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

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CHAPTER ONE:
"CHIEF MOLEMA AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF TSHIDI HISTORY"



Relatively little information remains of the first Chief Molema's life, yet the vital choices he made and the independent town he built made him vital to the history of the Molopo region. But for Chief Molema, this thesis argues, his grandson might not have interested himself in history at all. This chapter reconstructs aspects of his life that have been documented and to which Dr Molema would return, when attempting to re-create and explain his community's history. This story begins some 83 years after the old Chief's death.



In 1964, near the end of Dr Seetsele Modiri Molema's life, historian Dan Johns interviewed him in Mafikeng.[1] Johns highlighted his recent political life in the African National Congress, skirting the doctor's youth and his family's eminence in the (then) small British Bechuanaland town, Mafikeng. Likewise, he skimmed over Molema's education in the Eastern Cape, Scotland and Ireland.

Dan Johns [DJ]: What was your early education?
Dr Seetsele Modiri Molema [SMM]:
I was born here in Mafeking and went to school here at the Mission School until Standard 4, then to the Mission School in Hazeltown (?) [*Johns seems not to have known about Healdtown*].[2] Went to Lovedale for Matric, and then went overseas. My father was keen on education, he was the first teacher of the people here. We were the leaders in education, this was our family tradition.
DJ: Did the family hold any particular position?
SMM: Yes, my grandfather was the brother of a chief.
DJ: Of which tribe.
SMM: The Barolong.[3]

For the rest of the interview, Dan Johns focused on the man whom political posters had hailed in the 1950s, those heady days of the Congress Alliance, as one of "our national leaders".[4] The interview's focus on Molema's later life may create the impression that historians have valued his political life far more than his early life, family history, his historical writing and medical practice. Molema's answers to Johns make fleeting allusion to important aspects of family history, his father, Silas Thelesho's educational prowess and his grandfather's daring religious and political innovations. In many ways, Silas and Modiri's generations were both offspring of this choice. Dr Molema plainly communicated his pride in the family's educational tradition, begun by his grandfather: "[w]e were the leaders in education, this was our family tradition".[5] Some twenty-seven years after the doctor's death (1965), Rre Phiriepa Thwane, headman on one of Molema's several farms, Motsosa, described both the doctor and his father as "my chiefs". Whether the younger Molema was or was not recognised by the South

[1] SOAS Archive, University of London, MS38007 7, H Selby Msimang ("Notes from Autobiography", p.203) remarked on the ways in which academics were "targeting" older members of the African elite as repositories of history: "I have had young fellows coming all the way from Cape Town for help in historical projects. What did that commissioner say? Oh to milk my brain". Whether Dr Molema felt that his brain was being duly "milked" has not been recorded.

[2] The Methodist Missionary Institution, Healdtown at Ft. Beaufort in the Eastern Cape educated several generations of Molemas, including Silas Thelesho, all his sons, and his brother Joshua Moshoela Molema's children.

[3] University of South Africa [UNISA], Molema Papers, (microfilm) 2:xM1118:77, 4 March 1964, [Nfn], Interview with Dr SM Molema by Dan Johns, [cited as *Molema, Johns Interview, 1964*] Molema passed away the next September.

[4] UW, African National Congress Collection [ANC], AD2186 Ha8, 1p pamphlet, "Meet Our National Leaders". Molema's name appears under ANC President, Dr JS Moroka's. Other leaders named were Natal politician, AWG Champion (Industrial Workers Commercial Union organiser), and the South Africa Indian Congress' Dr George Naicker. The 4 men addressed the Market Square Rally, Johannesburg on 01 July 1950. My thanks to Dr Tim Clynick for this document.

[5] *Molema, Johns Interview, 1964*.

African and Bechuanaland governments as a chief is not material here; what is significant is that members of the Tshidi continued to do so.[6] Leadership of the Tshidi at Mafikeng was of prime importance to three generations of Molemas and led Modiri to play a leading role on more committees than most people can fit into their lives.

The complex interplay of old devotions and modern leanings is the stuff of which Molema's life was composed. Studying the past, and through it, oneself, is frequently part of the individual subject's psychological development. Molema pursued that development further and made reinterpreting family and community origins his point of departure as an historian. Oft-retold family stories may eventually constitute a kind of mythic experience through which an individual constitutes his subjectivity:

> [f]amily stories can give a feeling of continuity of how the past led to the present, of rootedness and family tradition, and so help to make sense of a complicated and fraught family life in the present.[7]

Mythic experience was one thing, but political power, land and, ultimately, justice, hinged on telling the clan history correctly, in Molema's view. His *raison d'être* for writing three published and several unpublished works began with these remembered family stories onto which he grafted a larger architecture of African history and moral illustration. His passion for the past is harder to dissect and explain. His need to read, research and re-create the past was so strong that it amounted to a creative passion. It had a logical aspect that could be rationalised as a need to conserve the past in the face of two forms of erosion: the inevitable atrophy that occurs as time passes, and the aggressive assaults that African communities faced in present and past, upon the places in which they lived, the ways in which they lived, and the people with whom they chose to live. That second aspect gave Molema an added impetus: his creative passion united to his moral and political beliefs — so strong that they amounted to a sense of vocation — in his duty to bear testimony about the past. Molema knew that he was fortunate in knowing so much about his and his family's past. His family's unusual access to the past was, in a sense, a starting place for his interest which, fused together with his unusual ability to represent it. To gain more insight into his historical inspiration, this thesis reconstructs the surviving documentary evidence of his grandfather and father's lives.

The Molema family narratives and over two centuries of Tshidi history revolves around the children of two chiefs named Tau.[8] Conflicts among the descendents of these two Chiefs animated many family stories. The first Tau lived in the mid-eighteenth century and the second during the wars of the 1820s and 1830s, which some mid twentieth-century historians called the "*difaqane*".[9] The Tau histories were not simply recitations of genealogical descent and internecine dispute; they provided the framework — a "shaping mythology" —in which future generations situated themselves, and fought out among themselves aspects of those past struggles for mastery over the Molopo region's resources.[10]

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[6] Interview with Rre Piriepa Thwane, 1992. (*Piriepa Thwane Interview, 1992*.) Thwane ran the Motsosa Estate for Dr Molema and his father. KAB 1/MFK 57, N2/4/2, 29 September 1960. Chief KL Montsioa, Maf, to Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Maf, showed that Thwane's application for a General Dealer's licence, plus 18 others, were pending. Dr Molema sat on the District Council, given his hereditary position, popularity, and individual eminence. His Bechuanaland landed interests — the family farm, Mabete — entitled him to sit on the Bechuanaland Legislative Council.

[7] John Byng-Hall interviewed by Paul Thompson, 1990. "The Power of Family Myths". In Raphael Samuel & Paul Thompson, (eds), 1990. *The Myths We Live By*. (London & New York: Routledge), p.217.

[8] " Tau", meaning lion in Setswana, connotes bravery and heroic action, though ZK Matthews (1954: 8) likened some of the elder Tau's actions to the cruelty of Shaka's reign over the Zulu ("*Pušo ya gagwê gare ga BaRolong e ka tšhwantshiwa le ya Tšhaka gare ga MaZulu*".)

[9] William Lye (ed), 1975. *Andrew Smiths's Journal of his expedition into the interior of South Africa, 1834-1836.* (Cape Town: AA Balkema), p.227. On 9 June 1835, Smith witnessed the effects of these wars on the Rolong. He described his journey through the Mariqua [Marico] district to Mzilikazi's nearby kraal: "[s]oon after leaving the Mariqua … we passed over the ruins of several large kraals which had been inhabited by the Battow [Tau's Rolong] tribe while this district …was in possession of the Bishuanas [Batswana]. One of the largest of these we found to have been reduced to the state in which we found it by means…or rather at the instigation of, Coenrad Buis, a Cape Colonist of whom we have already spoken and who, together with his personal adherents, assisted the Barahutzi [Bahurutshe] in destroying and plundering this tribes."

[10] Byng-Hall, 1990: 221. See KAB PAS 2/31 "Mafeking Municipality: Diversion of the Molopo River". Town Clerk, Maf, to the Medical Officer of Health for the Colony, Cape Town, 5 Apr 1910, showed that almost a century later, Tau's

"The Barolong", wrote Plaatje in 1932, "had fought their way down from the great lakes and were known among other tribes as baga Rungoana le bogale (the people with the sharp spear)…".[11] In his unpublished "History of the Barolong", Dr Molema detailed the Rolong's geographic and demographic situation. The four main communities inhabited an area bounded by Ganyesa (near Vryburg) to the south and the Ramatlabama tributary of the Molopo River to the north. The four Rolong branches were spread out over the area but each retained allegiance to its reigning chiefs. The Ratlou were spread out: their "capital" was Ganyesa, with satellite villages nearby, a larger town at Khunwana, on the Setlagole River (near today's Lichtenburg), and two villages near Mafikeng. The Tshidi's centre was at Mafikeng, with outposts at Modimola, Dithakong, Mareetsane and Mosita villages. While some of the Rapulana dwelt at Bodibe (Polfontein, near Lichtenburg), most lived near Mafikeng, at Lotlhakana [Rietfontein], a proximity producing future confrontations. The furthest-flung Rolong community were the Seleka, who remained at Thaba 'Nchu in the Free State after the 1840s, when the three other groups returned to the Molopo.[12] In practice, this distribution meant that Rolong chiefs' jurisdiction was "tribal" rather than territorial — a situation that the South African government would forcibly change by the mid-1930s.

While the Rolong might claim seniority among other Tswana communities, recent studies suggest that the politics of the day may influence such contentions. While Dr Molema tended to accept colonial conventions that claimed to "explain" ethnic distinctions among southern African communities, more recent scholars have challenged such notions of ethnic origin, settlement south of the Zambesi and even nomenclature.[13] The Comaroffs noted in 1991 that there is increasing debate about these matters. Molema argued that the dominant people inhabiting the southeastern highveld and surrounding regions had always called themselves "by the generic name of Becoana, or Bechuana and Basuto". However, as other scholars have shown, the emergence of the collective term "Tswana" was framed in the context of colonial encounters on the Cape Colony's northern frontier, along the Orange River during the nineteenth century. These were encounters between "Nonconformist missionaries and peoples of the South African interior", the Comaroffs contend:

> [th]e former were footsoldiers of colonialism, the humble agents of a global movement. The latter, who would come to be known as "the" Tswana, inhabited a world with is own history, a history of great political communities built and broken.[14]

The Comaroffs argue that it is difficult to know anything of Tswana history *outside* of missionary annals. The "knowability" of the precolonial past and the nature of the evidence available to all historians, whether colonial or critical of colonialism, are central to this thesis.

For Parsons, southern highveld archaeological excavations suggest the indeterminacy of their erstwhile dwellers' ethnic origins. Tswana- and Sotho- speakers had common origins which coalesced into political and ethnic identities during the nineteenth century.[15] "*Bechuana*" itself was a nineteenth-century coinage:

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descendants competed with Lichtenburg farmers, Transvaal, over access to the Molopo. This issue caused the South African government to involve itself in the water affairs of Mafikeng and surrounding farms.

[11] Solomon Plaatje, "Chief Montsioa". In TD Mweli Skota, 1930. *The African Yearly Register: Being an Illustrated National Biographical Dictionary (Who's Who) of Black Folks in Africa*. (JHB: The Orange Press), pp.53-57. This thesis cites the re-printed article in Brian Willan, (ed), 1996. *Sol Plaatje: Selected Writings*. (JHB: WUP), p.413.

[12] Molema ("Barolong": 20, 26) also claimed that the Barolong were the largest Tswana grouping (155,000 or ⅛th of the estimated Tswana population — 1,250,000). The Ratlou village outposts were at Morokweng, Bothithong (Motito), Tlagameng and Konke, near Ganyesa, and Phitshane and Tshidilamolomo villages near Mafikeng.

[13] Molema, 1920: 19, 35, 36.

[14] John & Jean Comaroff, 1992. *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*. (Boulder & Oxford: Westview Press), pp.33 & 40.

[15] Neil Parsons, 1982. "Later Iron Age: Central and Western Region". From *A New History of Southern Africa*. (London: Macmillan). In Johan de Bruyn, ed. 1992. *Themes in the early history of Southern Africa*. (Pretoria: UNISA), p.199.

> developed by whites...and often applied very loosely to cover all the African peoples of the interior. As a classificatory term, "Tswana" is convenient. But while it denotes a degree of cultural homogeneity, it in no way represents any kind of socio-political entity. Indeed, Tswana history is characterised by internal fission and division resulting in the creation of numerous independent chiefdoms.[16]

Maylam referred initially to a common *modern* identity. But, Tswana identity emerged gradually. As missionary intervention and long-distance trade with the colony increased during the nineteenth century, Tswana identity became an object of study and definition by missionaries and travellers, sources that would greatly influence the later research of historians and anthropologists.[17]

In the debate about Tswana precedence, the Kwena, Ngwaketse and Ngwato maintain descent from one original "tribe", recognising the Hurutshe as their senior branch. Schapera and Matthews agreed that the Rolong probably descend from the Hurutshe.[18] However, the Comaroffs believe that precise linguistic, archaeological and cultural evidence of Rolong descent is inconclusive. Their split from the parent group predated independent Rolong rule, which Plaatje dated back to the fourteenth century.[19] Parsons doubted the Rolong's Hurutshe descent, suggesting that nineteenth -century rivalries may have "influenced" the re-telling of oral history. He maintained cautiously: "Morolong appears to have lived in the western Witwatersrand around the 13th—14th centuries". While the Rolong enjoyed some eminence as ironsmiths, the causes of their rise to power (like that of other Tswana polities) "can only be guessed at". The Hurutshe originated elsewhere, being one branch of the Masilo lineage, which was divided between the Masilo's grandchildren — chieftainess Mohorutshe and her brother Kwena. While oral accounts of subsequent Tswana divisions differ, Parsons (like Molema) tentatively accepted the Rolong's independent origins.[20]

Seeking refuge from the Kwena and an alliance with the Hurutushe, the Rolong made the modern-day Mafikeng region during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the landed base of their powerful state.[21] This region, conducive to agropastoralism and hunting, gradually became the Cape's northern frontier, as Khoisan, Griqua, slave and other fugitives from the Dutch, sheltered there. Tswana communities did not exclude the refugees, absorbing them into their large stone towns like Dithakong and their capital, Taung (place of BaTaung).[22] South of Dithakong, the Rolong delved out iron and specularite mines. They kept their large cattle herds some distance away.[23] Today, this territory forms part of both the Northern Cape and Northwest Provinces. Evidence of Rolong military prowess is

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[16] Paul Maylam, "Sotho, Venda and Lemba communities until c.1830". In *A History of the African People of South Africa*. (Cape Town: David Philip, 1986). Collected in De Bruyn, 1992: 261-62.

[17] See the Comaroffs' (1991, 1992 &1997) skillful analysis of the influence of missionary and traveller representation of the Rolong. Gordon Mears, "The Bechuana Mission or the Advance of Christianity into the Transvaal and the Orange Free State". In *Methodist Missionaries No 4*, "The Bechuana Mission" (Rondebosch, Cape: The Methodist Missionary Department), p.26: Rev S Kay reached Griqua Town (7 May) and Dithakong (Leethakoo) (17 May 1821).

[18] Schapera, 1938 & 1970: 3-4. Matthews (1954: 4) noted the Hurutshe's seniority ("*Mme botlhe ba re ba sika longwe fêla le BaHurutshe ba e leng bo-mogolo-a-bônê botlhe*").

[19] See also Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 39-40. University of Cape Town, BC255F3, Lestrade Papers, SAB NTS 315 15/15, 1, "Daniel Mokhatle & Others v JBM Hertzog". No.25, TPD (1924) (Solomon T Plaatje's Evidence), p.221: by this calculation back to the earliest Rolong ancestor, the eponymous Morolong, ruled around 1420.

[20] Parsons, 1982: 193-96. Cf. *infra*, p.247 & fn.112.

[21] Matthews (1954: 7) stated that the Rolong arrived in the Molopo region either in the reigns of Noto or his successor, Morara, but admitted that very little is known about Morara ("*Kitšô ya rona kaga Morara e pôtlana thata...*"). Parsons, 1982: 197-98.

[22] Molema (1951: 1 fn.1) thought Taung was probably "named after the Bataung, the earlier inhabitants of the place". The "–ng" locative form in Setswana denotes "place of" a people, as Phokeng means "…place of the Bafokeng". Were it named after Tau, the place might be "*gôô-Tau*" (as affirmed by DT Cole, 1955. *An Introduction to Tswana Grammar*. (Cape Town: Longman), p.352. Parsons (1982: 197) stated that "Taung" meant "place of Tau".

[23] Parsons, 1982: 197. Martin Legassick, "The Northern Frontier to c.1840: The rise and decline of the Griqua people". In R Elphick & H Giliomee, 1989. *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*. (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman), pp.364-66. Maylam (1986: 263): some travellers' accounts spelled Dithakong "Lithakūn"; "*li-*" in the Sesotho orthography of Lesotho is pronounced "*di*".

widespread: one "Kativine", a warrior chief thought to be Tau's warrior father, Thibela, is said to have defeated the Herero in battle near Okahandja.[24]

Seantlho and After — Rules, rationalisations and conflict in the Tshidi-Rolong Succession:

Twists of fate and custom made Modiri Molema the descendant of the first Tau, but not the second; the second Tau's brother, Tawana, was his grandfather. This account commences with the first Tau, the fierce warrior who founded the four main clans of the modern Rolong: the Ratlou, Tshidi, Seleka, and Rapulana. Yet, the legitimacy of the Rolong, specifically the Tshidi, line of descent was hotly debated.[25] As an historian, Molema discreetly used "putative", meaning "commonly believed", to highlight this ambiguity: "[i]t is known among Tshidi Barolong antiquarians that Tshidi the putative son of Tau was in fact the natural son of Seleka, the eldest of Tau's own sons…".[26] Over the past two centuries, depending on where their allegiances lay, clan members credited one or other version of the Tshidi descent.

The "Tau/Tawana" historical narratives must be read in the context of socio-economic transformation. In 1842, missionary Robert Moffat believed that Rolong rule had extended 320km from "'the Bahurutsian mountains to the Hamhanna hills".[27] Legassick argued that Khoisan pastoralists and hunter-gatherers' advance into central Transorangia pressurised Rolong resources from the south. Northwards, Ngwaketse hunters vied with the Rolong for eastern Kgalakgadi hides and ivory. While these pressures pincered the Rolong from both directions, Tau's sons diverged to form distinct entities. Rolong offshoots had earlier formed the Tlhaping polity, to the south.[28] Economic competition thus promoted Rolong fragmentation.

Yet, economic and ecological circumstances alone cannot explain intricacies of chiefly conduct and conflict. Rolong conceptions of chiefship, the "epicentre of their political universe", played a complex and strategic part in the subsequent century's politics of succession. John Comaroff distinguished eleven rules, which the Tshidi regard as self-evident, that govern chiefly conduct and selection.[29]

One Setswana proverb asserts: "Man should be born for kingship, not fight for it" ("*Bogosi boa tsaleloa, ga bo loeloe*").[30] As Comaroff recapitulates, "[t]he chief, in formal rhetoric, is born, never elected. Once installed, he rules until his death"[31]. Nor can a chief be deposed. The rules associated with Tshidi chiefly office are clear on these points and widely known throughout the society. While Comaroff was describing the chiefly dispute between Chiefs Bakolopang and Lotlamoreng from 1914-1919, the logic of the rules indicated that they derived from an earlier time in which polygamy was the rule rather than — as in the "modern era" — the exception.[32] While Comaroff lists eleven interrelated rules central to the orderly operation of chiefship in Tshidi society, he notes that they contain a built-in ambiguity:

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[24] Parsons (1982: 197) found that Herero oral traditions held evidence of Rolong military proficiency. There were also archaeological remains of Rolong dwellings in the Kgalakgadi and as far north as Lake Name.

[25] Molema, 1951: 204-05. Also ZK Matthews, 1945. "A Short History of the Tshidi Barolong", *Fort Hare Papers*, June, I :1 and Maylam (1986: 263).

[26] Molema, 1966: 6.

[27] Legassick (1989: 367) cited Robert Moffat, 1842 & 1969. *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa.* (New York & London: Johnson Reprint Corporation), Ch. XXIII.

[28] I Schapera, "A Short History of the Bangwaketse". In *African Studies*, I (1942), pp.1-26. In Legassick, 1989: 367. Legassick, 1989: 367.

[29] John L Comaroff, "Rules and Rulers: Political Process in a Tswana Chiefdom". In *Man*, 14, 1978: 3.

[30] Plaatje (1916b: 23, Proverb No.43). A modern rendering would be: "*Bogŏsi bóa tsálelwa, ga bó lwelwe*".

[31] Comaroff, 1978: 3.

[32] Chapter Two deals with this dispute, because it intimately involved Silas and Joshua Molema.

> [w]hile access to authority is determined by birth, political power depends upon individual ability. At the same time, the recruitment of talented office-holders is held to be a basic requirement for the achievement of the indigenous ideal of good government. The means by which this apparent dualism is resolved lie in the properties of the rules themselves.[33]

The ambiguity is evident in rules 1-5 governing the selection of the chief and related contingencies. These rules are prescriptive; access to office is determined patriarchally, via "agnatic ranking principles". The first rule concerns primogeniture (succession of the first-born son):

> [Rule 1]: The eldest son of the principal wife of a chief (*kgosi*) is his rightful heir.[34]

Given that so many situations might arise in which this rule could not operate automatically (or where the heir might be found wanting), the other ten rules qualify Rule 1. In a polygamous marriage, the community usually chose the chief's principal wife for him when both partners were very young. However, in conflicted cases, the principal wife might be selected retrospectively, even after both her and the chief's death, as Chief Montshiwa's heirs were to find. Normally,

> [Rule 2]: [t]he principal wife of the son of a chief is selected for, and betrothed to him by his father or guardian and the chiefly advisers when he is a young boy. She is the first woman to be betrothed to him.[35]

The principal wife is not necessarily the chief's first bride, but it is vital that their betrothal be made public, as it is a matter of state. Usually, the ranking of royal wives relates to their order of marriage; in keeping with the rationalising ethos of Tshidi chiefship, the order is negotiable. Should a chief die without an heir, the third rule provided an answer:

> [Rule 3]: When a chief dies without an heir, a close surviving agnate must cohabit with his widow (*go tsena mo tloung*, lit. "to enter his house") and raise sons on his behalf. Also, when a chief dies without having married, or having had sons by a principal wife, this house must be entered (or created) — even if he had sons by other wives.[36]

The "surviving agnate" may be a full- or a half-brother and although the custom was well-known in theory, the individual deeds were usually kept secret. Two further rules make additional qualifications to Rule 3:

> [Rule 4]: If any of the chief's wives either die childless or prove to be barren, a substitute (seantlo) must be supplied without further transfer of bridewealth. Children of the *seantlo* are credited to the house of the barren woman.
>
> [Rule 5]: If an heir predeceases his father, right of accession passes through the dead man to his senior son. (If the deceased has no heir, rule 3 must be put into effect.)[37]

As Comaroff observed, participatory politics is highly valued among the Tshidi. Two of Plaatje's proverbs support this position:

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[33] Comaroff, 1978: 3.

[34] Comaroff (1978: 3): "[t]he Tshidi, most of whom are at least nominal Christians, rarely practise polygamy, any more. The rules are still stated as if they did, however, and many modern claims to office are made in terms of past events and arrangements. Hence, I list them in the present tense".

[35] Comaroff, 1978: 3.

[36] Comaroff (1978: 3): "Schapera's account (1938) does not make this rule completely clear for the Tswana in general, as he does not mention the second part of it. Tshidi informants, however, were emphatic that this is integral to the rule-set."

[37] Comaroff (1978: 4) cited Schapera's (1950: 154) statement that "'[t]he sororate in general was never obligatory'". Comaroff questioned the Tshidi about this view. Respondents "tended to answer that a childless woman *must* have a substitute. But it does not follow that the latter must live permanently with the husband of the woman for whom she bears children, even if the [wife] is dead. The voluntary aspect of the sororate, then, must pertain to the incorporation of the substitute into the domestic group".

> Proverb 260: "A chief is a chief by grace of his tribe". ["*Kgósi ke kgósi ka moráfe*"].
> Proverb 292: "Always build a fence round the chief's word." ["*Lencoe ja kgósi le ágeloa mosakô*"].[38]

The first proverb suggests that chiefship is not absolute but dependent on community consensus, but the second modifies it, specifying that the chief's supreme authority (his utterance) requires protection. Plaatje observed, "[t]he whole truth about a fact cannot always be summed up in one pithy saying".[39] One proverb may apparently contradict another, but this merely means that social issues are complex, needing methodical debate. Tshidi society's capacity for debate shows that while these rules have an "an inflexible appearance", they comprise "a repertoire of potential manipulations".[40] These rules allowed a latitude extending to the creation of an heir after the husband's demise, a matter affecting the royal Tshidi line from its inception.

Seantlho[41], the Setswana custom of "raising up seed" (likened to the biblical levirate) enabled the conception of children in a late brother's name.[42] Rather than a sexual aberration, *seantlho* was a way to resolve dilemmas within the chiefly succession. The custom of fathering one's brother's nominal children was common among Tswana chiefs and a strategy through which culture might overcome biology. Starting with Tshidi himself, many of Tau's descendants through the Tshidi line were children of *seantlho* liaisons.

"A ruthless chief" (oral and written accounts state), Tau's cruelty impelled several followers to found separate communities. By the mid-1700s, his brutal politics had led the Tlhaping to join the Kora on the Vaal River. They survived by eating fish, earning their new name "fish eaters" ("*tlhapi*" is Setswana for fish).[43] Tau's direct descendant, Silas Molema recorded his praise poem (*lebôkô*) over a century later:

> Now comes TAU (lion) the great king of the forest, master of a great country to whom even the sons of wild Khalagari pay tribute and kiss his hand. But the vile assassin's spear send[s] his royal bones to a lamented grave at Taung (wrongly spelt Tauns). Yet left he five young lions all born to be Chiefs.[44]

Alienating the Tlhaping eventually occasioned Tau's death (c.1760-c.1770): they joined the Kora, under Matsatedi (Taaibosch) to ambush Tau with poisoned arrows. Upon Tau's death from his wounds, his sons (the "five young lions") and their descendants underwent the often-violent process of fission, shortly after Ratlou's death (c.1775), according to Schapera.[45] It precipitated an intense succession dispute and a violent battle; the Comaroffs, Schapera's ethnographic "descendants", make 1780 the date of these splits.[46]

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[38] Plaatje, 1916b: 47, Proverb No.260 & 51, Proverb No.293. In the modern orthography, Proverb 260 would remain unchanged, but 293 would read: "*Lentswé ya kgósi le ágelwa mosakô*". *Lentswé* means a voice or utterance in Setswana.

[39] Plaatje, 1916b: 13.

[40] Comaroff, 1978: 4.

[41] Molema (1966: 6) stated that "[i]n Tswana Law, if a man, and especially a man of royal rank, dies and leaves a widow, and especially if he dies childless, one of his brothers may legitimately procreate with his widow (or widows)".

[42] Schapera took down a Tshidi genealogy (1943), "The Royal House of the Barolong" [henceforth 1943a] at the chief's *kgotla* in the Mafikeng Stadt, checking it with members of the Montshiwa and Molema families. Professor Schapera very kindly allowed me access to this copy of the genealogy in December 1991, [*Isaac Schapera Interview, 1991*].

[43] Maylam (1986: 263) and Parsons (1982: 198).

[44] MPP A979 Cc1, (Nd), Historical Notice. Chief's Letter Book [Henceforth, "Chief's Letter Book] p.4. The round brackets in the quotation are STM's; his comment on the spelling of "Taung" suggests the *lebôkô* may have had a written source. His letter book mostly held Hut Tax data (c.1890-1910). The history section is at the back of the book, in his hand.

[45] Parsons, 1982: 198. Matthews (1954: 5) recounted the gradual division of the Tlhaping and Rolong. Whereas they had initially worshipped the kudu together ("*ba bina thôlô mmôgô*") up to Tau's reign, their division was confirmed ("*Ga go tlhômamisege gore ba kgaoganye leng*") and now the Tlhaping venerate the fish (*tlhapi* —origin of their name). The Rolong retain the kudu from which their name also derives (*boroló* means kudu nature).

[46] Schapera, 1952: 7. Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: xvii.

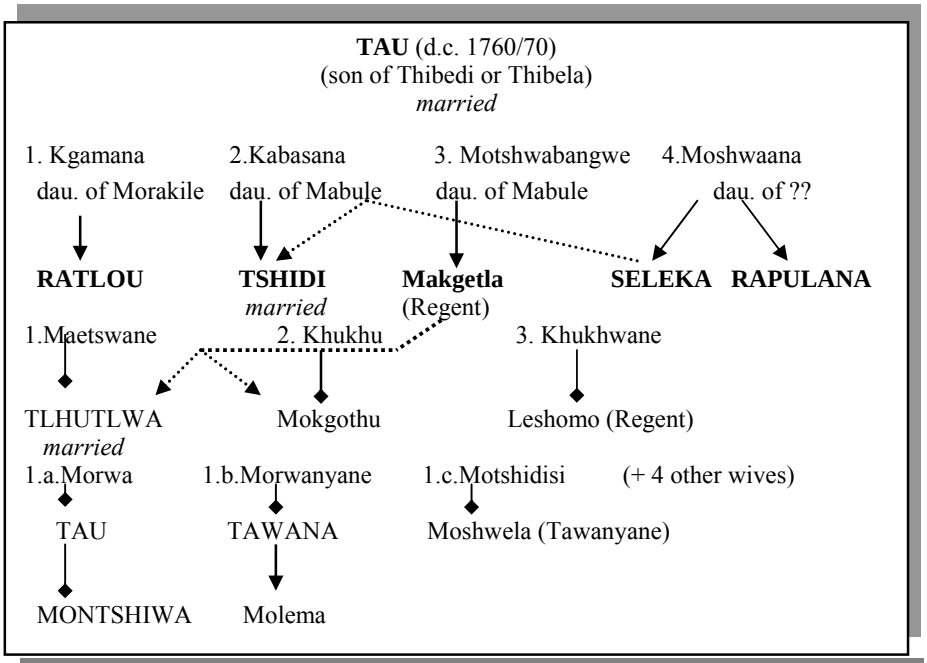


Table 2: "Tau and His Sons: The Subdivision of the Rolong"

Key: Descent ⟶ Recognised Descent ⟶◆ *Seantlho* ⋯⟶

The above chart illustrates Rule 2's implication that the chief's principal wife was not necessarily his first bride.[47] This would explain how Seleka (of the fourth house) was old enough to father Tshidi, while Ratlou, a younger son, ranked as most senior.[48] As Molema stated, a chief's sons by his principal wife (selected "by the royal princes") takes precedence over their older brothers.[49]

In 1966, Dr Molema stated that Tshidi (of Tau's second house) was the Rolong clan's "nominal founder". Makgetla (of Tau's third house) ruled on Tshidi's behalf after his demise in battle near Mamusa (c.1775).[50] Moreover, he was said to have fathered (and dominated) Tshidi's sons, Tlhutlwa, the heir, and Mokgothu.[51] Uniting their clans, he led them north from Setlagole, a Rolong stronghold since 1770, to Phitsane Molopo, and eluded their brothers, Seleka and Rapulana, who then moved southeast to Lotlhakana.[52]

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[47] The genealogical information in Table has been compiled from Dr Molema's *Moroka* (1951: 2, 4-5, 204) and his *Montshiwa* (1966: 5-7). Comaroff's (1978) genealogy omits the lines of *seantlho* descent but conveys the official Tshidi descent. Schapera (1943a) conveys some of the complex (and ongoing!) debates involved in establishing the Tshidi descent. Jean Comaroff, 1985. *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp.20-2, provides an interesting genealogy of chiefly descent, and states "…the descendants of Makgetla [served] as influential collaterals of the ruling Tshidi dynasty", but does not show Makgetla's vital role in keeping the dynasty's "fire burning" (cf. *infra*, p.50).

[48] Molema (1966: 6) asserted that Seleka was the eldest.

[49] Molema, 1966: 8-9.

[50] Mamusa is the traditional name for Schweizer-Reneke (Northwest Province) on the Harts River.

[51] In MPP A979 Cc1, a genealogy bracketed together the three generations — Tshidi, Tlhutlwa and Tawana — as the "*Bora Makgetla*" i.e. Makgetla's direct descendants. This genealogy was originally "[t]aken from the Chief's Letterbook". Jacobson, compiler of the catalogue for the Molema-Plaatje Papers notes that Silas Molema may have been the compiler, though some names on the genealogy are typed, and corrected in a handwriting that is almost certainly Dr Molema's.

[52] Molema, 1966: 4-11, 216. In Molema ("Barolong": 31) noted that Setlagole, 72km W of Mafikeng, "became the headquarters of the Ba-Rolong tribe, and is still often spoken of as their first home, in the sense that it was here that they first made something like a permanent residence" from about 1535. Molema (1966: 189) distinguished Phitsana [on the Molopo River] from Pitsana Photloko (further north) where Montshiwa later granted Silas a farm, Mabete. From there, Dr Jameson launched his raid in late-1895, discussed in Chapter Two. See Map, pp.122-23.

This fraternal conflict among Chief Tau's sons underpinned Rolong history, contributing to the twin processes of fission and fusion that later twentieth -century historians identified among the Tswana.[53] As the four clans' expanded, their competition for scarce land and water resources intensified. The dry Molopo had been Rolong territory since the late-1500s; from the early 1800s, new competitors for these resources pressurised the Rolong and their neighbours.[54] These new contenders included the Tlokwa, the Matebele and the MaBuru (Boers); the missionaries who began arriving in 1812 (like Rev John Campbell) were gradually, sometimes grudgingly, seen as allies.[55] These conflicts deepened as available land decreased and drought worsened. Political struggles over these assets played out with mounting complexity, including internecine power struggles, cattle and stock raiding.[56]

The Ratlou entrenched themselves at Setlagole before attacking the Tshidi/Makgetla at Phitsane and slaying Tlhutlwa. His early death gave Makgetla, the acquisitive regent, a chance to consolidate his power over the conjoined clan. However united he might wish they were, his followers wrangled over the "Tshidi" clan's biological descent. Rumour and doubt surrounded the parentage of Tshidi and Tlhutlwa, his heir. "What a muddle of succession and succession of muddle and confusion", Molema summed up *seantlho*'s role in mystifying the Tshidi succession. Tlhutlwa's sons, Tau and Tawana, were informally known as "*Teleki o Sephiri o Mokgothu*", "Excellency of secret descent from Mokgothu", Tlhutlwa's junior brother. Only officially did Tlhutlwa father Tau and Tawana! Their own marriage intrigues would sow yet greater conflict among their biological and virtual heirs. This secrecy allowed Leshomo, the son of Tshidi's third house, to seize the regency after Makgetla's fatal wounding (c.1790). Leshomo argued outrageously that Tawana was neither Tlhutlwa nor Mokgothu's son and clung to power for 24 years![57]

Relations between Tawana and Leshomo eventually reached deadlock. Knowing most of the clan backed the Regent, Tawana avoided tackling him, but turned to *seantlho* to outwit him. By 1814, Tlhutlwa's firstborn, Tau, had been long dead. Tawana decided astutely that his senior brother's name might still carry authority. Then over thirty, Tawana (c.1784-1849) already had two wives. The first was his enemy Leshomo's daughter, Dikgang, the mother of four daughters. His second wife, Mosela Molekane, a Rapulana, had five sons: Seetsela, Tlala, Molwakapele, Motshegare and Molema. Waiting until his third and principal wife, Sebudio Phetlhu, was pregnant, Tawana proclaimed he had married her, "on behalf of his brother Tau"; thus, their children should be "counted to Tau". He then fathered six children by Sebudio and Letshane Dingoko, "to keep [Tau's] fire burning".[58] Thus, Montshiwa was the eldest of Tau's putative sons, but younger than Tawana's first five sons, including Molema.

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[53] Schapera (1952: 12 & 15) showed that all the larger Tswana communities broke up into "mutually independent sections, which, however, were subsequently reunited by one conquering the other". "Fission" is his term. Molema ("Barolong": 42-44) recounted the Rolong clans' break-up at more length.

[54] Perhaps being far from his source material, and relying on Theal, Molema (1920: 40-41) stated that the Rolong reached southern Africa in the sixteenth century, during the reign of "Ratlou, father of Tau the Great". Actually, Ratlou was Tau's son; Tau's father was Thibela, an eighteenth-century chief. Matthews (1954: 6-7) located the Rolong's arrival in the Molopo during Morara's reign, which Plaatje reckoned was during the late-1400s. Molema revised his 1920 statement in the later manuscript, "Barolong" (31-32). Shillington (1985: 4-12) provided further analysis of the Molopo region's climate and agricultural potential. See also Parsons, 1982: 197.

[55] Introducing *The Journals of the Rev. TL Hodgson: Missionary to the Seleka-Rolong and the Griquas, 1821-1831*, (JHB: WUP, 1977), p.1, Richard Cope stated that Moffat reached the Tswana in 1821. Comaroff & Comaroff (1991: 46 & 174): Campbell's tour on behalf of the London Missionary Society [LMS] began in 1812. (On Campbell, see Legassick, 1989: 384-90.) In 1822, Broadbent and Hodgson departed for Plaatberg where, Molema (1966: 1) stated, the Rolong later sheltered while fleeing the Battle of Khunwana (1832). The Comaroffs (1991: Ch.1) provided a new ethnographic understanding of relations between the southern Tswana and nineteenth-century missionaries and colonial culture.

[56] Shillington, 1985: 135.

[57] Molema, 1966: 5-7, 56.

[58] Lye, 1975: 321. Molema (1966: 9): Tawana ("lion-cub", suggesting status junior to Tau's) succeeded to the Tshidi chieftainship after ousting Regent (c. 1815), Molema (1966: 9) asserted.

Dikgang and Mosela's children would customarily have deferred to the principal wife's; had Tau lived, "[he] would have been chief before Tawana, so his supposed children must take precedence before all the children of Tawana".[59] Had Leshomo then conceded defeat, the *seantlho* stratagem would have clinched the succession. Leshomo dug in his heels and their confrontation escalated into a civil war.[60] The larger bloc preferred Leshomo, forcing Tawana to flee.

The dramatic flight took Tawana north to Tswaneng, in Hurutushe country, where Sebudio gave birth to Tau's firstborn son, Montshiwa, amid "whirl-winds and dust storms at the end of harvest and winter".[61] This name, derived from the verb "*ho ntshiwa*" (to be taken out), signified his birth in enforced exile. Providentially, exile found Tawana a powerful ally in Hurutshe chief Mokaba. Together, the two warriors defeated and banished Leshomo. Silas's traditional account of Tshidi history related that Tawana's enemies "followed the lion to his den, who [Tawana] now with terrible rage fell on his assailants."[62] Tawana reclaimed the chiefship and made Phitshane his capital, reuniting the Tshidi there after Leshomo's death (1818).[63] This victory was the start of a long military career that pitted Tawana against invaders who drove him into another exile, and allies who later tried to appropriate his land.

In the throwaway line that his grandfather was "the brother of a chief", Dr Molema understated this bond's significance. "Brother" does not capture the unfolding relationship between Montshiwa and Molema.[64] English might term them "half-brothers"; Setswana custom would deem them brothers whether they were Tawana's sons by two wives or their fathers, Tau and Tawana, were brothers. Had Tawana's twelve sons been commoners, a hierarchy of age might have prevailed: the eldest, Seetsela, would have been his father's heir; Molema, too, would have been senior to the young Montshiwa. However, the community accepted Tau's *seantlho* family and recognised Montshiwa's precedence.[65]

Molema's advantage of age, "strong personality and exceptional gifts" gave him leverage in Tshidi affairs.[66] The Molema clan's founder was more than a "brother" to Montshiwa, who dominated Rolong and regional politics from 1848 to1896. Molema's eminence stemmed from non-traditional means: allegiance to an "alien faith" (Christianity) and trading links with Kimberley.[67] Wesleyan Methodism

[59] Molema, 1966: 9. Cf. *infra*, p.303.

[60] In *The Ethnic Composition of the Tswana Tribes*. (London: London School of Economics, 1952, p.12), Isaac Schapera relied on Matthews' view that Leshomo "apparently hung on so long to the regency that trouble began to brew". (See Matthews, 1945: 13.) Schapera confirmed: "[a] civil war resulted in the expulsion of Tawana and his followers, who fled to Tswaneng (c.1810). They subsequently again attacked Leshomo, who was killed in the ensuing battle, and Tawana then became chief of the whole tribe".

[61] Molema, 1966: 10. The "Historical Notice" ("Chief's Letter Book", Point 14 [p.7]), seemingly a typed version of a handwritten Setswana history from Chief Silas Molema's Letter Book, gives "1820" as Montshiwa's birth date. The translator may, from his turn of phrase, have been Modiri Molema. In "The impact of the Difaqane on Southern Tswana Communities, with special reference to the Rolong" (History Workshop on *Class, Community and Conflict: Local Perspectives*, 31 Jan-4 Feb 1984, pp.17, 34 fn.93), M Kinsman attributed this document to SM Molema, but may not have seen Chief Silas' Setswana version.

[62] "Chief's Letter Book", Point 14 [p.7]. The author did not date this battle and used chiefly praise names to represent Tawana, calling him "the lion" was high praise, as the Tswana regarded lions as valiant fighters.

[63] Molema, 1966: 10.

[64] In JW Snyman, JS Shole & JC le Roux [eds], 1990. *Dikišinare ya Setswana English Afrikaans*. (Pretoria: Via Afrika), pp.226-27, the fraternal relations in Tswana societies occupy three columns. I Schapera, 1953 & 1979. *The Tswana (Ethnography Survey of Africa)*. (London: International African Institute), pp.43-44, noted that terms for brother vary among Tswana communities. A sister and brother would call each other *kgantsádī* or *kgáitsádī*. An older brother or sister is *mógololé* or *nkgónné*. A father's older brother is *ntatémogólo* or *rrémogólo*, and his younger brother, *rángwané*. A mother's brother is *malómé*.

[65] Molema 1966: 34.

[66] Molema, 1966: 35.

[67] The ironic phrase is Modiri Molema's (1966: 54). While Molema's conversion to Christianity may have prevented him from undergoing initiation and leading a *mophátô* (age regiment), as Schapera (*Interview, 1991*) speculated, it must be remembered that he was the fifth son in Tawana's second house. His elder brothers in this house took precedence. Schapera (1943a: 1) showed that Seetsela, Molema's eldest brother, headed the *mophátô maTshelaphala* (c.1815). Tlala, the next brother, headed *maLaú* (c.1820), which fought at Phitshane (1824), where Tlala was killed. Motshegare headed *maAbakgósi* (c.1825). In 1830, the much younger Montshiwa headed his own *mophátô*, *Mantwa*. Cf. *infra*, p.66 fn.171.

came between the brothers, making Montshiwa think, mid-century, that he could not govern *with* Molema. By 1870, he realised that he could not govern *without* him. As Transvaal Boers struggled to colonise Tshidi land, Montshiwa saw that he needed the strong allies Christianity had won Molema. For over thirty years, Molema was Montshiwa's ally, opponent, religious and cultural adversary, and latterly, when the Boers assailed Montshiwa and followers at Sehuba, his saviour.[68] After Molema's death in 1881, Montshiwa knew he needed a secretary, and recruited first Israel, then Silas Molema.

Yet, in these extended fraternal relations, custom sowed confusion for coming leaders and their followers; Tawana's tactical assumption of Tau's identity would not sit well with their lineage. Future relations between Montshiwa's and Molema's descendants depended substantially on Molema's marriage to his eldest brother, Seetsela's widow, Baetlhoi Mushi Lekoma.[69] Clan analysts questioned whether Molema had wed her in *his* name or Seetsela's? Seetsela had perished in battle against the Hurutshe (1818).[70] Following custom, Molema stepped in to marry Baetlhoi, his sole wife, as Christian custom prescribed.

This union brought Rolong and Christian beliefs systems into sharp confrontation. In Rolong custom, if Molema had married Baetlhoi (later named Mmasiako after their first son, Mosiako Israel's birth) in his late brother's name, their eleven children would have been Seetsela's. Being the first Tshidi Christian leader, Molema asserted that their children were his alone; they bore his name. Molema and Baetlhoi had six sons, Mosiako Israel, Palo Matthew, Tawana, Moshwela Joshua, Thelesho Silas, and Theleshwane (died young) and five daughters, Ngwanakobo, Amogelang, Kebapetse, Mafikeng, and Maria.[71] Most of their sons and at least two of their daughters (Ngwanakobo and Mafikeng) were significant figures in the history of Mafikeng and the region.

Later chiefly conflicts caused Montshiwa and Molema's descendants to debate their respective claims to seniority, in terms of the Tshidi rules of chiefship. To challenge the Montshiwa clan's legitimacy, Chief Sebopiwa (Joshua Molema's son) revived traditionalist interpretations of Molema's marriage in the mid-1900s. His backers claimed precedence over Tlala and Motshegare, Molema's elder brothers' lineage.[72] Sebopiwa contended that Tawana's *seantlho* services were performed too long after Tau's death to be valid. Montshiwa was only one of Tawana's many sons, he argued, while Seetsela was undeniably Tawana's eldest son and, thus, heir. If one accepted that Molema and Baetlhoi's marriage was *seantlho* on behalf of the late Seetsela, then (concluded Sebopiwa's faction) the Molemas were more entitled to rule the Tshidi than the Montshiwas![73]

Thus, *seantlho* was a kingmaker and, perhaps, a king-breaker among the Tshidi. As this thesis shows, the long-rumbling succession dispthe "Cis-Molopo" utes formed a core of twentieth-century family history. Indeed, Silas

[68] Molema (1966: 35) noted that one of Montshiwa's first acts was to send Chief Molema to Thaba 'Nchu "to request the Wesleyan District Missionary Society for a teacher or missionary". Sehuba is ±10km SW of Mafikeng. (See Map, pp.52-53). Molema used the older orthography, "Montsioa", in *The Bantu* (1920), but used the newer *Montshiwa* in 1966.

[69] Holub (1881: I, 278-82) met the then frail Baetlhoi Molema in 1873 and 1875 on his visits to Mafikeng.

[70] Schapera (1943a: 2) stated that *two* brothers performed *seantlho* for Seetsela. Molema (1951: 30, 155-56) affirmed that Tlala, Tawana's second son, entered the hut of Nkhabele Leshoma Tshidi, Seetsela's first wife, to father her son, Tshipinare. Nkhabele later married their chief, Moroka, who "adopted" Tshipinare as his heir. Years later, Tshipinare's claims to the Seleka chiefship were so hotly disputed that he was murdered in murky circumstances. Molema, 1951: 149. Cf. *infra*, p.200.

[71] Schapera (1943a: 16): Plaatje (1973 & 1999: 116, 16 Feb 1900): Molema's aged widow stayed with her daughter, Mafikeng, and Chief Lekoko, during the Siege.

[72] Schapera (1943a: 1): Sebopiwa was one of Schapera's informants on *seantlho*-related issues. P-L Breutz, 1955. *The Tribes of the Mafeking District*. Ethnological Publications No.32. (Department of Native Affairs, Pretoria: Government Printer), p..200, para.569): Sebopiwa was one of two "officially recognized" headman at Mafikeng (the other was Nakedi Mokgweetsi). Sebopiwa succeeded Dick Mmaditshukudu Lekoko (1938-41), son of Modiri's schoolmate, Richard Lekoko (1931-38), Dr Molema's first wife's first husband. Richard Lekoko had succeeded Silas Molema as the Mafikeng headman.

[73] Schapera, 1943a: note 3.

may have evoked that dispute in naming *his* eldest son *Seetsele* Modiri.[74] As noted, succession disputes surrounding Tau the Great's sons and Tawana's third marriage not only rumbled — they often roared.

This thesis merely summarises the pre-Montshiwa era on which Dr Molema, Matthews and others have elaborated, relying on traditional histories, which tended to focus on military strategy and marital alliance. Modiri Molema would, in 1920, give far greater depth to the depiction of African societies, by analysing the practices of daily life and belief. What is known of the 1760, after Tau's death, is that a tangle of alliances and feuds ensued among the followers of Tau's sons. Some conflicts, like the Tshidi-Rapulana land dispute, later escalated into war, became enmeshed in the South Africa War, and caused a protracted court case from 1919 onwards. During World War I, Silas played a robust role in the Tshidi-Rapulana feud.[75] In the present study, the Molemas' part in Mafikeng's history features as a twice-told tale, being a partial reconstruction both of Dr Molema's life and of the past that *he* chose to re-construct in his various histories. This is why Dr Molema's sources and standpoints require further discussion.[76]

"Cornerstones of the Barolong":

The first Chief Molema was reputedly "... a courageous man of strong character [who] established for himself an influential position in tribal affairs".[77] His association with the Wesleyan missionaries rendered his influence more complex. Some sources prefix to "Molema" the name "Isaac", a sign of his religious conversion. Modiri never met his grandfather, who died nine years before his birth, but understood the old chief's importance to family and community affairs:

> Molema was the grandfather of the author, and perhaps the reader will pardon us if we say one or two words about him. It is not, however, solely from the feelings of loyalty and love due to one's forebears that we make a slight digression, but also and mainly because Molema was, and his sons after him have been, are, the corner-stone of the Rolong, as anybody, black or white, who know aught of Mafeking will tell.[78]

This excerpt from *The Bantu* indicates the autoethnographic purpose in Dr Molema's writing. Its first phrase is a "ritual formula of prefaces in the third person".[79] Molema circumvented the first person pronoun "I" (erroneously thought to be the only one appropriate to personal texts) to preface his portrayal of Chief Molema with personal detail. Fleetingly, he united authorial and narrative voices to authenticate the portrait, but without rupturing his "pact" with the reader: history and ethnography were *The Bantu*'s major concerns, not Molema family narrative. Thus, the autoethnographic aspects accompanied the text's main themes, but did not replace them.[80]

The excerpt's initial sentence united past ("*Chief* Molema") and present ("the author", *Dr* Molema), creating a convergence of meaning between the two periods. This relationship was fundamental to the text: it provided the author's reason for writing and his textual identity. He defined his *present* textual self as the product of the past about which he wrote. The opening paragraph served three purposes: firstly, it clarified his viewpoint as a writer and, secondly, suggested his specialist knowledge of the subject. Thirdly, the aside on Chief Molema teased the reader into contemplation of links between race, coloniality, writer and text; it introduced his inquiry into historiographical objectivity throughout *The*

[74] Cf. *infra*, pp.165-66.

[75] See *infra*, pp.142ff, for Silas Molema's involvement in this case and the Tshidi succession dispute.

[76] For the sources themselves, see Appendix C.

[77] A Sillery, 1952. *Bechuanaland Protectorate*. (Oxford: Geoffrey Cumberledge), p.173.

[78] Molema, 1920: 43.

[79] Philippe Lejeune, 1980. *Je est un autre*. [The "I" is another] (Paris: Éditions du Seuil), pp.40-41: "*formule rituelle des préfaces à la troisième personne*".

[80] Lejeune, 1980: 40-41.

Bantu. He anticipated that colonially-minded readers in Britain and "at home" would have been used to denigrating African culture, so deliberately understated his assertion of self and standpoint knowledge at first, in order to win them over. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin discerned this tactic among many postcolonial writers, who are, like Molema, alive to "...the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model..."[81]

This reference to Mafikeng's founder showed how Modiri grasped his forebears' place in Rolong history. A sense of place was vital to historical understanding, he believed. His writings return repeatedly to Mafikeng as the place that determined identity, power, culture and social meaning for the Tshidi, himself and his family. At Mafikeng, he was born and came to know how complex his world was. While studying in Glasgow, he constantly wrote home, received Mafikeng news, and reflected more deeply on the town's significance for his family and its place in history. Any reconstruction of Molema history must recreate the bond between Chief Molema, his descendants and Mafikeng.

The town has been so often represented in historians and travellers' accounts and in Dr Molema's work that it has acquired an historical personality, as an actor in their lives. Since the 1870s advent of white traders and freebooting settlers in the Molopo region, there was not one town, but two: Mafikeng and Mafeking. Two towns remained when Silas Molema, Plaatje and the Tshidi assessed the damages after the South African War (1899-1902). The line between these adjacent settlements was racial segregation:

> [t]he European township, laid out in 1885 when Bechuanaland was annexed to the British empire, and the older African settlement of Mafikeng, founded and occupied by the Tshidi Barolong, and separated by the railway line from the European township which now shared its name....[82]

The Crown Colony of British Bechuanaland's largest settlement, these twin towns' black population outnumbered white inhabitants threefold: 5,000 to 1,500. Geographically, the two populations' living space was segregated, although black residents were increasingly drawn into the economy of the white town as servants and consumers. White Mafeking was not alone in prizing its staunch replication of colonial culture, on the Kgalakgadi Desert's edge. Many black residents yearned to share that culture, partially re-creating it in the "other" Mafikeng, west of the dividing railway.[83] Members of the Molema clan were foremost among these residents in encountering the ambiguities that Christianity and their desire for recognition as citizens of the British Empire proffered.

Architecturally and in terms of available resources, Mafikeng and white Mafeking differed dramatically:

> [b]y 1898…the European township of Mafeking had assumed the character of a respectable, settled colonial community. It had been proclaimed a municipality two years previously, and was now equipped with the institutions, societies, sports and social clubs and other amenities thought appropriate to any self-respecting small-town community in the British Empire in the late Victorian era. There were four churches, a convent, a hospital, a spacious government square, some tennis courts, a branch of the Standard Bank, a Masonic Hall, a library, a race course, and it was very shortly to acquire its own regular weekly newspaper, the *Mafeking Mail and Protectorate Guardian*… in May 1899.[84]

Mafikeng residents lived in the village Molema had founded, little changed from pre-annexation days with none of the white town's rapid infrastructural development. Much of the profit the "numerous [white] trading stores and contractors" enjoyed came from "native trade" with the Rolong and the "Coloured" location, south of the Molopo's inhabitants.

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[81] Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffin, 1989: 9-11.

[82] Willan, 1984: 58.

[83] Sillery (1971: 48): the Cape railway reached Mafikeng in 1895, although the line to Johannesburg opened only in 1912.

[84] Willan, 1984: 59.

> [t]o the west...lay the far larger Barolong settlement, the *stadt* as it was known....Apart from the church erected by Wesleyan Missionaries, most of its buildings — scattered amongst the large boulders from which Mafeking took its name — were round huts with red walls and thatched, peaked roofs, many of them with their own courtyard, and surrounded by high walls. Some of the wealthier…Barolong people…had built European-style houses for themselves, a visible mark of their superior status within their society. Most of the tribesmen earned an increasingly precarious living from cultivating small plots of land, or tending herds of livestock on the communally held land which the Barolong occupied around Mafeking.[85]

Besides the burdens of taxation, war and a variable local economy, the Rolong were increasingly vulnerable to natural disaster: rinderpest, locusts and drought ravaged their ability to survive on their land and stock.[86] Younger men continually sought work on the Kimberley and Rand mines, with local traders, or on surrounding white farms.[87]

The area's natural resources were hardly plentiful, the Cape's Director of Irrigation confirmed in 1910.[88] While the whole Molopo area experienced poor rainfall, Mafikeng was comparatively well-endowed. "The rainfall is heaviest at Mafeking and diminishes slightly towards the south and south-west...Mafeking being situated close to the watershed". African inhabitants had to rely on underground water, acquired through digging "sand wells" or pits in the Molopo's often dry bed.[89]

Less dry than its parched environs, the area enjoyed the Molopo's erratic waters and fair rainfall, an enticement to Chief Molema and his Tshidi Rolong *ba Wesele*.[90] Between 1857 and 1865, Molema reclaimed and renamed this spot, known to the Rolong before their flight to Thaba 'Nchu. [91] The name "Mafikeng" embodies a sense of space, being a contraction of "*Mafika-kgoa-choana*" (place among the rocks).[92] Molema secured it after leading his followers from Montshiwa's town, Moshaneng, 24km west of Kanye, the Bangwaketse capital, now in southern Botswana. Those massive rocks, *mafika*, offered potential shelter and a natural *kgotla*, while the meager river enabled them to raise crops and cattle. Montshiwa permitted his brother to settle there with twelve families.[93]

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[85] Willan, 1984: 60. Molema ("Barolong": 80) inadvertently confuted a point in Willan's description: the original Wesleyan church had gradually decayed after Chief Molema's death, because of the continual fighting (1881-1884). When Sir Charles Warren arrival in Mafikeng (May 1885), he helped the Tshidi, with Israel Molema's regiment, to rebuild the church. He, Montshiwa and his heir, Kebalepile jointly dedicated it that June. (Molema's description summarized.)

[86] In his journal (South Africa African Library, John Campbell Papers, Journal, vol.3, 7.15.1820 & 7.18.1820), Missionary Campbell depicted the 1820 drought's impact on the southern Tswana, noting "'[i]t was a hard time for the poor, and even for the rich'". Robert Moffat found people starving and in dire straits during the 1834 drought, with scarcely "a full meal of wholesome food'", cited in Kinsman, 1983: 46.

[87] Willan, 1984: 59-60. See *infra*, p.168, for the building of Silas' home.

[88] KAB PAS 2/31, Cape of Good Hope Department of Agriculture, "Bechuanaland from the Irrigation Standpoint: A Reconnaissance Survey" by FE Kanthack, AMICE, Director of Irrigation, p.5. [Henceforth, "Kanthack, 1910".] He called the Molopo region "a gentle rolling country", with few hills, but much hard rock ("quartz-porphyry, quartzite, or magnetic").

[89] Kanthack's tables (1910: 9) showed that from 1890, Mafikeng had more annual rainfall than other settlements with rain gauges: in 1890, (a "wet year") Mafikeng had 28.49"; Vryburg had 20.84". In 1905, when more centres owned gauges, Mafikeng had 22.94", Setlagole 10.19", Vryburg 18.20" and Kuruman 18.38". Breutz (1955: 180) gave annual rainfall for 3 stations at Mafikeng: Station No.1230: 20.53 inches (51.33cm) on 69 days and Station No.1231: 21.79 inches (54.48cm) on 59 days (both an average of 33-35 years before 1935); Station No.1226: 19.07 inches (47.68cm) on 58 days (av. of 7-8 years before 1935). Kanthack (1910: 17): by 1907, 97 boreholes had been successfully sunk near Mafikeng to a depth of 9,891 feet; 65 of these yielded up to 2,099,260 gallons of water daily.

[90] According to Parsons (1982: 198), tree-ring dating suggests that in areas receiving Indian Ocean rains (Tswana-settled regions included), rainfall peaked c.1790. As the carrying capacity of the most fertile land around the Witwatersrand rose, animal and human overpopulation resulted. Once-dry western lands became prime for new settlement. When drought worsened (1790-1810), it hit both "overpopulated old lands and recently populated new lands alike".

[91] Dr Molema (1966: 52) believed 1857 was the date. See *supra*, pp.52-53, for Map of Early Mafikeng.

[92] UNISA AD2186, Fb19, ANC Collection, SM Molema, "Mafeking — A Retrospect" [henceforth Molema, "Mafeking"], p.1: while Molema was vague about the date of Mafikeng's founding, the Comaroffs (1991: xviii) found 1865 most likely.

[93] According to Molema (1966: 53), Montshiwa took refuge in Kanye after the Boers attacked the Tshidi at Lotlhakana. See Shillington, 1985: 126, and Agar-Hamilton, 1937: 67-72. Theal (1915: 7, 400-01): Montshiwa moved to Moshaneng after receiving SAR Commandant Scholtz's demand that the Tshidi perform service to the Boers near Lotlhakana. In September 1852, Montshiwa decided to avoid this service and departed with 1,600-1,800 followers.

The Tshidi's "centre, headquarters and metropolis" (Dr Molema's hyperbole) was founded during years of fraternal strife. Evidently, Montshiwa was eager to allow his brother and followers to move to Mafikeng because they had introduced an "alien" religion and its culture into his community.[94] Molema claimed to be the first Wesleyan Methodist convert among the Tshidi. His large following, the *ba-Wesele*, grew so fervent that they challenged Montshiwa's seniority and disobeyed his orders. He regarded them as contumacious and began interrupting or even prohibiting their observances.[95] Mafikeng's founding and the spiralling conflict between Molema and Montshiwa occurred at an intriguing moment in relations between the imperial power and southern Africa. In the early 1850s, Britain formally withdrew from any involvement in the country beyond the Orange (Gariep) and Vaal (Lekwa) Rivers. This left the Orange Free State [OFS] and South African Republic [SAR] to their own devices, especially in dealing with African communities inside and adjoining their borders.

In the nineteenth century's second half, largely lawless western Transvaal farmers harried the Rolong increasingly. Their lawlessness stemmed from weak state formation in the SAR, where nodes of political and economic organisation formed and disbanded in the 1850s and 1860s. Demographic statistics for the period were scanty, but by 1905, the Transvaal Colony's population numbered 300,000 whites and 945,408 blacks.[96] From around 1850 until the mineral discoveries, land "was the...chief capital asset", which explains the white farmers' constant acquisitiveness.[97] Most land was in white hands, as the 1858 Constitution (which Dr Molema attacked strongly in *The Bantu*) prohibited black landownership.[98] Differential landowning told a story of inequality and helped to explain the white farmers' escalating need for land and labour. Whereas whites could own two 3,000 morgen (±2,573.9 hectares) farms each, and occupied 70,140,000 morgen (60,177,595 hectares) of the SAR's total land area, Africans held just 860,000 morgen (737,849.04 hectares), including chiefdoms and locations.[99]

1905 represented a peak in white land accumulation. In the 1850s, that process was just commencing, and the Tswana chiefdoms on the SAR's western borders, newly-returned from Thaba 'Nchu, were rapidly learning just how much Western Transvaal farmers desired their labour and their land.

Accusations of slavery were often laid against the Boers in these years, both by the African communities and missionaries living nearby or among them. So fearful was Montshiwa of Boer attacks during the 1860s that he accepted the urgent need for the political, if not the spiritual, assistance of a missionary well-connected to powerful Cape and London institutions. Through his missionary contacts, Molema gained more appreciation of what he interpreted as "British" ways.[100] But he still avoided closer union with his brother. The two chiefs lived a sizeable distance apart (today ±115km by road, via Kanye) and quite secluded from imperial contact — though increasingly desiring it, as Montshiwa's pleas indicated.

The fickle "imperial factor" played a major role in tying and untying the bonds between the brothers. By the early 1870s, Britain was reassessing its southern African commitments owing to Boer

[94] Molema, 1966: 54.

[95] Shillington (1985: 17) alluded to Molema's Christianising role among the Tshidi after their departure from Thaba 'Nchu's Methodist Mission station and their settlement near Lotlhakana, then Mafikeng.

[96] Davenport (1991: 203-06): after the South African War, the Treaty of Vereeniging transformed the SAR into the Transvaal Colony and the OFS, the Orange River Colony.

[97] Davenport, 1991: 76. In "Abel Erasmus: Power and Profit in the Eastern Transvaal" (In William Beinart et al, [eds], 1986. *Putting a Plough to the Ground*. [JHB: Ravan], p.18), Peter Delius confirmed the importance of land speculation as an economic base; from 1873, mineral rights began to play an important role in capital accumulation.

[98] Molema (1920: 368) included Clauses 9 and 31 of the 1858 Grondwet [Constitution] of the SAR, which outlawed "equality" between blacks and whites.

[99] Keegan (1986: 1): "Morgen, used in the Dutch colonies, was equivalent to 2.12 acres (1026 sq yards or 857.74m). According to these statistics, Transvaal whites held approximately 81.56 times more land than blacks pre-1913 NLA.

[100] Molema (1966: 35): the benefits Chief Moroka II of Thaba 'Nchu derived from his relationship with the missionaries also taught Molema and Montshiwa the advantages that resident missionaries could confer on a beleaguered chief.

aggression towards certain African polities and the diamond discoveries. In the two successive decades, imperialism's "official mind" (the policies of key actors in the Colonial Office) engaged the subcontinent anew, responding to its changed economic potential.[101] Molema and Montshiwa found themselves fairly minor players in this colonial boardgame, and increasingly appealed for British imperial protection against Boer encroachment.

That is a synopsis of the context in which Molema's role in these affairs unfolded. While much of his story is unknown, missionary and travellers' annals and his grandson's accounts have contributed to this reconstruction of his life. Molema's Thaba 'Nchu conversion was central to his career as an evangelist and this narrative now returns to the reasons why he and his community fled there: the Matabele attack on the Rolong at Khunwana, and their flight to safety. Young Molema, Tawana's fifth son, would have joined in the many battles that his father and elder brothers fought. His grandson suggested that he was about 24 years old when the Tshidi sought refuge at Thaba 'Nchu in 1833 after the destruction of Khunwana. His birth date would have been 1808 or 1809, though this is approximate owing to the lack of written records.[102] To understand why this young man accepted Christian teachings shortly after his arrival at the safe-haven of Thaba 'Nchu, one needs to realise that he had spent the impressionable years of his youth on the run from many invading groups. From 1823 to 1832, the Tshidi rarely spent a year in one place and suffered terribly from famine and illness. The next section attempts to characterise that time of troubles.

"'A Tragedy and its Vendetta'" — The Battle of Khunwana and the Rolong Diaspora:[103]

Plaatje's epic account of the Matabele/Rolong confrontation attributed causal significance to the Battle of Khunwana (1832). When Mzilikazi, "king of a ferocious tribe called the Matabele,…who by his own sword proclaimed himself ruler over all the land", struck Khunwana (near Setlagole), he put the Rolong to flight.[104] Plaatje's deliberately elevated prose evoked European classical epics, reminding readers that the Tswana had a comparably heroic past, but prized peace over military combat. Like Homer, who re-created a supreme sense of valiant struggle in the Trojan War, Plaatje's purpose was more allegorical than historical. Athenian historian Thucydides (c.460-c.395BC) challenged Homer for exaggerating "facts", and one might charge Plaatje similarly without detracting from his magnificent narrative.[105] He correctly regarded Khunwana as modern Rolong history's defining moment. It unleashed the sequence of flight, alliance with Moroka, compromise with the Boers, and return to the Molopo. But Plaatje exaggerated Khunwana's permanence as "the Rolong capital"[106] *and* the Matabele purpose in attacking it. In his patron, Silas Molema's account, an "evil" decade of displacement preceded the battle, which was the culmination of many lesser military engagements.[107]

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[101] In *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism.* (Basingstoke, Hants: Macmillan, 1961 & 1988), Robinson, Gallagher & Denny analysed "the Official Mind" in a controversial analysis of imperialism in Africa. Anthony Atmore & Shula Marks provided a major critique of Robinson and Gallagher in "The imperial factor in South Africa in the nineteenth century: Towards a reassessment". In *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Oct, 1974: 105-39. In UNISA, 1987: 241-75.

[102] Molema, 1951: 59.

[103] Plaatje's (1930 & 1996) chapter is entitled is "A tragedy and its vendetta": it dealt with the Battle of Khunwana and the Rolong's enforced exile.

[104] Plaatje, 1930 & 1996: 14-15. In Setswana, Ndebele (AmaNdebele, *plural*) is Letebele (Matebele, *plural*), Molema uses Matabele.

[105] Thucidydes, c.431BC. *The History of the Peloponnesian* War. Trans. Richard Crawley, 1994-2000, Book 1. http://classics.mit.edu/Thucydides/pelopwar.1.first.html : "we can here also accept the testimony of Homer's poems, in which, without allowing for the exaggeration which a poet would feel himself licensed to employ, we can see that it was far from equalling ours". Homer is credited as the 8th century BC oral poet of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

[106] Plaatje, 1930 & 1996: 14.

[107] "Chief's Letter Book", Point 16 [pp.6-10].

The Battle was a military set piece in Rolong history; chroniclers narrated this battle as an almost Troy-like encounter pitting the four Rolong clans' heroic warriors against the untold might of the invading Matabele, under Mzilikazi. It followed a tumultuous decade between the Vaal and Molopo Rivers. This extended conflict induced intense historiographical disputation about the nature of the disrupted African societies, their alleged predilection for violence, the southern highveld's "depopulation" and the ensuing "rights" that Boer immigrants claimed over both Transorangia and the Transvaal. In short, many historians from the late-1800s to the 1980s accepted an academic "notion" of continuing warfare, the *mfecane/difaqane*, as "fact".[108] In 1928, Eric Walker encoded Theal's "phenomenon" as the "*mfecane*" in the sweepingly vague statement: "[f]or fifteen years or so before [Governor Benjamin] D'Urban's arrival, pandemonium had raged among the Bantu of South-eastern Africa. The Bantu still call those the days of the Mfecane, the crushing…". This claim seems risible in the light of Julian Cobbing's findings that Walker's coinage was *post-facto*.[109] Walker applied the meteorological term "storm-centre" to the Zulu Kingdom's role in launching the sequential attacks that "cleared" the Transorangia region and triggered population displacement as far north as Lake Nyasa.[110] Cobbing and John Wright's 1980s reappraisal of *mfecane* ideology and its implications culminated in a major conference, "*The 'Mfecane' Aftermath: Towards a new Paradigm*" (1991).[111] Participants substituted the Thealite model (unmitigated violence and ethnic slaughter) with studies of historical change in the interior's ecology, and trade with the colony. The 1991 *mfecane* re-evaluators analysed the rise of the Nguni's new military tactics and state building, rather than viewing participants in these wars as violence-prone barbarians.[112]

Elizabeth Eldredge observed, "[t]his so-called '*mfecane*' has been explained in many ways by historians, but never adequately".[113] This thesis addresses historiographical debates about the Shakan state and the *mfecane* in Chapter Five, while Chapter One examines the impact of ecological deterioration and ensuing political violence (including Matabele aggression) on the Rolong.[114] In brief, earlier accounts overstated the violence and dehumanised its perpetrators, by underplaying the political nature of these encounters.

Plaatje, Molema and Matthews' Rolong-centred narratives portray their ancestors of the 1830s as the passive victims of successive outrages between Dithakong (1823) and Khunwana (1832).[115] Plaatje depicted the Rolong clans living at Khunwana long before the battle, the first interruption of their

[108] Julian Cobbing, "The Case Against the Mfecane", Unpublished Seminar Paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 1984, p.3: Thomas Arbousset, the French missionary, provided the first known use of "*lifaqane*" [*difaqane*] in the early 1840s, as a "nickname for the Zulu or Bakoni, 'that is to say, those who hew down…with the *chake*, their formidable battle-axe'". For Arbousset, "Zulus" probably included "Zulu, Ndebele, Hlubi or Ngwane".

[109] Walker (1928: 175). Cobbing (1984: 2) analysed the term's linguistic roots and usage at length.

[110] Walker (1928: 203) also "explained": "[a] very few decisive battles were enough to make the Trekkers masters of open country which had been cleared of most of its inhabitants either by death or displacement during the *Mfecane*". Weather-related metaphors characterising the violence have pervaded the work of the *mfecane*'s proponents. JD Omer-Cooper, 1966. *The Zulu Aftermath*. (London: Longmans, Green), pp.2-3: "[t]he period of colonization was over and as population continued to increase a local centre of *high pressure* developed in Zululand producing a *violent eddy* which *sent ripples scudding* over most of Southern and Central Africa….It was accompanied by warfare on a scale hitherto unknown amongst the Southern Bantu which sent defeated tribes feeling from the *storm centre*….". [Weather/climate imagery italicised].

[111] "The 'Mfecane' Aftermath: Towards a New Paradigm", 6-9 Sep 1991, University of the Witwatersrand. See Cobbing, 1984; J Wright, "Political Mythology and the Making of Natal's Mfecane", and J Cobbing, "Jettisoning the Mfecane (with Perestroika)", papers presented at the ASI Seminar (Paper No.241, University of the Witwatersrand), as "The Mfecane: Beginning the Inquest", 12 Sep 1988.

[112] Carolyn Hamilton, 1998. *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention*. (Cape Town: David Philip), pp.4, 15-16.

[113] E Eldredge, "Sources of Conflict in Southern Africa, ca.1800-1830 — The 'Mfecane' reconsidered". Conference: "The 'Mfecane' Aftermath: towards a new paradigm". University of the Witwatersrand, 6-9 September 1991.

[114] Selected papers from the Conference, "*The 'Mfecane' Aftermath: towards a new paradigm*". University of the Witwatersrand, 6-9 September 1991 appear under the following names in the Bibliography: Cobbing, Eldredge, Gump, C Hamilton, & Wright. See also M Kinsman, "The impact of the Difaqane on Southern Tswana Communities, with special reference to the Rolong". History Workshop on *Class, Community and Conflict: Local Perspectives*, 31 Jan-4 Feb 1984.

[115] Kinsman (1984: 23) set the battle in 1833, but Molema (1966: 21) dated it specifically: 6 Aug 1832.

harmonious lifestyle. Epic convention necessitated *Mhudi*'s diametric contrasts between peace and war. Historically, armed conflict had raged in the Molopo region since 1822, when rumours of coming disorder had reached the Tswana. Plaatje completed *Mhudi* in 1917 — but only secured its publication in 1930! It is unlikely that Molema had access to the text of *Mhud*i by 1917, when he completed *The Bantu*'s first draft. He had perhaps heard oral reports of the story from Plaatje, who wrote it in Britain where both men were exiled, from 1914 to 1917.[116]

The reasons why this region succumbed to external attack are still uncertain. Initially, most "*difaqane*" theorists regarded the Zulu state as the centre of a "shockwave" radiating north, south and west.[117] French missionaries in Lesotho and LMS missionaries to the Tswana helped to represent the successive westward raiding as a "'railway shunting' sequence": the Ngwane and Hlubi struck the Tlokwa, who tackled the Fokeng and Hlakwana. They, in turn, overwhelmed the Tlhaping.[118] Cobbing censured the French missionaries' epic amplification of stark contrasts between "villains" and "heroes". The former were Tlokwa and Ngwane chiefs, Sekonyela and Matiwane, while Sotho chief Moshoeshoe was the missionaries' hero. Assumptions of wanton Tlokwa slaughter caught on: WC Scully added cannibalism to their tally of violence. Ellenberger deduced, via dubious "*difaqane*" arithmetic, that 300,000 people had been eaten by 1832! Outdoing Ellenberger's calculations, Theal (1891) blamed the Tlokwa for 115,000 deaths and for obliterating 28 (or more) "'distinct tribes'" — the Rolong included! In later editions of Theal's works, guesstimates of deaths east of the Drakensberg mounted to 2 million.[119]

Dr Molema both read (and somewhat echoed) Theal's and missionary accounts, yet stated carefully that the Tlokwa were just one element of the "fugitive tribes" escaping Shaka's wrath. Molema argued that the "heterogeneous mob" MmaNthatisi and her son, Tlokwa chief Sekonyela, led integrated survivors of smashed communities.[120] Their swathe of onslaught and its speed were astonishing: inside six months, the Tswana towns of Thabeng, Khunwana, and Dithakong lay ruined. Yet, who were the perpetrators, really?

The missionaries, Theal, Walker, and Macmillan blamed these battles on the "Mantatee" (named after *MmaNthatisi*). Thus, on 13 January 1823, the Mantatees crossed the Vaal near today's Klerksdorp, to overpower Sefunelo and Tshabadira's Seleka Rolong at Thabeng.[121] Dr Molema called that date the "commencement of Barolong recorded history", as Tshabadira later met Samuel Broadbent and Thomas

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[116] Plaatje returned to South Africa in 1917. See Willan (1984: 349-51) on *Mhudi*'s delayed publication.

[117] In 1992's "The Colonization of Consciousness", the Comaroffs (p.237) used "shockwaves" to depict the *difaqane*. Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 167, cited WF Lye & C Murray, 1980. *Transformations on the Highveld: The Tswana and Southern Sotho*. (Cape Town: David Philip), p.31. Comaroff & Comaroff (1991: 331, fn.47) provides sources on Zulu state formation. Cope (in Hodgson, 1977: 4) also uses "shock waves" to describe the *difaqane*'s effect on "Tswana country".

[118] Cobbing (1988: 3-4) stated that, in the 1880s, Theal "sculpted" the myths from various areas of the country into the "central chain-reaction of the 'mfecane': Zulu attack Hlubi/Ngwane, who attack Tlokwa (i.e. Mantatees), who expel Kololo, some of whom career on to Dithakong". Cobbing (1984: 3-4) cited the Paris Missionary Society-affiliated writers T Arbousset & F Daumas, 1846. *Narrative of an Exploratory Tour to the North East of ...the Cape of Good Hope*. (English Ed., Cape Town), p.134, and DF Ellenberger & JC MacGregor, 1912. *History of the Basuto Ancient and Modern*. (London). Cobbing added in fn.17, that MacGregor, the translator, possibly "inserted the word *lifaqane* into the text [of the latter work] on pp.117, 122-3".

[119] Cobbing (1984: 4-5) cited WC Scully, "Fragments of Native History". In *The State*, vol.2, 7-12 (1909), pp.285, 597 and Ellenberger & MacGregor, 1912: 225. "*Difaqane*" arithmetic refers to the calculations these historians predicated on doubtful facts and extrapolated exponentially to "support" their claims of extreme violence *prior* to colonisation. Cobbing (1984: 5) cited GM Theal, 1891. *History of South Africa, 1795-1834*. (London), p.305 plus its 1901 (p.305) and 1903 (p.389) editions.

[120] Molema (1966: 11 & 17) referenced "*Theal* 1795-1828 [Nd], p.388" in referring to the "28 whole tribes". His explanation of Mantatee identity expanded on his 1951 view, where he had called all MmaNthatisi's followers "Tlokwa" See Molema, 1951: 9.

[121] Cobbing (1984: 4-5) for Arbousset & Daumas, 1847: 134 and Ellenberger & MacGregor, 1912: 117, 122-23. Theal, 1919. *History of South Africa since 1795*, vol.5. (London: George Allen & Unwin; reissued Cape Town: Struik, 1964), pp.472-73; WM Macmillan, 1928. *Bantu, Boer and Briton: The Making of the South African Native Problem*. (London: Faber & Gwyer), pp.15, 38, 173, and E Walker, 1934 & 1938. *The Great Trek*. (London: Adam and Charles Black), pp.89, 110, 117.

Hodgson, Wesleyan Methodists who founded a Mission Station among the Tswana, and began a written record of their history.[122] Broadbent confirmed the violence that Tswana communities suffered:

> [i]n some parts, houses were broken and partly burnt. Here and there were strewn wooden utensils, and sometimes skeletons who had been slain in the assault, or of children who had been left by their friends, and had been killed by the enemy, or perished from want.[123]

Molema attributed the Thabeng rout and much subsequent upheaval to MmaNthatisi's "hordes". He accepted, seemingly without question, that the raiders were the Tlokwa of Sekonyela and his warrior mother, MmaNthatisi. Historical debate as to the identity of the Mantatee raiders has vigorously interrogated this notion. Historians such as Julian Cobbing, Margaret Kinsman and Elizabeth Eldredge have attributed the raids and the large battle at Dithakong (June 1823) to the generalised social disruption in the southern highveld and "slave-raiding by Europeans and their agents".[124] Interestingly, Dr Molema's father made a little-known speculation on the identity of the raiders. Again writing in the Chief's Letterbook, in which he recorded many historical and legal observations, he wrote a short Setswana account of Tshidi history. This was later translated (possibly by his historian son, Modiri), and it named one of the Mantatee leaders. At Khunwana,

> [a]s they [the Tshidi and Ratlou] were beginning gratefully to enjoy the milk and honey of their land, behold a mad Rhinoceros, CHOANE MASUTO, Chief dashed on Tau's sons and the shock of the battle was great.[125]

Warriors were commonly identified with fierce animals in traditional accounts.[126] The name Choane [*pron*. Tshwane] corresponds to "Tsooane", the MaPhuthing chief who later attacked Dithakong *inter alia*.[127] Silas and Modiri both used the old Setswana orthography in which "*Ch*" stood for the "*Tsh*" sound and "*-oa*" or "*-ooa*" for "*-wa*". Silas' account omitted Choane's origins, but the latter's destructive behaviour and the timing of his attack within the historical sequence, suggests that he was *that* Phuthing chief. Silas affirmed that, at the time, the Tshidi questioned which community was attacking them; similar uncertainty may have made other eyewitnesses use the general term "Mantatee". The name "Chuane" supports How, Kinsman, Cope and Eldredge's argument that the Mantatee were a composite force, containing the Phuthing among others.

Consideration of the late twentieth-century debate about the *mfecane/difaqane* is significant in that it shows, to an extent, Dr Molema's tendency to rely on the assumptions of colonial historians. However, the existence of brief account in the Chief's Letterbook illustrates that the father's interest in these historical matters predated the son's. The period in which Dr Molema gained access to his father's comments in the Letterbook is not known, so it is impossible to conclude that Silas' own historical writings inspired his sons. Yet the existence of the Letterbook writings attests to Silas' ongoing concern

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[122] Molema (1951: 9-1 and 1966: 1) relied on Broadbent's *Narrative of the first Introduction of Christianity amongst the Barolong Tribe of Sechuana, South Africa*. (London: Wesleyan Mission House, 1864) when writing *Chief Moroka*, (1951). Cope (in Hodgson, 1977: 4, 5 & fn.9, 16) mentioned this first meeting. The Comaroffs (1991: 180-81, 209, 257) discussed both works. Cope conjectured that the Taung had attacked the Seleka at Thabeng, northeast of Matlwassi [Maquassi]. Divided by the constant upheaval, Sefunelo and Tshabadira, sons of Moroka I's first house, each ruled a section of the Seleka. Sefunelo, the first Seleka leader to contact the missionaries, fathered Moroka II, the Seleka chief who established Thaba' Nchu as a Rolong haven and a mission station. See Map from Molema (1951: 38), reproduced, pp.52-53.

[123] Kinsman (1984: 10) cited Broadbent, 1864: "Introduction", p.37.

124 Elizabeth A Eldredge, "Sources of Conflict in Southern Africa, ca.1800-1830 — The 'Mfecane' reconsidered." Conference on "The 'Mfecane' Aftermath: towards a new paradigm". University of the Witwatersrand, 6-9 Sept 199, p.21), a specialist on Lesotho's history, used the Sesotho spelling "Lithakong". Details of the three articles by Cobbing used in this thesis appear in the Bibliography.

[125] "Chief's Letter Book", Point 15 [pp.7-8]. Molema (1966: 13) noted that one leader of the raiders who clashed with the Griqua and Tlhaping at Dithakong was "sub-chief…Chuane", another spelling of "Choane".

[126] Plaatje cited six several proverbs about the rhinoceros' fierceness, though not its wisdom. Plaatje (1916b: 27, Proverb No. 77): "*Chukudu, ko gobe e isioa, ke ngoana*", which would now read "*Tshukudu, ko gobe e isiwa, ke ngwana*" ("The rhinoceros is led to trouble by its calf". Another proverbial expression is "*O lwa sesukudu*" [he fights like a rhinoceros].

[127] Eldredge, 1991: 24.

with the history and laws of the Tshidi-Rolong, a concern that may have a general interest in historical matters within the Molema home.

Evidently, raiding and its causes formed a repetitive pattern in the 1820s. Highveld communities turned to incursion for ecological and economic reasons and not, as the Thealite *mfecane* effectively proposed, because the Shakan state's expansion triggered their innate violence. Once agricultural lifestyles broke down, communities had few options, which they apparently exercised in sequence: starve, fight, and flee. When the Phuthing lost their economic base after Hlubi and Ngwane assaults, they too became raiders. Fearing their town, Phitshane (24km northwest), would undergo Thabeng's fate, Tawana marched the Tshidi south to shelter with the Ratlou at Khunwana. Silas recorded, perhaps having heard the story from his father, that "…Tshidi and Ratlou's people mutually desired to dwell together and their predilection led them to the fertile hills of Khunoana".[128]

Mantatee defeats of the nearby Hurutshe and Kwena affected the Tshidi indirectly, by dispersing these neighbors and pressuring natural resources. Only renowned Ngwaketse warrior, Makaba, halted their career. The Mantatees then attacked the Ratlou and Tshidi at Khunwana. They had, Dr Molema judged, "jumped from the frying pan into the fire by leaving Phitsane in…panic without reconnoitering".[129] Many people and livestock were slain and Khunwana burnt. The first Molema, the historian's grandfather, thus spent his youth alternately fighting and fleeing this marauding band.

Mid-1823 found Tshidi and Ratlou back at Phitshane, rebuilding their forces: in Silas' text, "…the Barolong remembered the old kraals of their fore-fathers at Phitshane".[130] Moffat met them there and later described Tawana's appearance and silence bitingly. Dr Molema thought Tawana's "very flat nose and…remarkably protruding lower lip" might have made Moffat think the chief foolish.[131] Even popular song hailed the flat nose as Tawana's defining feature, but this belied, rather than betokened, folly. That he sustained his people over twenty-five years through battle, exile and their return to the Molopo, indicates that he was a silent tactician. Three years on, traveller Andrew Geddes Bain gave insight into Tawana's reticence. He found the Tshidi at Phitshane huddling in the Molopo bed, believing all strangers their foes.[132] Well may Tawana have eyed this unknown white visitor warily. Bain documented the Tshidi's misery, calling Tawana a "sedate-faced old fellow with a very flat nose and a remarkably projecting under lip, who,…muffled up in a buckskin kaross was sitting on his hams smoking a Batswana pipe".[133]

Bain's remarks reflect how complex colonial encounters were. Early travellers and missionaries were often the only literate witnesses to "*difaqane*" battles, and their accounts influenced the writing of African history powerfully. Bain subjectively accentuated Tawana's "exotic" qualities: his features, garments and "Batswana pipe" featured as "other" against Bain's everyday language. Tawana's impressions of Bain or Moffat (his visitor in 1824) went unrecorded, so his European beholders held the

[128] Kinsman (1984: 5-7) cited Mary & Robert Moffat, *Apprenticeship at Kuruman*, Ed. I Schapera, (London, 1951), pp.102 & 372, and Robert Moffat, 1842 & 1969: 360. "Chief's Letter Book", Point 15 [p.7].

[129] Molema, 1966: 14.

[130] "Chief's Letter Book", Point 15 [p.8].

[131] Molema (1966:13) cited Moffat, 1842 & 1969: 388. Molema also cited Mosadikwena (b.c.1837-1940), second wife of Saane, Tawana's elder son by MmaSefera (see Appendix A, "Genealogy"). She was about 11 when Tawana died (1848).

[132] Silas Molema's "Chief's Letter Book", Point 15 [pp.7-8]) conflated two sojourns at Phitshane: one in 1824, after the first Khunwana battle and another after the Tshidi's return from Morokgweng. Both stays were, he hinted, unhappy.

[133] Molema cited a derisive song other Batswana (not Rolong) sang about Tawana's nose. The nicknamed him "*Nko e lopapi*" [Mr Flat-nose]: "*Na wa re leina ja gágwê ke Tawána?/A loné tota leina ga se Lopápiēla*?" [Say you his name is Tawana? Isn't his right name Flatness par excellence?"]. Molema (1966: 16) quoted Bains's words from JC Chase's *S.A. Quarterly Journal*, July-Sep 1830 article. Quoting Molema on this point, Kinsman (1984: 17) confusingly stated that he had cited Thomas Baines' (*Journal of Residence in Africa, 1842-1853*. [Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1961]). She correctly cited "Andrew Geddes Bain" in the footnotes (p.34 fn.94). Molema and the Comaroffs (1991: 127, 133) confirmed the source as Andrew Bain.

power of representation. Thus, Dr Molema's claim that written *Rolong* history began in 1823 seems overhasty.[134] Missionaries began recording Rolong history then, but Montshiwa's dictated letters to Boer and British officials from the 1850s were probably the first *Rolong-authored* documents. Plaatje's journalism, the 1916 preface to his *Sechuana Proverbs* and some chapters of *Native Life in South Africa* formed the first published episodes of Rolong history.[135] Dr Molema was the first Morolong to publish a book-length history of black South Africans (1920), 88 years after that first missionary encounter, while Matthews' "A Short History of the Tshidi Barolong" (1945), was the first text by a Morolong *about* Rolong history.[136] Molema's lengthy "History of the Barolong" was unpublished, but partly incorporated into *Chief Moroka* (1951) and *Montshiwa* (1966), the first full-length Rolong-authored, Rolong-centred histories.

On Moffat's return to Phitshane from his visit to the Ngwaketse, he took Tawana seriously. The Rolong were ill, starving, and struggling to repel a raid by the feared Taung. Tawana begged Moffat and his companions, Barend Barends' Griqua, for help. Still recovering from a Mantatee attack the year before, Tawana feared his people would not withstand Moletsane's Taung. Moffat recorded Tawana's plea to him: "'You see how many human bones lie scattered in the plain and how many of us are dying of hunger, the result of last year's scourge when the Manthatis drove us from Khunwana?'" [137]

The reportedly brutal Moletsane, seeking control over the Molopo-Vaal area, led his Taung to destroy Matlwasse, Sefunelo's settlement. Fleeing covered "all over with blood", Sefunelo begged Waterboer, the Griqua leader's support. Instead, Waterboer fined him 600 cattle for vandalising Broadbent's property, despite Sefunelo's protests that Moletsane was responsible![138] The impoverished Seleka escaped to Phitshane, only to face the Taung again, but this time with the combined Rolong chiefs' aid. Ratlou chief, Gontse, fielded his son, Montshosi's regiment; Tshabadira led Sefunelo's Seleka and Tawana's son, Tlala, headed the *Malau* regiment.[139] By night, the Rolong crept into the dry Molopo bed, where they faced the enemy at dawn.[140] As defeat threatened, the Rolong fled, but providentially secured the newly-arrived Griqua's help. With Griqua intervention, a new form of warfare entered the Molopo: they used their guns, obtained via regular trade with the Cape, to trounce the Taung. Although technically victorious, the Seleka lost their strategist, Tshabadira and many cattle.[141] Even if Tawana had removed Molema (then about 15), he witnessed this ugly battle and would have heard tell of how the mounted Griqua armed with musket eventually outlasted about 150 furious "Mantatees", armed with assegais and battle-axes.[142]

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[134] Molema (1951: 10) stated that the 13 January 1823 "…was the commencement of Barolong recorded history", as published in Rev Broadbent's "Narrative of the first Introduction of Christianity among the Barolong…".

[135] Silas Molema's customary histories went unpublished. See "Chief's Letter Book". Also see Willan's 1996 selection of Plaatje's journalism. Cf. *supra*, p.45 fn.11.

[136] See Molema, 1920, and Matthews, 1945.

[137] Molema (1966: 14-15) cited Moffat (1842 & 1969: 289) who judged Tawana's appearance "imbecilic". Kinsman (1984: 14) noted that the scanty 1820s evidence on the Rolong suggested that they knew little peace from 1823-1826, being beset by "the Phuthing" (May 1823) and the Fokeng (July 1923), attacks Molema blamed on the Mantatee generally!

[138] "Chief's Letter Book", Point 15 [p.8]. Hodgson (1977: 255), called Sefunelo "Sibbonel", Dithakong "Lattakoo", and the BaTaung the "Batows".

[139] Molema (1951: 149): Seetsela (Tawana's eldest son) died c.1818 fighting the Hurutshe. In "Political Institutions" (In Schapera [ed], 1937 & 1956: 195), Schapera explained that fighting regiments were organised on an age basis, every few years. "In times of war each fights as a separate unit in the army, under the command of a son or brother of the ruling Chief.…The whole army is led by the Chief, or in his absence by the commander of the senior regiment in order of formation…".

[140] Schapera, "Political Institutions" (1937 & 1956: 193) stated that this was the usual form of attack.

[141] Molema, 1966: 15. Hodgson (1977: 257 & 295) reported that although Moroka (Sefunelo's son) and "Twany's son" (probably Tlala) fled, "Sabbadere" (Tshabadira) slew 6 men before succumbing. An infelicitous translation of Silas Molema's "Chief's Letter Book" (Point 15 [p.8]) states that Tshabadira "bit the dust".

[142] Hodgson, 1977: 255-57.

This decade's alternate fighting and fleeing dislocated the Rolong's agricultural lifestyle. They frequently abandoned their distinctive Tswana towns, where chiefs dispensed social order via the ward structures, in which clans lived together under a senior member. The Tswana year had two "clearly distinguished phases": in winter, their towns were fully occupied, but as summer rains fell, people took to the fields.[143] While men prepared the fields, women managed the agricultural cycle: tilling, planting, reaping and threshing. Men hunted and tended the larger animals (cattle, sheep and goats), while women kept the poultry. While being gender-based, labour was also age-based: girls *and* boys had to chase birds from the crops and young boys (like Modiri Molema) were cattle-herders. Women and girls performed the domestic labour (cleaning, cooking and child-rearing), but both genders played specific roles in hut-building. Warfare disrupted this annual cycle, depriving people of housing, food, and livestock — the usual target of enemy raids. Such breakdown explained the misery in which Moffat and Bain found the Tshidi.[144]

Between 1820 and 1826, Moffat and other northern Cape and Transorangia travellers documented the natural disasters that caused communities to move continually. Drought and cattle disease had depleted human and natural resources for some years before his 1824 journeys; he suggested that the Tlokwa had experienced famine even before the Hlubi's attack, impelling them to migrate. This testimony supports the view that ecological disaster had eroded the socio-economic basis of many warring communities.[145]

A combination of Taung, Fokeng and Phuthing attacks, coupled with drought caused Tawana's people to settle nowhere permanently from 1825 to 1830. Associating with the Seleka increased their vulnerability to Taung attacks — three in August 1824! With Gontse's Ratlou, the Tshidi and Seleka sought safety at Khunwana. A drought later that year made them move again: Sefunelo returned to Matlwasse, but Tawana and Gontse headed west to Morokweng.[146] Tawana remained there, although increasingly unnerved by threatened attacks in 1825. In March 1826, when the Fokeng struck, the Tshidi retreated into the Kgalakgadi. After further attacks, they reached Taung in 1830, where Tawana told the Moffats he had had "'no news but drought and hunger' while on the Harts River".[147]

During this troubled decade, the Tshidi and their Rolong kin searched for food and shelter over a roughly 200km² area, stretching westward from Phitshane to Morokweng, and southward from Phitshane to Matlwasse on the Vaal.[148] As this estimated square of "Rolong country" suffered attack from raiders, the four Rolong clans often moved several times a year. Silas' narrative traced the Tshidi's gradual return to the Mareetsane spruit, a Molopo tributary like the Setlagole, after finding "security nowhere, and running in a circle line like the ostrich". After "ravenous hyenas", the Namaqua Koranna, stole their cattle, Tawana led the Tshidi to safety at Khunwana, their old home with the Ratlou.[149]

By 1832, the Tshidi had enjoyed a brief peace at Khunwana and almost believed their wanderings over.[150] Tawana's family was relatively intact, having endured multiple attacks and hardships.[151] Worse

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[143] I Schapera & AJH Goodwin, "Work and Health". In Schapera, 1937 & 1956: 145.

[144] Hodgson's (1977) *Journals* attested to the Seleka and several other Tswana communities' disruption from 1823-1828.

[145] Eldredge (1991:45-47) supported this case convincingly, regarding Moffat (1842 & 1969: 307, 315-16, 329-30, 447), J Campbell, 1822 & 1967. *Travels in South Africa*, vol.II. (London), pp.93-94, 332-4 & Thompson, 1827 & 1968: 30-31.

[146] "Chief's Letter Book", Point 16 [pp.8-9]. Morokweng (meaning "among the bushes) lies ±190km SW of Phitshane.

[147] Kinsman (1984: 17) cited the Moffats' (1951: 258) observation that Tawana had moved to Taung. In "Chief's Letter Book", Point 16 [p.9], Silas (possibly with Modiri's amendment) dated the Taung sojourn in 1830.

[148] Distances are hard to measure, as exact routes are not known. I have based my approximate calculations on the MapStudio's *Illustrated Atlas of South, Central, East Africa*. (JHB: Struik New Holland, 1997), pp.7-8. 14-15.

[149] "Chief's Letter Book", Point 17 [p.10].

[150] Hodgson (1977: 260, unknown date, just after 9 Jan 1825) stated that after his first defeat at Phitshane, "Twaany [Tawana] has been defeated by the Mantatees was driven up the Malappo [Molopo] river…".

awaited in the shape of an enemy from beyond their accustomed sphere, who had settled at Mosega (±128km east).

Theal and Walker depicted the newcomers' bellicosity and Mzilikazi's flight from Shaka in epic terms. For reasons relating to Tswana suffering at Matebele hands, Dr Molema also represented Mzilikazi as one of "Zulu tyrant" Shaka's "high ranking generals…who hived off with a large following of about 60,000 warriors".[152] Mzilikazi escaped the Zulu kingdom via the Pongola River, crossing present-day Mpumalanga to settle on the Apies River "north of where Pretoria now stands". Dr Molema despised this invader, calling him "a man of the Tshaka school of blood…[whose] trail from Zululand was littered with skeletons and ashes".[153] Two other Rolong writers, Silas Molema and Plaatje, likened Mzilikazi's attack to "a swarm of locusts", insects that once devoured highveld vegetation regularly.[154]

Molema was no different from other early 20th-century historians in portraying Mzilikazi as the epitome of cruelty. For Walker, race ("Zulu"-ness) explained Mzilikazi's tyranny. While the Matabele had been "pure Zulus", their integration of defeated tribes made them "a mixed people" who retained "the Zulu military tradition". Mzilikazi could field some 20,000 men, organised according to Zulu fighting scheme: "the 'bull's head' in the centre, the 'horns' tapering away on either side to encircle the enemy before the order to charge were given, and the reserve in the rear'". Walker and Macmillan both highlighted Mzilikazi's despotism, but did not acknowledge his unique form of state building.[155]

In the 1970s, Ngwabi Bhebe revisited Mzilikazi's actions, mostly discarding earlier historians' emotive language. He termed the Zulu state's offshoots an "Nguni diaspora" and deemed the Matabele kingdom "one of the most formidable African states in southern Africa". In Bhebe's view, Mzilikazi was not wantonly savage, but "used his power to defend whatever he had and to build". He creatively constructed an itinerant state, which included the cultures of Transvaal communities, while retaining strict military organisation.[156] Bhebhe's views are as controversial as those of Walker and Macmillan because they overlook the nature of violence as a result of competition for resources in the South African interior. He tends to glorify Mzilikazi as a proto-nationalist hero.

While resting after eight years' turmoil, the Rolong heard of Mzilikazi's encampment at Mosega and attacks on his Tswana neighbours (1830 and 1831).[157] He soon exacted tribute from the weary Tawana: animal pelts, "beads and bangles and choice fat oxen". Tawana was placatory, but a daring Griqua raid

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[151] Molema (1966: 11-17) reported various other skirmishes involving Moletsane's Bataung and Sefunelo's Seleka. The Tshidi reached Khunwana for the second time in about 1827, remaining there until the Matebele arrived.

[152] In "Mzilikazi, c.1795-1868". (In C Saunders [ed], 1979. *Black Leaders in Southern African History*. [London: Heinemann], pp.31-32), Ngwabi Bhebe summarised the struggle between Shaka and Dingiswayo (his predecessor) and their rival, Ndwandwe chief, Zwide. The Khumalo backed Mzilikazi's father-in-law, Zwide, but transferred their fealty to Shaka, after his destruction of the Ndwandwe. Mzilikazi was made head of the Khumalo regiment. However, in 1822, he refused to relinquish to Shaka the cattle his regiment had raided and fled to escape Shaka's ire, and settled first in the Eastern Transvaal, before moving westward.

[153] Molema, 1966: 17. Spellings of Shaka's name vary. The common Sotho spelling is "Chaka", as in the title of Thomas Mofolo's 1925 novel. Macmillan (1928) used this spelling, but Theal favoured "Tshaka". Bhebe (1979: 31-32) stated that Mzilikazi, "of the Khumalo s*ibongo* (surname)", which rose under his father Matshobane (in the Ngotshe district, Kwa-Zulu Natal) after the segmentation from other Khumalo clans. See Walker's (1934 & 1938: 119) rather vague account of Mzilikazi. Macmillan (1928: 17-18) provided a somewhat more analytical account of Mzilikazi's rise than Walker's.

[154] Plaatje 1930 & 1996: 15; "Chief's Letter Book", Point 17 [p.11]. Molema (1920: Chapters Five & Six) believed that these attacks caused major socio-political transformation in the interior. This thesis occasionally uses "Moselekatse" to represent a Setswana perspective, but generally uses Mzilikazi in an attempt to represent both "sides" of the historical debate.

[155] Walker (1934 & 1938: 119-20) includes the previous quotation. Macmillan, 1928: 17-18.

[156] Bhebe, 1979: 31-37.

[157] Molema (1966: 18-19): "Ga-Mosiga" first belonged to Mokgatlhe's Hurutshe and overlooks the Marico River between Ottoshoop and Zeerust. Between Zeerust and Mafikeng lies Zendeling's Pos, where French missionaries preached to the Hurutshe and, later, American missionaries preached to the Matabele Mzilikazi struck Philane's Kgatla at Mapela, Sekgoma's Ngwato at Shoshong, Sechele's Kwena at Lephephe and Sebego's Ngwaketse at Pitsa and Lwalwe to Khunwana's north.

pushed Mzilikazi to an ultimatum.[158] This was probably Barend Barends' cattle-raid on the Matebele in mid-1832".[159] Mzilikazi despatched envoys Bhoya and Bhangele "ostensibly to collect taxes…from Tawana", but really to probe Rolong involvement in the Griqua raid. In Plaatje's *Mhudi*, Tawana ordered Notto, his headman, to "take the two to the ravine and 'lose them'…the equivalent of a death sentence".[160] Molema relied on Rolong *ditirafalo* to explain his ancestors' hostility: the envoys enraged the Tshidi by invading the *Mantwa mophátô* initiation lodge, which Tawana's heir, Montshiwa (17), captained. In Setswana culture, initiation lodges are private and the furious *bagwêra* (initiates) promptly slew Mzilikazi's men.[161] Montshiwa's praise poem celebrated the event, supporting Molema's version:[162]

> "…[Moselekatse] had sent Bhoya and Bhangele to visit us
> But thou, crafty son of Tawana ate them up:
> Yours [presumably emissaries] will be similarly eaten up craftily —
> Remember you are not a mad dog, but a man
> But even a mad dog can be mimicked and imitated:
> Thou Royal Highness: Thou unrevealed Mystery of Mokgothu."
>
> **"The Praise Poem of Montshiwa or Sejankabo"**

The "eating" or devouring metaphor is common to praise poetry, conveying one warrior's power over another.[163] In Setswana culture, a *lebôkô* may praise the chief and also be admonitory (just as his council might); line 4 warned Montshiwa that although he had imitated "the mad dog" (Mzilikazi) in killing the messengers, he should not forget his own humanity.[164]

In Dr Molema's view, the Griqua-Rolong raid damaged Mzilikazi's pride just after he had endured two hefty defeats: by Zulu troops (June 1830) and Moshoehoe (September 1831).[165] Like Greek historian Plutarch, who thought Cato the Elder excessive in threatening Carthage's annihilation at every turn, Molema held that Mzilikazi's desire to conquer the Rolong was unreasonable: "*Khunwana delenda est*: 'Khunwana must be destroyed'".[166]

Dr Molema's vivid account of the battle suggests at least one eyewitness as his source. Yet this seems impossible, as Khunwana occurred 133 years before *Montshiwa* was written. Moreover, it was published posthumously, and contains neither footnotes nor bibliography.[167] None of the six oral

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[158] Molema (1966: 19) mentioned valuable "jackal and wildcat pelts" in particular. "Chief's Letter Book", Point 17 [p.11] also stated that the Griqua-Rolong raid incited the Matebele attack on Khunwana.

[159] Macmillan, 1928: 17 fn.2.

[160] Molema, 1966: 19. Plaatje (1930 & 1996: 16) possibly introduced this epic device to involve the father of his protagonist, Ra-Thaga, headman Notto, so linking the action directly to the hero.

[161] Molema (1966: 19, 21): "*Mantwa*" is a contraction of "*Maya ka Ntwa*", meaning "those enrolled in a time of war".

[162] Molema (1966: 20): the *lebôkô* (praise-poem) uses Montshiwa's *sebôkô* (praise-name), "Sejankabo" (a devouring metaphor). The praises also call him by Tawana's: "Sephiri-o-Mokgothu", alluding to Tawana's *seantlho* father, Mokgothu (See *supra*, p.51).

[163] Cf. In his praises (*lithoko*), Sotho Chief Moshoeshoe [M Damane & PB Sanders (eds), 1974. *Lithoko: Sotho Praise-Poems*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press), pp.70-71] is called "the Binders' tawny lion" devouring his enemies. In old age, now toothless, Moshoeshoe, the "lion" can no longer "devour", but "nibbles". His age-regiment was the Binders.

[164] On the role of the chief's council in Rolong society, see JL Comaroff, 1978: 6 & 11.

[165] Molema (1966: 20): Dingaan's men bearded Mzilikazi's on the Apies River; Moshoeshoe's repelled him from Thaba Bosiu. Walker (1934 & 1938: 119) dated Dingane's "punitive expedition" in 1832, which Bhebe (1979: 35) confirmed.

[166] Molema (1966: 20) paraphrased the conservative Roman senator, Cato the Elder (234-149BC). Cato feared Carthage's resurgence after its defeat in the first two Punic Wars. In *Roman Lives*, Trans. Robin Wakefield. (Oxford: OUP), p.34, Greek historian Plutarch (c.45-c.120-5AD) translated Cato's words as "'It seems to me that Carthage should cease to exist".

[167] Molema (1951: 206) listed his informants' names and ages; the eldest, Stephen Lefenya (b.1835/6) was Montshiwa's secretary.

sources he cited in *Chief Moroka* was old enough to have witnessed Khunwana, but might have heard their elders describe it. Likewise, it is possible to imagine a scenario in which Modiri heard his father relate what *his own* father, Chief Molema, had initially told him.

No sooner had Montshiwa and his regiment returned from initiation than Hurutshe refugees from Mosega brought Tawana news of the Matabele's planned attack. As dawn broke on 6 August 1832, sentinels hurtled into the royal *kgotla* to announce that the enemy's imminent arrival. Hastily aroused, warriors seized their weapons to defend the chief.[168] Younger men hurried the livestock away, knowing that they were the enemy's targets. Three Matebele regiments under Mzilikazi's finest *induna*'s fell upon the town: Gundwana attacked from both south and west; Mombate rounded the town to block off the Rolong's southern escape route; Gubuza completed the circle. Molema's description highlighted the enemy's excessive cruelty:

> [t]he fury of the attack was mainly directed against the royal place, regiment after regiment of the invaders jumping high as if at an athletic competition, shaking their assegais, waving their broad shields in the air, making weird noises, hissing and lustily shouting "Mzilikazi", charged the Barolong like demons and butchered man, woman and child alike.[169]

Three regiments of Rolong distinguished themselves under Chief Molema's brother, Motshegare, their relative, Mokgweetsi Phetlhu, and Ratlou warrior, Sebotso Montshosi, who slew six Matebele before Gubuza's men killed him.[170] Outnumbered by Gubuza and Gundwana's united regiments, the Tshidi fled, with very heavy losses. "Man, woman and child were butchered with ferocious cruelty", before the town and its granaries were torched.[171] As the Rolong finally counted their dead, the disaster's full impact struck home. Five of their queens, Tawana's wives, lay dead: Molema and Motshegare lost their mother, Mosela. Tawana lost Montshiwa's mother, Sebudio, taken in the late Tau's name, Leshane, likewise married in Tau's name, Dikgang, his first wife, and Senaanye. His sisters Koto and Kotonyane also perished.[172]

The town where the Rolong had eventually re-established an agricultural lifestyle after a decade's fighting, fleeing and drought, lay ruined. Khunwana's tragedy was not a ten-year siege, like the Trojan War, nor six-month's endurance, like the Siege of Mafikeng sixty-eight years later. It was a day's pitched battle and the sacking of a town, but it forced the Rolong into exile from a region they considered their own. Over the next year, they travelled nearly 600km, pausing at Plaatberg with the Wesleyan missionaries and finally reaching Thaba 'Nchu in late-1833. There, the Rolong sheltered until able to fulfill the "vendetta" of Plaatje's title: their commitment to driving the enemy from their land.[173]

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[168] Molema (1966: 21) listed their weapons as "assegais, battle-axes, shields and knobkerries".

[169] Molema, 1966: 20-22.

[170] Molema (1966: 22, 3, 15): Serolong oral poetry praised valiant Mokgweetsi, descendant of Phetlhu, son of Makgetla, the Tshidi's probable founder: "'Thou buffalo that once charged a Tebele/made mince-meat and mixed him with his excreta…'". Montshosi was apparently the son of Ratlou chief Gontse's brother, Montshosi. For Mokgweetsi's death, see *infra*, p.122.

[171] Plaatje (1930 & 1996): "Maddened by these awful scenes, the Barolong hurled themselves against the enemy and fought like fiends possessed". The hero, Ra-Thaga, later evoked the town's destruction: "'Kunana is in ruins…the Barolong are wiped out …their home is no more'". Alone in the bush, Ra-Thaga discovers the novel's terrified female hero, *Mhudi*.

[172] Molema, 1966: 23. Molema, 1951: 32-33.

[173] In epic mode, Plaatje (1930 & 1996) wove Rolong desire for revenge on the Matebele into *Mhudi*'s plot. The Rolong strike a fateful bargain with the Boer intruders. Boer guns eventually defeat Mzilikazi, forcing him to move north. For this aid, the Rolong hope the Boers will return their land, but the De Villiers leave Ra-Thaga and Mhudi only a wagon, signifying future Rolong landlessness (p.157). The majority of Boers' abhorrence of black/white contact presages future segregation.

"A chosen vessel unto the Lord" — Molema, from Migrant to Missionary:[174]

Molema, his grandson wrote a century later, "was destined to make a stir in the educational and religious life of the Barolong".[175] Molema left ruined Khunwana a migrant, one of the crushed Tawana's twelve sons.[176] For, Tawana's five *seantlho* sons in his brother Tau's name preceded his own sons.[177] All eyes were on Montshiwa, whose "active mind and inquisitive nature" made him the Rolong chiefs' apt pupil at Thaba 'Nchu.[178] Fifteen years on, however, when the Tshidi led the frail Tawana back to the Molopo, Molema's eminence was rising. For the next thirty years, his status was second only to Montshiwa's, but in ways that neither chief nor their followers could have predicted in 1833. He returned a missionary: the first African evangelist the European missionaries on the colony's frontier sent to parts unknown.

Evidence of Molema's life during these exiled years comes mainly from Wesleyan Methodist archival sources, the published narratives of missionaries, and oral sources. Early academic texts relegated Africans to "Trek" historiography's margins.[179] Dr Molema's accounts of the odyssey his community undertook sixty years before his birth are two of the few Rolong-centred ones.[180] One of his major historical contributions was to reconstruct a sustained narrative of these journeys and the Rolong's stay with Seleka Chief, Moroka II. He traced their routes and motivation for migrating. Publishing both versions while the National Party forcibly instituted strict urban and rural apartheid, Molema wished to convey a sense of precolonial geography, using Setswana place-names and spatial orientation. He also stressed an important consequence of the migration: his grandfather's conversion to Christianity. Once the Tshidi returned to the Molopo, the Christian segment's growth would spark major conflict in the community.

After Khunwana, the Rolong realised that, above all, they needed protection and hoped that Mahura, the Tlhaping chief at Taung, would supply it. Astonishingly, his brother, Kenakamorwa, and some Tlhaping brigands, murdered Tlala, their military leader, for his cattle. [181] Losing his eldest surviving son and the previous decade's continual fighting concentrated Tawana's mind on securing weapons and allies to improve Tshidi defences, as Silas's text explained:

> [n]ow the sons of Tau, seeing that it was impossible for them to cope with so many different enemies, unless they speedily provided themselves with fire-arms, they determined…to move towards the Colony.[182]

Trudging to Mamusa (Schweizer-Reneke), the Tshidi lost more cattle to Gert Taaibosch's Korannas, causing Tawana to press on 80km further to join the Seleka at Motlhana-wa-pitse (Platberg).[183] In July 1826, the Wesleyan Methodists established their station here under Broadbent and Hodgson, who were

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[174] Molema (1951: 59) cited James Backhouse, *Narrative of a Visit to the Mauritius and South Africa*. [1844], p.413, and John Mackenzie, 1871. *Ten Years North of the Orange River*. (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas), p.229.

[175] Molema, 1851: 33.

[176] The words "migrate" and "migrant" aptly describe the Rolong journey to Thaba 'Nchu, as Matthews (1954: 16) uses "*Mme Baralong ba šwetsa go hudugêla ko Thaba Ntšho*" [And then the Rolong decided to migrate to Thaba ' Nchu].

[177] See *supra*, pp.51ff, and also Appendix A, Genealogy, p.I.

[178] Molema, 1966: 27.

[179] JAL Agar-Hamilton, 1937. *The Road to the North*. (London: Longmans, Green), Macmillan, 1928, and Walker, 1934.

[180] The more detailed account of the Tshidi experience is in Molema (1966: Chapter Four), but Molema (1951: Chapters II-V) describes aspects of the "*difaqane*", the missionaries' arrival and the remove to Thaba 'Nchu.

[181] Molema (1966: 24) stated: Tawana received the Tlhaping chief.

[182] "Chief's Letter Book", Point 17 [pp.11-12].

[183] "Chief's Letter Book", Point 17 [pp.11]. Molema (1966: 24) spelled the name "*Motlhanapitse*". It refers to a hill shaped like the back of a horse — flattish, hence the Dutch name, *Plaatberg*, 10km E of today's Warrenton.

succeeded in 1833 by James Archbell.[184] Sefunelo's successor, Moroka II, welcomed the Tshidi and Gontse's Ratlou.[185] The 3,500-strong Tshidi contingent included Tawana's large family: his principal house comprised Montshiwa, Marumolwa, Selere and Seru Tau. His second, older house now consisted of Motshegare, Molema and their sister Majang, who later married Montshiwa. Tawana's last-born children, Saane (still alive in 1900) and Rabodietso, formed another generation.[186]

By 1833, Plaatberg could hardly "supply grazing and water, or accommodate so large a population" (8,000 to 13,000 people), especially when drought and locusts arrived. In April, a *pitso* (general council) of elders arranged an expedition to reconnoitre the southeast for "more fertile and better-watered land".[187] Moroka's uncle, Motlhware, and cousin, Jacob Ngakantsi, led them into Sotho country.[188] They had the provisions and security the Rolong had long sought: two missionaries (Archbell and Edwards), armed and mounted Griqua for protection, and 11 provisioned wagons. San hunters and copious game covered their route along the Khaba (Modder) River. At the Mogokare (Caledon), a Sotho chief introduced them to French missionaries Eugène Casalis and Thomas Arbousset, and then to Moshoeshoe.[189] After negotiations, Moshoeshoe granted the Seleka some 400km² to the Caledon's west, under dark Thaba 'Nchu.[190] With the deed signed, the expedition returned to Plaatberg to fetch their communities. Numerically, this mass migration outdid the first wave of Dutch-speaking emigrants (almost 14,000) who quit the Cape Colony in 1836.[191] 118 years later, Dr Molema re-created the scene:

> **Thaba Ncho.** In December, 1833, Platberg on the Vaal was all bustle, excitement and noise. The People were packing their goods and chattels on wagons and on pack oxen, and under their missionaries and respective chiefs, the Seleka Barolong of Moroka, the Ratlou Barolong of Gontse, and the Tshidi Barolong of Tawana…were leaving Motlhana-wa Pitse… for Thaba Ncho….about 15,000 people, travel[ed] in a compact body, some in wagons, some on horseback, some riding oxen, and a great number on foot. An eye witness has aptly compared this exodus to the flight of the Israelites under Moses, Aaron and Joshua from Egypt.[192]

Dr Molema depiction relied on an eyewitness, but might have coined the biblical metaphor himself. Mapping their route, he used Setswana names, bracketing their colonial equivalents.[193] They followed a similar course to the earlier expedition, arriving at the ±760m Black Mountain — Thaba 'Nchu — in late December 1833. In all, their journey from Khunwana to Thaba 'Nchu traversed almost 600km.[194] Modiri Molema found the mountain so movingly historic that he composed this poetic tribute: [195]

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[184] Molema, 1951: 33-35. Cope, in Hodgson, 1977: 12-13: Sefunelo, who had reached there on 31 July 1826, died in 1829.

[185] Molema (1966: 25) noted: only ±1,500 Ratlou marched to Plaatberg, most remaining at Morokweng. Gontse's children Shope, Phoi, Mmutla, and future chiefs, Masisi and Moswete, plus adviser's Letsapa and Leepo accompanied him.

[186] Molema (1966: 216): their mother was MmaSefera, daughter of the Ngwaketse chief, Makaba.

[187] Molema (1951: 35) includes previous quotation.

[188] Molema (1966: 26): Tawana sent two Khunwana veterans, Motshegare and Mokgweetsi, on the expedition. Molema (1951: 202): Mothlware was the son of Chief Moroka I's second house and brother to Sefunelo and Tshabadira.

[189] Molema, 1951: 3. Molema (1966: 25-26) reported that the journey took about 10 days.

[190] Molema (1951: 36) stated: the missionaries created a deed of sale for the land signed by both parties on 7 Dec 1833. The purchase price was 7 oxen, 1 heifer and a goat. On 17 July 1834, the Rolong bought a similar tract along the Caledon. Molema dismissed Theal's disparagement of the "alleged document" in *History of South Africa 1795-1884* (10 vols), p.406.

[191] Walker, 1934 & 1938: 6.

[192] Molema (1951: 37) cited Rev. J Edwards, *Fifty Years of Missionary Life in South Africa*. [N.Pub; Np], p.89. Some Griquas [and] Korana joined the party.

[193] See opposite page, from Molema, 1951: 38. See Map, *supra*, pp.52-53.

[194] Roughly their route from Khunwana went via Mamusa (Schweizer-Reneke) to Taung and thence to Mothlana-wa-Pitse (Plaatberg). The scouting expedition went from there down to Seretse (Van Wyk's Vlei/Boshof) on the Khaba River (Modder), which they followed eastward, then turning south to the Mokogare (Caledon).

[195] Molema's poem (1951: 38-39) described the Rolong town ±3.2km W of Thaba 'Nchu hill, which "with its mantle of bush and shrub, forming a dark visage at once serene, somber and sublime, and with its crown of big bare basaltic, boulders, silent, Sphynxlike…a symbol of security and a guarantee of protection, permanence, progress and perpetual peace".

A o ko mpolelele wena Thaba Ncho *Gore o bopilwe ke mang bogotsa jo,* *Bontle, bokariga le poitshego ya gago:* *Motsadi, botshabelo, kgotso le boikhutso.* Ao: thaba ntle, wena Thaba Ncho *Cwecwe a o ko o ntshebetse* *O ntse wa hidikwa, wa tshetshegwa ke mang foo!* *Bua tlhe, gore le nna ke bake Mmopi wa gago.*	Translation: Pray tell me, thou Thaba Ncho hill Who reared thee in thy beauteous strength? Whence comes the stately majesty? Thou parent, refuge, rest and peace. Majestic hill: Thaba Ncho hill Pray whisper softly, tenderly And say who carved and molded thee. Speak: that I too may worship Him

SM Molema, *"A o ko mpolelele wena Thaba Ncho"*

The second stanza reveals the influence of romantic poetry on Dr Molema's verse: the mountain's natural beauty represents providence's purpose for it as a place of Christian shelter and mercy.[196] After consecrating the land ritually, which the Christian Dr Molema called chanting "abracadabras to ward off inimical spirits", the clans withdrew to adjacent areas: the Seleka went south, the Tshidi north and the Ratlou northwest.[197] The missionaries built their station midway between the clans.[198] Despite this "strange" culture and cult presence, Rolong settlers brought a Setswana sense of space to the town: the circle was the basic architectural unit. Circular huts were formed into wards, and concentrically aligned around the chiefly *kgotla*. With some irony, Rev James Cameron called the town "'very imposing'" seven years later:

> "…a vast assemblage of houses teeming with inhabitants, but widely different from a European town. No splendid fanes, no towers or spires, no public buildings to serve the ends of either justice or benevolence greet the heavens, a heap of Bechuana huts jostled together without any apparent order, and their indispensable appendages – cattle folds – make up the scene".[199]

Strife interrupted Thaba 'Nchu's peace at various times, despite its reputation as a haven. In the 1830s, Taung and Koranna raiders menaced Moroka's settlement. Moshoeshoe and Tawana traded allegations over their sons cattle-raiding habits.[200] Nevertheless, Moroka gradually made Thaba 'Nchu a cultural crossroads. Its inhabitants not only encountered missionary teachings, but entered the emergent Sotho state's political ambit. Colonial travellers, like Andrew Smith, rested at the town and later described its luminaries.[201]

While there, Chief Molema (aged 24) felt the influence of several missionaries: Archbell, Richard Giddy, Thomas Sephton, James Allison, John Edwards and Hodgson, who taught "reading, writing,

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[196] On the Romantic influence, see Dr Molema's poem to Healdtown in Chapter Three. Chapters Five and Six discuss his reliance on the poet Thomas Pringle in *The Bantu*. Chapter Four outlines his friendship with Dr JS Moroka who also studied medicine in Scotland during World War I. Molema wrote *Chief Moroka* while serving on Dr Moroka's ANC Executive.

[197] For reasons related to his staunch Christian convictions, Dr Molema (1951: 39) spurned African traditional religion.

[198] Lye (1975: 115): at Thaba 'Nchu in 1834, Dr Andrew Smith noted that the Seleka and the Tshidi had their own wards. They had moved south recently having found "...the resources of the district inadequate to the wants of the increased population." Of the harmony between "Moroco" of the Seleka and the Tshidi's "Towani", he remaked, "[i]t is the custom for each principal descendant of the royal line to have the right of forming a community…and to a certain extent of governing it in any manner he may conceive the best; and thus at Thaba Unchu, the members of each division continued attached to their respective heads".

[199] Molema (1951: 40-42) cited James Cameron. In 1835, the Rapulana Rolong of Matlaba fled Moletsane's Bataung, and joined Moroka and the other chiefs at Thaba 'Nchu.

[200] On Moletsane, Molema (1951: 43-44), cited G Stow[e], 1905. *The Native Races of South Africa*. (London: Swann Sonnenstein), pp.280-83. On the Koranna, he cited J Engelbrecht, *The Korana*, Ellenberger, *History of the Basuto*, p.216, Theal, *History of South Africa, 1834-1854*, p.375, and G Lagden, *The Basutos*, p.65. On the cattle-raiding, he cited Theal, *History of South Africa, 1795-1828*, p.407.

[201] Molema (1951: 40) cited Smith's *Diary*, Vol.I, p.155, referring to an edition predating Lye's (see Bibliography). Smith observed of Thaba 'Nchu: "[t]he houses are irregularly disposed, though more or less encircling the cattle kraals".

arithmetic and scripture" to children and adults.[202] While about 100 people were baptised in the chapel, many more attended Sunday services and some became evangelists: Goronyane, Leshomo (later made "exhorters"), Mopedi, Mutla and Seatlholo (who became "helpers") and Molema, the ablest, who became a preacher "owing to his remarkable spiritual gifts, added to his considerable influence and high social standing".[203]

His conversion aroused considerable controversy:

> [i]t was...something of a crisis when Molema, Chief Tawana's second surviving son, a sensible man of twenty-four years of age, first evinced unmistakable signs of interest in the doctrines of Christianity; and when he publicly accepted the faith it was regarded as a national catastrophe….[204]

Dr Molema claimed that the first Tshidi Royal convert was regarded as a revolutionary, given that most rulers considered chiefship and Christianity incompatible. A photograph of him some years later shows a handsome, though solemn man in a dark jacket, white high-collared shirt and black bow tie. Close-shaven, in early Victorian style, and he sported a greying goatee beard. His penetrating stare revealed that Modiri resembled him more closely than he did his own father, Silas.[205]

Chief Moroka and the missionaries played a strong role in creating a permanent, socially mixed community at Thaba 'Nchu. Archbell attempted to proselytise Tawana's sons Molema, Montshiwa and Motshegare. While Montshiwa retained knowledge about the Christian conception of God until he died, he made no formal conversion to Christianity. Yet, he respected the by-products of the missionaries' office in the interior: their power to intercede diplomatically with other communities.[206] At Thaba 'Nchu, Montshiwa was exposed to a greater variety of leaders than his immediate ancestors had been: from Moroka and other Rolong clan chiefs, to the trekker leaders and the missionaries.[207] He also came to realise the strong pull of Cape colonial politics from beyond the Orange River. His father and senior Tshidi councillors used their respite from continual fighting to train him in the arts of chiefship.[208]

Initially, Moroka and the other Rolong chiefs did not realise the Boers' ambitions to own land and cooperated with them to remove their common enemy: the Matabele. In the immediate term, Moroka and Tawana's cooperation with the Trekkers contrasted with the reception they received from Moshoeshoe, who saw them as a threat to his embryonic state. The Rolong's assistance to the Boers and subsequent loss of land would return to haunt them. At the Bloemhof Arbitration 35 years later (1871), Rolong and Boer protagonists would gather to argue about title to the land.[209] While the events of the 1830s carried their own importance, in a sense, they gained greater significance in retrospect, as communities began defining and disputing their history in relation to the deepening colonial process.

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[202] Molema (1951: 193) dated these missionaries' stays at Matlwasse [Maquassi], Plaatberg and Thaba 'Nchu. Broadbent: Matlwasse, 1823-24. Hodgson: Matlwasse, 1823-24, Plaatberg, 1826-28. Archbell: Matlwasse, 1825-26, Plaatberg, 1833-37. Edwards: Plaatberg, 1833, Thaba 'Nchu, 1833-35. Allison: at Mpharane, Thaba 'Nchu, 1838-39. Sephton: Plaatberg, 1838-39. Giddy: Thaba 'Nchu, 1834-40. Cameron: Thaba 'Nchu, 1845-52.

[203] Molema (1951: 57-59) cited J Backhouse, *Narrative of Visit to Mauritius and South Africa*. [N.Pub, p.413]. Molema (1951:193-94) listed all the African assistants whom the missionaries enlisted.

[204] Molema (1951: 59) indicates that Molema was probably born around 1809.

[205] Molema, 1951: 59-60. The photograph shows that Chief Molema's nose was not, like Tawana's, flat.

[206] Motshegare, Tawana's fourth son in his second house, was Molema's elder brother. Their mother was Mosela. See *infra*: Appendix A — Genealogy, and JL Comaroff, 1978: 5. In 1852, Montshiwa found his community so besieged by the Boers that he asked Molema to secure the services of a missionary to mediate with the Boers and the British imperial government.

[207] Molema (1966: 28) mentioned Potgieter, Gert Maritz, Sarel [Carl] Cilliers, Rev Erasmus Smit and Piet Retief as some of the trekkers living with the Rolong at Thaba 'Nchu. Walker (1934 & 1938: 91-93; 113-16) characterised the trekkers.

[208] Molema, 1966: 27-28.

[209] Agar-Hamilton, 1937: 13, 67-68. Dr Molema referred to Agar-Hamilton's work in *Chief Moroka* (1951).

In 1836, Mzilikazi and 5,000 Matabele dealt the Boers their first major defeat at Vegkop, near the Vaal.[210] With the aid of Moroka, Archbell and Gerrit Maritz, another trekker leader from the Cape, they retreated to Thaba 'Nchu. 120 years later, reconsidering the Trek's consequences, Dr Molema commented ironically that, Boers and the Rolong at Thaba 'Nchu interacted on equal terms, but "there was no social admixture between white and black".[211] Equality was no longer possible, he implied, writing as an African historian, ANC Treasurer-General, and key sponsor of the Defiance Campaign, while the National Party government cemented apartheid's legal framework. He implied too that 1950s' Afrikaners had forgotten the combined generosity that Rolong chiefs and their missionary allies had shown their Trekker ancestors.[212]

His two biographies shared Macmillan's view that the Trek brought European colonists into direct contact with the interior's African peoples for the first time, with dire consequences. Macmillan, like missionary John Philip, his early research interest, saw Ordinance 50 of 1828 as a framework for the creation of liberal racial attitudes at the Cape. Instead, the Trek imposed "principles that looked backwards to the old days before 1828" on most African people of the interior, and eventually, after 1910 throughout the country.[213]

While Molema studied spiritual matters, his younger brother, Montshiwa, learned statecraft, and aided Tawana in supplying Potgieter with warriors to chastise Mzilikazi. Motshegare as well as Ratlou general, Leepo, and Rapulana Chief Matlaba accompanied the Trekkers.[214] On 2 January 1837, the Boer commando left for Mosega, arriving a fortnight later. Walker maintained that the country the Commando moved into was "empty", but Macmillan cited pre-Trek travellers' narratives indicating that the country was "by no means 'empty'".[215] Although the Commando seized many cattle, their defeat of Mosega's inhabitants, mostly "old men, women and children" was indecisive.[216] Their target, Mzilikazi and his men were away. At Kapain (Egabeni) in November 1837, Potgieter and Pieter Uys's Boers prevailed, but again missed their quarry, Mzilikazi, who then moved his settlement northward, settling across the Limpopo in Matabeland.[217]

Mzilikazi's departure gave the Boers mastery over the highveld and much scope for settlement.[218] By 1841, rumours reached the Rolong at Thaba 'Nchu that the Boers were now occupying their former lands near the Molopo. The Rolong realised that "the longer Tawana…remained in Thaba Ncho, the less land they would find to occupy. This consideration urged them to move".[219] Tawana's decision

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[210] Molema (1966: 28) stated that Vegkop is in the northern Free State, ±19km S of Heilbron. Walker (1934 & 1938: 121-24) noted that Potgieter had heard of Mzilikazi's attacks on two Boer parties (Stephanus Erasmus and the Liebenbergs, a breakaway of Sarel Cilliers' trek) north of the Vaal.

[211] Molema, 1966: 28.

[212] In *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa* (JHB: AD. Donker, 1970 & 1987, pp.399-400), Peter Walshe noted that Dr Moroka made Dr Molema ANC Treasurer-General in 1949. He supported the Defiance Campaign materially, donating at least £250 to ANC funds. From 1948 to 1953, the NP passed several Acts to form Apartheid's legal foundation: the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act (1950), the Population Registration Act (1950), Group Areas Act, Bantu Authorities Act (1951), and the Bantu Education Act (1953).

[213] Macmillan, 1928: 166.

[214] Molema (1966: 28) averred that Montshiwa (21) had helped arrange the expedition. Walker (1934 & 1938: 127-28) called it a "small" force of 107 Boers, 40 Griquas and Korannas mounted and armed, and 60 Rolong on foot to drive the cattle".

[215] Walker, 1934 & 1938: 127. Macmillan, 1928: 173 fn.2.

[216] Molema, 1966: 29. Walker (1934 & 1938: 127-28) stated that the "victorious commando" captured 7,000 cattle, wagons, and 3 American missionaries, including Daniel Lindley, but lost "only four" Rolong.

[217] Molema (1966: 29) gave Kapain's Dutch name Silkaatskop on the Tholwane River. See Matthews, 1954: 15-16. Walker (1934 & 1938:157-58) mentions 135 mounted men and "a few score Barolong", who defeated the Matabele in 9 days.

[218] Macmillan, 1928: 174.

[219] Molema, 1966: 30.

revealed his doubts about future relations with the Boers; the Tshidi's return to their lands might be more complex than anticipated.

That the Tshidi did not return to the Molopo directly would complicate matters further and was raised at the Bloemhof Arbitration to weaken their case.[220] Three Rolong clans — Tawana's Tshidi, Gontse's Ratlou, and Matlaba's Rapulana — quit Thaba 'Nchu in 1841, leaving their Seleka relatives behind.[221] Molema was among the Tshidi with his small following, who did not then constitute a separate entity. Later, the Tshidi, Ratlou and Rapulana, who had been sheltering with Moroka, would claim that they had struck an alliance with the emigrant Boers, under Andries Potgieter, to rid their former territory of the Matabele.[222] After Mzilikazi's removal, Potgieter had apparently advised Tawana to move "to the country of his birth south of the Molopo and west of the Hart[s]".[223] Theal dated this return "towards the close of the year 1848", when Tawana moved north from the Mooi river to Lotlhakana, "the country once possessed by Tao [Tau]. He had been away from the land of his birth more than fifteen years, and he returned to find it in a very different condition from that in which he left it".[224]

The Rolong journeyed home slowly. Dr Molema explained more precisely than Theal that the Rolong had passed only eight "ploughing seasons" at Thaba 'Nchu.[225] Their long route back took the almost 3,000 Rolong across land that the new Boer "immigrants" now claimed as their "Free State".[226] They spent brief periods at Maje-masweu (Brandfort) and Bodiba-jwa-dikwena (Kroonstad), before crossing the Lekwa (Vaal) at Commando Drift, and passing five years at Matlwang (Machavie) near Potchefstroom.[227] Then they made what they hoped would be a last push to Lotlhakana (Rietfontein).[228]

Their travels coincided with a new phase of both Molema and his brother Montshiwa's lives: both were married men. However, the kinds of marriage that each brother contracted exposed a religious rift in the family. As a Christian, Molema had vowed to marry one wife only, when he wed Baetlhoi. In sharp contrast, Montshiwa (then 22) had taken his first wife, Motshidisi Phetlhu, in 1837. His second marriage would have been a double anathema in Christian terms: he married Molema's sister, Majang, in 1839. Molema's reaction to this marriage has not been recorded. In Setswana custom, the marriage with an "agnatic half-sister" did not constitute a block to marriage, Dr Molema explained.[229]

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[220] Agar-Hamilton, 1937: 67.

[221] Molema, 1966: 30.

[222] Agar-Hamilton (1937: 67): Montshiwa's ex-missionary, Ludorf, and Moroka gave evidence of this alliance to the Bloemhof Arbitration court (1871). Molema (1951: 62) claimed that Potgieter renewed the Boer-Rolong alliance at Thaba 'Nchu in 1843.

[223] Theal, 1915: 7, 381. Schapera (1952: 7): much of what was had been Tswana country, was colonised by Voortrekkers who, "having driven the Tebele out of the Transvaal, settled there and began to rule the country. Their treatment of the Native population led in 1852-53 to the flight of several tribes into what is now the Protectorate. The Tshidi settled at Moshaneng, in the territory of the Ngwaketse; the Mmanaana-Kgatla, Malete, Tlôkwa, Tlhako, and two sections of Hurutshe (Manyana and Mokhubidu), sought refuge among the Kwena….Several of these tribes afterwards returned to their former homes including the Tlôkwa (1874) and the Rolong (1877), but the Mmnaana-Kgatla, Hurutshe, and Malete, have lived in Bechuanaland ever since".

[224] Theal, 1915: 7, 382.

[225] Molema, 1951: 61.

[226] Molema (1951: 61-62) estimated that the route was 300 mile (480km) long, but my calculations suggest that it could have been longer: about 588km.

[227] "Machavie", named after Chief Matlaba, is on the Mooi River near Potchefstroom. Molema (1966: 31) stated that the Tshidi, Ratlou and Rapulana dwelt together at Matlwang until 1845. Gontse then settled his clan to the Schoonspruit's west at Motswi-wa-petlana, later given "the exalted name of Kafferskraal" in reference to the ruined Ratlou huts.

[228] Molema, 1951: 61-62.

[229] Schapera (1953 & 1979: 41) states that a man's marriage with an "agnatic half-sister" is accepted among the Rolong. Molema (1966: 29): Motshidisi was the daughter of Mokgweetsi Phetlhu, hero of Khunwana (see p.28 fn.197). Montshiwa would marry 11 wives in all, and the Tshidi succession dispute (from 1915 on) concerned his wives' seniority. See Chapter Two.

Thaba 'Nchu missionaries maintained contact with their new evangelist, whom they had tasked with creating and increasing a Wesleyan Methodist community in what was, to them, the unknown interior of southern Africa. In 1843, while the Rolong were still making their way home, Rev Giddy reported that Molema could "read well" and sent him frequent messages from the interior. Giddy, in turn, sent Molema "a large parcel of Scripture extracts, with directions on how to proceed in teaching, holding the services, etc". Giddy stated confidently, "[t]hus we have in the wilderness, some 400 miles distant from our station, a society of Bechuanas and an unpaid native teacher zealously labouring among them". Methodist metaphors abounded. Unknown and presumably "unchristian" landscape must needs be "wilderness" (like that which tested Christ). "Zeal" and "labour" were the chief personal strengths any Wesleyan could wield in the face of "heathenism". Giddy and companions at Thaba 'Nchu could little have known how the new faith would divide Tswana communities.[230]

At Matlwang, the brothers assumed further responsibility, as their father, Tawana, was ailing. His calendar years did not reflect the considerable hardship Tawana had undergone in his almost 65 years. The physical effort of completing nearly 588km twice, mostly on foot, in one's lifetime, together with the wanderings and famine of the 1820s, must have taken their toll.[231] He knew great political and emotional stress during these years, having lost five wives in the bloody defeat at Khunwana, besides bearing the heavy burden of his people's safety. This aloof, but prudent leader's last request was to return home, and his sons took him. Molema later gave evidence to the Bloemhof hearings that the Tshidi's desire to resist European claims on their labour also compelled them to leave Matlwang.[232] They departed in August 1848, and their route, in his grandson's description, preserved the evocative Setswana names that colonization soon overwrote. They travelled west to the flat-topped Mutsasa (Plaatberg) and Lomawe (Goedgevonden) astride the Khing (Schoonspruit).[233] They then turned northwest to Matlape (Coligny), Ditsobotla (Lichtenburg), Bodibe (Polfontein), Lotlhakana (Rietfontein) and nearby Dithakong (Transvaal), arriving in late September.[234] Tawana passed away in mid-1849. Whether he lived long enough to celebrate the arrival of Molema and Baetlhoi's fifth boy, Thelesho Silas, is not known.[235]

Tshidi rules of chiefship ordained that the succession was not automatic, but the decision of the whole Tshidi community, who duly "pointed out" Montshiwa.[236] The new chief continued his father's attempts to counter early manifestations of Boer colonisation: "[t]here were several farmers living along the Molopo and at some of the best fountains in the country before the return of Tawane, but he was not in a position to dispute their right to be there". These Boer settlers tried to force the Tshidi to pay labour tax and began taking issue with the new chief at Lotlhakana.[237] In May 1849, the Boers regrouped politically.

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[230] School of Oriental and African Studies [SOAS], *Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society* [*WMMS*], South Africa Correspondence, 315, 20 June 1843, R Giddy, Thaba 'Nchu. In Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997: 91.

[231] On their return journey, the Rolong may have had wagons, as suggested in Plaatje's *Mhudi*.

[232] Agar-Hamilton, 1937: 67-68.

[233] This was not the same Plaatberg as "Motlana-wa-Pitse". South Africa has large numbers of flat-topped hills or mesas, resulting in many "Tafelkops", "Tafelbergs", and "Platbergs".

[234] Molema (1966: 32): Dithakong "in the Lotlhakane valley", where Tawana was buried, was not the identically-named place of the 1823 battle, as Dr Molema's (1966: 220) index clarified. It was customary to bury chiefs in cattle-kraals, which Dr Molema stated had prevented him from finding Tawana's grave. This route would have passed roughly along today's R503.

[235] Molema (1966: 32) calculated Tawana's age as 75 in 1849, but this does not tally with his early statement that Tawana was ±30 in 1814 during his dispute with Leshomo. If this were correct, Tawana would have been born in about 1784, making him 65 in 1849. The earlier dates are well-nigh impossible to confirm, given lack of documentation. The date of Silas Molema's birth is discussed in *infra*, p.104.

[236] Molema (1966: 33): until Montshiwa's selection, Tawana's brother Moshwela acted as regent (*motshwárélēdi*).

[237] Theal, 1915: 7, 382. Agar-Hamilton, 1937: 68.

On leaving Thaba 'Nchu, the Rolong clans also bade farewell to the missionaries, who saw their departure as a means of extending, rather than severing, their connection. The Wesleyans took an unprecedented step in sending the most promising of their recent converts to continue their work among the Tshidi. Rather than send a resident missionary on the long journey to the Molopo, the Wesleyans sent Molema as their evangelist, or "*moruti*", perhaps hoping that his proximity to the chief would, soon deliver other Tshidi converts into their hands. Thaba 'Nchu was near enough, and Dr Moffat at Kuruman also accessible should Molema need to consult them.

"A man of strong personality and exceptional gifts" — Molema's role in Tshidi politics:[238]

At Lotlhakana, Molema's position as a Christian evangelist among the Tshidi soon became complicated. Montshiwa realised that an African preacher (especially one's brother) could provoke political and cultural controversy in the community, whereas a white missionary might help him parry Boer forays onto Tshidi lands. For the latter reason, Molema also urged Montshiwa to petition the Wesleyans for a permanent missionary who could communicate in Dutch with Boer authorities. Despite Molema's "betrayal" of traditional Rolong beliefs through his conversion, he still wielded "great influence in the tribe" as Montshiwa's "chief counsellor". Both brothers had witnessed the benefits of missionary advisors at Thaba 'Nchu. Archbell and James Cameron had rendered "enlightened services" to Moroka, while Arbousset and Casalis had steered Moshoeshoe throughout "the labyrinthine intricacies of European diplomacy which…threatened to entangle him". The brothers hoped that a missionary would deal firmly with the Boers' many letters of demand for "grazing, land and labour", hunting rights, permission to retrieve cattle, and also border disputes between Boers and Rolong.[239]

Thus, in December 1849, Molema returned to Thaba 'Nchu to beg the Wesleyan District Missionary Meeting for a permanent missionary. The Meeting duly appointed Rev Joseph Ludorf (articulate in Setswana, Dutch and English), who reached Lotlhakana in January 1850.[240] He concluded on arrival that Montshiwa had sought his services for practical and political considerations, and "...no great wish for the Gospel".[241] The complex dealings between Rolong, missionaries, Boers and (later) British grew increasingly intense as key resources, like water and land, grew scarcer and the numbers of people relying on them expanded.[242]

After the Trek, the Tshidi and other Sotho-Tswana communities found themselves on a new frontier. Their southern border with the Cape was an unregulated area, flanking open desert and governed by the pressing need for "land and labour, cattle and water".[243] Trade in many commodities, especially guns, expedited economic growth. In 1851, white farmers settled on land that Montshiwa claimed in the "Molopo eye", at Grootfontein and Mooimeisiefontein. When they ignored Montshiwa's requests to leave this land, he began a long correspondence with their Commandant-General, Andries Pretorius.[244]

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[238] Molema, 1966: 35.

[239] Molema, 1966: 35.

[240] *Methodist Missionary Notices* relating principally to the Foreign Missions, IX, no.148, Apr 1851, Bechuana Country, James Cameron, 6 Dec 1850 and 11 Jan 1851. Theal (1915: 7, 382) stated that Molema conveyed Montshiwa's request to Cameron, who summoned a meeting of the regional clergymen, who resolved to send Ludorf north. Molema, 1966: 36.

[241] *WMMS*, XVII, Bechuanaland 1838-1857, Box 315, 1 March 1852, Lotlhakana, Rev Ludorf to Rev Mr. Shaw and Dear Brothers, p.1.

[242] Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 207-10: water, probably the Tswana's most precious resource, was the site of ideological, spiritual, political and economic conflict between missionaries and Tswana leaders, like that between Livingstone and the Kwena Rain Doctor (*Missionary Travels*, 1857: 25), and Broadbent (1865: 99-101) and the Seleka. Missionaries used western scientific models to explain rain production, while Tswana chiefs and doctors believed rain came "from the clouds", not from waterholes. Really at issue was the respective power of the systems chiefs and missionaries used to explain the natural universe. Among the Tswana, power resided in the chief's ability to control the sources of water.

[243] Comaroff & Comaroff (1991: 273, 373-75, 389) discuss the cultural and economic value of water and cattle to the Tshidi.

[244] Molema, 1966: 36.

Boer behaviour in the interior won them few allies among the inhabitants, especially when Britain ratified the Sand River (1852) and Bloemfontein (1854) Conventions to recognise the independent Transvaal and Orange Free State Republics' supremacy over Africans in the region. The previously divided Transvaal Boers had pledged to unite under one Volksraad in 1849, but Potgieter's absence from the leadership frustrated this objective. Initially, the Volksraad excluded military leaders from political office, but by 1851, it appointed four commandants-general to govern four key areas. Accomplished soldier, Pretorius ruled over the Western Transvaal (Mooi River, Magaliesberg and part of the Marico), thus making him responsible for the newly re-settled Rolong[245]. Several Rolong communities were soon at the Boers' mercy and begged support from the agents of informal empire, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Societies (WMMS) and London (LMS). These appeals were astute, as missionary interests had much in common with those of the beleaguered Africans. The Comaroffs characterised the missionaries' behaviour, overall, in these terms:

> ...being whites who preferred to ally themselves with blacks [rather than Boers], the churchmen defied not only the political interests but also the ideological categories of a nascent Afrikanerdom.[246]

The Boers reacted by treating missionaries as the enemy.[247] Dr David Livingstone, one of the Scottish doctor-explorers whom, Modiri Molema later admired, used his stature in Britain to report on Boer colonisation. "The Boerish masters", he punningly cautioned readers, shamelessly forced and exploited Tswana labourers to build their houses, water courses, dams and gardens, and generally divert the natural resources of the country for Boer profit.[248] Recent Boer settlers, seeing their "farms" as profitable places of work, tried to turn Africans into poorly-remunerated labourers, Livingstone explained:

> [w]hoever required a piece of work done, just rode over to the nearest Bechuana town, and ordered the chief to furnish twenty or thirty men or women, as the case required. In the majority of cases when the work was finished they were dismissed without even a morsel of food....[This] is now grinding the natives to the earth.[249]

Unsurprisingly, under such pressure, the Rolong favoured anyone who could protect them against the Boers. In what evolved into a three-sided (Rolong, Boer and British) conflict over regional resources, all parties complained vociferously. Rolong remonstrated about Boer and *vice versa*. The Boers also objected to alleged missionary interference on the Rolong's behalf. British intervention came later.

From 1850, Montshiwa and Molema corresponded with Boer representatives over the farmers' intrusions onto Tshidi land and demands on their labour. Pretorius himself regretted to "*Opphoofd der Barolong*" the Molopo Eye Boers' presence and arranged a meeting between the two Chiefs and 12 Boers, under Pieter Scholtz and Adriaan Stander on 30 December 1851.[250] They agreed the first formal boundary between their communities.[251] Dr Molema criticised GM Theal for "repeatedly" failing to specify this border and quoted the Bloemhof Arbitration report's demarcation. The new boundary

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[245] CFJ Muller (ed), 1969 & 1981. *Five Hundred Years: A History of South Africa*. (Pretoria: Academica), pp.177-78.

[246] Comaroff & Comaroff (1991: 274) used "Afrikanerdom" to denote the construction of racial oligarchies at the Cape and in the Boer Republics by the nineteenth century's end. Post-1910, Afrikaners controlled the South African state increasingly, culminating in the 1948 election of Dr Malan's first apartheid government. On Afrikanerdom's invention, see T Dunbar Moodie, 1980. *The Rise of Afrikanerdom.* (Berkeley: University of California Press) and Dan O'Meara, 1983. *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934-48*. (JHB: Ravan).

[247] Comaroff & Comaroff (1991: 275 & fn. 54) cited Council of World Mission, LMS Home Odds (Freeman Deputation 1849-50), 2-4-D, Rev J Freeman, Mabotsa to Foreign Secretary of LMS, 25 Dec 1849, mentioned the Boer belief that missionaries "protected" Africans: "The missionaries are the protectors of the Natives and the latter cannot be so easily outraged and driven out...under the direct observation and remonstrances of the missionary".

[248] I Schapera (ed), 1974. *David Livingstone: South African Papers, 1849-1853*. (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society), p.8.

[249] Schapera, 1974: 9.

[250] Agar-Hamilton, 1937: 68.

[251] Molema, 1966: 36.

redefined land that the Tshidi had recently traversed and where they had fought the Matabele: the line went from Mosega to Ottoshoop, up the wagon-road to Buurmansdrift, thence to the Harts River's source, and down-river to Matlwassie.[252]

As this conflict unfolded, 36-year-old Tshidi chief, Montshiwa, feeling his community increasingly threatened by Boer attempts to define the boundaries of their nascent "states", relied on his brother and their missionary, Ludorf. There was no uniform missionary stance towards the territory's indigenous inhabitants, and various denominations with different political approaches, supported the Tswana.[253] Some missionaries appealed to the British government for advice and aid on behalf of local Tswana communities.[254] Believing "a little ordnance went much further than even the most far-reaching ordinance", others openly ferried guns and information about "the enemy" to the beleaguered Tswana.[255] Livingstone persistently denied Boer accusations that he dealt in guns.[256] Ludorf favoured a mid-path between the two strategies and tried to persuade Boers occupying Rolong fountains and land to return them.[257]

"Evangelism and medical work have in Methodism ever gone hand in hand, in an endeavour to heal both bodies and souls", wrote Rev William Illsley. Ludorf, who became Superintendent of the South African Mission, had "distinct skill as a surgeon [and] a physician".[258]

In 1850 Ludorf, a German-born Wesleyan, trekked north from Thaba 'Nchu to spend an indefinite period among the Tshidi, but left just two years later.[259] James Cameron, Thaba 'Nchu's resident missionary, reported Ludorf's departure for Lotlhakana to the Wesleyan Mission's General Secretariat in London. Cameron predicted sanguinely that "[t]rials undoubtedly await him, but what African missionary is without trials?"[260] Ludorf settled at Lotlhakana among 8,000-9,000 "natives".[261]

The young minister's principal trial was to find that the *baruti* or "converted teachers" of Thaba 'Nchu days had sadly lapsed. He reported disapprovingly to Rev Shaw, his superior, that "...the natives...have now had again a swing of heathenism for the last seven years" and had again resorted to "old, filthy, worn-out customs and abominations, adoring even men, beasts and Devils". Feeling despised and

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[252] Molema (1966: 36) cited the *Report of the Land Commission*, p.81 and *Evidence at the Bloemhof Inquiry*, p.183. Agar-Hamilton, 1937: 68. "Rev. GP van der Merwe, "Maquassi; The First Wesleyan Mission-Station in the Transvaal". In *The Foreign Field*, v.VII, 1910-11, p.87: in 1823, Revs Broadbent and Hodgson founded their station among Sefunelo's Seleka. After Sefunelo's death, Moroka led them back to Plaatberg (192km SW). In 1833, they departed for Thaba 'Nchu.

[253] Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 275.

[254] Molema (1920: 203): "[b]esides being evangelists and civilisers, the missionaries have also been in South Africa...the political champions of the Bantu. For them they have interceded and conferred with Governments from the beginning of missionary work to this day…[and] stood up for the rights of the primitive peoples even at the risk of their own popularity and...safety."

[255] Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 275.

[256] Livingstone (Schapera, 1974: 14) refuted the gun-running slurs, lambasting the Boers for bootlegging guns in the region. He trenchantly argued that trying to police frontier gun-running was like bolting one's castle with "a boiled carrot". On the interior's arms trade, see Anthony Atmore & Peter Sanders, 1971. "Sotho Arms and Ammunition in the Nineteenth Century", *JAH*, XII, 4 (1974), pp.535-36.

[257] *WMMS*, XVII, Bechuanaland 1838-1857, Box 315, 1 March 1852, J Ludorf, Lotlhakane [*sic*], 315.

[258] William Illsley, "Developments at Moroka Mission Thaba Nchu". In *Methodist Missionaries and Ministers*, "Developments at Moroka Mission, Thaba Nchu", (Rondebosch, Cape: Methodist Missionary Department), p.50.

[259] The *WMMS* archive shows that his stay lasted from 1850 to 1852. *WMMS*, XVII, Bechuana, Box 315.

[260] *WMMS*, XVII, Bechuana, 315, 11 Jan 1851, James Cameron, Thaba 'Nchu, Bechuana Country to General Secretaries. *Methodist Mission Notices, Foreign Missions*, IX, 148, Apr 1851 and the earlier 6 Dec 1851, Cameron noted that the Rolong had been "importunate in their entreaties for a Missionary" since leaving Thaba 'Nchu.

[261] *WMMS*, XVII, Bechuana, 315, 23 May 1851, James Cameron, Northern Sovereignty to General Secretaries. Lotlhakana was later overtaken by the Boer town of Rietfontein. Shillington (1985:126) estimated that Molema's Mafikeng numbered "a couple of thousand" people, substantially fewer than the missionary's estimate.

rejected by his new flock, Ludorf despaired of fulfilling his work among them. Believing the Rolong were exploiting him for their own ends, he feared he had little evangelical influence over them.[262]

Ludorf cited Molema's ordeals to illustrate that evils and devils now pervaded the community. Although he had not witnessed this anecdote, Ludorf used it to show how the forces of Providence and Nature worked through Molema. The example bears quotation, as it reveals Molema's perceived status in and his conflicted position as a Christian convert among the Rolong. It also exhibited the missionary discourse which first represented African societies to British missionary societies and later colonists:

> ...Molema, one of the believers went into the village on the Lord's day, it appears, exhorting the people to think of their Maker, and to prepare to meet their Judge. Presently one of the Chief's brothers, a notoriously wicked man, came to oppose him; but Molema went on without taking much notice of him, seeing this the man called some of his friends, and began to sing, to dance, to curse and swear, and make such a noise, that Molema was finally obliged to discontinue. He returned to his abode, with sentiment of having done his duty; when lo, after a few minutes an awful streak of thunder put the whole village in confusion. The chief's brother, that wicked man, was struck; there remained scarcely any skin on his body, and in a few moments he was in eternity; at the bar of his righteous Judge, to receive according to his deeds. This struck horror into the bones of all the heathen and now it is the general impression that it is bad policy to fight against God.[263]

Neither this nor any other account revealed which of Tawana's many sons the elements considered sufficiently unrighteous to strike. Suffice to say, it was not Montshiwa himself. At this stage in Tshidi history, Christianity played a divisive role, Dr Molema recounted: "[Montshiwa] thought Christianity was unmanning, spoiling his people — 'making old women of them'…and was determined to forbid its spread; his brother [Molema] thought it was ennobling the Barolong, and was as determined to propagate it". [264]

This brief narrative opposed Christian and heathen ritual performances diametrically. None too subtly, the narrator aligned "goodness" with Christianity, and "evil" with African rites. "The good" Molema performed correct Christian offices at correct Christian times. As the Comaroffs found, the missionary project hinged on imposing the Christian morality of time and its appropriate observances on Africans' daily lives.[265] Ludorf stereotyped as automatically evil the singing, dancing, "anti-Molema" brother, whose rejection of Sabbatarian devotions and Christian time exemplified his transgression. The pious and entirely serious Ludorf found no other interpretation of this clash. He overlooked any anger that Montshiwa's followers may have felt towards Molema for offending custom and the Chief. He could not see that in this conflict-ridden situation Molema may have been both "good" *and*, through his Christian practices, provocative.

Heavenly intervention, in event and text, confirmed Ludorf's opinion. "'When lo!'", the pious gasp of biblical discourse ushered in that thunderbolt of divine justice. Here, Ludorf's God made gruesome use of natural forces to inscribe His mark on the sinner's body. His letter suggested that the enjoyment of the physical expressions of worship — near-naked dancing and singing that form part of Setswana custom — contributed greatly to the offence that the prelate experienced.

Violence was part of this moral tale's message. Ludorf implied that by flaying the dancing indigenous body, the Lord sent His unambiguous Word to the "heathen" villagers: disobey the Christian God or

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[262] *WMMS*, XVII, Bechuana, 315, 1 March 1852, Lotlhakana, Ludorf to Rev Mr Shaw, p.1.

[263] *WMMS*, Bechuana, Box 315, 1 March 1852, Lotlhakana, Ludorf to Rev Mr. Shaw and Dear Brothers, pp.2-3.

[264] Molema, 1920: 43.

[265] Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 234: "[t]he curricula of church and school together set out to reorganize the flow of seasons and events that configured space and time for the Tswana. They separated the sacred from the secular, work from leisure, the public from the private, the inner from the outer, the biography of the scholar from the master narratives of Christian history. Sunday service, weekday classes, quarterly communion, and annual feasts introduced a new schedule of activities that encompassed local routines within a global timetable, a universal geography."

suffer the consequences! Ludorf did not recognise the Rolong celebration as a spiritual experience, but regarded it as "Other", completely opposed to his own faith's framework of absolute truth and justice.

The drama and ambiguity of Molema's position increased after Ludorf left Lotlhakana. Ludorf departed in late 1852, after the Tshidi's dispersal by Transvaal Boers, who were trying to gain mastery over the region.[266] Although cast down by his inability to assist the Rolong against the Boers, he still campaigned for the rights of peoples of the interior to possess their land unimpeded by Boer covetousness. Like Moffat of Kuruman, Ludorf abhorred the reduction of Tswana communities to "absolute vassalage".[267]

That year, the tenor of Rolong-Boer interaction changed. Both parties awaited the findings of the Commission that Pretorius had set up to inspect their common border. It confirmed the Tshidi's tenure of their land. Politely addressing Montshiwa as "*Waarde Vriend en Bondgenoot*", Pretorius assured him that the Boers would not infringe Tshidi rights and asked him to keep his people on their side of the border. Dr Molema thought it "beyond question that Pretorius and the emigrant Boers…recognised the Barolong as [an]… independent people, and had no visible designs upon their land and liberty".[268] Yet, shifts in the power relations between Britain and the Boers imperiled Tshidi autonomy.

The Boers gained the advantage when Britain withdrew from the interior under the Sand River Convention (1852). It was a "strange document", as the two white colonising powers agreed the Transvaal's independence, but excluded the region's black inhabitants politically.[269] Wishing to shed its "intolerable burden of dominion", Britain agreed to "guarantee absolute independence to the Dutch Boers beyond the Vaal River".[270] The Convention was, wrote Dr Molema, the Boers' "Magna Carta, their Bill of Liberty", the basis of their segregationist "native policy". It foreshadowed the Transvaal Constitution, which Molema appended to *The Bantu* as a model of racial discrimination.[271]

Transvaal independence severely limited Africans' freedom, as Comdt Scholtz of Lichtenburg now ruled the Molopo's Rolong. In February 1852, he informed the area's chiefs that African land now belonged to the Boers, who had defeated and banished Mzilikazi; in gratitude, Africans now owed the Boers labour.[272] Whatever the Convention's legality, Dr Molema found it morally reprehensible: "…if you dispossess a robber of stolen goods, do the goods become yours, or …revert to their original owner?" Thus, if the Boers expelled Mzilikazi from Tswana lands, did *that* land revert to the Boers? Dr Molema thought not.[273]

Transvaal Africans were also forbidden to own Firearms. The Volksraad expelled several missionaries for allegedly arming the Tswana and protesting both to the SAR and the LMS about "the enslavement

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[266] In *Ten Years North of the Orange River*. ([Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1871], p.103), John Mackenzie did not mention Ludorf's departure date. *WMMS*, XVII, Bechuana, 315, 16 Oct 1852, J Ludorf, Motito; also 8 Feb 1853, J Ludorf, Thaba 'Nchu. Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 346, fn.76: in the 1850s and 1860s, Ludorf ministered to the Seleka at Thaba 'Nchu. He also visited Moshaneng frequently to assist the Tshidi, in "exile" from Lotlhakana. Also Agar-Hamilton, 1937: 67-72

[267] Council of World Mission, LMS Africa Odds (Philip Papers), 3-2-A, Robert Moffat, Kuruman, 1 Oct 1849. See *WMMS*, XVII, Bechuana, 315, 16 Oct 1852, J Ludorf, Motito.

[268] Molema (1966: 37): Translation: "Valued (or worthy) friend and ally…".

[269] Molema (1966: 38) considered the Convention the foundation of the SAR's anti-African political system. Livingstone in Schapera, 1974: 50: this "Convention" was signed on 17 Jan 1852 at a farm on the Sand River Orange River Sovereignty.

[270] Molema, 1966: 38-39.

[271] Molema, 1966: 36. Molema, 1920: 368.

[272] Molema, 1966: 39. Livingstone in Schapera, 1974: 50.

[273] Molema (1966: 41): Walter Inglis (1815-1884), an LMS missionary at Mathebe (now Dinokana), ±29km NW of Zeerust, reported on Scholtz's meeting with the chiefs to the LMS Directors in London.

of young natives".[274] Boer leaders later complained that these campaigns eventually contributed to Britain's decision to annex the Transvaal in 1877.

In August 1852, unfazed by criticism, Scholtz and Pretorius resolved to disarm "disobedient" Kgatla and Kwena chiefs, Mosielele and Sechele.[275] However, Tswana chiefs who had survived the 1820s' warfare and Matabele raids believed firearms essential to their defence. Sechele's amassing of arms and reliance on Livingstone annoyed the Boers.[276] Another "disturber", Scholtz claimed, was "Monsua" [Montshiwa], whose "subjects were continually plundering" — a claim Dr Molema accepted.[277] While assembling his commando, Scholtz commanded Montshiwa to send 20 [another version says 200] armed, mounted men "to assist us in punishing Sechele".[278] Montshiwa sided with Sechele and refused. Scholtz then accused him of asserting his independence and engaging his "tribe" in extensive cattle-raids. In September, Pretorius informed the Volksraad that Montshiwa was a "trouble-maker" for disobeying Scholtz's request.[279]

When Scholtz returned to the Marico after routing the Kwena, he summoned Montshiwa.[280] A stand-off ensued: Montshiwa sent Molema, their relative Bodumelo Moshoela and Ludorf instead. Scholtz rebuffed them, particularly resenting the missionary, Montshiwa's scribe. Molema returned to warn Montshiwa that defying Scholtz would make "the cannon…roar upon him".[281] By 1852, a two-tier struggle was unfolding: a hot-war between the Boers and their Tswana enemies, and a "colder" correspondence war between Boer officials and the missionaries, writing in two capacities. Some, like Ludorf and Edwards, wrote for "their" respective chiefs, as did Livingstone and Moffat, who also protested on broader humanitarian grounds.

The Tshidi took evasive action that led them to settle 150km north to Moshaneng among the Ngwaketse. On 18 September, Montshiwa and some 1,800 Tshidi fled to join the Ratlou at Setlagole.[282] While there, the Tshidi and other Tswana youths defiantly raided many Boer cattle. Pretorius and his acolyte Paul Kruger tracked their cattle to Setlagole. Montshiwa could run forever, but despite escaping west to Mosita, he had to face the enemy in a battle with many fatalities. Pretorius left the field and an anonymous Tshidi poet, thinking he had fallen, praised the man credited with shooting "the hero of the

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[274] Livingstone (In Schapera, 1974: 5, 50-51) denied that claim in a letter to Rev Andrew Murray (10 June 1847). Muller (1969 & 1981: 256): the Volksraad was both the Transvaal's legislature and its highest judicial authority.

[275] Livingstone (In Schapera, 1974: 3 & fn.5) was based with Sechele at Kolobeng (±32km W of present-day Gaborone) where they had moved in 1847 to avoid the Boers (some 64km E).

[276] Livingstone's (In Schapera, 1974: 3-5) last visited the future Transvaal in late-1848 researching race relations and interviewing inhabitants. Potgieter accused him of trying to colonise the Transvaal for the British. More anxious about religious matters, Livingstone warned Potgieter that "'if he hindered the gospel the guilt of the loss of many souls would rest on his head'".

[277] Livingstone (In Schapera, 1974: 163) cited PE Scholtz, Acting-Commandant-General, Official Report to the Volksraad, Marico, 20 Aug 1852. Molema, 1966: 46-47.

[278] Molema (1966: 44) disputed Ludorf's report that Scholtz had demanded 200 men. Agar-Hamilton (1937: 68 fn.4) noted that Ludorf and Leshomo gave differing evidence on this point to the Bloemhof Arbitration.

[279] Livingstone (In Schapera, 1974: 158) cited AWJ Pretorius, Commandant-General, Report to the Volksraad, Sep 1852.

[280] Livingstone (in Schapera, 1974: Chapter 3): on 28 Aug 1852, Scholtz's commando attacked the Kwena capital, Dimawe (±13km N of Kolobeng). When Sechele would not produce Mosielele, the Boers attacked Mabotsa, SE of Mathebe (30 Aug). The Boers captured many women and children, and thousands of cattle. The Klein Marico, Scholtz's "seat of government", lies NE of the Molopo. The Marico River joins the Crocodile, which merges with the Ngotwane to form the Limpopo.

[281] Dr Molema (1966: 46) placed these words in "inverted commas" as if citing a source, but did not name it. Bodumelo Moshoela was probably a descendant of Tawana's brother, Moshoela.

[282] Molema (1966: 45-46): Setlagole was about ±72km (45 miles) from of Lotlhakane, where they had been for only 3 years.

white horse" (Pretorius). [283] Having actually retired ill, Pretorius died shortly afterward, aged 55, just months after another Trekker hero, Potgieter.[284]

During these troubled years, Molema and his Wesleyans lived among the Tshidi. Wherever Montshiwa moved to defend their independence, so did Molema. On 14 October 1853, Molema's name featured among signatories to a Boer Peace Treaty with the Tshidi. Their brief ceasefire, brokered by Ngwaketse chief Senthufi, a Boer subject, occurred when the Tshidi returned to Phitshane from Morokweng.[285] Montshiwa parleyed terms with MW Pretorius' envoy, Viljoen, at the Marico town, Mathebe.[286] Unhappily, the Boers did not see Tshidi land as their birthright, but as a gift from Potgieter, "Head of the first Emigrants". The "unbusinesslike" treaty (Dr Molema's term), affirmed Boer territory as theirs in perpetuity.[287] Montshiwa avoided the Molopo for many years, despite the Treaty. Fearing Boers intentions, he took the Tshidi to live with the Ngwaketse for over five years, embroiling himself in their politics. He sent Molema, Motshegare, Selere, and Moshoela (Tawana's brother) to retain a strategic foot Gaseitsiwe hold at Lotlhakana. The Tshidi were divided while Montshiwa and his Barolong dwelt among Ngkwaketse.[288]

By 1857, Montshiwa, still away, allowed Molema and 12 Tshidi families to settle permanently in "the rocky parts of the Molopo River about fifteen miles below its source…which he called Mafikeng (the place of rocks)…".[289] The village was already at the crossroads of south-north and east-west routes. Missionaries going north from Kuruman to Livingstone's Ngwato mission, Shoshong, plus traders and game hunters plying the lucrative route north and east from Transvaal towns, used these roads. Mafikeng was taking its place on the new colonial map, and its leader, Molema, became a man of singular religious and politic stature, no longer merely Montshiwa's brother.[290]

By staying so long with the Ngwaketse, Montshiwa eluded the land- and labour-hungry Boers. Molema could not, having too few followers to resist their daily violations of the "Mathebe" Treaty. Two years after Mafikeng's founding, Montshiwa settled more permanently at Moshaneng, north of Kanye, and strove to rule the Molopo via Molema, merely his deputy at Mafikeng.[291] He positioned three more brothers tactically in the region Andries Pretorius termed "Barolong Country" in 1851: Saane at Modimola, 19km to Mafikeng's west, Seru at Dishwaing, 19km to the east, and Selere at Dithakong (on old Lotlhakana's ruins), 12km south.[292] They were to rebuild these old Tshidi settlements as bulwarks against Boer incursions, the third such invasion Molema and Montshiwa had undergone since the 1820s.[293]

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[283] Molema (1966: 47-48): the poem honouring Motsotse [Mococe] Marumo reads "*Mogale wa pitse e tshweu ga bonwe,/Moetapele wa masoropo o jele mmu,/ O phamotswe ke phamole ya ga Marumo…*" ["The hero of the white horse is nowhere to be seen,/The leader of the white troops has licked the dust,/He has been snatched by the eagle of Marumo"].

[284] Muller, 1969 & 1981: 177. Molema (1966: 48): Potgieter died in August 1852, after a battle against Pedi chief, Sekwati.

[285] Molema (1966: 48): they spent "one planting, and one reaping season" at Morokweng, consolidating Tshidi resources.

[286] Molema (1966: 48) cited the Peace Treaty, 14 Oct 1853, between "Representatives of the South African Republic and the Chief of the Barolong". Cmdt Viljoen strove eloquently to convince the Tshidi of the need for peace: "…war has no home, war has no sleep, war has no child, war has no sheep nor harvest".

[287] Molema (1966: 48 fn.50 & 52): Rabodietso, Tawana's youngest son, and Viljoen's escort, Snyman, also signed the Treaty, on which. Dr Molema reflected: "[o]ne reads it with haunting feelings of its unreality, and apparently, so did Montshiwa…".

[288] Molema (1966: 52): Montshiwa helped Gaseitsiwe wrest control of the Ngwaketse from Senthufi. Montshiwa stayed 2-3 years at Segeng and four years at Selokela (today, just west of the A2, ±50 km NW of Kanye).

[289] Molema, 1966: 52.

[290] Molema (1966: 52-56) travellers came from Cape Town, Grahamstown, Pretoria, Magaliesburg and Rustenburg.

[291] Molema, 1966: 53. See *supra*, pp.57-58 & *infra*, p.83. Moshaneng is ±40-50km W of Selokela, their previous home.

[292] Molema (1966: 32): Tawana lay buried at Dithakong in the Lotlhakana valley. For Selere, see *infra*, p.97.

[293] Molema, 1966: 53.

"People of the Word" — "The Separation that the Gospel Makes in Heathen Lands":[294]

It embarrassed Montshiwa that many of his close family were "People of the Word". Early conversions began at Thaba 'Nchu, under Wesleyan missionary influence. Even Tawana's two elderly peers, Rapulana Makgetla and Galeboe Thwane, became Christians.[295] Converts sat on Montshiwa's council, further mortifying the Chief: Leinana Motlgelwa, Maleme Tau and Jan Leshomo.[296] At Thaba 'Nchu, Molema and fellow converts' daily routine included "preaching", "class meetings and worship", thereby drawing more followers. New converts flocked to them at Matlwang (1841-47) and Lotlhakana (1849-52). When the Tshidi reached Moshaneng (1859) this group formed an "organised society whose way of life stood out in sharp contrast to many heathen practices and tribal customs demanded by their national religion", meaning customary Rolong practices. Montshiwa's eldest daughter Buku's defection to the converts greatly upset the chief, still smarting because their leaders were his brothers, Molema and Saane.[297] Fond of comparative examples to elucidate African history, Dr Molema likened Montshiwa to a Roman emperor crushing the divisive tendencies Christians created within his domain, and "persecut[ing] its leaders and followers".[298]

Tawana's sons remained divided during the 1860s: at Moshaneng, Montshiwa was aloof from changes in the Molopo, while Molema suffered as Western Transvaal Boers redoubled their Hut Tax demands. From 1866, however, socio-economic and political change in the region accelerated, after diamond and gold discoveries on the Vaal and Orange Rivers. Within three years, greater prospects along the Vaal and Harts Rivers and in Griqualand West were confirmed. From being relatively remote, the region north of the Cape suddenly became central to the plans of gem-dealers and many hopeful diggers. After 1867, investors and politicians from the Cape, Great Britain and further afield attempted to steer the process. Several local communities — the Cape, Boer Republics, Rolong and Tlhaping — claimed that they had a stake in the Diamond Fields and so, in Dr Molema's phrase, "Diamondiferous Disputes" commenced.[299]

The momentous mineral discoveries made little immediate impact on Mafikeng. Molema focused on Boers demands for Hut Tax and on the arrival of a vexing new missionary at Mafikeng. Molema had led his small Christian community for thirty years since their departure from Thaba 'Nchu, save for Ludorf's brief stay at Lotlhakana (1849-1852) and frequent visits as a "missionary-diplomat".[300] After his death at Dithakgong on 13 January 1872, Montshiwa initially invited John, son of Rev James Cameron, a Thaba 'Nchu acquaintance, to be his agent, but Cameron Junior never arrived.[301] Webb, whom Molema distrusted, was the next choice, and Montshiwa wanted him to play Ludorf's role.[302] Ludorf had supported the Rolong zealously, alienating many Transvalers in the process. Judging historically, Theal censured Ludorf's friendship with Tswana chiefs, claiming he taught them "to base

[294] Molema (1966: 54-55) cited Mackenzie (1871: 103) on the "separation" between Montshiwa and Molema. From 1833, Tshidi Christians were known as "People of the Word".

[295] Molema (1966: 53): Rapulana was probably descended from the Tshidi clan's putative founder, Makgetla. In 1991, Thwane's descendant, Rre Piriepa Thwane stressed the long association between the Thwanes and the Molemas.

[296] Molema (1966: 53-54): the first chief Tau's (d.c.1760) son, Maleme would have been over a century old, so *this* Maleme was probably a descendant! Jan Leshomo was a descendant of the regent who had haunted Tawana's early years as chief.

[297] Molema (1966: 54 & 29) Buku was Montshiwa's eldest surviving child; her mother, Majang, was Molema's full sister. Montshiwa's firstborn son, Sekgoro died in a gunpowder accident at Moshaneng, aged 15.

[298] Molema (1966: 55): Montshiwa finally accepted the Christians the right to worship after Molema's death.

[299] Molema (1966: 55-59): in 1866 and 1867, diamonds were found on the Orange and Vaal Rivers. In Dec 1867, German mineralogist, Karl Mauch, found gold at Tati (320km NW of the Transvaal border); gold was also found in Matebeleland.

[300] Livingstone (In Schapera, 1974: 158) cited Robert Moffat to William Thompson, LMS agent, Cape Town. In September 1852, Ludorf told Moffat that he had left Montshiwa and was going to Motito, the Mission Station 35km N of Kuruman.

[301] Molema, 1966: 68.

[302] Molema, 1966: 67. Molema (1951: 138) did not accept that a white man, *Seakgamoriri* (lanky hair), had poisoned Ludorf.

their pretensions on what was false…".[303] Dr Molema complimented the missionary, however, saying that, Montshiwa apart, Ludorf was "perhaps the man best hated by [SAR] citizen", another of Dr Molema's disagreements with Theal.[304]

After Ludorf's death, Montshiwa explained to the Thaba 'Nchu Wesleyans how desperately he needed a missionary. "The Chief Montshiwa has complained very much about our lack of interest in him and his people and has plainly told us he will wait no longer", wrote Webb in April 1872.[305] In 1873, direct missionary intervention resumed, when the reluctant Webb was persuaded to serve Montshiwa at both Mafikeng and Moshaneng (±112km apart).[306]. The aggrieved Webb blamed his difficulties in settling among "the Natives" on Molema's unwillingness to welcome missionaries to Mafikeng.[307] Traveller Emil Holub, visiting Molema at this time, believed that the Molema-Webb friction arose because "...Molema being himself a preacher, was by no means well disposed to white missionaries at all".[308] Holub, a secular visitor and no religious fixture, thought Molema entirely hospitable.

Webb's reservations about being there *at all* evidently prevented him from seeing how greatly Mafikeng, Molema's Town, differed from other Tswana towns. Webb dismissively described Mafikeng as "a village on the banks of a small river". His opinion differed markedly from his contemporary, Holub, who found the town picturesque and charming:

> ...on a moderate slope, with woods in the background; on its eastern side the town is bounded by two interesting rocky heights, and between one of these and the stream stands the commodious Mission-house, built in the native style, belonging to the Wesleyan Missionary Society.[309]

Its industrious farming community was settled around the centre in houses with pointed roofs. Holub called it "one of the most pleasing of all the native settlements of Central South Africa". He met Mafikeng's central character, Molema, at least twice, recalling him as:

> ...a thin, slight man of middle height, with a nose like a hawk's beak, which, in conjunction with a keen, restless eye, gives to his whole countenance a peculiarly searching expression. At times he is somewhat stern, but in a general way he is very indulgent to his subjects who submit to his authority.[310]

In profile, Molema did not resemble his father, but in his labours at Mafikeng his tenacity equalled Tawana's. Holub took the town's many wagons as an "index of a thriving population", ascribing the ethos of hard work to the chief's ban on brandy, which traders marketed profitably to other Tswana communities. The cereal crops, which former missionaries had introduced, contributed to Mafikeng's prosperity.[311] Holub respected Molema highly as a "...Christian and a preacher" and "...governor, or sub-chief of the town". But Molema was ailing, having suffered severe asthma since last seeing "Nyaka [*ngaka*] Livingstone".[312] Holub, with medical degrees among his numerous qualifications, promised to visit Molema next day:

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[303] Molema (1951: 137) cited Theal, *History of South Africa, 1854-1872*, p.356.

[304] Molema, 1966: 68. The issue of Dr Molema's alleged reliance on Theal's works is debated further in Chapters Five and Six.

[305] *WMMS*, Bechuana, 316, 9 Apr 1872, Webb to Rev Bryce, p.3.

[306] Holub, 1881: I, 290. Molema (1951: 193): Webb had spent the years 1869-1873 at Thaba 'Nchu. Molema, 1966: 68.

[307] *WMMS*, XVII, Bechuana, 316, 10 Oct 1873, Jonathan Webb to Rev W Bryce, Wesleyan Mission House, Bishopsgate Street Within London, pp.1-2.

[308] Holub, 1881: I, 279.

[309] Holub, 1881: II, 13.

[310] Holub (1881: II, 13) includes previous quotation. Breutz (1955: 200, parag.570): cited Holub's description as well.

[311] See i*nfra*, pp.90, 96, 98.

[312] "Ngaka" means doctor in Setswana. See *infra*, pp.99-98, on Molema's lifelong struggle with asthma.

> [t]he chief received me in his little court-yard, and after introducing me to his wife…and sons, whose apartments were close at hand, sent for some wooden stools for myself and Mr Webb…. When we were seated, he begged me to give him the latest news from Cape Colony and the diamond-fields; he made inquiries about the proceedings of the English Government in the south, complained bitterly of the encroachments of the Boers in the east, and wound up by asking me whether I was an Englishman or a Boer. When Mr Webb tried to explain to him that I was a Bohemian, he looked completely mystified.[313]

This portrait revealed Molema as a man of the emerging South African world, anxious to know how matters at the diamond fields (to which he was economically tied) might affect him politically. British and Boers formed the external frame of his worldview. Puzzlingly, Holub belonged to neither!

On Holub's return in March 1875, Molema introduced him to the generational changes at Mafikeng, by inviting him to visit his family's homes. While the father "adhered to the native style of architecture", the sons (including, presumably Silas, then a Healdtown student) and "...upper class residents of the town have adopted the European mode of fitting up their houses".[314] Informal colonisation had indeed arrived. Holub's observations conveyed Molema's keen awareness of the two colonial powers' economic and political encroachments. Rolong country was no longer culturally and economically isolated from continental and world politics, as it had been upon Molema and Montshiwa's returned in the 1840s.

In the future, the Molema sons, Israel, Joshua and Silas, would cultivate a British colonial lifestyle. From the 1880s on, Silas adopted a "gentlemanly" personal style, at first Victorian, then Edwardian.[315] In English and Serolong letters to his father, Modiri often sounded like any devoted Edwardian son writing to "papa". This cultural affinity increased when Britain annexed the Molopo in 1884, after four years of John Mackenzie's persistent pleading.

Until Webb's arrival, Tshidi had intermittent contact with missionaries. Ludorf had visited from Thaba 'Nchu, but no resident had filled the role Montshiwa yearned to create for him. Occasional missionary visitors administered sacraments, as when Rev Mackenzie performed baptisms at Molema's invitation. Mackenzie's cordial relations with "Moleme" indicated that the latter did not dislike *all* missionaries. On hearing that the Scottish evangelist was visiting Kanye, Molema hastened there to beg him to preach at Mafikeng.[316] Had Montshiwa despatched *Mackenzie* to Mafikeng permanently, would Molema have welcomed him? Webb's being Montshiwa's agent in Molema's Town hardly endeared him to its founder. While among the Rolong, Mackenzie memorably characterised Molema and Montshiwa as two brothers separated by the gospel, "the one believing in Christ, the other cleaving to Paganism".[317]

"Gospel truth" alone had not estranged these brothers. Working among the Tshidi in 1943, anthropologist Schapera learnt that the Christian/Serolong dichotomy masked a deeper struggle.[318] Powerful symbols of the conflict between colonial and precolonial religious forms were embedded in Tshidi cultural consciousness. The power struggle between Montshiwa and Molema (and their descendants), while part of the religious tussle, was also tied to debates about colonialism's longer-term transformations of Tswana lives. Aware of this complexity, Molema told Mackenzie,

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[313] Holub (1881: I, 278-82), is also the previous source quotation's source: Molema's wife was Baetlhoi, his late brother, Seetsela's widow.

[314] Holub, 1881: II, 13.

[315] Plaatje, 1973 & 1999: 183fn.60: the editors commented "[t]he Molemas were amongst the few Barolong families who had the resources to build European-style homesteads, which generally had a few out-houses built in the traditional manner".

[316] For friendly Tshidi relations with Gaseitsiwe, see *supra*, p.82. It is a ±120km journey from Mafikeng to Kanye!

[317] Mackenzie, 1871: 103. Also, James Stewart, 1883 & 1969. *Day Dawn in Dark Places*. (London: Cassell).

[318] Schapera, 1943a: note 3.

> [t]he young people especially were losing confidence in the old customs and giving increased attention to the doctrines taught from the Word of God. But "the kingdom of darkness" did not allow for this change... without violent opposition.[319]

Using Christian idiom, Molema identified traditionalists as the Tshidi Christians' opponents. To assert his hegemony, Montshiwa tried forcing Molema's flock to observe custom. Only then would he let them be "*bathu ba lehuku*" [people of the word].[320] Christianity, he held, endangered Setswana *mekgwa le melao* (customs and laws), the system producing his own chiefly authority.[321] Another such threat came externally, via Boer encroachment, another reason why Montshiwa tried aggressively to dilute this internal challenge to his authority by inserting Setswana practices into the new faith.

Although substantial rivalry between the brothers existed, this was no mere dispute over "*tlou ya mmadi*", the authority derived from being a place's first possessor. Molema had the ultimate authority at Mafikeng, having built it; however, Montshiwa claimed supremacy over all the Tshidi's Molopo settlements. Their conflict over precedence peaked in 1881, when the hard-pressed Montshiwa finally took shelter with Molema.[322] Christianity was not just Molema's political instrument; his faith was sincere, if missionary Whiteside's word holds true.[323] Dr Molema, and later the Comaroffs, argued that Christianity was both surface and substance: "...in place of social marginality, the mission offered 'people of the word' a positive social identity, a *society* of the saved based on the power and knowledge of *sekgoa*".[324] Certainly, Molema gained significant authority as civil and religious leader of this unprecedented Tswana faith: chiefship of Christ (*Bokgosi yoa Kereste*). The Rolong boo RaTshidi *ba Wesele* soon became a "state within a state".[325]

Christianity gained power because its ministers made use of divisions among the Tshidi, like gender. Mackenzie reported that even Buku, Montshiwa eldest daughter, clung fast to Christian rites. Most of Molema's adherents were women, clasping Setswana hymnbooks ardently as Montshiwa tried to ban their services.[326] This supports the Comaroffs' view that Christianity attracted the marginalised (women), who resisted Tshidi patriarchy. The role of hymnbooks hinted that the new technologies of printing and reading offered access to an alternate authority beyond the Chief's word. Through the Word and the Book, the evangelists, particularly Molema, proved their power to Montshiwa. He gradually realised that to keep his community united, he had to deploy the missionaries to his and the Tshidi's advantage.

By 1863, Montshiwa had had enough. In a meeting to which he invited Ludorf, he attacked Wesleyans publicly, lambasting Molema, who "...did not submit to [his] orders". This brother had disobeyed him: instead of standing "...as a chief in [his] place", Molema had "...set up a chieftainship of his own". Montshiwa's tone and imagery were significant: "[t]hese Christians are obeying the Book more than the

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[319] Mackenzie, 1871: 228.

[320] Mackenzie (1871: 229), using phonetic spelling, possibly because "*-o*" is often pronounced "*-u*".

[321] Among the customs that Christians rejected were keys rites of passage: male initiation (*bogwera*), female initiation (*bojale*) and polygamous marriage (*go nyala lefufa*). On *bogwera*, *bojale* and polygamy, see *infra*, pp.300ff.

[322] Molema 1966: 117. See *infra*, pp.97-99, for the "resolution" to this fraternal struggle.

[323] Molema (1966: 163) cited Rev J Whiteside, Nd. *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in South Africa*. [N.Pub], p.443.

[324] Molema, 1951: 58. Comaroff & Comaroff (1991: 261): *sekgóa* means English language and custom, and the customs and religious practices missionaries imported. *Bokgóa* means European nature; *lekgóa* (plur. *Ma-*) is a European. *Seburu* is Dutch/Afrikaans. *Seésémánē* is English language or culture, and *Moésémánē* or *Leésémánē* (plur. *Ma-*), an English person.

[325] Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 261. Molema, 1951: 58. Rev John Mackenzie, 1871. For an amplified Christian interpretation, contemporary to Molema's, see Plaatje, *Koranta ea Becoana*, 11 Apr 1903, "Bogwera". Also in Willan, 1996: 71-72.

[326] Mackenzie, 1871: 231.

King; ultimately the tribe will split and perish". In their sentence structure, Ludorf's notes conveyed the transfer of allegiance from visible chief to invisible God, "present" only in this mesmerising Book![327]

This fraternal tension erupted over Webb, who accused Molema of not building his dwelling because he represented Montshiwa's cause in Mafikeng. The Chief had ordered Molema to build Webb a "native hut for the present" (which Holub saw).[328] The missionary's displeasure with Molema went deeper; Webb doubted his faith, extrapolating this into a criticism of all "native" teachers' abilities to reshape Tswana society along Christian lines. In late 1873, he informed the Methodist General Secretaries:

> [t]he [Methodist Missionary] Committee are under the impression that our cause here has hitherto worked well under the care of the native teachers, but nothing is further from the truth...there has been very much kept that we have not known, and not till now that the Missionary has taken up his residence among them, does the true character of many come to light.[329]

He conceded that missionaries had underestimated the time it would take to instruct these teachers thoroughly: "[w]e can't blame him [Molema] for this, but rather command him".

"Command" heralded Webb's increasingly authoritarian tone. Holub had praised Molema's tolerance, but Webb claimed that he infused gospel with "corrupt heathen custom", confusing his political and religious roles.[330] Although Molema was monogamous, Webb berated him for letting his subjects practise polygamy, which Webb called sinful adultery! Montshiwa "was a polygamist of the deepest dye", with eleven wives and various *seantlho* arrangements. Webb most resented Molema's mixing of tribal affairs and religion: "...being a chief also, he often does things at his court, which compromise[s] him in the Church."[331]

It shocked Webb profoundly to find that Setswana religion was not the weak, amorphous jumble that Nonconformists deemed it. Its resilience meant that *sekgóa* religious practices had no inherent superiority over Setswana custom.[332] He genuinely regretted that Christianity, which lit the evangelical fires of Europe, remained such a small flame in the dark world his faith taught him Africa was.

Webb and most evangelists were concerned that most Tswana Christians understood the conversion process differently from himself. To him, it meant, "making a spiritual choice among alternative, incommensurable faiths". To most Tswana Wesleyans, conversion did not necessarily involve "a profession of 'true belief' in repudiation of all others; that would have made little sense in a relativistic world…in which the accretion of cultural knowledge and technique was not taken to erase existing verities". Conversion, though significant, did not necessarily imply relinquishing all connection to prior cultural beliefs. As a Rolong evangelist, Molema acknowledged this, but among the wider numbers of evangelist, he was in the minority. Webb considered Molema's attitudes "insincere"; to Molema, this was the accommodation he had reached with traditional Setswana beliefs.[333]

By the time Webb arrived in 1873, Montshiwa knew that his people were living in an increasingly literate world: he needed a fluent agent to deal with the Boers — and with Molema! Intensified Boer

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[327] *Wesleyan Missionary Notices* [*WMN*], 3rd series, no.120 (Dec 1863): 203-07, 29 June 1863, J Ludorf.

[328] *WMMS*, Bechuana, 316, 10 Oct 1873, Webb to Bryce, pp.1-2.

[329] *WMMS*, Bechuana, 316, 10 Oct 1873, Webb to General Secretaries.

[330] *WMMS*, Bechuana, 316, 10 Oct 1873, Webb to General Secretaries.

[331] *WMMS*, Bechuana, 316, 10 Oct 1873, Webb to General Secretaries. Molema ("Barolong": 99) discussed Montshiwa's polygamy. *WMMS*, Bechuana, 316, 8 Aug 1873, Webb to Rev WB Boyce, pp.1-2.

[332] See *supra*, pp.84-85.

[333] Comaroff & Comaroff (1997: 117-18) pointed out that many Nonconformist evangelists interpreted Tswana converts' relativist attitudes to their new faith as "insincerity" — Rev J Tom Brown, Kuruman, Annual Report for 1909 [Council for World Mission, LMS South Africa Reports, 402].

attacks after 1867 made Montshiwa seek a permanent "missionary-diplomat" to communicate Tshidi needs to Boers and British. When Boers threatened reprisals for Montshiwa's failure to pay hut tax and accept their suzerainty, he fired missives in two directions. In March 1870, he warned the Boer leaders that unless there were "an end to this lawless matter, I shall be obliged to hand it over to Her Britannic Majesty's High Commissioner, Sir Philip Wodehouse".[334] To Wodehouse, he narrated Rolong history, commencing with the unfairness of Andries Pretorius' imposed boundary and Boer theft of Rolong land (1850-1851).[335] The letter conveyed Montshiwa's sense of a "moral geography...a sense of right and wrong in the sociospatial connections among mobility, property, possession, production, place".[336]

Webb continued working for Montshiwa and may have modified his attitudes to Bible readings. Montshiwa gained fondness for Isaiah, calling the Methodist God "Jegofa", but abjured Christianity itself. Ironically, Wesleyan Molema remained enigmatic to Webb, who wrote in 1875 that Tshidi Christian conversions were impermanent in the face of "heathenism in all its blackest forms...still practiced with impunity".[337]

Comparative insight into Methodism's social role may help to explain the divisions that Mackenzie observed between "pagan" and "Christian". Methodists Ludorf and Webb's attitudes resembled those of Wesleyan evangelists in industrial Britain. Historically, Wesleyans brooked no accommodation between grassroots culture and the word of God:

> Methodism's function as a carrier of work-discipline was shared by Evangelism more generally, but in no other church is it to be seen so clearly. The Wesleyans...repeatedly sought for outright confrontation with the older, half-pagan popular culture, with its fairs, its sports, its drink, and its picaresque hedonism.[338]

Although Webb decried Molema's tolerance of "pagan" practices, the Chief established an industrious working culture at Mafikeng, as his trading relations with the Kimberley market illustrate.[339] His family absorbed the philosophy of work. His grandson, Modiri, took a strong line against any indigenous practices he believed "heathen", especially in relation to medical healing.[340]

An odd combination of Webb's ministrations and Boer harassment helped to reconcile the Tawana brothers' after 20 years' aloofness. Molema and the *Ba-Wesele* had made Mafikeng such a desirable spot that Montshiwa coveted its missionary contacts and three potential "agents": Stephen Lefenya, farmer and interpreter, and Israel and Silas Molema. The latter, returned from Healdtown, was Mafikeng's teacher, and his father's scribe-interpreter.[341] Molema offered Montshiwa greater Tshidi

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[334] Molema (1966: 60) gave no source for these letters, though others similarly dated, appeared in the *Imperial Blue Books*. Davenport (1991: 559-60): Wodehouse was HC for South Africa and Cape Governor from 15 Jan 1862 –30 Dec 1870. Cf. also TAB, SS 122, 01, R534/70, "Landdrost, Potchefstroom. Erken ontvangs brieven no. 560, 573 en 576 over afgenomen geweren. Toezending Correspondentie Greef en Montsioa — ontvang 29/4/1870, 18700427-18700427". Montshiwa told Hendrik Greeff he refused to pay the Boers tribute, because the land around Mafikeng belonged to him and Molema represented him there.

[335] Molema (1966: 59) cited these letters more fully.

[336] The concept of moral geography is articulated in Mark Auslander, 1993. "'Open the Wombs!': The Symbolic Politics of Modern Ngoni Witch-finding". J Comaroff & JL Comaroff, (eds.) 1993. *Modernity and Its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp.169ff. In Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997: II, 205.

[337] Molema, 1966: 207. *WMMS*, Bechuana, 316, 6 July 1875, Webb to General Secretaries.

[338] Marks (1974: 253) cited EP Thompson, 1968. *The Making of the English Working Class*. (London), p.918.

[339] See *supra*, p.84 & *infra*, pp.93, 97-98.

[340] For example, see Molema's (1951: 137-38) comments on the Rolong's reaction to Ludorf's alleged poisoning: "But, of course, among the primitive Batswana, no death is ever regarded as natural".

[341] Shillington, 1985: 20. Molema (1951: 206): Lefenya, Montshiwa's secretary and relative, was one of Dr Molema's informants for *Moroka*.

numbers (some 2,000) and good watering for cattle between the Molopo and Harts Rivers. In 1876, after 23 years' exile, Montshiwa left Moshaneng to settle 10km from Molema at Sehuba, with 7,000 followers.[342]

A word on Stephen Lefenya, for his role in Montshiwa and Molema's lives was substantial. Even Dr Molema, Professor Schapera and Jennifer Potter, in a recent History of Methodism in Botswana, did not quite explain his closeness to the ruling Tshidi dynasty, although both mentioned that he was a "Mokubung", an early Christian convert.[343] They also mention that he was Montshiwa's secretary, advisor, and played a key role in the church in the leadership vacuum that Molema's death (1882) would create. Quite why both brothers trusted him so much, particularly if he was not a Morolong, has never been clear. His own words, discovered in a faded affidavit made at 77 years old in 1913, reveal that the blood of Morolong ran in his veins: he was Tawana's grandson. The document was evidence in Chief Lekoko's case against the Government of the Union of South Africa and the Divisional Council of Mafeking.

> I am 77 years of age I am a nephew of the old Chief Montsioa, my mother having been his sister. My father was a leader under Montsioa in the war against Mosilekatse, and after the Baralong were re-established at Molopo under Montsioa, he was one of his Chief advisers. I was about 15 years when the Barolong returned to the Molopo. My father told me the whole history of the war and the circumstances under which Montsioa was recognised as the Paramount Chief of the Baralong settled at the Molopo.[344]

This relationship, previously unmentioned in those texts that discuss Lefenya's life, may mean that one of Tawana's four daughters by his first wife, Dikgang, was his mother and that his grandfather was Regent Leshomo. Thus, Lefenya was doubly a descendant of Tshidi, the clan's founder.[345] Which of Tawana and Dikgang's daughters (Morwanyana, Motshidisi, Mmamorema or Manca) was his mother, is unknown.[346]

For Montshiwa, Lefenya's skills mattered as much as his family ties to the Royal dynasty: whereas many Rolong might be proficient orators, few had mastered the new technologies of long-distance, cross-cultural communication: reading and writing, often in English. Following the Keate Award (1871), Lefenya interpreted at key meetings with British officials like Lieutenant-Governor of Griqualand West, Richard Southey and his successor, Owen Lanyon. Protracted negotiations throughout the 1870s eventually led, Lefenya judged, to the annexation of British Bechuanaland.[347]

Lefenya's astute analysis of what he regarded as the unique position of the Rolong boo RaTshidi within the British Empire is relevant both in terms of debates around colonialism and in that it may explain the Tshidi's implacable defence of their freedoms:

> As an individual Baralong, as a Councillor of the Paramount Chief, and one of his advisers and by virtue of my special knowledge of the affairs of my tribe I say that the Baralongs are a free, as distinguished from a

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[342] Shillington, 1985: 126. Molema (1966: 86) dated the move on 19 Dec 1876. In an earlier essay on Mafikeng (c.1949), Dr Molema gave1879. (UW, ANC Collection, AD2186, Fb19). Shillington (1985: 20, 127) stressed the necessity of these rivers to the Tshidi economy, and said Montshiwa moved to Sehuba in 1877. In "Barolong" (34-35), Dr Molema explained that Ga-Sehuba was named after a ruler of the Barolong-ba-ga-Modibooa (Plaatje's ancestors), Sehuba, son of Mogale, c.1620.

[343] Potter, Jennifer. [Nd] "The Origins and development of Methodist Mission Work in the Area of Present-Day Botswana". *Studies on the Church in South Africa*, Vol.VI.

[344] MPP A979 Bd3.2, "Chief Lekoko Disputes", Lefenya's Affidavit (date illeg, as document torn, b.c.1912, if Lefenya was b.c.1835).

[345] See Appendix A, p.I.

[346] Schapera (1943a: 10) recorded Tawana's daughters and family's names, but Lefenya's is not among them.

[347] MPP A979 Bd3.2, "Chief Lekoko Disputes", Lefenya's Affidavit.

> conquered people voluntarily incorporated themselves in the Empire of Queen Victoria[.] [T]hey were entitled to and did make certain conditions upon which they so entered the [Empire, *paper torn*.] [348]

The rest of the page is torn, but he ascribed the "special conditions" to the initial agreements between the Tshidi and Sir Sidney Shippard, governing matters like Hut Tax. By 1912, the community was resisting increasing taxation, but Lefenya stated in terms of the Treaty of 22 May 1884, "we cannot be taxed without the consent of the tribe".[349]

Mafikeng's strategic geographical position both advantaged its inhabitants and imperiled them: politically the Rolong were uncomfortably situated between the Transvaal Boers, on one side, and the Cape Colony, with its diamond diggings and commercial markets, on the other. Although the actual digging took place further south, the economic ramifications of the diamond economy underpinned Mafikeng's growing importance. Diamond mining, the diamond trade and the new industrial city burgeoning around it, became the engine of massive change in the interior, exceeding the growth of other imperial settlements.[350]

Almost instantly, this flourishing city made Britain's capitalists and officials consider the roles they could play in exploiting its resources. As a centrifugal force, Kimberley soon drew the surrounding communities into its growing working class, and economic and cultural life. Rural populations, often very distant, sent young men to Kimberley as migrant labourers. They not only participated in the industrialising process, but brought home material rewards: transportable goods like blankets, clothes and foodstuffs. The 1870s' and 1880s' colonial wars to subdue the Transvaal Republic's Pedi, Matabele and Swazi, the Basotho of Basutoland, Natal Zulu, and Eastern Cape Xhosa, made these polities rally to defend their homes. Kimberley became their prime market for guns and ammunition.[351]

These onslaughts on the African polities became linked to Lord Carnarvon, the British Secretary of State's plan to confederate southern Africa. Although his plans proved impracticable in the 1870s, they show the imperial statesmen's (the "official mind's") awareness of the region's enhanced importance. Three decades after Britain's withdrawal from the interior, it was now central to imperial interests. Now a source of newfound wealth, southern Africa attracted Britons of all classes and raised hopes of further gold and diamond stocks to buttress imperial funds. In Robinson and Gallagher's view, political crises in the African and Afrikaner polities resulted from decades of expanding commerce (particularly the arms trade), missionary intervention, demographic expansion and migration, and the concomitant decline of domestic natural resources. These multiple reasons underlay Britain's piecemeal process of conquering and annexing large tracts of the interior.[352]

Kimberley's hinterland, including Mafikeng, was differently affected from the rest of the country. From the first, Tswana communities inhabiting Griqualand West refrained from working in the mines. They preferred trading in commodities vital to urban life: crops, domestic animals and transport vehicles.[353]

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[348] MPP A979 Bd3.2, "Chief Lekoko Disputes", Lefenya's Affidavit.

[349] MPP A979 Bd3.2, "Chief Lekoko Disputes", Lefenya's Affidavit. Lekoko v. Union Government hinged on documents like the May treaty, letters between Shippard and Montshiwa, and Blue Books C.4889 and C.7932.

[350] Molema, 1966: 52. In "Mafeking: A Retrospect", Dr Molema wrote "[s]outhern Bechuanaland, especially Mafeking, was the cockpit and vortex of rival ambitions — Scylla — the Transvaal Boers on the one side, and Charybdis — the Cape Colony British on the other and the Barolong between the two rocks". Kimberley is over 350km S of Mafikeng, but much alluvial digging occurred along the rivers between the towns.

[351] Robert Turrell, 1987. *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields. 1871-1890*. (Cambridge: CUP), pp.22-23.

[352] Robinson & Gallagher, 1988: 18-19. This summary relies extensively on Atmore & Marks, 1974, and Turell, 1987.

[353] Shillington, 1985: 126-28.

The high stakes involved in diamond digging created new and systematic forms of violence for local communities. Firstly, individuals who impeded diggers and dealers' activities were "dealt with". Three Cape papers, covered one notorious incident:

> ...a Kaffir had stolen or swallowed a diamond of considerable value, and...some traders, having discovered what he had done, cut him open in order to recover it. The man has since died.[354]

More insidious forms of violence pervaded the struggle for ownership of the diamond fields, initially affecting those closest to Kimberley, but soon incorporating the Tshidi. Some knowledge of the Diamond Fields Dispute is essential to understanding two important aspects of this history: the Rolong's enduring belief that their land had been stolen, and the Molema clan's abiding interest in history as a mode of explaining the past — and past injustice more particularly.

Participants in the Dispute represented a cross-section of southern-African inhabitants. The Cape Colony and both Boer Republics interested themselves in an area that had, before the discoveries, attracted them little. Besides the settler states, Nicholas Waterboer's Griqua community also entered a diamond claim, based on their long occupation of Kimberley's hinterland. Moreover, Jantjie Mothibi's Tlhaping claimed, from 1867 to 1870, to be the foremost *African* diamond discoverers and dealers. As their control over this trade and consequently over their land soon ebbed, Tlhaping discontent mounted.[355]

The Seleka and Tshidi Rolong formally claimed the diamond fields as their common ancestor, Tau's legacy.[356] Seleka chief, Moroka, asserted that had he not been compelled to settle at Thaba 'Nchu during the Matebele wars, the lands would have formed his ancestral domain. The Tshidi argued similarly, claiming that Boer settlement after the Trek had alienated their lands.[357]

Some agricultural collapse made many sell their labour in Cape towns; others sought work on white farms.[358] The Tshidi resisted as both Montshiwa at Moshaneng and Molema at Mafikeng were supplying goods to Kimberley. Yet, Montshiwa's initial dominance in the hunting trade (ostrich feathers and ivory) soon weakened; demand rapidly exceeded supply, and the hunting frontier moved north.[359] In contrast, Molema's profitable farming operation sent irrigated winter wheat crops to Kimberley. Despite this agricultural success, Boer depredations emphasised the brothers' need for mutual support.[360]

When the Bloemhof Arbitration Court sat to deliberate the Diamond Fields' ownership, Britain, like all the claimants, feared losing Africa's most valuable piece of real estate. All parties pursued their own

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[354] *Colesberg Advertiser*, 7 Sep 1869 and *Eastern Province Herald*, 17 Aug 1869, themselves quoting the *Graaff-Reinet Advertiser*, 9 Aug 1869. Shillington (1985: 38-39) cited these newspapers in referring to burgeoning violence on the diamond fields. Also Anthony Atmore & Shula Marks, 1971. "Firearms in Southern Africa." *JAH*, XII, 4, 525.

[355] Shillington, 1985: Chapter 2, *passim*. The Tlhaping dwelt further south than the 3 northern Rolong clans along the Harts River around Taung, Dithakong (Cape), Kuruman and Phokwani. By late 1870, over 5,000 White diggers on the Vaal River denied Mothibi his £5 licence fee, signalling his loss of control.

[356] Agar-Hamilton (1937: 55) cited *Bloemhof Blue Book*, 178: Ludorf led his evidence as Tswana negotiator. He was said to believe so fervently in the importance of maintaining the Rolong's landed base, and preventing their drift to the new towns that he concocted a treaty claiming their right to the diamond fields. Also Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 283.

[357] See Shillington, Chp.2, *passim*. Agar-Hamilton (1937:87), who downplayed the African claims, judged the Rolong claims "extreme" as they would have "pinned the whites in the valley of the Mooi River".

[358] Comaroff & Comaroff (1997: 199): the process of proletarianisation accelerated in the nineteenth century's latter years.

[359] UW, AB 187, 25 Aug 1870, W Crisp, Moshaneng, to his father. In *The Work in Bechwanaland and at Lake Ngami*. (London: LMS, 1895), p.168. Edwin Lloyd wrote: "[t]he old habit of spending three months in hunting is happily coming to an end, through the game having been killed out". In Comaroff & Comaroff: 1997: 199.

[360] Shillington (1985: 20, 126 & 38) cited Eastern Province Herald, 10 Aug 1869, "[b]y the second half of 1869, diamonds were being traded for 'horses, wagons, cows, sheep, cash, goods etc. at a deuce of a pace'". William Worger, 1987. *South Africa's City of Diamonds: Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*. [New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press), pp.18-23, on diamond prices, and the rush of hopeful diggers and traders to the diamond fields.

agendas. The Klipdrift Standard Bank manager near the Barkly West diggings remarked (without irony) that, given these claims, imperial intervention was vital to prevent Britain's being "...turned out by the 'rightful owners...the local Tswana chiefs.'"[361] The three Tswana chiefs, Tshidi, Seleka and Tlhaping, entered as Court evidence treaties and letters between themselves and Boer settlers to substantiate their respective rights to Kimberley and Griqualand West.[362]

Their actions and arguments intimated that history itself was both main character and chief suspect in the evolving drama of the diamond fields at a forum that would, literally, "make history". When the Bloemhof Arbitrators under the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, RW Keate, sat in adjudication, all parties mustered their oral and written history (where available) to bolster their respective cases. It was the first of many cases in which the Tshidi would recount their history to colonial and later Union government representatives. Modiri Molema was raised in this history-conscious atmosphere; that his two later works, *Moroka* and *Montshiwa* recreated this period of colonisation is, perhaps, no coincidence.

In 1871, before Keate delivered judgment, Sir Henry Barkly, new British High Commissioner, claimed to acknowledge the Waterboers' plea for imperial protection in annexing the diamond fields to the Cape.[363] Despite this pre-emptive strike, Keate's findings in October 1871 did not simply "giv[e] the white man everything for which he asked", making himself and the British the claimants' disapproval. The Award granted the Tshidi and Seleka claim partially, but no part of the diamond fields. Given the Boer counterclaims to Tshidi territory, Keate's Award exacerbated Boer/Tshidi tensions. Worse, Keate denied the Republican claims, leaving them bellicosely convinced of his defending the blacks to disadvantage the *volk*. Nevertheless, the OFS received £90,000's compensation for their claim. Keate directed both republics to observe "native tribes'" rights "in friendly alliance with Her Majesty's Government", hardly mollifying them.[364] Nor was this " British protection" that the Tshidi sought.

All affected parties disputed the Award, but its "real weakness" was its attempt to demarcate boundaries "in a land where boundaries had never been known".[365] Early land tenure patterns suggest that even before the 1820s the Rolong moved frequently within a known area. Land tenure was linked to culturally-defined agnatic power relations, and agricultural usage.[366] Communally-delineated, boundary-less landownership was incompatible with both Boer notions of commercial farming and British schemes to develop the land's mineral resources. Shillington considered the Keate Award virtually a *fait accompli*. Appointing Keate, a vocal proponent of expanding British influence over "native territories", lent authority to "British interests and designs". The Award rubber-stamped the annexation of the diamond fields to the Cape and opened the trade and labour route from the "'interior'".[367] Keate's approval of the Rolong and Tlhaping claims extended British interests northward, but temporarily curbed the Transvaal's western expansion.

The diamond fields dispute reverberated through subcontinental politics for many decades. The Cape, Britain's outpost in the region, did not receive direct control of the diamond fields. Instead, Keate made potentially lucrative Griqualand West, which controlled the interior's mining and commercial wealth, a

[361] Shillington (1985: 43) cited CA, A611/43, JD Barry mention of the manager's words to Richard Southey, incoming Lieut-Governor of Griqualand West, 10 Jan 1871. Also Kevin Shillington, 1982. "The impact of the diamond discoveries on the Kimberley hinterland: Class formation, colonialism and resistance among the Tlhaping of Griqualand West in the 1870s". In Marks & Rathbone, 1982: 101, Map.

[362] Agar-Hamilton, 1937: 83.

[363] Worger, 1987: 12.

[364] Agar-Hamilton, 1937: 88, 94-95. Molema, 1966: 7.

[365] Agar-Hamilton, 1937: 88.

[366] Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 145-46.

[367] Shillington (1985: 53 & fn.95) cited CW de Kiewiet, 1929. *British Colonial Policy and the South African Republics, 1848-1872*. (London), pp.262-63.

crown colony independent of Cape administration. Kimberley's population rocketed from about 5,000 (1870) to over 50,000 diggers, black and white in the 1880s. Amazingly, this new state's population already matched that of each Boer Republic while exceeding that of each African claimant.[368]

It is worth considering Nicholas Waterboer's plea for imperial annexation as part of a trend. The Griqua's incorporation followed Wodehouse's 1868 annexation of Basutoland to the Cape, ushering in an ambiguous decade, in which several African communities — like the Tshidi, beset by the Boers — saw Britain as the only authority strong enough to oppose their enemies. In 1882, the Tshidi appealed for imperial annexation. Dr Molema clearly simplified the tendency in portraying all Africans as loyal to the British. The trend was not universal: the Pedi and Zulu (both 1879) and Basotho (this time, in 1881) fiercely resisted the British.[369]

The annexations assumed a more definite pattern from 1875 to 1879, which the single-minded Tory Carnarvon thought made South Africa "…a terrible labyrinth of which it is very hard to find the clue".[370] His agenda was to reduce Britain's expenditure on its colonies, but was not intended to replicate the withdrawal from the interior in the 1850s. He aimed to limit Britain's expensive military and administrative commitments, without disbanding the Empire.[371] Colonial policy-makers were unconvinced that white colonisation represented Britain's regional interests: most colonists were Boers, whose increasing appropriation of the interior affected Africans detrimentally.[372] British officials commonly championed African rather than Boer causes, although Galbraith considered that earlier British intervention had not intended to benefit African interests. Until the 1870s, "[t]he South African colonies…were by far the most unpopular of all the white dominions…".[373] As Atmore and Marks concluded, imperial intervention generally occurred after complex interactions with local collaborators and local events.[374]

However, by the early 1890s, new Tory leader, Salisbury, identified a "revolution" in British colonial policy.[375] Each engagement between imperial agents and the local situation in pursuit of the elusive imperial scheme (annexation, administration, war or withdrawal) would swing the southern African balance of power further towards the white Boer and British colonists. As early as 1867, Wodehouse had argued that Britain should incorporate the Boer Republics while they were weak.[376] Imperial intervention's unintended consequences and changes attendant on them, allowed settlers to establish the racial and class subjection to which South Africa is still heir.

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[368] Agar-Hamilton (1937: 94-95): any advantage to Britain of "controlling" the diamond fields was lost on the British taxpayer, who bore the costs of the new Crown Colony's establishment and the OFS's compensation. Worger, 1987: 15-16.

[369] Dr Molema remarked on this annexation pattern in *The Bantu*. His unpublished "Barolong" (57) gave subtler insights into local agents of imperialism, Rhodes and Mackenzie, and strengthened his case about Britain's involvement in Rolong country, as did his detailed account of Rolong-Boer politics.

[370] Minute on Barkly, 82 of 25 July 1874, Colonial Office [CO] 48/469, and on Barkly, 104 of 31 Aug 1874, CO 48/470. In Agar-Hamilton, 1928: 103. For the view that Carnarvon's personal eccentricity explained his confederation scheme's failure, see CM Goodfellow, 1966. *Great Britain and South African Confederation, 1870-1881*. (Cape Town: OUP).

[371] For 20 years before Carnarvon several confederation schemes had failed. Davenport (1991:172-75): to encourage the empire to run itself had led Britain to federate several colonies (New Zealand, 1852; Canada, 1867) and install responsible governments. With these schemes in mind, Carnarvon (Disraeli's Colonial Secretary), set to work on South Africa. In 1858 and 1859, George Grey, Cape Governor, and Bulwer Lytton, Lord Derby's Secretary of State, strove to federate the Cape, Natal and the OFS along the New Zealand model. Another Tory, the Duke of Buckingham's federation attempts (1866-1868) collapsed. Granville and Kimberley, Gladstone's Liberal Colonial Secretaries, fared no better from 1868 to1874.

[372] Robinson & Gallagher (1961 & 1988: 22) stressed the continuities in colonial policy from the late-18th Century to the 1880s, mentioning that most officials had been "formed" in the same class-based educational and political institutions.

[373] Atmore & Marks (1974: 243) cited JS Galbraith, 1963. *Reluctant Empire: British Policy on the South African Frontier, 1834-1854*. (California), pp.271-74. Robinson & Gallagher (1961 & 1988: 15-16, 57 fn.1): from 1854-1892, white populations in the interior are said to have expanded as followers: OFS (15,000-78-000) and Transvaal (25,000-119,000).

[374] See Atmore & Marks, 1974: 241-43 & *passim*.

[375] Robinson & Gallagher (1961 & 1988: 17) cited Salisbury's Speech at Glasgow, May 1891, in G Cecil, *Life of Salisbury*, (1922-32), IV, 510. Robert Cecil, Marquis of Salisbury (1830-1903) led the Conservative Party after Disraeli's death (1881). A proponent of imperial development, he was Foreign Secretary and then as Prime Minister (1885-1892 and 1895-1902).

[376] Atmore & Marks, 1974: 244. Robinson & Gallagher (1961 & 1988: 56) cited De Kiewiet, 1929: 120-21, 139ff.

By 1881, the Colonial Office and international investors considered that the Boers might make stronger economic and political collaborators than any African client.[377] However, as the next 20 years demonstrated, Boer-British relations were fraught with conflict. As Atmore and Marks indicated, "[d]uring the century of imperial relationships there were only a few, and comparatively short-lived, examples of Africans or coloured people even marginally becoming collaborating groups". [378] The Pretoria Convention (1881) following the Anglo-Boer War (1880-81), gave Transvaal Boers limited self-government, to the Tshidi's detriment: "[i]n most cases, the price of white colonist collaboration was African subjugation".[379] In the Tshidi view, the Boers had long intimidated the Rapulana and Ratlou into collaborating with them. The Convention empowered the Tshidi's land-hungry Transvaal neighbours, Gey van Pittius and JP van Otto, who began campaigning to seize Tshidi land for their own farms.[380] In Montshiwa's view, the Convention had left the Tshidi "in the lurch".[381]

The Tshidi were already suffering economically, after having profited from supplying Kimberley markets, but in 1876, "...the relationship between Kimberley's demands (for food as well as labor) and black suppliers began to change to the detriment of black societies".[382] Sudden economic depression that year induced cutbacks in mine employment; thousands of mineworkers abandoned Kimberley for work elsewhere. Yet, by then, the land's productive capacity had shrunk; for both Rolong and Tlhaping, market production was no longer a viable alternative to migrant labour. Later that year, mineowners raised wages which led many Rolong and Tlhaping to decamp to the city. With local economies ragged, and human and natural resources dwindling, the Rolong, Tlhaping and Griqua rejected a Kimberley land court's overturning of the Keate Award's substantial recognition of their land title. Then the colonial administrators revealed the nature of things to come. Colonel Lanyon, Griqualand West's Lieut-Governor, established one of the country's earliest rural locations. Early forced removals saw "the majority of Griqualand West's black inhabitants...placed in the...locations"; nearly a quarter of the black populace became "servants on white farms".[383] The Rolong strongly feared that they would also lose their land and be resettled in locations.

Defying Lanyon's tactics, the Tlhaping and Griqua unleashed the guerilla-style Langeberg Rebellion on Griqualand West from January 1878; it spread to Tshidi country, partly involving Montshiwa. By August, most "rebels" were subdued; hardline resisters, like Jantjie Mothibi, were imprisoned in Kimberley.[384] Details of the Tlhaping and Griqua's subsequent proletarianisation are not germane, but their conquest, and consequent imperial policy changes affected the Tshidi greatly. Several nervous Rolong chiefs, including Montshiwa and Moswete, begged to be "'taken under British rule'".[385]

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[377] Robinson & Gallagher (1961 & 1988: 56): "[t]wenty years before the gold of the Rand turned the Transvaal Republic into a formidable opponent of empire, its eventual absorption had become necessary to British plans. The ambition was not born of a new economic imperialism in the [1890s]; it was inspired by thoroughly mid-Victorian schemes for reducing expenditure and devolving authority without sacrificing supremacy."

[378] Atmore & Marks, 1974: 245.

[379] Robinson & Gallagher (1988: 20): the formalisation of borders elicited Boer defiance: the Stellaland and Goshen wars.

[380] Main Map Notes, Mafikeng Museum. NTS 81/2112/164, "British Bechuanaland Native Unrest": 1 Jan 1904, Executive Council Resolution Art. 304, 12 Oct 1885: Ratlou chief, Moswete, had verbally granted land to Western Transvaal farmers. On assuming the government of Goshen (1885), the SAR undertook to inspect — and grant written recognition of — these land titles.

[381] Molema, 1966: 115.

[382] Worger, 1987: 92.

[383] Worger (1987: 30) noted how the Griqua and Kora situation resembled that of the Rolong and Tlhaping. Worger (1987: 94-95) cited *Native Affairs Blue Books*, G20 1881, pp.127-30, "Report on the Land Question by Warren", pp.18-19.

[384] Molema (1966: 100) surpassed Shillington in detailing Montshiwa's collaboration with Lanyon: he "ferreted" out rebels, for example, Francis Thompson's murderers, and sent them to Lanyon under the trusted Israel Molema's escort.

[385] Shillington (1985: 81): Mankurwane, Tlhaping chief at Taung, Kora chiefs, Mosweu and Taaibosch, and Ratlou chiefs, Moswete and Makgobi, also sought British annexation. Others joined Montshiwa's plea for British protection.

The Tlhaping's fate dispelled Tshidi thoughts of resistance, and inspired their response to Colonel Charles Warren's late-1878 mopping-up operation.[386] He visited all Tswana communities "between Griqualand West and the Molopo", displaying British military might to all recidivists. Rewarding Tshidi capitulation, Warren sent "British agents" to manage Montshiwa's people. Ironically, Lieut. Christopher Bethell, Warren's selected adviser to Montshiwa at Sehuba, soon defected to the Tshidi.[387] His pro-Tshidi stance later incensed freebooting Western Transvalers, who audaciously aimed to superimpose their biblically-named Goshen Republic over Mafikeng and Rooigrond.[388] They captured Bethell during the second Goshen War (1884) or Siege of Tigele.[389] Bethell's gruesome death at Boer hands is now Mafikeng legend, but should not distract from the war's economic shock to the Tshidi: 3,000 cattle lost to the Goshenites. Many were slain: 112 Tshidi, 67 Ngwaketse (their allies), 2 Englishmen, and 50 Goshenites.[390] Yet, Montshiwa would not surrender. But this was a future consequence and far ahead of the events and trends that were dramatically re-shaping the lives of Molema and Montshiwa Tawana.

A year after the 1878 upheavals, Sir Bartle Frere (Britain's chief executive at the Cape) sent Captain Harrell to develop an administrative code for the "Cis-Molopo".[391] Harrell reported favourably on Sehuba, where Montshiwa had relocated after a decline in Moshaneng's hunting reserves:

> Montshiwa's people seemed very prosperous, large areas were under cultivation, and there seemed to be many cattle, sheep and goats. The population was roughly 12,500 and the Chief was reputed to be able to put 800 horsemen in the field. Montshiwa spoke at length about the troubles of the tribe, the friction with President Burgers [of the SAR], and complained bitterly of his placing Matlabe [a rival Rolong chief] at Polfontein.[392]

By contrast, Lieut-Colonel Moysey of Christiana's research stressed Sehuba's many disadvantages, which probably explained Montshiwa's 1881 removal to Mafikeng: "Sehuba is without doubt, badly off for water, the women collect some for household purposes in holes in the dry bed of what may have once been a passing stream, but in dry weather when the rain water does not stand in pools the cattle have to be driven to the Molopo [9-11km] for drink".[393]

Moysey's attention to water resources confirmed Sehuba's — and thus, Montshiwa's — vulnerability to climatic change.[394] At this turbulent decade's close, the quite prosperous Tawana brothers lived

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[386] Interview with Spencer Minchin, November 1991 [*Spencer Minchin Interview, 1991*]: among some Mafikeng residents, Warren's name was hallowed even in the 1990s. Agar-Hamilton (1937: 174, 184 & 190): during the 1875 Griqualand West conflict, "Captain" Warren was appointed to reconcile chief, Jantjie Mothibi's claims to ancestral land. He rose rapidly in the ranks, settling land disputes and borderlines in Griqualand West and among the Rolong.

[387] MPP A979 Ba 9 22.05.1884, *Treaty between paramount Chief Montsioa, his sons and councillors and the Imperial Government, Mafeking*: Bethell signed several of Montshiwa's documents; Montshiwa concluded this Treaty with Mackenzie, (for the British government); by 11 counsellors and Rev Stuart Franklin, missionary at Mafikeng, also signed it.

[388] Main Map Notes, Mafikeng Museum, show that Goshen was "confined to the area around Rooigrond [its 'capital']; Gey van Pittius [w]as its President. The Tshidi were successful in preventing the mercenaries from occupying all their land titles".

[389] Molema ("Barolong": 64): "Tigele" means "a submergence…a swallowing up by an abyss". Van Pitius declared war against Montshiwa in *De Volkstem* (24 June 1884), then mounted freebooting cattle raids, which became full-blown fighting on 31 July, when 183 Rolong and Christopher Bethell were slain, and Montshiwa defeated.

[390] Shillington (1985: 81, 88, fn.112, & 176): Bethell, Warren's distant relative, volunteered to serve Montshiwa "with whole-hearted vigour" from 1878 until his death. Freebooter Barend Vorster, claiming Bethell had once denied him land at Kimberley, captured and then shot him in cold blood. His body was taken to Rooigrond for burial. Tales of his corpse's mutilation by flaying were "rumour", said Agar-Hamilton (1937:191, 339-40). Minchin (*Interview, 1991*) believed these accounts were true. For statistics of the dead, see Mafikeng Museum, see Main Map Notes.

[391] Shillington, 1985: 178-79. Agar-Hamilton (1928: 149, 151-58, 225): Frere became Governor of the Cape Colony (1877) and HC for South Africa (1879-1881). Convinced that he could realise the confederation scheme, Carnarvon made him Barkly's successor. Frere contributed to colonizing several African polities: he arbitrated Rolong and Tlhaping affairs, sent Sir Garnet Wolseley to defeat the Pedi and Zulu polities (1879) and oversaw the Sotho's defeat in the Gun War (1880-81).

[392] Shillington (1985: 128) ascribed Montshiwa's move to this cause. In my view, political concerns may have influenced his removal. Agar-Hamilton (1937: 159) gave no source for this information. See *infra*, pp.142ff on Matlaba.

[393] Agar-Hamilton (1928: 17) cited Lieut-Col CJ Moysey, Deputy-Commissioner, Christiana, 18 Dec 1880. "Report on the Claims to Land in the Keate Award Territory adjoining the Transvaal", *BPP*, 1882, XXXVIII, 573-605.

[394] Molema (1966: 115): Silas Molema and Stephen Lefenya assisted Moysey in marking the borderline from Ramabatlama

10km apart in the Molopo. Yet, their success made them vulnerable; their long-term foes, the Boers, and newer arrivals, the British and international traders, coveted their land, labour and Mafikeng district's trading potential.

The dual colonial encroachment intensified the Rolong clans' tendency to side with Boer or British. Montshiwa warned Harrell of impending conflict between the Tshidi, the Ratlou and Rapulana. Rolong country's natural resources, which many had described eloquently, were now highly politicised.[395] The ensuing intra-Rolong battles might have been avoided had Frere and the British heeded Harrell's information. Early in 1881, Matlaba, Moswete and Masweu (Massouw) united with heavy Boer backing, and tried to unseat Montshiwa from Sehuba. Thus, Rolong interests were entwined with Boer expansionist plans. Recognising the Cis-Molopo's rich trading potential, Harrell advocated British annexation to protect chiefs from "European adventurers" and Boer freebooters; but Frere left office too soon to implement the suggestion.[396]

Only after the battles at Sehuba and the First Siege of Mafikeng did annexation eventually occur; by then, the Tawana brothers had reunited pragmatically, for better or worse.[397]

Molema's role in Molopo politics is under-chronicled. While he is most "visible" in documents concerning Montshiwa and Tshidi politics, these need to be viewed against the elaborate machinations of each Rolong polity, the freebooting Western Transvalers and the "reluctantly" imperialist British. In 1896, the aged and ailing Montshiwa praised Molema for buttressing the Tshidi state's integrity.[398] He addressed crowds at the funeral of Molema's eldest son, Israel, his steadfast adviser:

> ...and now Israel Molema has also left me, Israel my light and your light, my chief and last adviser who remained to comfort and solace me in these grievous losses, Israel to whom I mainly owe my position as chief of his tribe, and indeed for my very life. For this Mafikeng was Molema's own town, and should now be Israel's as the chief heir and successor of Molema. *As for my life, you all know how he rescued me at the risk of his own life when I was surrounded by the sons of Rapulana and Moshete in the battle of ga-Sehuba in 1881*.[399] [my emphasis]

While Montshiwa elucidated Mafikeng's strategic importance, his speech expressed gratitude for the Molemas' political and emotional sustenance during the 1881 Sehuba attack and the first siege of Mafikeng (1882). Despite Montshiwa's early opposition, Molema's Christian strategy had largely succeeded. He had refused to be alienated and had a name for pouring "oil on the troubled waters of inter-tribal emotions".

The Sehuba battle to which Montshiwa alluded in 1896 formed part of the lengthy land dispute between the Rolong chiefs: Moswete and Matlaba.[400] This attack indicated the changing balance of power in the

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(north of Mafikeng) to Buurmansdrift.

[395] Agar-Hamilton (1928: 159): the northern Rolong clans' location was significant: despite their proximity, the Transvaal border separated them. Montshiwa protested that President Burgers had placed Matlaba at Polfontein. Moswete was ±48km S at Khunwana with 2,000-3,000 people. By making him Rolong "Paramount", Pretorius stirred conflict among the clans.

[396] Molema (1966: 104): Frere was re-called on 1 Aug 1880. Molema speculated that had he stayed, had Britain not been focusing on the Isandhlwana defeat, and had Warren not retired as Griqualand-West Administrator, Montshiwa's pleas for annexation would have been dealt with in 1880/1 and not three years later!

[397] The trade Agar-Hamilton (1928: 159) mentioned included soft goods and wagons from the Colony valued at £50,000 p.a. Natural resources included cattle, grain, ostrich feather and kaross exports of £100,000 p.a. Harrell estimated the population at 67,500, and native-owned wagons at 400 (worth £80,000). He did not stipulate the exact geographic area surveyed.

[398] In 1896, British Bechuanaland was annexed to the Cape as a Crown Colony. See Chapter Two.

[399] Molema (1966: 196) gave no source for this speech. Molema ("Barolong" (98: Israel died in 1895.

[400] Molema (1966: 87, 106) includes previous quotation. Koranna chief, Mosweu, (Mamusa) was also involved. Ratlou chief, Moswete dwelt at Khunwana, west of the Transvaal border, and Rapulana chief, Matlaba at Bodibe (Polfontein) near Lotlakana, inside the Transvaal. See Map, after pp.119-20, *infra*.

land-war on the Transvaal's western border. The Boers, under whose authority the Rapulana now lived, put Moswete and Matlaba's collective anger to military use.[401]

During Britain's occupation of the Transvaal (1877-1881) and the resultant First Anglo-Boer War, the SAR's western frontier was a lawless expanse where rival parties plundered and counter-plundered one another.[402] Although Montshiwa, who was open about his British sympathies, tried to break Ratlou-Rapulana allegiance to the Boers as he strove to unite the Molopo Rolong, Moswete and Matlaba declared themselves "'children of the Transvaal' [or] vassals of the South African Republic".[403] The humiliation of his British allies in Zululand made Montshiwa vulnerable and the Boers increased hostilities on the Western Transvaal borders. Comdt Piet Cronjé offered Montshiwa a choice between Boer protection or redoubled hostilities.[404] Icily polite, Montshiwa declined both options, but the Boers expressly wanted the Tshidi heartland (Mafikeng and Rooigrond) for their "Republic of Goshen".[405]

On 3 May, the Tshidi, Rapulana and Ratlou abandoned their "war of words".[406] Montshiwa demanded that Matlaba's Lotlhakana headman, Abram Motuba surrender, but he defiantly mustered Khunwana and Bodibe support. In deadly earnest, Montshiwa rallied his Hurutshe and Ngwaketse allies to sack his former capital, killing 73 men.[407] This violent attack drew Joubert and Cronjé's attention; the former ordered Montshiwa to return Lotlhakana to Matlaba. Montshiwa refused, protesting to the Royal Commission that Joubert and the Transvalers were urging the claims of their Rolong allies in order to "recover all the land taken from them by the Keate line".[408] Montshiwa feared that the coming Pretoria Convention would strengthen the Boers' hand and destroy the wheat trade Chief Molema had established.[409]

In early August 1881, the Royal Commission on the Western Boundary presented its findings to some 300 colonists and many chiefs at Pretoria, just before the Pretoria Convention.[410] Having read Agar-Hamilton's somewhat simplistic account of Tshidi actions at this time, Dr Molema reconstructed

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[401] Davenport (1991: 180-81): in the area the Keate Award granted to the Rolong and Tlhaping, Boer mercenaries ("freebooters" or, "*vrywilligers*") claiming to fight on behalf of Moswete, Masweu, Mankurwane (Tlhaping) and Montshiwa", founded the micro-states of Stellaland and Goshen around Vryburg, and Mafikeng and Rooigrond, respectively.

[402] JS du Plessis, "The South African Republic". In Muller (1969 & 1981: 278): provided an Afrikaner interpretation of the "War of Independence". Transvalers declared war on 16 Dec 1880, demanding independence from the British. Major battles included Laing's Nek, Ingogo and Majuba, at which the British were defeated, ending the war on 27 Feb 1881. Joubert, joint Transvaal leader with Kruger and MW Pretorius, played a leading role in the Western Transvaal.

[403] Molema (1966: 106): the Rapulana denounced Montshiwa's pro-British views and reiterated support for the Boers.

[404] Molema (1966: 107): Cronjé's 29 December 1880 letter to Montshiwa reads: "'Monchua [*sic*]: Take notice that as soon as you, or any of your people are found armed fighting against the burghers of the [SAR],…we will consider you…as our enemies….But you can send your people to help us work our corn and our farms, and for which we will pay your people well'". Cronjé led both the 1882 and 1899-1900 sieges of Mafikeng. Fascinated by his persistence, Dr Molema prepared a biography of Cronjé, in manuscript among the Molema/Plaatje Papers, A979 "The Scapegoat of the Boer War".

[405] Rooigrond lies 16km E of Mafikeng. Molema (1966: 107-08): Montshiwa replied (4 Jan 1881): "'…I want to inform you that I found some of the burghers of the [SAR] going about in my country armed, and I was astonished about that because I am not fighting with anyone….[A]bout the work I may say that I cannot force anyone to go and get employment. I do not know who are your enemies, but I consider all the people as your friends. Tell your people not to come to my country with arms'".

[406] Molema (1966: 112) this was roughly 3 months after the British defeat at Majuba. For Motuba, see *infra*, pp.143-44ff.

[407] Molema ("Barolong": 49): Montshiwa summoned Ratlou chiefs Bonokwane (Morokweng), Makgobi (Phitshane), Moswete (Khunwana) and many Rapulana from Lotlhakana and Bodibe to Sehuba to discuss their "collective security". However, Molema (1966: 111-112) noted, these chiefs defied Montshiwa and supported Matlaba; many died at Lotlakana.

[408] Molema (1966: 112-13): having heard of the battle, the Royal Commission at Newcastle sent Joubert and Col. Buller to investigate. They questioned Montshiwa on 21 May and ordered him to let Matlaba's Rapulana reoccupy Lotlhakana. On 28 May, Montshiwa complained to the Royal Commission of the procedure had been deeply unfair.

[409] Main Map Notes (SA War Room, Mafikeng Museum) affirm that Montshiwa drove the Rapulana from Lotlhakana as he wished to grow winter wheat there. Agar-Hamilton (1937: 183-84) ignored economic reasons for the Tshidi's attack, explaining it as a dynastic dispute with the Rapulana. Shillington (1985: 126ff) expanded on Molema's (1966: 106-13) economic argument.

[410] Molema, 1966: 114.

events, using primary and secondary material.[411] He captured the Tshidi's sense of betrayal when, via Cape HC and Governor Robinson, their British "allies" announced their reinstatement of the Transvaal's republican status. Should Africans in the "independent" state be maltreated, they could complain to the Transvaal government — a stunning tautology for Montshiwa and other African chiefs! Shortly afterward, the Royal Commission transferred to the Transvaal a large section of territory that Keate had granted the Barolong. Commissioner Moysey had ignored Silas Molema and Stephen Lefenya's protests (his assistants in marking the line) that it encroached on Tshidi territory. Many Southern Tswana chiefs for once found themselves similarly affected. Montshiwa and Tlhaping chief Mankurwane complained about the border to their "British allies"; even Moswete and Matlaba turned against their "Transvaal suzerains".[412]

On 31 August 1881, the Pretoria Convention confirmed Montshiwa's fears: Britain was leaving them to fend for themselves against the SAR. Tshidi land transferred to the SAR included Rooigrond, bestraddling the boundary, and more. With the boundary drawn, the Boers incited Moswete and Matlaba to attack Sehuba, on 17 October 1881 in retaliation for the Lotlakana attack. Following Montshiwa's complaints to Pretoria that the Boers had done nothing to prevent the raid, the Boer Triumvirate (Pretorius, Kruger and Joubert) "hedged", claiming Transvaal neutrality.[413]

Now 73 and acutely asthmatic, Molema used the Sehuba attack as a final pretext for closing the division Christianity had opened among the Tshidi. Montshiwa had repelled the Ratlou-Rapulana incursion, but Molema wisely thought "defenseless and comparatively waterless" Sehuba too exposed and the Transvaal too nearby for lasting peace. Mafikeng's natural defences and greater numbers offered greater protection.[414]

Yet, Montshiwa wavered. Mafikeng, Molema's stronghold, held unseen threats; he had first authority there, and the Rolong taboo against a chief's "warm[ing] himself at the fire kindled by [his] junior" (Molema) was possibly more powerful than the joint Ratlou, Rapulana and Boer threat. Anthropologically, Dr Molema explained that Montshiwa would have risked physical disease or insanity for flouting this taboo.[415] His nervous followers spread rumours that Molema was conspiring to usurp the chiefship. To counter such negativity, Molema swore temporal, but not spiritual allegiance to his younger, but senior, brother.

Events proved Molema correct: early in November, 600 Ratlou, Rapulana and Boers descended on Sehuba, vanquishing Montshiwa utterly. Calling themselves Moswete's *vrywilligers*, the Boers were elated by recent "liberation" from Britain.[416] Motuba, Motlaba's brother, led the assault, which created lasting memories at Mafikeng. Many Tshidi fell, including Montshiwa's brother, Selere's death.[417] In 1882, they were facing greater forces than either "Mantatees" or Matabele: the SAR government had not only funded and armed the Rapulana and Ratlou, but also augmented the *Vrywilligers*' numbers

[411] In order to gain a sense of the "cut-and-thrust" of Montshiwa's verbal engagement with British and Boer authorities, see Dr Molema (1966: Chapters 10 & 11).

[412] Molema, 1966: 115. Molema (1966: 121) sardonically called Robinson "by no means a negrophilist" when showing his indifference to Montshiwa's failed attempts to secure ammunition.

[413] Molema (1966: 115-16): on 13 Oct 1881, Montshiwa had written to George Hudson, British Resident in Pretoria complaining, in terms of the Pretoria Convention. The Proclamation of Neutrality was issued on 21 Oct.

[414] Molema, 1966: 116.

[415] Dr Molema (1966: 117) gave little credence to these beliefs, as they conflicted with his Christian worldview.

[416] Shillington (1985: 130) cited *BPP*, C.3381, pp.42-48, report of Capt. H Nourse to Robinson, Kimberley [Kmb], 16 Feb 1882. The attack occurred in early November. Shillington (1985: 136-45) further analysed these mercenaries' composition and history.

[417] Molema (1966: 118): Selere was the third son of Sebudio, Tawana's principle wife. See *infra* pp.149-51, for the Tshidi's later retribution.

with *Volksraad* members.[418] Crushed, Montshiwa could now only flee to Molema. Tawana's sons could not have known, when as youths, they fled the Molopo for Thaba 'Nchu, that, a half-century later, they would still be embattled. Nor could the brothers have foretold that they would be caught between two such powerful forces as the SAR and the British Empire.

In the thick of battle, while Montshiwa was finding his feet at Mafikeng, calamity struck: Molema died. His was "a man of powerful personality, simple life and one who always spoke his mind"; and his passing at approximately 73, attributed to his "life-long battle with asthma", staggered the Tshidi.[419] His influence among them was considerable, although the major decision of his life — to convert to Christianity — had often put him at odds with Montshiwa. In founding the *Ba Wesele* (Tshidi Wesleyans), he had created a religious and cultural alternative in a community that had not, until then, tolerated alternatives. In the 1850s, his and his followers' lifestyle and observances were so opposed to Tshidi custom that Montshiwa sent him to establish a separate community. Molema proved the worth of the Wesleyan Methodist experiment, as an African evangelist ministering to an African flock. He experienced many difficulties that foreign white missionaries did: resistance to conversion and the mingling of Christian and Setswana custom. Possibly, his position was tougher: as a member of the Royal Clan, he could not abandon his duties within Tshidi society upon becoming a Christian. Indeed, his dual positions somewhat prefigured his grandson's: he had both to stand outside Rolong society and review its practices in order to understand and explain how they differed from Christian practices.[420] Modiri Molema, born some nine years after Chief Molema's death, recounted a familial and what may be a tribal memory of him:

> His contribution to the life of his people is incalculable and has multiplied itself many times over with succeeding generations.[421]

Rev Owen Watkins, Superintendent of Methodist Missions in the Transvaal, travelled to Mafikeng to comfort the bereft Tshidi in their loss of "a man of 'stainless life, great devotion and untiring energy...wise too to know the seasons and what was good for the nation'".[422]

Molema's greatest victory over his brother came months after his death. Montshiwa tactically declared "spiritual freedom" among the Tshidi, but did not convert to Christianity. He aimed to bring Molema's followers under his rule and also to recruit missionary assistance against intensified Boer attacks. During the first siege of Mafikeng, he begged churchmen and the more powerful agents of the British Empire for protection. This finally came in 1885, but by then, the Tshidi state was much-weakened.[423]

Molema's surviving sons Israel, Joshua and Silas became leaders of the Molema clan, also serving the ageing Montshiwa as key political advisers.[424] Silas, his secretary in 1896, oversaw the writing of his will, a document provoking later controversy. Silas' name appeared on reports of Tshidi negotiations with Britain before and after Rolong country's annexation.

After colonisation, many white settlers, mostly traders, settled at Mafikeng; its importance as a trading centre in a black and white agrarian community expanded. The town's Tshidi founders lived beside the colonists, some of whom merely passed through *en route* to lucrative trading prospects in Bechuanaland

[418] Molema (1966: 118) also cited Nourse's report, *BPP*, C.3381, pp.5, 33-43 and *BPP*, C.3486, p.61.

[419] Molema, 1966: 119.

[420] Modiri Molema's dual position as historian and community member is broached in Chapters Three to Six.

[421] Molema, 1966: 119.

[422] *Wesleyan Missionary Notices* 1883, p.112; also in Molema, 1966: 119. See Map of Mafikeng, pp.52-53, for Watkins.

[423] Molema, 1966: 204. Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991: 264

[424] Molema (1966: 195): Israel Molema died 12 years after being wounded in the lung at the Siege of Tigele; the wound had never healed. Molema's third son, Tawana, would perish in 1884 at the same Siege.

and Rhodesia. Mafikeng remained a small, quiet town, until several white politicians began viewing it as a launching-pad for their designs on the gold-rich SAR. The region's involvement in the ensuing war won it legendary status. Demographic and industrial change eventually linked Mafikeng to the country's economic hub: in 1912, a new railway reached Mafikeng, which then expanded its agricultural, commercial and cultural communication with Johannesburg.[425]

Molema did not survive to see the outcome of these conflicts; his son Silas would emerge as the family politician, endeavouring to negotiate terms with the colonists. His grandson, Modiri, the historian, would try to tell the story of the old Chief's hectic century.



[425] *Mafeking Mail*, 12 Nov 1912, "Johannesburg-Zeerust-Mafeking Railway — Official Opening-Speech by Mr. Burton.