the Governor-General over Lotlamoreng's allegedly unfair governance. Had they managed, Silas would have wielded considerable local power. The petition asked that:

> John Bakolopang Montsioa be re-instated as Chief…; that failing such reinstatement that the… Tribe be divided up into different Sections, i.e. Stadts, without any…Chief; each stadt to conduct its own internal affairs under its own Chief Headman [and] settle its own tribal, civil and criminal disputes and trials, the only reference to any outside Court to be to the Magistrate as an Appeal Court in terms of Sections 33 BB Proclamation No 2 of 1885.
>
> Should neither of the above be done there is no doubt that in the near future disturbances of a very serious nature, which are now maturing, will materialise.[396]

The petition failed, but Silas found a suitably symbolic way, given his respect for land and power, to express dissatisfaction: he refused to pay Lotlamoreng the nominal quitrents on Mabete, so refusing to acknowledge him as the lawful replacement for Badirile's sons, and for his son-in-law, Bakolopang.[397]

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[393] Schapera (1943a) filed ZK Matthews' letter (dated 11 Oct 1944) with his genealogy of the "Barolong booraTshidi". *Seantlho* was central to the Molema-Montshiwa dispute. Matthews, who knew the family well, and Schapera corresponded in 1944, just after Schapera and Sebopiwa Molema compiled his extensive genealogy of the Tshidi lineage. Matthews wrote: "[a]bout objections to Lotlamoreng's becoming chief, I know that the Molemas were the leaders of the opposition, but I am not aware that they actually then raised the point that they themselves were entitled to the succession on the ground of the 'seantlho' marriage of Molema to the 'widow' of Seetsela. I believe that their case rested principally on the contention that 'seantlho' marriages were contrary to the principles of Christian marriage, Christianity having as it were become the official religion of the tribe".

[394] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 17 Nov 1919, Minutes of meeting...at Court House, Mafeking, between [MNA] and Ratsili Barolong.

[395] NTS 209 1/44 Pt 2, 17 Nov 1919, Minutes of meeting...at Court House, Mafeking between [MNA] and Ratsili Barolong.

[396] SAB, GG 50/859, 10 June 1920. "Petition of the Headmen and members of the Ratshidi Branch of the Barolong Tribe in the district of Mafeking", pp.1-4. This attached the Molema genealogy, which differed from Schapera's (1943a: 2). Theirs put Badirile and Bakolopang in Montshiwa's first house with Buku; Schapera put them in the fifth house with a sister Moledi.

[397] Schapera, 1943a. MPP A979 Aa4, 24 Jan 1920, Lotlamoreng K Montsioa to "Dear father" [Silas Molema], correspondence from Lotlamoreng to Silas indicated no loss of love between them.

If this petition communicated the Molema faction's ambitions, it conveyed Silas' desire to steer a chiefship weakened by drink, immature leadership, and the South African state's encroachment. In terms of the Tshidi's rules of chiefship, he was merely seeking to substitute intelligent, independent leadership for, he believed, the weak rule of either Bakolopang or Lotlamoreng. This made him not the adversary of either chief, but of the South African state. This "also illuminates the Tshidi view that wisdom is the political resource par excellence".[398] Silas' intellect earned him Malan's very personalised warning. The Minister's tone suggested that he knew when he had met his equal.

The intense and rambling intra- and inter-Rolong struggles established Silas' powerful position in 1919. As the Tshidi's senior councillor, he was an astutely self-interested man, but "self" to him meant community; he cared as deeply about his hard-won intellectual and material property as about Tshidi and national politics. These struggles also brought out the Rolong themes of land, power and the history that created their meaning. This history, which continually re-played the Molema family's decisive role in intra-Rolong politics and in dealings with the NAD, was the foreground to Silas' political career and the backdrop to Modiri Molema's histories of the Tshidi past and present.



[398] Comaroff, 1978: 16.