THE BAKGATLA-BAGA-KGAFELA IN THE PILANESBERG DISTRICT OF
THE WESTERN TRANSVAAL FROM 1899 TO 1931

by

BERNARD KACHAMA MBENGA

submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

in the subject

HISTORY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTER: PROF. A. M. GRUNDLINGH

JOINT PROMOTER: MR. J. T. du BRUYN

JUNE 1996
Declaration

I declare that THE BAKGATLA-BAGA-KGAFELA IN THE PILANESBERG DISTRICT OF THE WESTERN TRANSVAAL FROM 1899 TO 1931 is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

DATE

B.K. Mbenga
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration ........................................................................................................... ii
Abstract .............................................................................................................. v
Glossary ............................................................................................................ vii
Abbreviations ................................................................................................... viii
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................... ix
Introduction ....................................................................................................... 1

## CHAPTER ONE

**THE ORIGINS AND SETTLEMENT OF THE BAKGATLA IN THE PILANESBERG** ................................................................. 17
The geographical and physical setting ............................................................ 17
The archaeological record ............................................................................. 20
Bakgatla origins ............................................................................................... 22
Chiefdom formation, conquest and conflict, c.1760-1820 ............................... 25
The structure and organisation of Bakgatla society ...................................... 29
The Bakgatla and the *difaqane* up to 1837 .................................................... 33
Bakgatla-Boer Relations: 1840s-c.1870 ......................................................... 36
Map ................................................................................................................... 46

## CHAPTER TWO

**THE BAKGATLA AND THE DRC MISSIONARIES, 1900 - 1931** ................................................................. 47
Gonin's arrival and settlement ......................................................................... 50
Missionary education ...................................................................................... 74
The Bakgatla's alternative educational model ................................................. 83
Bakgatla chiefs and the missionaries .............................................................. 88
The missionary impact upon Bakgatla society .................................................. 96

## CHAPTER THREE

**THE BAKGATLA-BOER WAR IN THE PILANESBERG, 1899-1902** ................................................................. 103
Prelude to war .................................................................................................. 107
British policy regarding African participation in the war ............................... 109
The Bakgatla's decision to enter the war ......................................................... 115
The Derdepoort attack, 25 November 1899 and the Sidney Engers incident 118
Issues and repercussions arising from the Derdepoort episode .................... 126
The Bakgatla's escalation of the war in the Pilanesberg ................................. 131
The results of the war ...................................................................................... 146

## CHAPTER FOUR

**THE SAULSPOORT CHIEFTAINSHIP AND BAKGATLA CROSS-BORDER UNITY, 1902-1931** ................................................................. 160
The chieftainship interregnum: April 1870-January 1903 ............................... 160
The controversy about the installation of chief Ramono: November 1902-February 1903 ....................................................................................... 164
Ramono's rule: February 1903-January 1917 .................................................. 170
The controversy over Ramono's estate ............................................................ 175
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The acting chieftainships of Dialwa and Ofentse, 1917-1931</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The problem of the South Africa-Bechuanaland border</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;We are one people with one Chief&quot;: Bakgatla unity and oneness across the border</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Genealogy</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LAND-PURCHASING AMONG THE BAKGATLA, 1903-1931</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early African acquisition of land</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missionary assistance in land-purchasing: the Rev. H. Gonin's role</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bakgatla land-purchasing in the 20th century</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Land-purchasing procedures</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chiefly accumulation: land-ownership by chiefs</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black-white wrangles and the African resort to attorneys</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The 1913 Land Act and land-purchasing</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic constraints and the end of land-purchasing, 1920-1931</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Table showing comparative bank-balances of the Pilanesberg chiefdoms, November 1930</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHAPTER SIX</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TENANCY AND CROP PRODUCTION AMONG THE BAKGATLA, 1900-1931</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The shortage of labour</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Bakgatla and poor whites</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forms of tenancy</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Bakgatla on absentee-owned land</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

The Bakgatla-baga-Kgafela have lived in the Pilanesberg region, western Transvaal, since the 18th century. From c.1825 to the 1830s, they faced two important experiences, the *difaqane* upheaval and the Voortrekker incursions. From 1864, another major influence among the Bakgatla was Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) activity which introduced Christianity and the rudiments of Western education. However, forced labour on Boer farms, a major Bakgatla grievance, resulted in the flogging of their chief, Kgamanyane, and his emigration with more than half of his people to present-day Botswana. During the South African War, in which the Bakgatla fought against the Boers, they looted many thousands of Boer cattle, with which they purchased more farms (about seventeen between 1903 and 1920), than any other group in the Pilanesberg. After that war, despite strong government objections at first, the Bakgatla chief, Linchwe, was allowed to appoint his nominee for the Saulspoort chieftainship, a practice that continued throughout the study period. From 1903, the Mochudi paramount and his Saulspoort representative used this opportunity to unite their geographically divided people and accrue benefits for them. The international border notwithstanding, the Mochudi chief wielded enormous influence upon his people in the Pilanesberg; indeed, nothing important could be carried out there without his approval. The Bakgatla's consistent focus was to maintain their unity in the face of the border's restrictions and government efforts to divide them. The first two decades after the South African War saw unprecedented Bakgatla prosperity, partly from the looted cattle, and partly from crop production on both their own as well as absentee-owned white farms. Absentee landownership, a major characteristic of the Pilanesberg, enabled Bakgatla producers to maximise production and become prosperous during the first two decades following the South African War; hence, the prevalence of labour tenancy in the Pilanesberg and not, for example, sharecropping which existed elsewhere in the Transvaal.
Another feature of the 1920s was the Bakgatla's success in establishing and running their own school in Saulspoort which provided a much more secular education than that of the DRC.

**Key terms:**

Bakgatla; DRC; Pilanesberg; Saulspoort; Mochudi; Kgamanyane; Linchwe; Ramono; Land-purchasing.
Glossary

bogadi - dowry or bridewealth.

bogwera - male initiation rites.

bojale - female initiation rites.

bywoner - (Boer) client, sharecropper.

commando - armed, mounted party.

difaqane - period (1820s to 1830s) of massive violence and destruction of life and property in southern and central Africa.

inboekeling(e) - indentured servant(s), slave(s).

kaross - a rug or blanket made from dressed furs.

kgotla - public meeting, central meeting place or court.

laager - a defensive Boer encampment.

landdrost - South African Republic (SAR) official, equivalent to a magistrate.

lekgotla - general assembly of adult men meeting to debate and decide important cases that come before the chief.

letsholo - veld assembly.

mafisa - cattle for loan.

veldkornet - local (SAR) district official with administrative and especially military duties.

voortrekkers - the pioneer Afrikaners who set out on the Great Trek from the Cape Colony from 1834 to the 1840's and settled in the SAR and the Orange Free State.

volksraad - the parliament of the SAR.
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNA</td>
<td>Commissioner for Native Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Dutch Reformed Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMS</td>
<td>London Missionary Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAD</td>
<td>Native Affairs Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Native Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAR</td>
<td>South African Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SANAC</td>
<td>South African Native Affairs Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNA</td>
<td>Secretary for Native Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNC</td>
<td>Sub-Native Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNAD</td>
<td>Transvaal Native Affairs Department</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

Very many people and institutions have, in varying degrees, contributed towards this thesis. My first considerable debt of gratitude is, certainly, to my promoter, Albert M. Grundlingh, for his guidance, constructive advice, criticism and patience throughout my preparation of this thesis. I am also grateful to my co-promoter, Johannes T. du Bruyn, for his very useful criticisms and suggestions.

I wish to thank my colleague, Andy Manson, who suggested this thesis' topic in the first place, indicated sources and made valuable comments on aspects of my work. Iain R. Smith of the University of Warwick, England, and Jeff Ramsay of the Legae Academy, Botswana, made very valuable comments on the first draft of the thesis. I am very grateful to both of them. However, any shortcomings still in the thesis are entirely mine.

In the Pilanesberg, my special thanks go to the following people: the Sefara family of Magong for their constant generosity, friendship and accommodation during field trips; Simon Molope, for leading me to oral sources; Bogope Pilane and Titi Senwelo Pilane for their patience and understanding when I kept returning for more information. In Gaborone, Botswana, I wish to thank Peter and Grace Muteto for their generosity and friendship during my research trips. In Mochudi, I appreciate the assistance of Chief Linchwe and the staff of the Phuthadikobo Museum. In Mmabatho, Simon Cushman assisted a great deal with word-processing, for which I am very thankful.
I also wish to thank the following people who, in various ways, assisted towards the completion of this thesis: Fred Morton of Loras College and Barry Morton of Indiana University, USA; the staff of the Botswana National Archives, Gaborone; Anita Balkwill of Johannesburg; Patrick van Wyk of the Dutch Reformed Church Archives, Cape Town; Mary-Lynn Suttie of the University of South Africa, Pretoria; Sabeth van Zyl of the Central Archives Depot, Pretoria, and Lionel Wulfsohn of Rustenburg; Geoffrey Phillips of the Mafeking Museum and Jan Weertman of the North West Development Corporation, Mmabatho/Mafikeng; Kees Bootsman, Eva Mothibi, Claudia Lemmert and Buti Matlhako of the University of the North West, and Steve Johnson of the National Parks Board, Mmabatho.

I am very grateful to the Research Committee of the University of the North West, which provided most of the funding for this research and without which this study would have been impossible. I also gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance of the Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, and the National Parks Board of the former Bophuthatswana.

Lastly, but not least, my thanks go to my family, especially my wife, Mary, who always ‘kept the fort’ while I was away on field trips and constantly nudged me to ‘keep at it’ each time the study seemed overwhelming.

B.K. Mbenga

June 1996
Introduction

(i) Scope and approach

This thesis is about the history of the Bakgatla, in their regional context of the Pilanesberg, during the period 1899 to 1931. The starting point, 1899, has been chosen because it marked a momentous development in Bakgatla history. Taking advantage of the opportunities provided by one of the two major antagonists in the South African War, the British military authorities, the Bakgatla decided to go to war against the Boers of the South African Republic (SAR). For South Africa as a whole, that war brought major social, political and economic changes and, therefore, marked the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. The period studied ends in 1931 because of the enormous impact upon South Africa by the world-wide economic Depression. This reduced the value of agricultural products to extremely low levels; the 1932-1933 drought killed thousands of livestock and in 1932, South Africa abandoned the Gold Standard. These dramatic developments adversely affected the African rural economies such as those of the Pilanesberg.

---

1 For details, see Chapter Three.
3 A. P. Ravenscroft, "The course of the depression in South Africa," MA dissertation, University of South Africa (1938).
The case for a regional or micro-study, such as this, is a strong one. In 1990, the South African historian, Saunders, wrote that unlike countries like the United States, Canada and France, "South African historiography has not yet been enriched by a series of substantial regional histories," and argued for much more regional, rather than ethnic, histories that are defined by geographical unity, common political and historical processes. This thesis attempts to answer that call since it deals with more than just the Bakgatla. Another exponent and historian of regional history, Keegan, has asserted that mega-view history "not only conceals as much as it reveals; it can often result in a distortion of vision." It is not at all suggested that the national view of history is wrong or invalid, but rather that "the smaller the scale of investigation[,] the more likely it is that the intricacies and complexities of social interaction will stand revealed, stripped of schematic abstractions." The need to link a local study such as this one with national ones cannot be overemphasised. As Morris wrote in 1987, "...these wider processes are the ultimate source of structuration of such smaller communities. It is[, for example,] the wider processes of capital accumulation and class struggle that structure the life possibilities of small communities. In a very profound sense, the latter play out these wider social forces in their own local contexts."

The 1970s saw the emergence of a school of historians, some of them Marxists, commonly known as “revisionists,” who began to ask new questions about the nature of the South African state. They asked, for example, why and how the South African state had managed to obtain and keep such an extremely high degree of power, and how the development of capitalism had become so successful under its control. Since the 1980s, a new grouping of social historians has shifted away from focusing on the development of mines, factories and other urban issues to the countryside and dwelt on writing about rural South Africa, in which agrarian issues like sharecroppers, labour tenants and capitalising white farmers featured prominently in the process of transition to capitalism in the countryside.

From the works of Marks and Atmore, Beinart, Bundy, Bozzoli, Delius, Keegan, Trapido and Bradford, we have begun to understand the diversity and complexity of the processes of transition or transformation in South Africa’s rural societies. These historians were preoccupied with processes, especially those of accumulation and dispossession among both blacks and whites, and thus, began to shed more light on, among other issues, the nature of rural society and agrarian change, particularly since the last half of the 19th century. Their writings are also characterised by an emphasis on “the way in which individual agency, social differentiation and

---


regional characteristics meshed with broader patterns to condition the course of change."

This thesis has benefited from all these works.

Within the last sixteen years, there have emerged important new regional historiographies on the rural populations of the western Transvaal. Notable examples are the works of Relly, Warwick, Mohlamme, Morton, Simpson, Krikler and Manson. Through these works, we now have better knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of the rural societies of the western Transvaal at the turn of the 19th century and the first three decades of the 20th. Indeed, this study has been informed by, and enormously benefited from, all of these works. However, all these writings, with the exception of Morton’s, say very little about the Bakgatla and other groups of the Pilanesberg. The works of Warwick and Mohlamme, for example, both give general overviews on the role of blacks in the South African War. Mohlamme's study of the role of black people in that war in the two Boer territories of the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony, for example, is too sketchy to address adequately the issues behind the events of the war and, for instance, treats the Bakgatla-Boer battle of Derdepoort in exactly two and

11 Beinart and Delius, “Introduction,” Putting a Plough to the Ground, p. 16.

half pages, and thus, does not address the episode's real issues and outcomes in any detail.\textsuperscript{13} Similarly, Warwick's work covers the whole of South Africa and, although quite scholarly, is necessarily general. This scantiness in both cases is understandable in view of the very many black groups over geographically very large areas which these historians have had to cover. But that is precisely their weakness. They portray general processes and trends without sufficiently revealing the specific and detailed experiences of any single group, such as this study attempts to do for the Bakgatla.

In the same vein, Relly's work on social and economic change attempts to cover all Batswana groups in the western Transvaal and, in the process, becomes very sketchy. Although the title of Simpson's much more extensive and analytical work suggests that it is about the western Transvaal generally, it is, in fact, more focused. However, it deals almost entirely with the Bafokeng and the three Bakwena groups of Rustenburg, and says comparatively little about the Bakgatla and other groups of the Pilanesberg. Krikler's very extensive, Marxist-oriented and scholarly work covers the whole of the Transvaal and, thus, shares the same weakness already referred to. Krikler does give some attention to the Bakgatla, but does not go beyond the immediate aftermath of the South African War. Moreover, Keegan has made an important criticism of Krikler's major study on agrarian change in the western Transvaal in the late 19th century and early 20th. Keegan points out that Krikler has confined his focus entirely to the Transvaal and hardly made any comparisons with, or referred to, the considerable research similar to his on the neighbouring settler economies, such as the former Rhodesias, for example. Instead, Krikler's comparisons and references are almost entirely made in relation to

\textsuperscript{13} See Mohlamme, "The role of black people," pp. 30-32.
agrarian capitalism in Europe.\textsuperscript{14}

Two historical studies on Rustenburg, by non-professional historians, have tended to marginalise blacks. Rosenthal's book is, for example, almost entirely about the history of the white people of Rustenburg. The Pilanesberg hardly features in it,\textsuperscript{15} despite the fact that the two areas are historically and geo-politically linked. Wulfsohn's study is also entirely about the town's white population. Black people feature in only one chapter where the Bakgatla are depicted as murderers of 'defenceless' white 'civilians' during their first engagement against the Boers at the beginning of the South African War.\textsuperscript{16} Another book by Carruthers, published as late as 1990, makes relatively little mention of black people. In a 44-page chapter on "The South African War of 1899 to 1902," for example, there is not a single mention of black people at all.\textsuperscript{17} This is a general shortcoming of these studies. However, this is not to suggest that these writings are not valuable. In fact, this thesis has gained a great deal from, for example, their empirical richness.

This study has also made use of the considerable body of historiography on missionaries among the Batswana, such as, for example, the works of the Comaroffs, Maree and Hasselhorn.\textsuperscript{18}


\textsuperscript{16} See L. Wulfsohn, \textit{Rustenburg at War} (1987), Chapter Six.

\textsuperscript{17} V. Carruthers, \textit{The Magaliesberg} (1990).

Comaroffs' works of historical anthropology, mainly on the Barolong-bo-Rashidi of Mafeking, have received some very favourable reviews. However, a most incisive critique by du Bruyn has revealed some major flaws in them. He shows, for example, that interaction between missionaries and the southern Batswana was over a much longer time than is suggested by the Comaroffs; also that their works over-dwell on the missionaries' European backgrounds and they are portrayed as the major doers and actors, while the Batswana are shown as the passive receivers of European culture. These criticisms notwithstanding, this study has benefited a lot from the Comaroffs' writings through, for example, comparisons and drawing upon their ideas. Maree, who was himself a DRC missionary, wrote about missionary activity in the Pilanesberg from the early 1860s to 1966. His work is empirically rich, but written from a strongly missionary point of view. Hasselhorn's scholarly work, which has been useful mainly for comparison with this study, is about German missionaries and landownership in the Transvaal. This thesis attempts to rectify the missionary bent by emphasising the Bakgatla’s role and perspective.

As already suggested, Morton has written extensively and incisively on many aspects of Bakgatla history. He has, for example, very ably demonstrated the nature of the Oorlam ex-slaves in Bakgatla society, the decisive role of the Bakgatla in the South African War, as well

(...continued)


as the resilience of their relations and unity across the Bechuanaland-Transvaal border. 21
Indeed, Morton has done more historical work on the Bakgatla-baga-Kgafela than anyone else.
This study both complements, and greatly benefits from, Morton’s work. Morton’s studies,
however, do not provide sufficient detail, and this thesis attempts to be more comprehensive
and provide much more detail than Morton has done. This thesis has also been inspired by, and
benefited from, the various historical writings on the Bakgatla of Mochudi as well as other
Batswana groups of modern-day Botswana. 22 The work of the retired government
anthropologist, Breutz, on the African peoples of the Pilanesberg and Rustenburg areas, 23 has
been extremely useful to this study, especially in terms of empirical data. Of particular benefit
have been the very many writings of the renowned anthropologist, Schapera, on the Bakgatla. 24
Apart from Schapera’s extensive anthropological works, however, no detailed and
comprehensive historical study has been done on the Bakgatla of the Pilanesberg, and yet, in

21 See, for example, Morton, “Manumitted slaves and the Dutch Reformed Church Mission
in the Western Transvaal and eastern Bechuanaland at the time of the colonisation of
southern Africa, 1864 to 1914,” paper to symposium, Zagreb, Yugoslavia (28 July
1988); “Linchwe I”; “Chiefs and ethnic unity”; “Land, cattle and ethnicity,” South

22 See, for example, J. Ellenberger, “The Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Boer war,”
Rhodesiana, XI (1964); L.W. Truschel, “Nation-building and the Kgatla: the role of the
Anglo-Boer War,” Botswana Notes and Records, 4 (1972), pp. 185-193; G.H. J. Teichler,
“Some historical notes on Derdepoort-Sikwane,” Botswana Notes and Records, 5 (1973),
pp. 125-130; E.P. Peters, “Cattlemen, borehole syndicates and privatisation in the
modernists: Seepapitso, Ntebogang and Isang,” F. Morton and F.J. Ramsay (eds), The Birth
of Botswana... (1987), Chapter One; F.J. Ramsay, “The rise and fall of the Bakwena


24 See, for example, I. Schapera, Tswana Law Custom (1938); A Short History of the
Bakgatla-baga-Kgafela of Bechuanaland Protectorate (1942); The Tswana (1953); “Christianity and the Tswana,” The Henry Myers Lecture (18 March 1958); Tribal
the western Transvaal, as a British government document pointed out in 1905: "Politically[,] the most important tribe is the portion of the Bakhatla located in the Pilandsberg(sic)."\textsuperscript{25} In terms of numbers too, the Bakgatla were the largest Batswana group in the Pilanesberg, their population being estimated at some 7,607 in 1905\textsuperscript{26}; hence, the need for this study.

In 1979, a prominent British historian, Stone, wrote: "Now, however, I detect evidence of an undercurrent which is sucking many prominent ‘new historians’ back again into some form of narrative."\textsuperscript{27} This thesis has generally been written in this ‘new’ trend of narrative, a much earlier historical tradition, which a number of prominent European historians, including those associated with the \textit{Annalies} school of historiography, have been reviving since at least the late 1970s.\textsuperscript{28} A few examples of this revived historical tradition will suffice. In 1973, Cipolla wrote a reconstruction of the 17th century reactions of a people to the crisis of a plague in the Italian city of Tuscany.\textsuperscript{29} In 1975, the English historian, Thompson, wrote about conflict between poachers and the authorities in the Windsor forest in early 18th century England in order to demonstrate that there was a clash between plebeians and patricians there at the time.\textsuperscript{30} The same year, the French historian, Ladurie, wrote a story based on 14th century inquisition

\textsuperscript{25} War Office, \textit{The Native Tribes of the Transvaal} (1905), p. 30.

\textsuperscript{26} War Office, \textit{The Native Tribes of the Transvaal}, p. 29.


\textsuperscript{29} C.M. Cipolla, \textit{Faith, Reason and the Plague in Seventeenth Century Tuscany} (1973).

\textsuperscript{30} E.P. Thompson, \textit{Whigs and Hunters} (1975).
In May 1995, one of the older South African historians, Keppel-Jones, wrote that: “There are two ways of handling and writing history. One is to use it as material with which to make laws, theories and generalisations; the other is ‘to tell it as it was.’ I prefer the second way and will not waste much time in dealing with the first.” Keppel-Jones has objected to the making of laws and theories about history for two reasons. First, he argues, that “it is impossible for theory to take account of all the relevant facts, because there are too many of them.” Second, what is available does not all lead to the same conclusion. The theorist, therefore, “chooses the evidence which supports his case but ignores or minimises the rest. He plays the part of an advocate when he ought to be the judge.”

As the British cultural historian, Burke, has written recently, “many scholars now think that historical writing has been impoverished by the abandonment of narrative, and a search is under way for new forms of narrative which will be appropriate to the new stories historians would like to tell.” Historical narrative, according to Stone, is “the organization of material in a chronologically sequential order and the focusing of the content into a single coherent story, albeit with sub-plots.” Its arrangement is essentially descriptive, while its focus is on humans rather than circumstances, as in structural history. In this manner, it “deals with the particular

---

33 Keppel-Jones, “History as experience,” p. 3.
34 Burke, “History of events,” p. 245.
and specific rather than the collective and statistical."^35

These "new historians" have a practical desire to make their research findings accessible to a wider public that is intelligent but not expert at history, a public that is eager to learn what the new questions, methods and data have revealed. Such a public cannot always cope with or understand statistical tables, highly theoretical arguments, models and historical jargon. It is for this reason, as Stone has rightly pointed out, that "increasingly[,] the structural, analytical, quantitative historians have found themselves talking to each other and no one else."^36 In this regard, the more easily accessible historical periodicals, such as History Today, for example, have clearly proved that the general public are, indeed, interested in history.^37 Similarly, it is intended that this study would also be easily understood and appreciated by the general public, and not just by historians alone. The 'new' history referred to above has influenced this thesis in the sense that it uses description and analysis, both important aspects of narrative, and alternates between the two modes.^38 This suggests that the ideal is, perhaps, half-way between narrative- and theory-dominated history. In other words, it should be a theoretically informed narrative, since theory helps us to ask pertinent questions. In this regard, therefore, this study is a social history. The definition of this term is, however, a problematic one. It is more difficult to define social history than, for example, political, economic or military history.^39

^39 Regarding the problems of defining "social history" see, for example, the detailed discussions by R. Samuel et al, History Today, 35 (March 1985), pp. 34-44. See also C. Lloyd, Explanation in Social History (1986), p. 2.
The background to this study looks at the origins and settlement of the Bakgatla in the Pilanesberg during the 19th century. It looks at the role and impact of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) upon the Bakgatla and their responses. In this regard, the study demonstrates that the black teacher-evangelists of the DRC did much more to spread Western education and Christianity among the Bakgatla than their white superiors. The other major themes it discusses and analyses are the Bakgatla’s role in the South African War and its impact on them; the problem of land shortage among the Bakgatla and their responses; the role of the Native Affairs Department (NAD) in the processes of land-purchasing by the Bakgatla; the Bakgatla-NAD controversy over the Saulspoort chieftainship and how the Bakgatla forced compromises; the Bakgatla’s responses and initiatives regarding the division of their people into two segments in two different countries, and how the Union government was forced to back down on the matter. The thesis also examines the productive relationships on white-owned land, especially labour tenancy. In particular, it looks at the relationships between black tenants and the undercapitalised white landholders in the Pilanesberg and how black production was undermined, while white farming got stronger with state assistance. These issues are situated within the context of the changing regional and national developments as a whole, thus, relating the micro-view to the mega-view.

Furthermore, as a social history, this thesis attempts to provide as much of the Bakgatla’s history during the study period as possible. It gives a considerable amount of attention to Bakgatla chiefs, but it also deals with the general Bakgatla populace in terms of, for example, their social and economic organisation. It examines the Bakgatla’s very successful attempts at providing their own alternative model of education when they became dissatisfied with the kind of tuition provided in the DRC schools. Moreover, the study points to social stratification
among the Bakgatla, discusses the feature of poor whites in the Pilanesberg and demonstrates the close interaction between them and the Bakgatla.

According to the traditional paradigm, history is supposed to be objective. But it must be pointed out that certain objective realities such as, for example, the ideas historians hold about society, do influence their writing of history. Burke has put it this way:

However hard we struggle to avoid the prejudices associated with colour, creed, class or gender, we cannot avoid looking at the past from a particular point of view. Cultural relativism obviously applies as much to historical writing itself as to its so-called objects. Our minds do not reflect reality directly. We perceive the world only through a network of conversions, schemata and stereotypes, a network which varies from culture to culture. 40

This study, much as it strives for objectivity, is written from an African perspective but, nevertheless, has been undertaken in the conviction that its detail and texture will contribute significantly to a better understanding of the forces and conflicts that shaped early 20th century rural South Africa.

(ii) Limitations of the study

One of the obvious limitations of this study is that it has not addressed gender issues. The writing of ‘women’s history’ in South Africa began in the early 1980s as part of then emerging

revisionist or radical history.\textsuperscript{41} Such history was preoccupied with, for example, women's struggles against pass laws, women's roles in popular organizations and the emerging township culture, production and reproduction. However, there is still relatively little written on gender issues and, since most of the literature on women in South Africa is on urban women,\textsuperscript{42} there is a glaring paucity of historical studies on rural women. In the Pilanesberg, literature on women and their roles during the study period is virtually non-existent. This is a problem with other rural areas as well. As Wells has admitted about Potchefstroom, "the role of women in the smaller [i.e. rural] towns is not easy to uncover."\textsuperscript{43} For the completely rural Pilanesberg during the first three decades of the 20th century, the role of women is even harder to uncover, except for their generally known gender-related roles. A possible reason for this could be the very high degree of the subordination of women in Bakgatla and Batswana societies generally.

(iii) Archival and oral sources

The records of the Central Archives Depot (CAD) in Pretoria, the Botswana National Archives (BNA) in Gaborone, the Phuthadikobo museum in Mochudi, Botswana, were all


\textsuperscript{42} See Walker, \textit{Women and Gender}.

\textsuperscript{43} J. Wells, “‘The day the town stood still’: women in resistance in Potchefstroom, 1912-1930,” B. Bozzoli (ed), \textit{Town and Countryside}, p. 271.
extensively consulted for material on issues that concerned the two Bakgatla segments on both
sides of the Transvaal-Bechuanaland border. These reveal a great deal, for example, about
government policies and have been very useful; but they need to be treated with caution
because of the inherent biases and vested interests of their official authors. The Phuthadikobo
archives in Mochudi, whose material is entirely about Bakgatla affairs, are a very small
collection, unclassified and in need of being sorted out. The strongest point about this material,
however, is that much of it consists of correspondence by Bakgatla chiefs and, to a lesser
extent, ordinary individuals as well, which helps to temper the preponderance of government
views.

Of particular importance to any historical research on the Pilanesberg peoples is the material
contained in the Van Warmelo Boxes in the CAD. It was collected from the Pilanesberg by the
noted government ethnologist, N.J. Van Warmelo during the early 1930s. Literate individuals
in the area, such as teachers and clerks, mainly from the Bakgatla, were asked by Van Warmelo
to write monographs on various aspects of the Pilanesberg societies' past and present, such as
origins, kinship, religion, birth, death and burial, the conduct of public meetings and ancestor
worship. The authors of some of the most valuable material are Madisa, Mogorosi, Sephoti and
Masiangoako.⁴⁴ Some of this information is in Setswana, but some is also in English. What
makes this material especially valuable is that it was compiled by indigenous people of the
Pilanesberg and written from their point of view.

The archives of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRCA) in Cape Town were also extensively

⁴⁴ See, for example, van Warmelo Box No. K32/14 S.171, L.S. Madisa, "Kxatla history,
marrige, law and other customs."
used. Some of the most useful sources here were the official and private correspondence of the DRC missionaries in the Pilanesberg, especially the pioneer missionary there, H.L. Gonin, who was a prolific letter writer. Unlike the Pretoria and Gaborone archives, which are used by very many researchers, the DRCA are underutilised, possibly because they are written mainly in Dutch and Afrikaans. The writer used translations of the Dutch/Afrikaans documents from these archives.

Oral sources have also been used fairly extensively. Elderly men and women in both the Pilanesberg and Mochudi were interviewed, some of them more than once, if they were perceived to be particularly useful. Much of the useful information from informants was not available in any written documents, which made it particularly valuable. Some of the informants were members of the Bakgatla royal family; others were not. The historian, Vansina, has outlined the strengths and weaknesses of both categories of sources. Members of the royal family tend to give official views that are coloured by the kind of function they are intended to carry out, while "[p]rivate sources are often badly transmitted or embellished to please an audience..." 45 I experienced both of these tendencies, as well as some of the usual problems of oral research such as, for example, informants' poor memories, uncertain chronology and expectation of monetary or material reward. The strong point of all oral sources, however, is that "it is history as recorded by insiders." 46 A cross-comparison of all the above sources helps to yield a very plausible picture of what happened.

46 Vansina, Kingdoms of the Savanna, p. 9.
CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGINS AND SETTLEMENT OF THE BAKGATLA IN THE PILANESBERG

Although the thesis focuses mainly on the 20th century, this chapter is necessarily both a survey and a summary of the background events in 19th century Pilanesberg which are essential to the understanding of the study as a whole. It begins with a description of the Pilanesberg's geographical and physical setting as well as a discussion of the region's archaeological findings, all of which are important aspects of the historical background within which the study is situated.

This chapter looks at three major issues. First, it discusses the problem of civil war within Bakgatla society and shows how it weakened them to the extent that they were unable to resist the Amandebele and Voortrekker incursions of the 1820s and 1830s, respectively. Second, it demonstrates that the impact of the Amandebele invasion upon the Bakgatla and other Batswana of the Pilanesberg was much less violent than elsewhere in southern Africa. Third, it discusses Bakgatla-Boer relations and how the Boers’ persistent demands for labour resulted in the Bakgatla chief, Kgamanyane, being publicly flogged by Commandant S.J.P. Kruger in 1870. The incident resulted in the chief and more than half of his people relocating to what later became the British Bechuanaland Protectorate.
The geographical and physical setting

The Pilanesberg district is located in the mid-western part of the Transvaal and got its name from the range of mountains in the area which the first Voortrekkers in the late 1830s called the "Pilandsberg," (sic) after the then ruling chief Pilane. Rustenburg, which had initially included the Pilanesberg, was first officially defined as a magisterial district in the Government Gazette No. 50/1909 of 16 July 1909. The boundary between Rustenburg and the Pilanesberg was announced in General Notice No. 298 of 1928 which recognised the whole of the Pilanesberg as a district. The geographical extent of Rustenburg district as a whole was 23,091.2 square kilometres, while the Pilanesberg alone was 14,592 square kilometres. However, for administrative purposes, the Pilanesberg remained under the district of Rustenburg until 1 August 1946 when it became a magisterial district on its own.

The Pilanesberg district is in the lower-lying areas of the mid-western Transvaal. Geographically, it is part of what is called the "Bushveld Complex" and lies generally 1,000-1,250 metres above sea level. It is characterised by gently undulating plains with occasional kopjes or ridges of hills. In the midst of these plains, however, the Pilanesberg highland area rises over 500 metres. Geologically, the Bushveld Complex consists of igneous layers which, some 1,300,000,000 years ago, were volcanic liquids called magma which occurred inside the earth in vast volumes. This magma then cooled, solidified very slowly and formed discrete

1 J.T. Brown, Among the Bantu Nomads (1926), p. 268.
2 Breutz, The Tribes, p. 3.
3 Breutz, The Tribes, p. 4.
4 Breutz, The Tribes, p. 4.
layers of different minerals that today make up the Bushveld Complex that completely surrounds the Pilanesberg proper. Thus, the rings of hills seen in the area today are the deeply eroded remnants of a volcano. These geological facts are important in order to understand, for example, why most of the land the Bakgatla occupied was generally unsuitable for arable farming.

The major rivers of the region are, from west to east, the Odi (Crocodile), Kgetleng (Elands), Seshabele (Rhenosterspruit), Tshwane (Apies) and Moretele (Pienaars). They all drain into the Limpopo, but only the latter two are perennial. The Seshabele can be perennial during years of successive high rainfall. During the rainy season, flowing streams, rapids and waterfalls are plentiful over the entire Pilanesberg region. The region has a sub-humid warm climate with an average January temperature of between 23 and 24 degrees centigrade, while the average July (winter) temperature is 11 degrees centigrade. Rainfall, sometimes as much as 700 mm, lasts from November to March, the hot moist season. The hot and arid season lasts from August to October and the cool dry season from April to July. The highest temperatures are from November to March while the lowest are from May to August. It was due to this sub-tropical kind of climate that the region favoured tropical crops such as tobacco, pineapples and coffee. However, it must be stressed that droughts in the region are also common, quite often severe and sometimes last for several years. As will be shown in the succeeding chapters, such

---


droughts invariably had serious negative effects on many aspects of human and animal life in the region.

The common vegetation in the region is the Mixed Bushveld type. In the lower-lying areas of the southern parts of the region can be found a variety of plant species such as the sandvaalboom (*Terminalia sericea*) and wild seringa (*Burkea Africana*), both types growing up to 10 metres. The commonest type of grass in the Bushveld is the elephant grass. Other grasses are tufted, wiry, sour species of medium to tall height, and the savanna trees are of short to medium height (6 to 8 metres). In the higher northern parts, there is more open savanna land with tall Boekenhout trees (*Faurea saligna*).

**The archaeological record**

Due to archaeological research carried out in the Transvaal especially since the 1970s, we are now much more certain about the antiquity and continuity of Batswana occupation of the region from at least the Late Iron Age. No archaeological work has yet been carried out in the Pilanesberg area proper, but a great deal of the work which has been done in the areas bordering on it may help to reconstruct Iron Age life in the Pilanesberg too. Mason's work at Broederstroom in the Magalies valley west of Pretoria, for example, has revealed that “iron and copper producing Negroid pastoralists” inhabited the area from c.350 A.D. to 600 A.D. In another study of the Iron Age stone-walled site of Olifantspoort, Mason has shown that it “was

---


occupied by the Bakwena people between the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries and
approximately A.D. 1820," while Buffelshoek, a Late Iron Age site in the southern Transvaal,
excavated by another archaeologist, Loubser, was "once occupied by Bafokeng or Bakwena
people," 12 both of them neighbours of the Bakgatla today. This indicates the likelihood that the
ancestors of the present-day Bakgatla, as their oral traditions show, may have inhabited their
present general homeland since, at least, the Late Iron Age. It also indicates the continuity of
Batswana occupation mentioned earlier. In other words, as Mason has argued, the Basotho-
Batswana are direct descendants of the Early Iron Age inhabitants of the region. 13

In a later study that is geographically closer to this one, Pistorius investigated the
archaeological sites of Molokwane (Selonskraal) west of Rustenburg, Kaditshwene in the
Zeerust district and Vlakfontein in the south-western Pilanesberg district. Using a combination
of archaeology and oral tradition, Pistorius stated, for example, that the first two sites are
associated with early Batswana settlement in the Transvaal. More specifically, he established
that "Molokwane and Boitsemagano were occupied by related Bakwena Bamodimosana
communities" during the Late Iron Age. 14 Molokwane has a settlement style that is
representative of the settlement system of historical and contemporary Basotho-Batswana

12 Cited in T. Maggs and G. Whitelaw, "A review of recent archaeological research on
food-producing communities in southern Africa," Journal of African History, 32
13 Mason has also shown similarities in the styles of ceramic remains from the Early,
Middle and Late Iron Age sites in the southern, western and central Transvaal and
argued that they are similar to those of the modern Batswana inhabitants of these areas.
For details, see Mason, "Early Iron Age...", pp. 412-413. See also D.W. Phillipson, The
villages in its ground plan, composition and settlement layout. These findings are very similar to the earlier ones by Maggs and Whitelaw, Mason and Phillipson. The significance of all these findings is that they clearly demonstrate both the antiquity and continuity of the occupation of the Transvaal by the Batswana, including the Bakgatla.

**Bakgatla origins**

There is very little precise information about Bakgatla origins. But, according to oral traditions, the Bakgatla, like all Batswana groups, trace their origins to a mythical ancestor called Malope and his father Masilo who were leaders of what Legassick has called “lineage clusters” and said to have lived between 1440 and 1560 A.D. Bakgatla history up to the 18th century, like that of all other Batswana groups, cannot be documented with certainty because it is, as Schapera stated, “only vaguely recorded in traditions that are often conflicting...” For these reasons, therefore, 18th century Bakgatla history will continue to be a matter of considerable conjecture until much more research is done in archaeology, linguistics and anthropology.

However, it is known with some certainty that from around 1500 A.D., the Batswana groups underwent a process of fission which resulted into their dispersal, around the junction of the Madikwe (Marico) and Odi Rivers, with various groups locating in different parts of the

---

Transvaal and north-western Botswana. All Batswana groups in the Pilanesberg and elsewhere were, in fact, characterised by a high incidence of fission. According to a "widely-held theory" among the Batswana, recorded by Schapera, the composite name "Batswana" comes from the term "-tswana" which means "to come or go out from one another, to separate," a derivation which suggests the very high incidence of secession and fission in Batswana history.

This process was due to a number of factors such as, for example, population growth and the scarcity of land and water resources, which tended to exacerbate political differences and succession disputes within a chiefdom. Thus, disgruntled individuals and their followers would break away to form their own separate chiefdom elsewhere. Repeated over time, this process resulted into a number of chiefdoms being related by descent and ties of culture, ritual and politics. This process of fission continued throughout the 17th and 18th centuries and, according to Legassick, seems to have affected the Bakgatla from about 1600 to 1680 A.D.

It was out of this process of fission that the Bakgatla emerged, initially as a composite group, which later split up further into separate and distinct sub-groups.

The Bakgatla, according to Brown, are an offshoot of the Bahurutshe of the present-day Marico district who are "the primary branch" of all the Batswana. This clearly points to the original unity of the Batswana at some distant point in time prior to the processes of fission due to the reasons already stated. The nature of early Bakgatla dispersal is not known, but Legassick recorded that it occurred mainly north of the Vaal River and entered the Pilanesberg district sometime during the 18th century. Oral tradition indicates that the Bakgatla take that name after their chief called Mokgatla. It is not known when he lived, but when he died, his people split into three groups, the Bakgatla of Kgafula, Mmanaana and Mosetlha. Those of Mmanaana are found in the Moshupa area of present-day Botswana, while those of Kgafula live in the Mochudi and the Pilanesberg districts of Botswana and western Transvaal, respectively. From the Mosetlha group are descended two other Bakgatla groups, the Bamotsha and the Bamakau. These last three groups live in the Pretoria district and are, therefore, outside the scope of this study.

24 Brown, Among the Bantu Nomads, pp. 260-261.
26 This oral tradition is recorded in Transvaal Native Affairs Department (TNAD), Short History of the Native Tribes of the Transvaal (1905), p. 27; The War Office, The Native Tribes of the Transvaal (1905), p. 22. For more details of the origins of, and splits among, the Bakgatla, see A. J. Wookey, Dingwao Leha E Le Dipolelo Kaga Dico Tsa Secwana, (1913), pp. 73-74. Hereafter, the Bakgatla-baga-Kgafula will be known simply as "Bakgatla."
Chiefdom formation, conquest and conflict, c.1760-1820

Traditions indicate that the Bakgatla's first settlement in the Pilanesberg was at Tsekane, east of the Odi River where they were ruled by Kgafela and his son Tebele,\(^{27}\) at an unknown date during the 18th century.\(^{28}\) But as Tsekane was fever-ridden, they moved to Molokwane (Viegpoort) at the junction of the Moretele and Odi Rivers, now under the rule of Tebele's son, Maselane.\(^{29}\) It was under Maselane that the Bakgatla settled at Huma, near present-day Saulspoort.\(^{30}\) Maselane's death was followed by a brief period of struggle for the chieftainship and Kwefane, his son from the first house was recognised as chief. During Kwefane's rule and that of his successor Molefe, the Bakgatla conquered and incorporated weaker neighbouring groups such as the Barokologadi, the Bamabodisa and Bamadibana, thus, greatly enlarging the Bakgatla's population.\(^{31}\) (Today, all these three groups constitute integral segments of Bakgatla society.)

This process of conquest and incorporation of weaker groups characterised Bakgatla society during the period c.1760-c.1820 and indicates their earliest attempts at chiefdom formation and centralisation, a process which other Batswana societies also underwent. Manson, for example, has shown that the general conflict among communities of the western highveld from the middle of the 18th century to the early 19th was due to factors such as “increasing competition among several powerful Tswana polities for control of trade,... social disruptions generated by

\(^{27}\) Breutz, *The Tribes*, p. 252.
\(^{29}\) Schapera, *A Short History*, p. 2; Breutz, *The Tribes*, p. 252.
\(^{30}\) TNAD, *Short History*, p. 27. Saulspoort is 68.8 kilometers north of Rustenburg.
\(^{31}\) Schapera, *A Short History*, p. 3; Breutz, *The Tribes*, p. 253-254.
colonial labour seekers and raiders, and finally by a shortage of agricultural land or pasture, exacerbated by the drought of 1790 to 1810."

From c.1780, internecine warfare seems to have increased. Again, these were further attempts at centralisation by the various Batswana groups in the area. Thus, for example, during the regency of Magotso (c.1780-1790) after Molefe's death, there was armed conflict between the Bakgatla and the Batlokwa on the one hand, and the Bafokeng, Batlako, Bakubung and the Bapo on the other. The cause is said to have been the destruction of the Batlokwa's crops by the Bafokeng's cattle, but the real cause could have been competition for the control of trade, the shortage of agricultural land, pasture, or because of drought.

By the beginning of the 19th century, the Bakgatla, now under Pheto, may have been militarily the strongest in the Pilanesberg as they attempted to centralise their chiefdom through war. They fought against their neighbours such as, for example, the Bammatau, Batlako and the Bakwena-ba-Mogopa. It does seem, however, that the methods used were not entirely military. Schapera suggested that incorporation was sometimes voluntary, when he wrote that the Bakgatla were "joined by many aliens, including the Baphalane and the Bamasiana, and became very powerful, claiming sovereignty over the greater part of the land in the triangle


33 Schapera, A Short History, p. 4.

34 Schapera, A Short History, p. 41; Breutz, The Tribes, pp. 254-255; TNAD, Short History, p. 27; War Office, The Native Tribes, p. 23.
formed by the Odi, Marico, and Eland's, Rivers. It is not clear why these groups joined the Bakgatla at this time, but, presumably, there was peace and security in Pheto’s chiefdom, which may have attracted these groups. However, this should not give the impression that the Bakgatla were completely powerful and had no challengers in the entire Pilanesberg region. Manson, for example, indicates that the Bangwaketse to the west were both militarily stronger and quite troublesome to both the Bakgatla and the Bahurutshe, especially in the period from c.1790 to 1820.

The period from Pheto’s death in c.1810 to c.1820 saw unprecedented internal strife, instability and misrule among the Bakgatla. The conflict was initially over a case of adultery between Letsebe, the heir to Pheto’s throne, and the regent, Senwelo. The two men and their followers fought each other and Letsebe was killed. Senwelo succeeded as chief but was in turn killed by Letsebe’s followers. The next ruler, Motlotle, was markedly despotic and “at heart a real savage...”; he killed “all” suspected rivals for the chieftainship and anyone who opposed him. Motlotle’s reign was characterised by factionalism, conspiracies and killings. Consequently, the Bakgatla “resent[ed] his savage rule” and “began to scatter from Motlotle,” leaving him “with very few followers.” The Bakgatla were still in this chaotic situation when, in c.1823, they were invaded and routed by the Bafokeng of chief Sebitwane around the junction of the Tshwane and Limpopo Rivers. The internal conflict and the Bafokeng invasion must have, 

---

35 Schapera, *A Short History*, p. 4. See also TNAD, *Short History*, p. 27.
39 Schapera, *A Short History*, p. 7; See also TNAD, *Short History*, p. 27; War Office, *The Native Tribes*, p. 23.
no doubt, weakened the Bakgatla considerably. Indeed, when Pilane returned from exile to take
over the chieftainship, he found many of the Bakgatla "roaming about in the veld, living like
Bushmen upon game and wild vegetable foods..."\textsuperscript{40}

In the Pilanesberg, this was the beginning of the violent conflict that has generally been termed
the \textit{difaqane}.\textsuperscript{41} The \textit{difaqane} has always been explained in terms of factors such as, for
example, population pressure and competition for scarce resources among the Nguni-speaking
peoples of Natal and Zululand.\textsuperscript{42} Since the 1980s, however, a few historians, notably Cobbing
and Wright, have disputed the traditional explanations and argued that there were, in fact,
three epicentres of violence, namely, the Cape Colony and its ceaseless military raids into the
interior for labour and slaves; the colonial Griqua/Korana/Bergenaar surrogates’ military forays
for slaves among African groups in the interior, and, lastly, the Portuguese who were based at
Delagoa Bay and Inhambane who continually sent military expeditions into the interior for
slaves.\textsuperscript{43} This hypothesis has, in turn, been vehemently disputed by other historians.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{40} Schapera, \textit{A Short History}, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{41} For an understanding of the evolution of the term \textit{difaqane}, see N. Parsons, "‘The time

\textsuperscript{42} See J.D. Omer-Cooper, \textit{The Zulu Aftermath} (1966); “Aspects of political change in the
nineteenth-century Mfecane,” Thompson (ed), \textit{African Societies in Southern Africa},
Chapter Ten.

\textsuperscript{43} See J. Cobbing, “The ‘Mfecane’ as alibi: thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo,”

\textsuperscript{44} An example is E.A. Eldredge, “Sources of conflict in southern Africa, c.1800-1830,”
Hamilton (ed), \textit{The Mfecane Aftermath}, Chapter Five.
The structure and organisation of Bakgatla society

It is necessary to have a general understanding of the social, political and economic structure and institutions of Bakgatla society in order to appreciate the kind of changes that the study discusses. For such a reconstruction, this study draws heavily upon the works of Schapera, the leading anthropologist on the Bakgatla. 45 However, a few points should be noted about this reconstruction. First, while this discussion is not meant to be a comparison with other Batswana groups, much of what it says is, nevertheless, applicable to Batswana groups generally. Moreover, Schapera's works on the Batswana were based on the research he did especially on the Bakgatla and, to a lesser extent, the Bangwato. Second, the reconstruction fully recognises that there were many and fundamental changes in Bakgatla society which had already occurred and were still occurring up to the first three decades of the 20th century because of the Bakgatla's interaction with white society. Third, the term "pre-colonial" is, therefore, problematic because as early as 1820, most societies in South Africa were already changing in response to colonial penetration.

Bakgatla society, like other Batswana groups, was divided into several different sub-groups, the smallest of which was the family, consisting of a man, his wife or wives, and their unmarried children, their own or adopted. One or more of the families that lived together as

a group made up a household, while several, closely-related households living together in the same part of the village made up the family-group. One or more family-groups made up the ward, an organised, well-defined local administrative unit of the tribe. Finally, the wards were grouped together into larger divisions called sections. The Bakgatla specifically were divided into two separate social classes, the bakgosing and badintlha. The former belonged to wards of the royal section and the latter to those that were made up of mainly immigrant communities. The distinction between the two classes was reflected particularly in political life in which political power was centralised in the hands of the chief and his relatives, while commoners and foreigners had local jurisdiction only, apart from their participation in the wider central councils.

The social, political and economic organisation and institutions of the Bakgatla in both the Pilanesberg and Mochudi were the same. In the Pilanesberg, the biggest settlement was Moruleng (renamed Saulspoort by the Boers) where the chief lived. There were also smaller villages consisting of a single hamlet or group of homesteads. The homesteads of a hamlet were usually arranged in a circular manner, all facing towards a central open space in which were one or more cattle-kraals. The cattle-kraal had both political and ritual importance. In both Moruleng and Mochudi, for example, the chief’s advisors and headmen held their secret meetings there, and the chief was usually buried there too. Within this centre was the kgotla,

---

46 For details of the social structure and organisation of the family, house-hold and family-group, see Schapera, Tswana Law and Custom, pp. 12-19.


48 For details of other social distinctions among the Batswana generally, see Schapera, Tswana Law and Custom, pp. 31-34.
a meeting place as well as the seat of tribal administration, where the chief administered justice, received reports, interviewed people and where many meetings and ceremonies were held. 49

Chiefs among the Bakgatla, as among other Batswana groups, were usually the most wealthy because they received various kinds of tribute from their people. The chief, for example, claimed from hunters one tusk of every elephant killed, and the skin of every lion or leopard killed; an ox from the father of every child being initiated and a beast from the head of every cattle-owning house-hold. Later, during the era of migrant labour, the chief claimed £1 from every returning migrant worker. 50 But the chief also had duties and obligations. He gave meat and beer to people who visited him, assisted at his court, or were summoned to work for him. He rewarded the services of his councillors and warriors with gifts of cattle. He loaned some of his cattle as mafisa to poor men who used the milk and ploughed with the oxen, while in times of famine, he gave his people corn from his granaries or bought supplies to distribute as food and seed. 51

In theory, all power was vested in the chief (kgosi), the head of the community who governed it with his closest relatives. While this may sound autocratic, in practice, government was by consensus and considerably democratic. 52 The chief was assisted by smaller chiefs (kgosana, pl. dikgosana), each of whom controlled a section or ward (kgoro) of the land or village. The larger wards could be sub-divided into smaller ones, each under the control of a headman

---

52 For details of the chief's duties, obligations and limitations upon his powers, see Schapera, *Tswana Law and Custom*, pp. 68-72, 84-88.
(mogo!Jvane, pl. bagohwane). Each of these divisions and sub-divisions had its own council of elders, lekgotla, for the whole community, lekgotlana for the ward and lekgotlanyana for the sub-ward. All adult males could have a say in the public deliberations of these councils, whose final collective opinion was binding to all. In addition to these open councils, there was a much more restricted one, the khurutamiaga, whose members were the chief’s most trusted councillors and advisors who met in secret (mo sekweneng) to consider in advance matters that were to be put before the lekgotla’s full meeting. 53

The Bakgatla were, like all Batswana, almost entirely self-supporting. They produced their own food through agriculture and breeding their own stock. Despite the later contact with Europeans who introduced new commodities that stimulated new wants and created new standards of wealth and social status, the Bakgatla generally still depended mainly upon the land for food and many raw materials. 54 The Bakgatla’s major crops were sorghum, 55 maize, millet, sweet-cane, ground-nuts and beans. The start of the cultivating season was marked by a rain-making ceremony, organised by the chief. In fact, until the chief’s “tribute fields” (masotla) had been ploughed first, nobody else could plant, weed or thresh in their own fields. However, by the time of the study period, the rain-making ceremony had been abandoned and replaced by a Christian “day of prayer for rain,” introduced by the missionaries. 56 Crop fields were located some 8 to 40 kilometres away from the settlements. Due to these long distances, most families had temporary settlements alongside their fields during the agricultural season.

55 This was given the derogatory term “Kafir corn” by the Boers.
56 Schapera and Comaroff, The Tswana, p. 16.
from November to June and returned to their permanent homes only after harvesting. Similarly, cattle, apart from drought oxen, were kept by older boys at grazing posts some 64 or more kilometres away, all year round. 57

**The Bakgatla and the *difaqane* up to 1837**

The many years of intra-Bakgatla conflict, misrule and the BafoKeng invasion which we have noted, had a weakening impact upon the Bakgatla. They were just beginning to recover from these difficulties and chief Pilane was in the process of rallying his people together when the Amandebele, led by Mzilikazi, burst upon them shortly after 1825. But due to the internal conflict already noted, the Bakgatla were “too weak to defend themselves” and, like many other Pilanesberg Batswana, submitted easily to the Amandebele to whom they paid skins, corn and ivory as tribute. 58 As the record of the contemporary traveller, A. Smith shows, various Batswana groups in this region were affected by the violence of the *difaqane* in varying degrees. 59

As long as the Bakgatla remained submissive to Amandebele rule, they were left in peace. Chief Pilane, however, resented “the servitude to which he was reduced” and appealed to the Griquas

---


59 For details of how, for example, the Bakwena-ba-Modimosana and the Bapo were affected, see W.F. Lye (ed), *Andrew Smith's Journal* (1975), p. 259. For the Baphalane, see Breutz, *The Tribes*, p. 328; For the Bahurutshe, see Manson, “The Hurutshe in the Marico,” pp. 64-73.
of Barend Barend for military aid against the Amandebele, which they provided. The Amandebele repelled the Griquas and 'punished' the Bakgatla by destroying their villages, taking "all their cattle" and drafting Bakgatla young men into their regiments. Consequently, Pilane went into exile in the Zoutpansberg area, while his half-brother, Molefi, acted as chief for him. When peace returned, Molefi went to ask Pilane to come and resume his reign, but on their return found the chieftainship usurped by Kgotlamaswe, Pilane's brother from the third house. Kgotlamaswe and his followers were expelled to the Mabeskraal area, and Pilane became chief again. But when Pilane suspected that the Amandebele were plotting to kill him, he fled to the Zoutpansberg once again, leaving Molefi in charge of the Bakgatla. Pilane returned only after the expulsion of the Amandebele from the Transvaal in 1837 and settled on the Kgetleng River at Mmasebudule (or Rhenosterfontein 887).

Overall, however, unlike the far more violent experiences of other Batswana chiefdoms, the Pilanesberg Batswana were much less affected by the violence of the difaqane. As Breutz has stated, the Amandebele attacks were less violent in this [i.e. the Pilanesberg] district than in the Rustenburg district. But, nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the difaqane did have some, albeit limited, impact upon virtually all the Pilanesberg peoples. The Batllako, for

---

60 Schapera, A Short History, p. 8.
61 Breutz, The Tribes, p. 257; Schapera, A Short History, p. 8.
63 For the relatively much greater violent impact of the difaqane upon the western Barolong, for example, see M. Kinsman, "'Hungry wolves': the impact of violence on Rolong life," Hamilton (ed), The Mfecane Aftermath, Chapter Fourteen.
64 Breutz, The Tribes, p. 364.
example, remained in their homes but became subjects of, and paid tribute to, the Amandebele. Among the Baphalane, “a few” people were killed, but otherwise there was “no lasting impression” of the Amandebele invasion among them. Other groups, such as the Batlokwa-baga-Sedumedi, were forced to flee their homes.65

Pilane returned from exile in the late 1830s or early 1840s to resume his rule, only after the Amandebele had been expelled from the western Transvaal by the Voortrekkers. At this time, the Bakgatla were still quite weak, mainly because of the impact of the internecine conflict we have noted, but also to a lesser extent, the disruptive effects of the difaqane. There seems to have been no resistance to the Voortrekkers' occupation of the Pilanesberg, presumably because of the disunity, rivalry and weakened state of the various Batswana groups, including the Bakgatla, as well as the former's superior arms. The Voortrekkers' arrival ushered in an entirely new era of experiences and relations for the Bakgatla and other Batswana groups in the region.

As already alluded to, the Bakgatla's neighbours in the Pilanesberg, such as the Bamatau, Baphalane, Batlokwa-ba-Sedumedi, Batlokwa-ba-Kgosi, Bakwena-ba-Modimosana, Batlhalerwa, Barokologadi, Bapo, Badidi, Batlako and the Bataung-ba-Mobana had similar experiences.66 All these groups shared common origins and, therefore, a certain degree of interrelatedness in terms of, for example, kinship. They also underwent the processes of fission which characterised all Batswana groups. Another similarity of these groups is that up to the early 19th century, they had wandered in the same general area of the Pilanesberg in search of a more suitable place of settlement until they found one. Although the impact of the difaqane

65 See Breutz, *The Tribes*, pp. 291, 238, 364.
66 For details, see the whole of Breutz's, *The Tribes*. 
was much less violent in this area than elsewhere in southern Africa, it, nevertheless, left these
groups weak and in disarray; and hence, their inability to offer any effective resistance to the
Voortrekker incursions. It is also clear that, at various times from the arrival of the
Voortrekkers to the end of the 19th century, virtually all of the Pilanesberg's Batswana groups
had experienced, to use Breutz's understated term, "trouble with the Boers,"67 as a result of
which some of them emigrated to other areas, either within the 'borders' of what was later to
become South Africa, or 'outside' to what became the British Bechuanaland Protectorate. The
basis of this "trouble" was the Voortrekkers' persistent demands for Batswana labour.68 To
understand this, we need to look at Bakgatla-Boer relations more closely.

Bakgatla-Boer Relations: 1840s-c.1870

The relationship between the Voortrekkers and the Bakgatla and other Batswana groups in the
Pilanesberg was an ambivalent one, characterised initially by mutual co-operation but later by
violence. Since the 1840s, the Boers and Batswana groups in the Rustenburg/Pilanesberg areas
had, in fact, been allies in a number of ways that were mutually beneficial. In this relationship,
Batswana regiments were used by Boer commandos as auxiliaries in their many raids against
other African groups in far-flung parts of the Transvaal.69 At a time when the Sand River

67 See, for example, Breutz, The Tribes, pp. 164, 365, 431.

68 For details, see B. Mbenga, "Forced labour in the Pilanesberg: the flogging of Chief
Kgamanyane by Commandant Paul Kruger, Saulspoort, April 1870," paper to
conference, Rhodes University, Grahamstown (2-5 July 1995).

69 About Voortrekker military expeditions using surrogate African groups against
independent African polities in the Transvaal during the 19th century, see, for example,
War Office, The Native Tribes, pp. 100-116; J. Meintjes, President Paul Kruger (1974),
pp. 64-67; M. Juta, Pace of the Ox (1975), pp. 46-55; J. Fisher, Paul Kruger (1974),
(continued...
Convention of 1852 expressly prohibited Africans from possessing firearms,\(^{70}\) as Morton has recorded, the Boer leader, S.J.P. Kruger, allowed Batswana chiefs such as Kgamanyane of the Bakgatla and Mokgatlle of the Bafokeng and their followers to own guns and participate in profitable ivory trading across the Limpopo River.

Consequently, "these men and their followers acquired wealth in cattle, plantations, tools, buildings and dependents."\(^{71}\) As a result of this relationship, the Bakgatla, for example, grew militarily to be the most powerful in the Pilanesberg and incorporated some weak groups.\(^{72}\) In return, Kgamanyane gave the Boers little African children whom he and his regiments captured in military raids. In a praise-poem dedicated to Kgamanyane, a reference is made to the fact that during such raids, he "seiz[ed] young children" whom he "[gave] to the white men."\(^{73}\) As the succeeding chapters will show, this position of prominence and leadership by the Bakgatla in the Pilanesberg as early as the 1840s was to continue throughout the 19th century and the early 20th. This mutually dependent relationship was similar to that which developed between African and Boer communities in the Marico district of the Transvaal where the fledgling Boer communities exacted labour demands on the Bahurutshe, and yet, at the same time, had to

\(^{69}\) (...continued)
\(^{72}\) Morton, "Captive labor," p. 177.
\(^{73}\) Schapera, Praise-Poems (1965), p. 68.
depend on them to keep the "Hunter's Road" open for vital trade.\textsuperscript{74}

This 'amicable,' but essentially contradictory Boer-Bakgatla relationship, however, began to deteriorate from the early 1860s. As an explanation for this change, Morton has suggested three factors. First, for reasons that he does not elaborate, Boer landowners put pressure upon their Batswana tenants "to pay them in cash and livestock for rights to land and, through the Volksraad, introduced taxes that Kruger and his relatives, as the local officials, collected."\textsuperscript{75} Second, the discovery of diamonds resulted in Britain's renewed interest in South Africa; the campaign against "slavery" in the SAR was revived once again, and "raiding without censure became impossible by 1868..."\textsuperscript{76} Third, shortly after the discovery of diamonds, Kruger embarked upon irrigated farming and building dams, for which he began to force Africans in his district to labour.\textsuperscript{77} These then were the pressures that began to mount against Africans during the 1860s in the region generally, and the Bakgatla specifically. Thus, while the Boers appear to have been considerably more 'amicable' to Kgamanyane himself, his own people clearly suffered while he gained materially from this collaboration. But it must also be pointed out that Kgamanyane may have had no choice in the role which he was compelled to perform for the Boer authorities.

The Boer-African issues just referred to can also be explained by the economic malaise of the SAR. During the 1860s, there had been a general economic decline among the burgers of the

\textsuperscript{74} Manson, "The Hurutshe in the Marico," pp. 90-92. See also P. Delius, \textit{The Land Belongs to Us} (1983), pp. 32-37.

\textsuperscript{75} Morton, "Captive labor," p. 178.

\textsuperscript{76} Morton, "Captive labor," p. 178.

\textsuperscript{77} Morton, "Captive labor," p. 178.
SAR. In this period, as Wagner has shown for the Zoutpansberg area, for example, previously profitable sources of income such as hunting were diminishing. With declining resources, SAR officials such as Kruger resorted to ever harsher methods of extracting tax from the African inhabitants. As Trapido has put it: "Between 1850 and 1868 various Volksraads attempted to raise taxes by exhortation, fines, proclamations and hectoring instructions to landdrosts, with little or no effect." According to Trapido, the Boer need for more African labour at this time led to territorial expansion through military expeditions westwards, eastwards and northwards. However, these expeditions which were in themselves disruptive, do not seem to have procured enough labour. Therefore, the Boers’ labour requirements had to be sought amongst the nearby African groups already under their jurisdiction, such as the Bakgatla.

Boer requirements for African labour were obtained through the office of the veldkornet and, as Delius has pointed out, the provision of African labour to Boer farms was integral to the

---

79 For details, see R. Wagner, “Zoutpansberg: the dynamics …,” Marks and Atmore (eds), Economy and Society, pp. 323-337.
82 W. Kistner, The Anti-Slavery Agitation Against the Transvaal Republic 1852-1868 (1952), p. 211. This was the lowest administrative and military rank in the SAR government. For duties of the veldkornet, see for example, E. Kahn, “The history of the administration of justice in the South African Republic,” South African Law Journal, LXXV, III (August 1958), pp. 300, 311-313.
duties of this official "and fundamental to [his] power." Krikler has described the veldkornet as a "sinister landowning representative of the [white] farmers in each district who hovered above the tenantry, violently intervening -- when necessary -- to ensure the rendering of labour service." Both Delius and Trapido have shown how holders of high office in the SAR, such as P. Kruger, were well placed to take advantage of not only accumulating personal wealth but, more importantly for the African communities, extracting the ever elusive labour.

In the Pilanesberg by the 1860s, the practice of forced labour "was so rigorously enforced by the Boers that all the young men of the Bakgatla fled to Secheli (sic) at Molepolole, Bechuanaland." Whereas it is most unlikely that "all the young men" would have fled, it is nevertheless, a clear indication of the severity of the Bakgatla's forced labour problem at the time. Early in 1903, Bakgatla eye-witnesses in Saulspoort told the newly-appointed Sub-Native Commissioner (SNC) for the Pilanesberg, F. Edmeston, about the hardships of what he recorded as "the 'corvee' system" of labour in the Pilanesberg in the 1860s from which so many young men fled that Kgamanyane "refused to supply further labour, as he had 'only old men left' ..."

The demand for forced labour on Boer farms in the Pilanesberg was already becoming unbearable as early as 1865 when some Bakgatla began to leave the area altogether because,
according to a contemporary Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) mission report, they had become "weary from the oppression they endured from the [Boer] farmers." Thus, in 1867, for example, due to the pressures of forced labour, the Bakgatla sub-chief "Bottoman" (presumably Letsebe) and "all his people" left the Pilanesberg and went to settle among the Bakwena in present-day Botswana.

The Bakgatla's on-going grievance of forced labour culminated in the flogging of their chief Kgamanyane because of their refusal to continue to provide such labour. Towards the end of 1869, Commandant P. Kruger embarked upon a wheat-irrigation project in Saulspoort, for which he had to dam a stream in the Pilanesberg mountains. The fields needed vast quantities of water. According to a Mokgatla informant, T.S. Pilane, reports reaching Kruger from "fellow Boers" in the Pilanesberg said that only Bakgatla women were working, "with babies on their backs," while men stayed away "making karosses." These "fellow Boers" then urged Kruger to "make the men work." Bakgatla men were, therefore, made to work on the project. They were inspanned to wagons and carts containing stone boulders and forced to pull them to the dam-construction site. Due to the harsh nature of the work involved, the Bakgatla refused to continue to work. In the words of S. D. Matshego, "it was this hard labour, forced

---

88 Jordaan, "Die Ontwikkeling," p. 298.
89 For details of this flogging incident, see Mbenga, "Forced labour in the Pilanesberg," pp. 1-5.
90 T.S. Pilane, interview, Ramoselekatse, Saulspoort, 29 May 1993. Although Kruger had used "irrigation from the mountain streams" of the Pilanesberg before to grow wheat, barley, mealies and tobacco (Juta, The Pace of the Ox, p. 25), the wheat irrigation project he began in Saulspoort was his most ambitious up to that time. The construction was just below the present-day George Stegman Hospital in central Saulspoort.
hard labour" which prompted the Bakgatla and their chief to agree to stop working forthwith.  

H. Malan, Kruger's official representative in the Pilanesberg who supervised the dam project reported this development to him in Rustenburg. Kruger decided that Kgamanyane as the chief and procurer of labour was at fault and he, therefore, must be punished. Accordingly, before the end of April 1870, Kruger convened a public gathering at Saulspoort at which Kgamanyane and all other Pilanesberg chiefs had to appear "to witness the flogging" in order to see what could also happen to them if they did not do what they were told.

In front of the public gathering, Kgamanyane's hands and feet were bound, tied to the wheels of a wagon and Kruger himself flogged him, while lying prostrate. As Schapera has recorded, Kgamanyane was "humiliated and angered by the insult" of the flogging and, in disgust, on 26 April 1870, he and at least half of all his people in the Pilanesberg emigrated to Bakwena country in present-day Botswana. They fled there because of an earlier agreement, according to which the Bakwena undertook to give refuge to the Bakgatla, "if the Boers continued to trouble them," a promise based on the Bakgatla's military assistance to the Bakwena in their war against the Bangwaketse at Segeng much earlier on. The Bakgatla were settled at Mochudi. From that date, the Bakgatla have always been a divided people, straddling an

91 S. D. Matshego, interview, Koedoesfontein, the Pilanesberg, 7 February 1993.
92 Schapera, *A Short History*, p. 5. Regarding the Boers' and other white colonist societies' racial perceptions of blacks and their attitudes to the flogging of blacks as the "most suitable" form of punishment for them, see, for example, Mbenga, "Forced labour in the Pilanesberg," pp. 11-14; S. Pete, "Punishment and race," *Natal University Law and Society Review*, 1 (1986), pp. 102-106.
international border. This sad episode which caused the division was extremely important because subsequently, it came to have a tremendous impact on the social, political and economic life of the Bakgatla. This division became the determining factor in how the Bakgatla perceived themselves in virtually all their dealings with the outside world.

Soon after the Bakgatla had settled in Mochudi, however, armed conflict ensued with their Bakwena neighbours for two basic reasons. First, chief Sechele demanded tribute from the Bakgatla, whom he regarded as his vassals, which they rejected. Second, according to the Bakwena, the Bakgatla began to raid their cattle posts along the Madikwe and Ngotwane Rivers. A year after Kgamanyane's death in 1874, fighting between the Bakwena and the Bakgatla became more serious, characterised by a series of raids and counter-raids until 1883 when peace was brokered by the Barolong chief, Montshiwa.

Psychologically, the flogging incident and the events leading to it became embedded in the collective psyche of the Bakgatla. On 9 February 1903, following the end of the South African War, for example, the Bakgatla leadership wrote a lengthy petition to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Transvaal, A. Lawley, in which they, among other issues, bitterly complained about the flogging thus: "Among other acts of inhumanity, Paul Kruger, [the] late President of the Transvaal Republic tied our late Chief Kgamanyane to the wheel of a wagon and flogged or

---


96 This aspect of Bakgatla history is, however, outside the scope of this study and has been adequately dealt with elsewhere. See the detailed accounts of Bakgatla history in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, prior to the Bakwena-Bakgatla war in, for example, Schapera, *A Short History*, pp. 10-18; Sillery, *Bechuanaland Protectorate*, pp. 154-157; Smith, *Great Lion of Bechuanaland*, pp. 291-298. See also the more incisive and scholarly account by Ramsay, "The rise and fall of the Bakwena dynasty," pp. 147-158.
whipped him, himself; from the effects of which unmerited punishment he eventually died.\textsuperscript{97}

The same year, a British journalist who travelled to the Pilanesberg and Mochudi recorded that “the flogging of the chief [Kgamanyane] was more bitterly resented by the persecuted people than was any of their various ills.”\textsuperscript{98} In the 1990s, in both Mochudi and the Pilanesberg, practically all of the older generation of Bakgatla men and women still retain graphic accounts of the flogging, although now with much less bitterness.\textsuperscript{99} The fact that, a little over a century later, this event could still be remembered so vividly is a clear indication of how long a traumatic historical episode can survive in a people’s collective memory.

A similar instance comes from the northern Transvaal where, in October 1854, about 900 Amandebele people under chief Makopane were killed by a Boer commando in a siege in a huge cave.\textsuperscript{100} Some 139 years later, in 1994, Amandebele informants could still give the scholar Hofmeyr detailed accounts of this episode, albeit in slightly varying versions.\textsuperscript{101} The flogging incident and subsequent geographical division of the Bakgatla during the 19th century was one of the forces that later shaped and directed Bakgatla life in its entirety during the first three decades of the 20th century and even long afterwards. The second, equally significant

\textsuperscript{97} CAD, SNA 116 NA 672/03, Petition of Chief Linchwe and others to Sir Arthur Lawley, Lieutenant-Governor of the Transvaal Colony, 9 February 1903, p. 1

\textsuperscript{98} E.F. Knight, \textit{South Africa After the War} (1903), p. 268. My emphasis.


\textsuperscript{100} For a detailed account of this event, see T.J. Makhura, “The Bagananwa polity in the northern Transvaal of the South African Republic, c.1836-1896,” MA dissertation, University of Bophuthatswana (1993), pp. 171-207.

\textsuperscript{101} For details, see I. Hofmeyr, \textit{We Spend Our Years as a Tale that is Told”: Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chiefdom} (1993), pp. 111-121.
factor dating back to the 19th century that had an important bearing on the Bakgatla was the role of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), which is the subject of the next chapter.
Figure 1  Map

PILANESBERG AND THE BAKGATLA RESERVE DURING THE 1920'S.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BAKGATLA AND THE DRC MISSIONARIES, 1900 - 1931

This chapter describes and analyses the interaction between the Bakgatla and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) missionaries in the Pilanesberg during the period 1900-1931. It highlights the work of the pioneer Swiss missionary, H.L. Gonin, and assesses missionary activity generally among the Bakgatla. It also demonstrates the important role played by the Bakgatla teacher-evangelists and shows that they, much more than the missionaries, did most of the work of spreading the gospel and Western education in the Pilanesberg. An attempt is made to unravel the complex question of the ways in which many aspects of Bakgatla life generally were transformed, supplemented or discarded as a direct result of DRC influence. It shows that, for certain reasons, missionary work in evangelisation was much more successful than in education. On the other hand, the Bakgatla, who were dissatisfied with the content of missionary education, were much more successful at providing their own alternative model of education. The chapter also looks at Bakgatla chiefs' financial, material and moral support for missionary work, and argues that this was one of the major boosts to missionary development and expansion in the Pilanesberg.

DRC activity among blacks in South Africa dates back to the 17th century when the church's first missionaries worked among the Khoikhoi and black slaves at the Cape. With the founding
of the South African Missionary Society in 1799, the church's interest and involvement in missionary work began to spread northwards. This spread was assisted by the localisation of missionary training which was at first done in Holland. Thus, a theological seminary was opened at Stellenbosch in 1859 and the Mission Institute of Wellington in 1877. This northward expansion also saw the emergence of two features. First, separate churches, based on race, were formed within the DRC. Second, there was a greater missionary involvement among blacks beyond South Africa's borders. In 1857, therefore, the Cape Synod of the DRC decided to establish missions at Kranspoort (1863), Saulspoort (1864) and, later in the same century, in almost all the central African countries and beyond.\(^1\)

But what were the purposes of Christianity in southern Africa generally? The general missionary view was that African culture was fundamentally corrupt, sinful and needed to be redeemed. At the turn of the 19th century, in what was to become Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), as Rotberg has recorded, missionaries condemned African culture as an "unfathomable abyss of corruption and degradation" and consciously sought to transform all aspects of African culture.\(^2\) In South Africa during the 1830s, the Wesleyans among the Amathosa assumed that "their listeners had no consciousness of evil nor prohibitions against

---

\(^1\) B.M. du Toit, "Missionaries, anthropologists and the policies of the Dutch Reformed Church," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 22, 4 (1984), pp. 617-620; Jordaan, "Die Ontwikkeling," pp. 273-275. The very first organised efforts at missionary work in South Africa began in 1737 when the Moravians sent a missionary to the Khoikhoi but had to withdraw in the face of DRC opposition and desire for religious monopoly of the Cape. In the late 1700s, there were brief attempts by van der Kemp and J. Williams among the Ngqika, while the London Missionary Society's (LMS) initial efforts were among the Griqua, the Korana and the southern Batswana. See H.H. Fast, "African perceptions of missionaries and their message: Wesleyans at Mount Coke and Butterworth, 1825-1835," MA dissertation, University of Cape Town (1991), p. 37.

wrongful conduct."³

For these reasons, therefore, evangelisation came as a part of a total "package" to transform African culture. As Comaroff has explained, 19th century Christian evangelisation, which he terms the "civilizing colonialism of the mission," was one of three competing models of colonialism, the other two being "state colonialism" of the British administrators at the Cape, and the "settler colonialism" of the Boers.⁴ As Comaroff has put it, the basic purpose of the missionaries' "civilising colonialism" was "to reconstruct totally African society and culture," by encouraging Africans to adopt European modes of thought and life such as, for example, "individualism and the nuclear family, of private property and commerce..." and taking practical steps to implant them in African society.⁵ In other words, African culture was intended to approximate that of contemporary Europe. Only then, the missionaries considered, would the Africans be receptive to the "civilising mission."⁶ Missionaries, therefore, frowned upon and actively suppressed many aspects of African culture, such as initiation ceremonies and polygamy. The DRC missionaries, for example, actively discouraged bogwera (circumcision),⁷ which they regarded as "most immoral[.] and did all they could to stamp it out."⁸ In particular,

³ Fast, "African perceptions of missionaries," p. 84.
⁴ Comaroff, "Images of empire," p. 674. Emphasis in text. For details of these models of colonialism, see the same source, pp. 671-675.
⁸ Schapera, Tswana Law and Custom, p. 105.
cultural activities that were expressed in physical, bodily form, such as dancing, were actively discouraged by the missionaries. This then was the general context of the contemporary missionary thinking to which the missionary, H.L. Gonin, also belonged.

**Gonin's arrival and settlement**

In c.1857, while Gonin was a first-year theology student in Geneva, Switzerland, he and his class got a message from the Rev. A.C. Murray of the DRC Synod of South Africa, asking for volunteer missionaries, and Gonin began to consider becoming a missionary in South Africa. In 1860, the Synod sent the Rev. Dr. D.W. Robertson to Germany, Holland and Scotland to recruit missionaries for its African missions. It was during Robertson's trip to Scotland that he recruited Gonin as a missionary, almost by chance.

The same year, 1860, Gonin went for further theological training at the Free Church College in Edinburgh, Scotland, where he met with Dr. Robertson in 1861 and agreed to come to South Africa as a missionary. Meanwhile, Gonin returned to Switzerland and got married to a fellow Swiss. At the end of October 1861, the Gonins sailed for Cape Town. From Worcester, the DRC's Mission Committee sent Gonin to open a new mission in the Transvaal. At the beginning of 1861, the Rev. Murray travelled to Rustenburg, “to prepare the way” for

---

10 DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 29 August 1899.
the Gonins, who eventually arrived there by ox-wagon in May 1862.\footnote{DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 29 August 1899.}

Gonin belonged to the *Buitelandse Sending* (i.e. Foreign Mission) branch under the Foreign Sub-Committee of the N.G. Kerk of South Africa. This was the section of the church that catered for black people in the Transvaal, Bechuanaland Protectorate, Mashonaland and Nyasaland. In the Transvaal and the Protectorate, the Foreign Mission was governed by a Mission Board which consisted of all the ordained missionaries in the two territories. This Board took instructions from the Foreign Sub-Committee in Cape Town and met annually to coordinate mission work and policy, review progress and agree on common strategies to enhance their work.\footnote{DRCA S5/15/7/1, "Notulen der Eerste Vergadering," Saulspoort, 4 September 1913. Dutch-English translations in this chapter and the rest of the thesis by K. Bootsman, a Dutchman and Senior Lecturer in Geography, University of the North West.}

The Gonins' departure from Rustenburg to a new mission station was delayed for two years for a number of reasons. First, by the beginning of July 1862, the political situation in the Transvaal was, as Gonin reported, "more and more in disorder," as it was under the threat of "civil war."\footnote{DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 4 July 1862.} This was a period of intense intra-Afrikaner religious and political upheaval in the Transvaal.\footnote{For details of these conflicts, see T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom* (1975), Chapter Four.} Second, by early August 1862, Kgamanyane was still out on a long hunting expedition and the Gonins had to wait for his consent to work among his people.\footnote{DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Neethling, 9 August, 5 September 1862, 2 March 1863; Gonin to Murray, 10 January 1863. Meanwhile, the Gonins were running short of money and, as they were lodging with sympathisers, accommodation too was becoming a}
Rustenburg's white population, including its clergymen, were generally against Gonin working among black people. The local clergymen, instead, wanted Gonin to work with them "under their Bestuur [i.e. jurisdiction]" but he declined and, from then on, they wanted nothing to do with the Gonins. 17

The Gonins' experience at this time was common to other missionaries working or intending to work among black people in South Africa. The Rev. S. Hofmeyr, a DRC missionary who worked among Africans in the Zoutpansberg area during the early days of white settlement there, was, for example, "practically boycotted" by the Boers in the area, "on account of his vocation," 18 of doing missionary work among blacks. Boer hostility against white missionary activity among black people originated from the 1850s when the Scottish missionary, D. Livingstone, worked among the Bakwena of chief Sechele. The Boers in the Transvaal accused Livingstone of 'influencing' the Bakwena against them. 19 From then on, African chiefs under Boer authority were not allowed to accept missionaries, especially English-speaking ones, to

16 (...continued) problem. By the beginning of 1863, the Gonins were becoming desperate and sometimes "had to be content with merely a little millies [sic] for our dinner not knowing what we should eat the following [day]." See DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Neethling, 9 August and 5 September 1862, 2 March 1863; Gonin to Murray, 10 January 1863.

17 DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Neethling, 13 June and 9 August 1862. Quotation from the first letter.

18 J.A.I. Agar-Hamilton, The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers (1927), p. 117. Meanwhile, the Gonins spent their waiting time learning Setswana and improving upon their Dutch. By March 1863, Gonin's Dutch was good enough for him to conduct Sunday service in it for Rustenburg's Afrikaners. See DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Neethling, 9 August and 5 September 1862, 2 March 1863; Gonin to Murray, 10 January and 21 March 1863.

work among their people without the permission of the area's veldkornet, who in turn had to obtain the permission of the Volksraad. That was why the SAR authorities invited the German-speaking Hermannsburg missionaries, instead, to work among the Bakwena, because they felt that they were "not so dangerous to them in their foreign policy as the English missionaries."21

The key individual who could influence the Volksraad and enable Gonin to begin his work was P. Kruger, then a Commandant and a major land-owner, with properties in both Rustenburg and the Pilanesberg.22 As early as 1862, Kruger was "quite favourable" to Gonin's intended missionary work.23 But chief Kgamanyane’s agreement was also essential because the establishment and success or failure of missionary work hinged upon the consent and cooperation of the chief. Therefore, at the end of 1863, Gonin visited the Pilanesberg where some Bakgatla gave him a "good reception" and requested him to work among them.24 Kgamanyane himself personally requested Commandant Kruger to allow Gonin to settle at Saulspoort, "to teach himself, his children and his people" the gospel, and Kruger agreed.25

But Kgamanyane may have needed Gonin for security with regard to the Boers around him due to the problems he and his people experienced with them, which we noted in Chapter One. For the northern Transvaal, for example, Hofmeyr has suggested that chief Makopane of the

20 Eybers, Select Constitutional Documents, p. 414; Agar-Hamilton, Native Policy, p. 132.
22 For details, see Chapter Five.
23 DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Neethling, 13 June 1862.
24 DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 30 January 1864.
25 DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Neethling, 1 July and 5 December 1866.
Amandebele invited the Berlin Mission Society missionaries to settle at his capital partly “for political and diplomatic ends, particularly since he had, for some time, been embroiled in a low level war with the Boers. Indeed, it was often as messenger and emissary that Makopane used the first missionary, W. Moschutz.” Gonin too was to play this role among the Bakgatla. Elsewhere in southern Africa, African chiefs invited and welcomed missionaries for political, economic and military reasons.

In June 1864, the Gonins bought the farm Welgeval (or Welgevallen) in the Pilanesberg from a D. Putter for £150. In July, they shifted to Welgeval and soon began to preach and conduct Sunday service there. It is unclear why Kruger and the Volksraad finally permitted Gonin to work among the Bakgatla. It may have been because he was Swiss and not British since the Boers had had such bitter conflict with the latter missionaries, especially D. Livingstone. Gonin, therefore, must have been considered least likely to instigate ‘trouble.’ Moreover, Gonin’s two-year wait in Rustenburg would have been long enough for the Boer authorities to realise that he would not harm their interests. That was why the local veldkornet told Gonin: “We know you now and we know that you won’t incite the blacks against the whites as others did,” and referred to Livingstone specifically.


28 DRCA SS/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 11 October 1864; Maree, Uit Duisternis, pp. 41, 44.

29 Quoted in Morton, “Manumitted slaves,” p. 11.
For these reasons, Kruger began to support Gonin more actively. Therefore, in August 1866, Kruger permitted the Gonins and their three children to relocate to Saulspoort, chief Kgamanyane's headquarters. Elsewhere in South Africa, locating a mission station close to the chief's residence was both common and desirable due to a more concentrated population, which facilitated itineration, education and regular communication with the chief. But there was a more significant reason for Gonin relocating to Saulspoort. It was important to try to convert the chief because his conversion was expected to result in large numbers of his people accepting Christianity.

However, Gonin was to be disappointed as Kgamanyane never accepted conversion all his life, because a chief was a key figure in many indigenous rituals, such as rain-making, which were unacceptable to Christianity. Among the Bakgatla-ba-Motsha near Pretoria, for example, the chief's leading role in rain-making was, as Campbell put it, a "crucial mechanism for asserting chiefly authority." Chieftainship and rain-making were, in fact, inseparable. In all Batswana societies, as Schapera recorded, rain-making was an attribute of chieftainship, while "a Chief's reputation and popularity were often determined by the degree of success with which he could provide this most essential factor to the economic well-being and prosperity of his people." Kgamanyane, therefore, had to make a choice between his chieftainship and Christianity, and he chose the former.

---

30 DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Neethling, 2 May, 10 October and 5 December 1866; Maree, Uit Duisternis, p. 49.
31 See, for example, Fast, “African perceptions,” p. 40.
32 Schapera, Tswana Law and Custom, p. 70. My emphasis.
At Saulspoort, Gonin found a large number of already literate Africans living there. These were the people the Boers called the *Oorlams* ("civilised", i.e. Dutch-speaking people). They had been captured as children by Boer farmers during raids against independent African chiefdoms or bought from Africans or other Boers. The Boers then brought them up on their farms and trained them in a number of skills, such as, for example, literacy in Dutch, wagon repair, hunting, gun maintenance and plough farming. In this regard, they became known as *inboekelinge* (Dutch, "apprentices"). When they became adults, their masters manumitted them. But because of the life-long separation from their geographical and family origins, they generally remained working on labour contracts on their ex-master's farms. It was in this status that they were known as *Oorlams*.  

The *Oorlams* were the first group of Africans who were attracted to Gonin. As literates, some of them were already gospel preachers. One such preacher, whom Gonin described as "a truly pious man," for example, was a certain old man called "David," who also taught Gonin Setswana, using the New Testament. In 1866, Gonin's two "most advanced" pupils in his first Catechism class on Welgeval were called January and September. January, “an intelligent youth of about twenty,” who knew “Dutch well” and was "well acquainted with the language of the Bible,” had been a servant and Dutch/Setswana interpreter of the Gonins soon after their arrival in Rustenburg. September had worked for various Boer farmers in the area before working for

---

33 The related issues of *inboekelinge* and *Oorlams* have been dealt with by Delius and Trapido, “*Inboekelingen and Oorlams...*,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 8, 2 (April 1982); Trapido, “Aspects in the transition...,” p. 25. For the Pilanesberg and Rustenburg areas specifically, this topic has been dealt with in great detail by Morton. See his “Manumitted slaves”, “Slave-raiding and slavery” and *Slavery in South Africa*, especially pp. 167-214.

34 DRCA S5/17/7/2, Gonin to Neethling, 13 June 1862; 15 May 1863. Gonin learnt Setswana partly with the assistance of some Setswana texts he acquired from the Rev. R. Moffat of the LMS mission at Kuruman. See DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 6 March 1866.
the Gonins as a wagon driver. Like January, September could also read and understand Dutch “pretty well” and was “well advanced in knowledge.”

Morton has quite ably analysed the nature and composition of these people. However, he has given the impression that all the inboekelinge and Oorlams were “detached since childhood from their original communities” and were, therefore, a totally uprooted society that had no contact with their original societies. This view may be inaccurate because at least some of the Oorlams did keep contact with their original African communities. In March 1866, for example, Gonin recorded that January's parents and an uncle were in “his kraal” nearby. Indeed, after becoming a Christian and working for the Gonins, January rejoined his people. But, according to Gonin, when he refused to renounce the Bible and participate in rain-making ceremonies and got threatened, he eventually returned to Gonin's Christian community for refuge. Another reason to refute the Oorlams' ‘rootlessness’ is the fact that September lived with “two of his brothers.” Moreover, towards the end of June or beginning of July 1866, September, as Gonin recorded, paid “a visit to his sister at Sechele’s,” clearly suggesting that he had maintained his Bakwena family roots all along. Therefore, Morton’s suggestion that the

35 DRCA SS/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 6 March 1866.
36 See, for example, the whole of Morton’s, “Manumitted slaves.”
38 DRCA SS/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 6 March 1866. Gonin's mission on Saulspoort was often a place of refuge for Bakgatla Christians who “refused to take a [sic] part in the sinful practices and ceremonies of circumcision,” which often brought conflict between Gonin and chief Kgamanyane, as the latter tried to bring them back into such ceremonies. See SS/15/7/2, Gonin to Neethling, 12 August 1869, 17 April 1873.
39 DRCA SS/15/7/2, Gonin to Neethling, 19 June 1866.
40 DRCA SS/15/7/2, Gonin to Neethling, 19 July 1866.
Oorlams generally “lacked kinship links,”\(^{41}\) may not be entirely accurate.

As everywhere else in southern Africa,\(^ {42}\) missionary progress was initially very slow. Three years after his arrival in Saulspoort, Gonin had managed to convert only three people.\(^ {43}\) Gonin was censured for this by the DRC’s Mission Committee in Cape Town, which also pointed out that he had “made no progress in the knowledge of the Sechuana language.”\(^ {44}\) In reply, Gonin cited his ignorance of a strange socio-cultural environment and pleaded for more time.\(^ {45}\) Regarding the lack of conversion, Gonin gave three fundamental and plausible reasons. First, he noted that many Bakgatla were often away, working on Boer farms. Second, many others kept away from Gonin because they received threats from the Boer farmers, presumably because conversion would reduce the numbers of their farm labourers. Third, the older Bakgatla, who were opposed to the gospel, also threatened the younger potential converts.\(^ {46}\) Gonin's first class in Saulspoort had only eight children, three of them Kgamanyane's. Instruction, which was very rudimentary, involved Catechism, spelling, reading and Christian hymns.\(^ {47}\) Towards the end of 1864, Kgamanyane's half-brother, Moselekatse, was attending Gonin's Sunday service.\(^ {48}\) Moselekatse was, thus, the first convert from the Bakgatla royal family. This was a significant development because Moselekatse had set an example not only


\(^{42}\) For Basutoland, for example, see V. Ellenberger, A Century of Mission Work in Basutoland 1833-1933 (1938), Chapter One.


\(^{44}\) DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Neethling, 1 July 1866.

\(^{45}\) DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Neethling, 1 July 1866.

\(^{46}\) DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 11 October 1864.

\(^{47}\) DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Neethling, 5 December 1866.

\(^{48}\) DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 2 December 1864, 9 January 1866.
to the rest of Bakgatla royalty, but to the Bakgatla generally. Following this development, Kgamanyane invited Gonin to settle at Saulspoort. With the permission of Kruger and the Volksraad, Gonin and his family relocated to Saulspoort in 1866.49

In many other African communities, resistance to conversion was a general problem faced by all missionaries, at least initially.50 At Saulspoort, Gonin too, initially met some resistance.51 To solve this problem, missionaries generally resorted to a reciprocal process of what Simensen has termed “transactions.” These were the exchanges of material and non-material values between missionaries and the local African population. Thus, the missionaries not only preached but also provided a variety of material goods and services to gain converts. The major requirement from the Africans in this “transaction process” was simply to become a Christian.52

On the Norwegian mission among the Zulu during the 1850s, for example, Zulu commoners were given paid jobs while producers expected the church to buy their agricultural produce. In return, they attended Sunday service, an act they considered to be reciprocal.53 On the Berlin Mission at Makapanspoort in the northern Transvaal, some of the major attractions to Africans to become “Christians” were, for example, opportunities for trade and barter, new fashions, as well as employment and health facilities.54 In short, as Dachs put it: “Secular benefits were

49 DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 6 March 1866.
50 See, for example, Chirenje, “Church, state and education,” p. 411; Maree, Uit Duisternis, pp. 78, 82-83.
51 Maree, Uit Duisternis, pp. 49-53.
expected of the missionary and were crucial to the bargain.”

Among the Bakgatla, the major factor that eased conversion was Gonin’s ability to assist them in buying additional land. During the late 1860s, by request from chief Kgamanyane and his kgotla, Gonin acted as an intermediary and advisor to the Bakgatla in their difficult and protracted task of buying Saulspoort from Kruger. (Later, in 1877, chief Linchwe bought the farm, Holfontein, with Gonin’s assistance.) Gonin became the Bakgatla’s official spokesman and intermediary in their purchase of Saulspoort. This was a common role played by missionaries in other South African societies. Among the Barolong-bo-Seleka of Thaba Nchu, for example, the Wesleyan missionaries served as chief Moroka’s “diplomatic intermediaries.”

In this regard, a Motswana scholar has recorded: "They [missionaries] were the channel of communication. They interpreted the hopes and aspirations of the people." Although there is no evidence of Gonin giving material benefits to the Bakgatla to entice them into the church, some may have joined with the hope of material gain. In July 1866, for example, Gonin reported that some Bakgatla joined his church due to "mere curiosity" while others did so "by [sic] the hope that I would then reward them and provide them with clothing

---

56 The issue of land-purchasing among the Bakgatla is dealt with fully in Chapter Five.
57 See GOV/756/Pr 50, “Purchase of land by Natives,” p. 82; Maree, *Uit Duisternis*, pp. 54-55. For details of how the Bakgatla bought Saulspoort and Gonin's role in the process, see Chapter Five.
58 N2/10/3(46), SNA to SNC, 20 July 1922.
This implies that Gonin may have offered material rewards to converts. But this is not to suggest that all the Bakgatla joined the DRC entirely for material rather than spiritual reasons. When Roman Catholic missionaries first came to Uganda at the turn of the 19th century, for example, some of their converts admitted that the promise of going to heaven and an everlasting life after death were the major attractions for them. During the 1830s, the idea of heaven and the fear of hell was one of the reasons why the Amahosa at Mount Coke and Butterworth were attracted to the Wesleyan Mission Society (WMS). Although there is no evidence of this among the Bakgatla, it may well have been an attraction to them too.

While it is not very clear why the Bakgatla accepted Christianity, the writer has some explanations. First, the fact that neighbouring Batswana groups, such as the Bakwena, for example, had already welcomed missionaries as early as the 1850s could have been a factor in their decision to accept Christianity. Second, the black ex-Oorlam teacher-evangelists who worked with Gonin would themselves have been a strong inspiration to the local communities among whom they worked. They were literate, educated and black. Most likely, they were role models for many Bakgatla. After all, as already noted, many of them were interpreters, skilled artisans and hunters, for example. Third, Gonin is known to have made the acceptance and practice of Christianity a pre-condition for living on at least one of his properties, Welgeval.

It is not clear how strictly Gonin enforced this requirement. However, in view of the

---

61 DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Neethling, 1 July 1866.
63 For details, see Fast, “African perceptions of the missionaries,” pp. 91-93.
landlessness of many Bakgatla, they probably accepted Christianity simply in order to live on Gonin’s more ample land. For these reasons, it is problematic to determine with precision the authenticity and significance of conversion or, indeed, even the conversion rates among the Bakgatla. But, it should be pointed out also that, to use Gray's words: “It is notoriously difficult for a historian to identify religious motivations, especially when he is dependent on the reports of alien observers.”

In the transaction process, the conversion of commoners was good enough. But the conversion of the chief was much better, for with it came the hope, if not the assurance, of many more converts because of his personal example and influence. During the late 1880s, as if to set an example for his people, chief Linchwe himself began attending baptism classes and "secluding himself in the hills to search his own heart." In 1892, he decided to be baptised and called a letsholo (veld assembly) at which he sought and obtained his people's approval. He told them that he had decided “to follow the precepts of the Christian faith and to rule as a Christian chief for the rest of his life.” He also announced that he intended to divorce two of his three wives and “to stop all old heathen customs, such as bogwera and bojale.” His people replied that he could do as he wished because that was his personal affair, but they refused to give up circumcision. It was for this reason that Linchwe created a girls’ age-set in c.1895 in the traditional manner. He, however, did not allow his heir, Kgafela, to attend the boys' bogwera ceremony in 1902, but stipulated that Christian parents could decide for themselves whether

67 Maree, A Century of Grace ..., n.d., p. 3
68 Maree, A Century of Grace, p. 3.
69 Quoted in Schapera, Tribal Innovators, p. 191.
or not to let their sons attend.  

It is not known whether or not Linchwe had prior consultation with his inner group of advisors, but this act of seeking his people's approval was significant because it indicated the importance of the Tswana tradition of consultation and consensus. Linchwe could not have taken such a grave decision alone, without alienating his people. Their approval was, therefore, necessary. For a chief of Linchwe's stature, this was not only a momentous and far-reaching decision, but also a courageous one because of the strong links between chieftainship and traditional Batswana rituals, such as rain-making, which were anathema to the missionaries and Christianity.

The impact of Linchwe's conversion was immediate and tremendous: "Scores of them [Bakgatla] followed his example and the church grew spectacularly." Among the Batswana generally, this was an important feature of conversion as it determined how the gospel would spread among a particular group. Schapera expressed the significance of this point in the following words:

---

70 Schapera, *Tribal Innovators*, p. 191. For details of these ceremonies, see Schapera, *Tswana Law and Custom*, pp. 105-107, 116-117.

71 See, for example, Schapera, *The Political Annals of a Tswana Tribe*, pp. 8-17.

The personal factor was thus, of considerable importance in the local history of Christianity. How the people reacted to the message of the gospel was often determined largely by the character of the man who gave it to them, or by the way in which their chief himself was influenced by the new doctrine.  

It is not clear why Linchwe accepted Christianity. However, as already suggested above, he may have followed the example of other Batswana chiefs. As early as 1857, for example, chief Sechele of the Bakwena had asked the SAR authorities to send him a missionary and, in response, he was sent three Lutherans of the Hermannsburg Mission. The London Missionary Society (LMS) set up their mission stations among the Bangwato in 1862 and the Bangwaketse in 1871. It is also possible that, because Linchwe was very keen to buy Saulspoort from Gonin, which the latter would not easily accede to, he may have converted to Christianity simply in order to ease his purchase of the property (which he eventually bought in 1898); since Saulspoort accommodated the biggest number of the Bakgatla in the Pilanesberg, it is understandable why Linchwe was so keen to buy it.

By c.1896, Linchwe already had a considerable understanding of the fundamental concepts of Christianity. He clearly demonstrated this when the DRC missionary, W.J. Neethling, died in Mochudi on 18 February 1897. On that occasion, the Rev. A.C. Murray asked Linchwe where

---


74 Schapera, *Tribal Innovators*, p. 194.

75 Schapera, *Tribal Innovators*, p. 119.

76 DRCA S5/15/7/4, W. Van Velden, Rustenburg, to A.C. Murray, Cape Town, 2 August 1921. The Bakgatla’s purchase of Saulspoort is dealt with in more detail in Chapter Five.
he thought Neethling was, following his death, and he replied that “... God has come and taken him to care [for him], and he is safe.” 77 Christianity, in fact, does appear to have permeated the entire Bakgatla royal family, as indicated by the nature of their letters of condolences to Neethling’s family in Stellenbosch. Segale, Linchwe’s half-brother, for example, wrote: “It is the will of God. He has done it. We have to love God’s will,” while a part of the message of Linchwe’s brother, Ramono, read: “God is love. He has done it in love.” 78 The chief’s mother, whom Murray referred to simply as “Ma-Linchwe,” had also become a Christian by 1896, 79 while Neethling, shortly before his death, had described Ramono’s first wife, Mantlho, as “one of the most honourable fruits of religion... and totally committed to giving her heart and life to the Lord.” 80

From the 1870s to the beginning of the 20th century, a small number of young white missionaries, mostly female and single, worked with Gonin at Saulspoort and Mabeskraal, but they tended to stay briefly and leave, either due to ill-health or to get married. 81 In 1906, G. Stegman joined Gonin as his assistant and, after the latter’s death in 1910, became the head of

77 Quoted in A.C. Murray, “Made Exceeding Glad”: In Loving Memory of William James Neethling (1897), p. 24. Neethling, who had worked in Mochudi for 10 months when he died, was killed by a falling gable in an accident during a storm while he, Ramono and Segale were constructing a church building. For details, see the same source, p. 22
78 Murray, “Made Exceeding Glad,” p. 27. Emphasis in text. See also Z. Moeder, Levensbeschrijving (1898), pp. 116-117.
80 Moeder, Levensbeschrijving, p. 11. After an illness during the 1890s, Ramono’s first wife Mantlho died at Mochudi, aged 32. In the early 1900s, he married Martha Thabole (nee Moloto), a teacher-evangelist who had also lost her husband in 1892. See Moeder, Levensbeschrijving, p. 226.
81 For details, see Maree, Uit Duisternis, pp. 74-78.
the DRC mission at Saulspoort. However, most of the missionary work of spreading the gospel and Western education in the Pilanesberg was done by Gonin's *ex-inboekeling* teacher-evangelists. A few of these worked with Gonin at Saulspoort, while the majority manned the many outer stations dotted all over the Pilanesberg. The pattern of a central mission staffed by a few white missionaries with outer, "bush" stations manned by black teacher-evangelists, was a common feature throughout central and southern Africa. For the Transvaal during the 1920s, Agar-Hamilton, for example, recorded that the basis of missionary activity was the work of the black evangelists. By the beginning of this century, it had become a well-established DRC policy and practice to entrust the management of mission 'out-schools' to African teacher-evangelists. The development and training of local teacher-evangelists, in fact, became an important aspect of DRC work in the Pilanesberg from Gonin's arrival at Saulspoort.

Gonin first trained them at Saulspoort, before sending them for further teacher-evangelical training at Morija, in Basutoland. This training was paid for by a combination of contributions from the local congregations, Gonin himself as well as his "friends in Switzerland." Thus, J. Madisa and L. Mariri, for example, were only two of the many who benefited from this scheme during the 1870s. These early converts, more than the missionaries themselves, carried out

---

82 Maree, *Uit Duisternis*, p. 221.
the twin missionary roles of teaching and evangelising. As Gonin reported to Murray in May 1903, for example, S. Moloto was in-charge of the school on Welgeval while Z. Tihira was in-charge of another on Kruidfontein.

About relations between the ex-inboekelinge and the Bakgatla populace, Morton has written that they acted as interpreters, skilled artisans and hunters among the Bakgatla. The better-educated ones, as noted, became teacher-evangelists. Towards the end of the 19th century, many ex-inboekelinge established new villages along the banks of the Madikwe River and, on the whole, they seem to have integrated well into Bakgatla society. However, it was common practice for the teacher-evangelists to marry within their own core-community. There are many examples, but a few will suffice. During the 1880s, a Kruidfontein (Lesetlheng) teacher-evangelist, J. Letanke, was engaged to Rebekka, a fellow teacher-evangelist; at Saulspoort, K. Thabile married Martha, the daughter of S. Moloto, an ex-inboekelinge. In 1893, after the teacher-evangelist, T. Phiri’s posting to a DRC outpost in the border village of Malolwane, he married the daughter of L. Mariri, the veteran teacher-evangelist he found there. Chief Ramono, also educated and a practising Christian, married Thabile’s widow, Martha, soon after he had assumed the Saulspoort chieftainship in 1904. Even the ex-inboekelinge who were not teacher-evangelists also tended to marry among themselves, as did C. Sefara, who

---

86 Regarding the enormity and variety of missionary work done by African teacher-evangelists in the Transvaal generally during the study period, see, for example, Agar-Hamilton, A Transvaal Jubilee, pp. 133-134.

87 DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 29 May 1903.

88 For details, see Morton, “Manumitted slaves,” pp. 10-18.

89 Maree, Uit Duisternis, p. 86-87.

90 Maree, Uit Duisternis, p. 219. Karel Thabile died at his mission station, Holfontein, in 1897. His widow, Martha, continued to work there alone, until chief Ramono married her shortly after 1903. See Maree, Uit Duisternis, p. 86.
married one of S. Moloto’s daughters at Welgeval at the turn of the 19th century.91

These teacher-evangelists were, in fact, a small elite group which may have felt justified to marry only within their core-group since they were, to a certain extent, culturally distinct from the rest of the Pilanesberg’s Batswana communities. After all, among other characteristics, they shared a common historical background, Dutch literacy and Christianity. Comaroff has stated that in many areas of rural South Africa, “it was the agricultural innovations of the mission that set in motion the processes of class formation.”92 In the Pilanesberg, however, it was different because the process of class formation was due to a combination of two basic factors (other than Christianity), namely, the historical ex-inboekeling origins of the majority of the teacher-evangelist group, as well as, their education and training.

The fact that the teacher-evangelists did most of the missionary work was, however, at variance with how the DRC treated them. As one of the Saulspoort missionaries admitted, their salaries, for example, were erratic, unreliable and poor.93 But the more thorny issue was that of the ordination of black pastors in the DRC in the Pilanesberg, about which there was a contradiction in policy. While emphasis was on local self-support in expenditure on, for example, teacher-evangelists’ salaries, church and school-building construction, the DRC was, at best, grudging in its “willingness” to ordain their indigenous teacher-evangelists.

91 J. Sefara, interview, Magong, the Pilanesberg, 29 May 1993. John Sefara is a grandson of the ex-inboekeling, Cornelius Sefara.


93 DRCA S5/15/7/2, D. Faasen (DRC missionary), Saulspoort, to Rev. Murray, Stellenbosch, 16 February 1914; S/15/7/1, “Zending Raads Vergadering,” 2-4 October 1916.
A good example is that of L. Mariri who was in charge of the DRC's Sikwane mission in the 1880s. Mariri, a Morija-trained teacher-evangelist, had worked for at least ten years when, in 1888, he asked to be ordained as a minister. However, the local DRC Council, whose membership was entirely white, rejected Mariri's request and insisted that many other black teacher-evangelists, just as hardworking, were still not yet ordained and he must carry on as a teacher-evangelist. 94

Mariri's treatment is explained in terms of the ideas of European racial superiority of the DRC's hierarchy and the view "that Africans could not immediately 'attain to the moral stature of those who have generations of Christian forebears behind them.' " 95 All over southern Africa, the question of relations between black pastors and their white missionary superiors was always a thorny one. The Mission of Basutoland missionaries who first came to Basutoland in 1833, for example, ordained their first black priests only as late as 1891. But even then, there was still debate as to how much responsibility to entrust them with and what the "exact relations" with their missionary superiors should be. 96

Part of the contradictory church policy just alluded to, was that of "self-propagation" and a strong emphasis on "self-support," which was started in the Pilanesberg early in the 20th

94 DRCA S5/15/7/1, "Notulen van de Zendings Conferentie...," Saulspoort, 18 May 1888.
95 Quoted in S. Dubow, “Afrikaner nationalism, Apartheid and the conceptualization of ‘race’,” Journal of African History, 33 (1992), p. 213. By the late 1920s, race attitudes in the DRC were “beginning to harden” and explicit racial segregation as a church policy was specifically pronounced in 1935. See Dubow, “Afrikaner nationalism,” p. 214.
96 Ellenberger, A Century of Mission Work, pp. 243-244.
Accordingly, from 1913, the local Mission Board in the Pilanesberg insisted upon membership contributions and "disciplin[ing]" defaulters; from 1916, congregations in the Transvaal and Bechuanaland had to pay a part of their teacher-evangelists' salaries. This policy, however, failed. During the whole of 1915, for example, 1646 church members contributed as little as £262 and by September 1919, 50% of the entire Saulspoort congregation were in arrears, while a similar situation existed at all the other DRC missions in the Pilanesberg. There were no reasons given by the missionaries for this situation. However, money may have been hard to come by, particularly because of a prolonged drought in the Pilanesberg especially, and in southern Africa generally in the period 1910-1914. This, perhaps, would have impoverished the local economy and weakened the ability of people to generate money.

98 DRCA S5/15/7/1, “Notulen der Eerste Vergadering...,” 4-6 September 1913. From 1913, members had to contribute 5s per year to the church. From the beginning of 1916, female members could pay less than 5s, or “maybe half” the male subscriptions. DRCA S5/15/7/1, “Zending Raads Vergadering,” 1916.
101 DRCA S5/15/7/1, “Zending Raads Vergadering,” 29 September 1919. However, church policy towards members who were in arrears with their contributions was lenient. They were “not to be stopped from coming to the table of the Lord.” See DRCA S5/15/7/1, “Notulen van de Zendings Conferentie...,” Saulspoort, 17-18 May 1888.
DRC policy was quite diverse, flexible in some parts and inflexible in others. An African marriage, for example, was recognised if one of the couple was a Church member, but much was left to the discretion of the local mission or evangelist. In a polygamous marriage, for example, a second or third wife might, at the discretion of the local missionary, be baptised if she could "free herself" from the marriage.\textsuperscript{103} Marriage between a church member and a non-believer was officially not approved of, but "it was up to the local missionary to decide," while illegitimate children could be baptised after their mothers had been "restored to their full rights in the Church," presumably after the church's disciplinary measures had been taken against them. Disciplinary action included excommunication from the church for at least a year.\textsuperscript{104}

On yet other matters, church policy was unclear, while on others, there was considerable disagreement. Thus, for example, regarding polygamous marriages during the 1880s at least, there was some disagreement among the local clergymen, whether or not to admit into church membership only the first or all of the wives.\textsuperscript{105} Regulations on certain misdemeanours, however, were much more strict. Male members who took a second wife, for example, were immediately excommunicated, while beer-drinking was strictly prohibited, especially for Church Council members and teacher-evangelists.\textsuperscript{106} As part of its crusade against cultural practices considered "heathen", the church tried to stamp out the payment of \textit{bogadi} (marriage dowry) among its members. Thus, a Church Council meeting of 7 October 1914 made threats of

\textsuperscript{103} DRCA S5/15/7/1, "Notulen der Eerste Vergadering...," 4-6 September 1913.
\textsuperscript{104} DRCA S5/15/7/1, "Notulen der Eerste Vergadering...," 4-6 September 1913.
\textsuperscript{105} DRCA S5/15/7/1, "Notulen van de Zendings Conferentie...," Saulspoort, 17-18 May 1888.
\textsuperscript{106} DRCA S5/15/7/1, "Zending Raadsvergadering," Saulspoort, 30 September - 2 October 1918; "Notulen van de vierde zitting...," Johannesburg, 7 October 1914.
"Church discipline" against members who gave or received *bogadi*. Such members could be reinstated only "after confession of guilt..."\(^{107}\)

Perhaps one of the most outstanding early black teacher-evangelists of the DRC in the Pilanesberg was T. Phiri. Also of ex-*inboekelinge* origins, Phiri became an assistant evangelist at Saulspoort from 1883 to 1886 when he went for further training to Morija, Basutoland. He returned to teach at Saulspoort in 1892. In 1893, at chief Linchwe's request, Phiri was transferred to a mission outpost in the border village of Malolwane.\(^{108}\) Phiri acquitted himself so well in his work that Linchwe sent two of his sons, Isang and Kgafela, to Malolwane to learn English and be taught by Phiri.\(^{109}\) Linchwe also made Phiri his private secretary and personal advisor.\(^{110}\)

It is interesting to note that in the turbulent black/white relations of the western Transvaal at the turn of the century, Linchwe chose to give this role to Phiri in the relatively distant border village of Malolwane, when he could have given the task to the much nearer white DRC missionaries in Mochudi. Linchwe clearly did not trust any of the missionaries enough to assign them such an important role, and preferred a fellow Motswana for it. Linchwe was not the only prominent person to hold Phiri in high regard. The Mochudi missionary, P. Stofberg, for example, held in high esteem both Phiri's character as well as the "exemplary" manner in which he ran Malolwane mission. In this regard, the missionary writer, Maree, has recorded

\(^{107}\) DRCA S5/15/7/1, "Notulen van de vierde zitting...," Johannesburg, 7 October 1914

\(^{108}\) Maree, *Uit Duisternis*, p. 87.


rather patronisingly, that Phiri "was intelligent with a lot of insight and church matters could be discussed with him as well as [one] could with any white missionary."\footnote{Maree, \textit{Uit Duistemis}, p. 181.}

For the above reasons, Phiri was selected for ordination as a minister and, in 1905, sent to Wellington in the Cape for further preparation. He was ordained at Mochudi on 23 December 1906 and thus became the first Mokgatla to become a DRC minister.\footnote{Maree, \textit{Uit Duistemis}, p. 181. For the next 30 years up to 1936, only three more Batswana from the Pilanesberg were ordained as DRC ministers, after T. Phiri: same source, p. 279.} Phiri's ordination was a significant development for both the missionaries and the Bakgatla. To the DRC, the occasion was a logical culmination of 41 years of missionary effort as well as some indication that the DRC was effective. To the Bakgatla, it must have been heartening to realise that one of their own was also capable of becoming a church minister, just like the whites. Phiri was given charge of missionary work in the greater Madikwe area, but based in Malolwane. In 1913, Phiri was appointed as a member of the Mission Board of the DRC's \textit{Buiteslandse Sending} (Foreign Committee).\footnote{DRCA S5/15/7/1, \textit{"Notulen der Eerste Vergadering..."}, 4 September 1913. Phiri's membership of the Board obviously must have ceased in 1936 when he broke away from the DRC to form his "Bakgatla Free Church." For details, see Morton, "Popular unrest in the Kgatleng," Morton and Ramsay (eds), \textit{The Birth of Botswana}, pp. 86-88.} Further responsibility came when he was appointed to serve on the Revision Commission of the Setswana Bible and later, in 1920, he became a member of the Native Advisory Council.\footnote{Maree, \textit{Uit Duistemis}, p. 182.}
Missionary education

The teaching of the gospel went hand in hand with that of literacy and the rudiments of Western education. Education consisted of the three Rs and Bible learning. On the Pilanesberg mission stations, there were two classes of Catechism, one in Setswana and the other in Dutch. After two years' instruction, a candidate for baptism was questioned orally in front of the whole congregation. Regarding the missionary purpose of education, Maree has put it succinctly: "The purpose of education is to develop understanding, empathy and to win the children for Jesus Christ."

Whereas at first church membership was based simply on one's willingness to join, by 1914, the Church Council proposed a new requirement: "a satisfactory knowledge of Bible history" and literacy in Setswana, except for the elderly, thus, stressing the importance of the link between literacy and the gospel. In all the mission schools for Africans, the emphasis was on religion. Perhaps even more revealing was the official view of the Transvaal Education Department which, as late at 1930, stated that mission schools for Africans "are regarded as ancillary to the religious activities of the missionary societies with which they are connected."

In terms of the missionaries' purpose of education, they were making some progress. In 1897, for example, out of an estimated Saulspoort population of 5 000, some 800 had been baptised,

---

116 DRCA S5/15/7/1, "Notulen van de tweede zitting...", Johannesburg, 6 October 1914.
while 400 merely attended church. In charge of the converts were two white female teachers M. Murray and M. Kriel, several other white teachers and five black teacher-evangelists. At the end of the 19th century, the DRC's evangelical progress in the Pilanesberg was best summed up by Gonin himself in the following manner:

...and now besides many outstations, we have amongst the people of that tribe [the Bakgatla], the three great stations of Sauls-Poort, Mochuli and Sikwane..., 12 - 1 500 communicants and thousands of baptised children every Sunday. In several places the Gospel is heard by hundreds and hundreds of natives who for the most part are able to read the word of God in their own tongue and are pretty well-acquainted with their Bibles: in many homes family worship is held and Christian hymns are heard.

By June 1903, the Pilanesberg as a whole had seven schools (apart from an undetermined number in the outstations) with a total pupil population of 560. That year, pupils paid between 6d and 1s per month as school fees. This money, little though it may seem now, was difficult for parents to get and, therefore, many prospective pupils stayed out of school. In 1905, Saulspoort alone had the largest school population in the Pilanesberg. It had 3 classes with a combined total of 272 pupils, taught by 3 teacher-evangelists, Z. Phiri, J. Moitsi and J. Ramala who taught Catechism and the 3 Rs. The fees at the Saulspoort school were 1s per pupil per

---

119 Heathens too, "except the bad ones," were welcome to attend prayers. See DRCA S5/15/7/1, "Notulen van de Zendings Conferentie...," Saulspoort, 17-18 May 1888.

120 Maree, Uit Duisternis, pp. 88, 159.

121 DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 29 August 1899.

122 TKP Vol. 239, Annual Report by the Commissioner for Native Affairs, Transvaal, 30 June 1903, Appendix 28.

month, 5s annually or 6d per month, depending on the class: the higher the class, the more the fees were. At the 'out-schools' of Modderkuil, Cyferkuil and Welgeval, it was 2s 6d per pupil annually, while at Ruighoek it was 1s per month.\textsuperscript{124}

With an average of 91 pupils per teacher, classes at Saulspoort were certainly overcrowded and the teaching loads must have been taxing. These very large classes reflected the equally large population of Saulspoort. While the entire farm was 3925 morgen,\textsuperscript{125} the mission part alone, which was 642 morgen, for example, held some 2751 Africans in 1905.\textsuperscript{126} The smaller DRC out-schools with a combined school population of 249 and a much smaller average class size of 50, were on the farms Modderkuil, Cyferkuil, Welgeval, Ruighoek and Palmietfontein. In the rest of the Pilanesberg, there was a much smaller number of schools run by the Lutherans at Grootwagendrift, Bultfontein, Ramokokaskraal and Grootfontein, while the Wesleyans and the Church of England were at Mabeskraal and Bierkraal, respectively.\textsuperscript{127}

An outstanding feature of the Pilanesberg/Rustenburg schools, like the church congregations, was that generally, females far outnumbered males. An extreme example was a Saulspoort class of 1906 with 50 girls and only 1 boy.\textsuperscript{128} This general sex-ratio imbalance in the Pilanesberg

\textsuperscript{124} TKP Vol. 239, \textit{Annual Report for the Year Ended June 1905}, p. C.81. The reasons for these fee differences in the outer-schools are not clear. But they may reflect the different levels of the individual communities' ability to pay.

\textsuperscript{125} Breutz, \textit{The Tribes}, p. 245.

\textsuperscript{126} TKP Vol.239, \textit{Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 1905}, Appendix 9, p. C.88.


schools continued up to the 1920s. As the SNC reported in September 1926, for instance, girls outnumbered boys "by about 75% to 25% in the higher classes."[129] In Bethanie's Hermannsburg mission schools, the situation was similar.[130] This heavy preponderance of females in school and church is explained by the fact that the males spent most of their time tending cattle at cattle-posts too far away from the villages or were outside the region on wage-labour.[131]

These mission schools did not receive any government grants and were entirely self-supporting (until much later during the period under review). The construction and maintenance of the schools, like the churches, was borne by the local Christian community, including those working away from home, who contributed money or unpaid labour. In 1888, for example, Saulspoort's congregation members working on the diamond fields at Kimberley contributed £22 towards the building of a new church.[132] Teachers' salaries, of between £18 and £48 per annum (in 1906),[133] were probably partly contributed by the community as well. Some indication of this is the fact that as late as 1934, for example, the DRC decided that the Sunday schools were to pay for the Saulspoort mission station.[134] There is no evidence of a medical facility at any DRC mission in the Pilanesberg in the period up to the 1920s. But Church policy regarding medical work was spelt out in 1909 when the DRC's General Mission Secretary,

---

[132] Maree, Uit Duisternis, p. 66. See also Schapera, "Christianity and the Tswana," p. 3.
[134] Maree, Uit Duisternis, p. 226. It is not clear, however, whether this decision was carried out.
A.C. Murray, stated that the African's "first and greatest need," was conversion and stressed that medical work was only secondary to the major missionary objective of evangelisation. Medical work was, he bluntly stated, "not an end in itself, but a means to an end, the end being winning souls for Christ." Thus, due to this policy, even as late as 1935, Saulspoort still had "no medical station" and, following representations by chief Ofentse to the NAD and the DRC, the latter agreed "to arrange for the Mission doctor at Mochudi to visit Saulspoort once a month, and to provide a resident nurse at Saulspoort at their own expense." 

The emphasis on self-support was a feature of the majority of African mission schools in South Africa during the first three decades of the 20th century. At Anglican missions in the Transvaal at the beginning of this century, for example, the salaries of black evangelists were borne entirely by their own congregations. Patterson has recorded that by the end of the 19th century, missionaries began to insist upon dependence on local resources to sustain African mission churches and schooling because of the diminishing of metropolitan revenues. This in turn, he argues, led to the division of financial resources on racial lines, with black priests and catechists getting substantially lower wages than their white colleagues. By the 1920s in the

---


136 BAO Vol.2218 NA 130/303, SNA to Minister of Native Affairs, n.d., 1935. There were problems of lack of facilities, however, and the erection of "two huts" to serve as a "medical station" began only in July 1935. In the same file, see "Erection of two huts on the mission property at Saulspoort..."


138 A.N. Patterson, "Contest and co-option: the struggle for schooling in the African independent churches of the Cape Colony, c.1895-1920," D. Phil. thesis, University of Cape Town (1993), pp. 114-115. In contrast to the great majority of mission schools for Africans with meagre resources that were battling for survival, there were a few elite-type mission (continued...)
Transvaal, the government was paying a grant towards each certificated teacher at an "approved" school under a white missionary and a "small sum" for equipment, while the rest of the expenditure was met by parents.\textsuperscript{139} This inadequacy of government funding, which was common to all mission schools,\textsuperscript{140} resulted in poor facilities and, of course, poor education. By August 1931, the church's three school-buildings on Saulspoort were so poor that the Inspector of Native Education for the area, N.D. Achterberg, had this to say about them: "Neither of the three buildings is suitable as a schoolbuilding...; the second building is only suitable as a pigsty; while the third building (the one furthest away) is a typical churchbuilding, with bad lighting and worse ventilation."\textsuperscript{141}

Achterberg recorded further that the buildings were "too small," "badly ventilated," "badly lighted," "badly constructed" and made "satisfactory teaching practically an impossibility." He, therefore, "strongly [recommended]" to the NAD for the Bakgatla to be assisted in erecting a "decent" school-building.\textsuperscript{142} It was only from the end of 1931, partly through the missionary G. Stegman's spirited pleas to the SNC, that the government came in to assist in the construction of the first properly built school at Saulspoort, which was completed in 1937. But even in this instance, the Bakgatla had to get a "grant" of £600 from their own money in the

(...continued)
schools for a relatively small number of Africans, such as Tigerkloof, Lovedale, Healdtown and St. Matthews which "were financially well-supported by the home churches, staffed and controlled in the majority by white missionaries and usually endowed with extensive teaching facilities and boarding accommodation." See this source, p. 83.

\textsuperscript{139} Agar-Hamilton, \textit{A Transvaal Jubilee}, p. 135.

\textsuperscript{140} For the period under review, see A.G. Smurthwaite, "The policy of the Smuts Government towards Africans, 1919-1924," MA dissertation, University of South Africa (1975), pp. 120-132.

\textsuperscript{141} NTS 2815 NA 180/302, N.D. Achterberg to NC, 22 August 1931.

\textsuperscript{142} NTS 2815 NA 180/302, Achterberg to NC, 22 August 1931.
Native Development Fund to finance the project. The Bakgatla made considerable efforts to improve their poor and inadequate educational facilities. On Modderkuil and Witfontein, during the late 1920s, for instance, they gathered foundation stones “from six miles distance” and erected a school-building “capable of seating 200 children.” However, as they ran out of resources and failed to pay for the roofing, doors and windows, they appealed to the NAD for support.

In August 1931, the Saulspoort Bakgatla decided to erect “a very big building” for classrooms on their location because the existing buildings were “too small and unhealthy to (sic) the children.” They took the initiative and made 80 000 bricks themselves before they requested the government for more assistance. This physical neglect was only part of the problem and dissatisfaction the Bakgatla had with missionary education.

Much more important to the Bakgatla was the question of the content of mission education with which, by the late 1910s, they had become increasingly dissatisfied. However, before we discuss the kind of initiatives the Bakgatla took to remedy what they saw as a defective mission school curriculum, we first need to look briefly into the official background policy and practice regarding African education in the Transvaal in order to better appreciate the sort of actions the Bakgatla took. The Grondwet (constitution) of the SAR had decreed inequality between blacks and whites but, nevertheless, did not spell this out with regard to education. Black children in the Transvaal generally attended mission schools since “Native education was

---

143 For details, see the various correspondence in NTS 2815 NA 180/302.
144 NTS 2815 NA 180/302, G.P. Stegman to SNC, the Pilanesberg, 22 December 1930.
145 NTS 2815 NA 180/302, O. Pilane to Assistant Native Commissioner, the Pilanesberg, 25 August 1931.
146 Eybers, "Introduction," Select Constitutional Documents, p. XIX.
exclusively a mission venture." By 1896, according to the educational historian, Cross, some African children even attended schools with white or mixed-race children. State intervention and entrenchment of racial segregation in education in the Transvaal began at the end of the South African War. Cross has traced the origins of this policy to the Reconstruction Administration of A. Milner. Education for blacks, Milner had envisaged in December 1901, would necessarily have to be different from, and lower than, that of Europeans because "their [African] requirements and capacities are very different..."

This meant that separate and, by implication, inferior African educational institutions would cater for "their natural aptitudes for their own good and that of the [African] community." By the beginning of the Crown Colony period (1902-1907), the nature and direction of African education was already taking shape. Thus, the Superintendent's Report for 1903, for example, recommended the teaching of English on an elementary level for the sake of "a common medium of communication between white employer and Native employee..." That year, the Milner administration instituted new measures to regulate the administration of African education in the Transvaal. In 1903, for example, a Superintendent of Native Education as well as an Assistant Inspector were appointed. At the same time, a "scheme" for African education was introduced to give instruction in the three R's up to Standard III and encourage manual

---

147 P.A. Linington, Native Administration in the Republic of South Africa (1933), p. 238.
149 Quoted in Cross, "The foundations," p. 263.
150 Quoted in Cross, "The foundations," p. 263.
151 Quoted in A. Bot, The Development of Education in the Transvaal (1951), p. 159. My emphasis. See also Linington, Native Administration, p. 238.
If a missionary society accepted this scheme, it would receive grants in-aid from the government. While the German and DRC missions were opposed to this education scheme, it was not because it offered inferior education, but rather that it excluded the teaching of African languages, the media of spreading the gospel.

Milner's ideas of a racially segregated education and inferior schooling for Africans were partly his own, but partly from the South African Native Affairs Commission (SANAC) of 1903-1905 which he had appointed to make recommendations for a comprehensive "native policy." In this regard, the SANAC emphasised, among other issues, "moral and religious instruction" for African pupils and also recommended, for example, that "industrial training and instruction in manual work are of particular advantage to the Native in fitting him for his [inferior] position in life." The SANAC urged that government grants to African schools be given only on condition of a "satisfactory report by Government Inspectors as to the efficiency and conduct of the Native schools to be aided."

But, considering that African (mission) schools were run on a self-help basis, with meagre financial and material resources, the sort of "efficiency and conduct" reports required by the government Inspectors would have been difficult to achieve by the majority of African mission schools. Thus, by 1910, the Pilanesberg schools, together with other mission schools in the

---


154 The SANAC Report, p. 52. See also Bot, *The Development of Education*, pp. 158-159.

155 The SANAC Report, p. 51.
western Transvaal, were still entirely self-supporting and had not yet got any grants-in-aid from the government by that stage.\(^{156}\) The “new” segregationist policy culminated in the Education Act of 1907 which entrenched and institutionalised segregated schooling which prevailed throughout this study's period and after.\(^{157}\) It is significant to note that “only a few missionaries” were opposed to this scheme, while many, in fact, accepted it “as a healthy division of labour and resources.”\(^ {158}\) It was out of the above situation that the Bakgatla’s disenchantment with mission education grew.

**The Bakgatla's alternative educational model**

The missionary emphasis on the religious component of the curriculum at the expense of other subjects began to cause dissatisfaction among literate and educated Bakgatla. They wanted, for example, much more English to be taught, contrary to the General Missionary Conferences of 1904, 1906 and 1909, which adopted the policy that in the lower standards of African education, teaching should be in the local language.\(^ {159}\) But, as the SNC for the Pilanesberg reported in 1910, this was precisely what the Bakgatla were against: “The natives deplore the fact that so little English is being taught in the schools.”\(^ {160}\) Another Bakgatla grievance up to


\(^{157}\) For details of this policy and how it was implemented, see Cross, "The foundations," p. 268; Bot, *The Development of Education*, p. 160-163.

\(^{158}\) Cross, "The foundations," p. 268.


the early 1920s was that the DRC mission school in Saulspoort, like all mission schools for Africans in the Transvaal, had only Standard 3 as its highest educational level. (For higher levels, pupils usually went to the Bakgatla National School in Mochudi, Bechuanaland.) Summers has recorded similar African dissatisfaction with education in DRC schools in the Gutu area of Southern Rhodesia during the 1920s and 1930s. According to Summers, "DRC schools [in Southern Rhodesia] were notorious for failing to satisfy Africans who came to school wanting to learn English and acquire an education which would lead to a better job."  

The Bakgatla on both sides of the border began to clamour for the broadening of the missionary curriculum. When a Mochudi teacher, A. K. Pilane, took up the issue with the local DRC, the Rev. A.C. Murray told him that he (the missionary) was there "to teach the Kgatla people the word of God, not the wisdom of the world." Not content with the rebuff, the Bakgatla appealed to the DRC's Home Committee in Cape Town, whose reply Pilane expressed quite starkly: "[T]he words of the Rev. Murray were repeated; they [missionaries] did not want worldly subjects like arithmetic to be taught." It was due to this grievance that, during the decade preceding the First World War, one S. Pilane began running 'tribal' schools in Mochudi. There were similar efforts among the neighbouring Bakwena and Bangwaketse communities.

---
162 B.N.O. Pilane, interview, Saulspoort, 8 October 1993. This informant did Standards 4-6 there, from 1924. Members of the Bakgatla royal family were generally educated there before they proceeded to the prestigious missionary institutions, such as Tigerkloof: Pilane, interview.
163 Summers, "Educational controversies," p. 8. Dissatisfaction was so strong that attendance at DRC schools in the area dropped drastically as pupils obtained alternative schooling at Zionist Church schools. For details, see Summers, "Educational controversies," pp. 6-14.
164 A.K. Pilane, "Notes on early educational efforts...," *Botswana Notes and Records*, 5 (1973), p. 120.
165 Pilane, "Notes," p. 120.
who, as early as 1908, had launched their own national schools. In 1920, as a continuation of these efforts, chief Isang transferred control and responsibility over Bakgatla education from the DRC to a "tribal" committee, but on which both the church and the British administration were represented. Subsequently, the Protectorate Bakgatla, led by chief Isang, built their own "Bakgatla National School" in Mochudi in 1923, in order to provide the kind of education that they desired.

Mochudi's idea of a national school idea strongly appealed to the Pilanesberg Bakgatla as well. After all, they faced similar problems regarding missionary education and, hence, embarked on a similar course of action. In the Pilanesberg, the initiative to build such a school came from the Molope family of Saulspoort, led by their patriarch, Cornelius. The school, named "Ramolope," after the Molope family, opened in the early 1920s with about 15 pupils, all members of this family, most of whom had left the DRC schools. It was built entirely on a self-help basis. The school's only teacher at its opening was J. J. Molope, also a member of the Molope family. While the missionaries only taught the Bible, Afrikaans and the 3 Rs, with 

---

166 J.F. Ramsay, personal communication, Gaborone, 29 April 1996.  
169 The rest of this discussion on the self-help Ramolope School is based on interviews with Ramurula Molope, Simon Molope and Moitoi Lydia Pitse, Saulspoort, 29 May 1993. Both Ramurula and Moitoi attended the school.  
170 John Jonathan's father, Montsu Molope, had been "kidnapped" by the Boers from his Saulspoort home and taken to Potchefstroom at the beginning of the South African War. Montsu "worked for the Boers" in Potchefstroom, married there and had a son, John Jonathan, who later trained as a teacher at Lovedale. Meanwhile, Montsu Molope had left a brother in Saulspoort who later became an itinerant general trader. During one business trip to Potchefstroom, he met by chance with his long-lost brother, Montsu. On reporting the encounter to relatives back in Saulspoort, the young John Jonathan was persuaded to (continued...)
emphasis on the former, the new school offered much more of English lessons as well as Arithmetic. This made the school very popular.

The missionaries, of course, did not like this competitive situation and their worst fears were confirmed when some of their pupils “left the mission school and flocked to this [new] school.” The missionaries expressed their verbal opposition to the existence of this “Bakgatla school.” But the missionaries did not take any practical measures against it, out of fear of alienating popular Bakgatla opinion. Nevertheless, the matter upset the missionaries to the extent that they “excommunicated all adult members of the Molope family,” presumably for having started the school in the first place and the fact that some mission pupils were now joining Ramolope School. The school became so popular that the rest of the Saulspoort community joined in the initiative. As the pupil population of Ramolope began to expand in the mid-1920s, four more teachers171 joined the school. (J.J. Molope was now the school’s principal.) It should be emphasised that by the late 1920s, the Ramolope School, despite its name, was no longer simply a family enterprise, but had developed and expanded into a community project serving the wider Bakgatla populace. The annual tuition fees, teachers’ salaries and all administrative costs were paid monthly, entirely by the parents. In 1927, the school had its first Standard 6 class, the highest school level in the Pilanesberg throughout the 1920s. The academic standards at Ramolope must have been quite high because the following year, 1928, some of the school’s 1927 graduates went for further education and training at the famous missionary institutions,

(...continued)
"return" and teach in the new "Bakgatla[i.e. 'Ramolope'] school" in Saulspoort. In the words of M.L. Pitse, J.J. Molope was "the first person who brought light [i.e. education] in this area."

171 Three of them were Moses Mokae, Tihira Ralethokoa and Ramogaritsi Pilane, all from the Pilanesberg. My informants could not remember the name of the fourth.
such as Kilnerton, Lovedale and Tigerkloof.\textsuperscript{172}

Both Ramolope and the mission school experienced growth, but in different directions. The latter's growth, with its emphasis on Bible teaching, was almost entirely spiritual while the former's was secular, with a practical, yet academic, emphasis on producing candidates who would proceed for further education and training. In this respect, which was its objective, Ramolope School was singularly more successful than the DRC school. Perhaps because of this success, the missionaries' earlier jealousy of, and opposition to, the school had ceased by the 1930s. With expansion, the school needed larger premises and was shifted to central Saulspoort.

But expansion also meant that the community found it more and more difficult to meet the school's routine overhead costs. It was, therefore, taken over by the government at the end of the 1930s and renamed "Ofentse," in honour of then acting chief Ofentse (1922-1942) who actively gave financial and material support to the school. By this time, Ramolope had ceased to be simply a Bakgatla school and become an important regional institution, attracting pupils from all over the Pilanesberg. However, it should be noted that the Bakgatla's establishment of Ramolope School was not unique to them only. In the rest of the Transvaal during the 1920s, there was a number of such schools, an indication that other African communities had similar problems and concerns. A Transvaal Education Department report for 1930, for example, recorded that "there is a large number of private schools -- probably between 200 and

\textsuperscript{172} From that pioneer class alone, about 8 students, 3 of them female, trained as teachers at these institutions.
300 -- run by the natives themselves..."\textsuperscript{173}

But this does not in any way diminish the importance of this development among the Bakgatla. It was significant for a number of reasons. First, the Bakgatla had demonstrated that they did not have to wait for missionary or any other outside initiative to undertake a venture of this kind. While the many DRC outstation schools in the Pilanesberg had been started by black teacher-evangelists, it was at the behest of the missionaries. This time, however, it was the Bakgatla's own initiative. But even the fact that the school was started by a family, rather than the community, was in itself unique. Second, the school was a clear manifestation of the Bakgatla's dissatisfaction with the mission school curriculum and also a demonstration of their ability to remedy what appeared to be a hopeless situation. They determined their own curriculum, according to their own objectives and achieved them. Third, the dissatisfaction with mission education implied that the Bakgatla, at least the literate and educated ones, had, by the 1910s, become conscious of the value and practical benefits of the kind of education they wanted their children to have.

\textbf{Bakgatla chiefs and the missionaries}

The chiefly support for education just mentioned above did not begin with the Ramolope School but much earlier, with the DRC mission schools. Bakgatla chiefs, starting from Linchwe, were all practising members of the DRC and they gave considerable moral and material support towards the spread of the gospel as well as education in the Pilanesberg. At

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{173} TPP 6/10, \textit{The Transvaal Education Department Report, 31 December 1930}, p. 21.}
the turn of the century, Linchwe, for example, personally paid the teacher-evangelist, T. Phiri's annual salary of £45. When Phiri's house was burnt down with the rest of the border village of Malolwane by the Boers, during the Bakgatla-Boer war, Linchwe afterwards made a donation towards its rebuilding. After Phiri's ordination and his annual salary had been increased to £88, Linchwe contributed almost half of it. 174

Such exemplary gestures may have been expected of a chief. But, in this respect, Linchwe obviously took care of a personal interest because Phiri was not only in charge of his children's education but was also his private secretary and personal advisor. His support in this case was, therefore, not disinterested. But, generally, he did materially support education work in the Pilanesberg, as the Director of Education in the Transvaal, E.B. Sargeant, reported in 1905. 175 Linchwe's successors too were equally active in this regard. His brother, Ramona, the first chief at Saulspoort this century (1903-1917), is a good example. Soon after his arrival at Saulspoort, Ramona "had the church building enlarged and assumed responsibility for the costs incurred. He also paid the salary of an evangelist." 176 While Ramono's support may have been motivated by the desire to see his people attain western education and influence, it was also out of a genuine religious fervour and desire to help spread the gospel. One missionary, for example, described Ramona as "a dedicated Christian." 177 All this portrayed a certain closeness between chief and missionary.

174 For details, see Maree, Uit Duisternis, pp. 180-192.
175 Cited in Maree, Uit Duisternis, p. 143.
176 Maree, Uit Duisternis, p. 218; Maree, A Century of Grace, p. 4. DRCA S5/15/7/1, "Zending Raads Vergadering," 2-4 October 1916.
177 Maree, Uit Duisternis, p. 218.
The above chief-missionary relations closely hinged upon the question of who, between chief and missionary, exercised control and authority in the chiefdom. Chiefs generally felt threatened by the advent of Christianity. Simpson has stated that Christian influence, because of its challenge to Batswana cultural institutions such as, for example, rain-making, "potentially unsettled the customary sources of ideological and material control [i.e. by chiefs] within these chiefdoms."\textsuperscript{178} When J. Read of the LMS came to work among the Batlhaping early in the 19th century, their chief, Mothibi, was convinced that the missionary had come to undermine his chiefly authority. Mothibi, therefore, at least initially, attempted to curb Read's efforts at evangelisation.\textsuperscript{179} This situation of resistance, however, existed especially in chiefdoms that had not yet been conquered and colonised, such as those of what came to be termed Bechuanaland. On the other hand, in the Pilanesberg and other parts of the Transvaal, the DRC missionaries found the authority and power of the chiefs already broken down by Boer conquest and overlordship. Thus, unlike in Bechuanaland, conversion in parts of the Transvaal, such as the Pilanesberg, met with little or no chiefly resistance.

Relations between Bakgatla chiefs and missionaries, however, were not always free from conflict. They, in fact depended upon the personalities and characters of the individuals concerned. Thus, for example, there was no serious conflict between the missionaries and the mild-tempered Saulspoort chiefs, Ramono, Dialwa and Ofentse, unlike the impatient and highly ambitious Isang,\textsuperscript{180} hence Isang's many quarrels with the missionaries. In 1918, for example,

\textsuperscript{178} Simpson, "Peasants and politics," p. 364.
\textsuperscript{180} See Morton, "The modernists," pp. 23-29.
Isang quarrelled with the missionaries in Mochudi. The cause is not clear, but Morton suggests that it was due to his "experiences in the Transvaal [which] hardened him against the Afrikaner." During the 1920s, Isang had a feud with the Rev. G. Stegman, Gonin's successor, and, therefore, insisted that he be transferred. An investigation, according to the missionary writer, Maree, revealed that it was because "Stegman would not kneel in front of him." But, as already suggested, this friction was basically to do with who, between chief and missionary, wielded authority in the area. The issue, however, died out as Isang stepped down from the regency in 1929.

There was, however, a more serious issue of friction between the missionaries and the Bakgatla, namely, the control over water. But first, the problem of the chronic lack of water in the Pilanesberg is discussed briefly in order to appreciate better the Bakgatla-missionary friction over the issue. The region generally had a perennial water shortage due to its geographical make-up. Among the Bakgatla specifically, this problem was exacerbated by two factors. First, the population of the Pilanesberg as a whole was very large and, for a 37390-morgen area with 20,865 people by the end of 1930 the region had become overcrowded, thus, straining scarce water resources further. Second, compounding the water problem was the relatively huge cattle population of some 21,785 as well as 4,354 "small stock."

---

181 Morton, "The modernists," p. 25. The missionaries at Mochudi at the time were all Afrikaners.

182 Maree, Uit Duisternis, p. 227.

183 The region's geography is dealt with in Chapter One. For details of the problems of lack of water in the Transvaal generally during the late 1920s and early 1930s and how the NAD and African groups attempted to solve them, see A.J. van Lille, The Native Council System (1938), Chapter Four.

184 SNA Vol.3 NA 144/337 Ref.10/340, Director of Native Agriculture to Secretary for (continued...
October 1917, Isang reported this problem to the Natives Land Committee and said: "Our cattle cannot live... unless we be allowed to hire grazing lands with sufficient water for them." Some thirteen years later, in June 1930, the Assistant Native Commissioner for the Pilanesberg, T.D. Emmett, expressed precisely the same concerns for the Bakgatla and recommended the sinking of boreholes on Bakgatla farms. The water problem, coupled with inadequate grazing, had, in fact, become so acute that the NAD, in obvious contravention of the 1913 Land Act, allowed the Bakgatla to lease five farms on the Bechuanaland border, for the grazing and watering of some 3 000 cattle.

Meanwhile, although the water situation for the Bakgatla was, in the words of the Additional Native Commissioner in 1930, "becoming more and more serious year after year," no decisive action was taken, due, apparently, to government bureaucracy. In 1932, the water problem and the Bakgatla's persistent demands for boreholes prompted the NAD to request the government geologist to sink at least two boreholes for the Bakgatla on Saulspoort. But, as the geologist reported, due to some geological problems in the Bakgatla part of the location,

(...continued)

Native Affairs (SNA), Pretoria, 28 November 1930.


187 SNA Vol. 3 NA 144/337 Ref.10/340, SNA to Director of Irrigation, 20 August 1930.

188 SNA Vol. 3 NA 144/337 Ref.10/340, Additional Native Commissioner, Rustenburg, to SNA, 24 September 1930. It was only during the 1930s that the government began to construct boreholes on Bakgatla farms. They were constructed by the Irrigation Department, which also supplied the necessary equipment, except for pieces of stone and sand which were provided by the Bakgatla themselves. See NTS 10875 T6301, "Borehole 20805: Holfontein: Rustenburg," n.d.; "NAD, particulars of borehole and pumping plant," n.d., January 1936. Same box, file no. T6302, SNA to Stewarts and Lloyds, Pretoria, 18 May 1932; "Specification of pumping plant," 13 December 1937.
this was not possible. In his professional opinion, water for the Bakgatla could only be obtained from the mission part of the location. However, the head missionary, G. Stegman, would not immediately accede to the Bakgatla request to obtain water from the mission part.

The Secretary for Native Affairs (SNA), therefore, intervened, giving considerable support to the Bakgatla and putting subtle but firm pressure on the missionaries to grant the Bakgatla’s request. Even more significant for the Bakgatla’s case, the SNA informed both the Additional Native Commissioner in Rustenburg and the missionaries, that the Bakgatla had a legal/historical right to obtain water from the mission part of the location. The SNA quoted the relevant clause in the Deed of Transfer for Saulspoort of 1898 which stated:

Furthermore, the Bakgatla tribe has the right as long as the location exists for watering their cattle from the water that can be found on the remaining part of Saulspoort, as long as the cattle does not damage the gardens of the missionary station, also the tribe has the right to draw water for their own use.

Confronted with this legal truth, the missionaries, grudgingly, acceded to the Bakgatla request, but stressed that, first, the matter would have to be referred to the Mission Committee for consideration and, second, that a “notarial deed of servitude” on the issue would be prepared by the mission’s attorneys. The Bakgatla request was granted, but with very severe conditions. Among other conditions, from 1933, the Bakgatla had to take over the church’s

189 For details of how Saulspoort got split into two parts, one for the DRC and a much bigger portion for the Bakgatla, see Chapter Five.
190 BAO 223/337 Ref.185/337 6914, SNA to Additional Native Commissioner, 17 November 1932.
191 BAO 223/337 Ref.185/337 6914, Additional Native Commissioner to SNA, 13 December 1932.
responsibility of paying the mission's annual quitrent and other taxes, all amounting to 10s 6d. Second, if the mission's own borehole ran dry, it would have free access to the Bakgatla's, "with no obligation to maintenance." Third, the Bakgatla's source would supply water to the missionary's house "or to any reasonable area that will be pointed out by the Church and will at their [i.e Bakgatla's] cost [,] make the necessary tap and structure for the supply of water and its maintenance." Fourth, if the Bakgatla failed to make use of the water continuously for six months, "the tribe will forfeit [the] boreholes[,] pipes and pumps." 192

The SNA considered the conditions unfair and "unreasonable" and, therefore, persuaded the missionaries to improve or change them. 193 Slight changes were made but the basic text remained unchanged. In March or April 1933, the conditions were presented to chief Ofentse and his kgotla for consideration and they approved them, 194 but, obviously, the Bakgatla had little or no choice in the matter, considering their water predicament we have seen above. By June 1933, the Notarial Deed of Servitude regarding the water arrangement was duly registered 195 and procedures got under way to construct the Bakgatla's boreholes on the DRC mission grounds. 196

192 BAO 223/337 Ref.185/337, van Velden and Lategan (DRC attorneys in Rustenburg), to Additional Native Commissioner, 1 February 1933, p. 1. See especially the Natarieele Akte, pp. 2-4, for the severe conditions.
193 BAO 223/337 Ref.185/337 6914, Additional Native Commissioner to SNA, 14 February 1933; 30 June 1933, p. 2.
194 BAO 223/337 Ref.185/337 6914, Additional Native Commissioner to SNA, n.d., November 1933.
195 BAO 223/337 Ref.185/337 6914, Additional Native Commissioner to SNA, 30 July 1933.
196 The NAD put up a tender and, after lengthy and bureaucratic procedures, work on the borehole began late in 1937. See BAO 223/337 Ref.185/337 6914, Assistant Engineer, Pretoria, to Engineer, Northern Areas, 1 November 1937.
From the manner in which the water issue was concluded, it is obvious that the Bakgatla got 'a raw deal' from the DRC mission. But, caught in a helpless situation, the Bakgatla had no choice but to accept the mission's severe conditions which, on the mission's part, reflected a lack of sympathy. In fact, as the conditions clearly reveal, the mission would benefit at the expense of the Bakgatla. It should also be noted that the mission was initially unwilling to help the Bakgatla until the SNA's intervention persuaded them into co-operation. Moreover, the notarial deed was drawn entirely on the missionaries' own terms, with no Bakgatla input, an indication of the Bakgatla's helplessness in the matter. The Bakgatla, after all, had no legal jurisdiction over the mission part of Saulspoort, apart from water rights. The missionaries, therefore, could deal with their mission land as they wished. Therefore, even the SNA's assistance to the Bakgatla in the matter was limited.

It should be pointed out, however, that the DRC missionaries did not always show callousness to Bakgatla problems. Indeed, we have noted, for example, the important role played by Gonin in the Bakgatla's dealings with the Boer authorities, particularly in land-purchasing. Gonin's successor, G. Stegman, also actively supported many Bakgatla interests. In his evidence to the Western Transvaal Natives Land Committee in 1917, for instance, Stegman gave a spirited defence of Bakgatla interests against the proposed Native Affairs Administration Bill. Stegman, for example, protested that the areas currently occupied by the Bakgatla and their neighbours, the Batlako, were “too small and inadequate,” and vehemently argued against the removal of Bakgatla cattle (which he estimated at 20,000 -- 30,000) from the Odi and Madikwe River areas, because elsewhere, he added, “there is no water, and ... no rain has fallen during three
years in a period of twelve years...”\textsuperscript{197}

Another DRC missionary came to the aid of the Bakgatla when they needed help. Soon after the Bakgatla had purchased the farm Rhenosterkop (Tlhokwane) 1048 in 1927 and they were awaiting official approval, “certain [white] people in the area” tried to influence the government to disapprove the sale. This prompted the Rev. J. Reyneke (based at Mochudi) to write to the Minister of Native Affairs, J.B.M Hertzog, on behalf of the Bakgatla on 28 August 1927, earnestly requesting him to ignore the detractors and approve the Bakgatla application. He advanced, among other supporting reasons, Rhenosterkop’s contiguousness to four other Bakgatla farms.\textsuperscript{198} In this manner, Reyneke's action characterised, to use Comaroff’s words, “the missionaries' self-appointed role as the conscience of the coloniser.”\textsuperscript{199} In conclusion, the chapter finally focuses on the impact of Christianity upon the Batswana generally and the Bakgatla specifically.

The \textbf{missionary impact upon Bakgatla society}

To what extent then, did Christian evangelisation influence Bakgatla society? The impact was significant. By the turn of the century, Western influence had become quite widespread; the DRC had become akin to a Bakgatla ‘national’ church and Christianity was now “a dominant

\textsuperscript{197} Report of the Natives Land Committee, Western Transvaal, Annexure "O," p. 57.

\textsuperscript{198} NTS 3456 NA 107/308, J. Reyneke, Mochudi, to Minister of Native Affairs, Pretoria, 28 August 1927. The Bakgatla farms bordering on Rhenosterkop were Holfontein (Mokgalwana) 593, Witfontein (Modimong) 215 and Cyferkuil (Matsinyane) 372. The Bakgatla did finally obtain Minister Hertzog’s approval.

\textsuperscript{199} Comaroff, "Images of empire," p. 674.
force in [Bakgatla] tribal life.” Seboni, the Motswana writer and biographer of Isang Pilane, asserts that this impact upon the Bakgatla was manifested through “their Christian weddings, funerals, baptism, confirmation, praying for rain and in their traditional initiation schools and in their attitudes of reverence to Sunday.”

During the brief period of 1904-1905, there were in the Pilanesberg, 57 marriages consummated "under Christian rite" and, for an estimated population of 8808 men and women, this was a fair indication of the impact of Christianity and Western influence by the beginning of the 20th century. Many Bakgatla cultural practices were either abolished or modified. The age-old Bakgatla rain-making rites, for example, became syncretised with a church ceremony, "conducted by the chief and the missionary." In Saulspoort, this was done on a nearby flat rock called “borite,” or letlapa la Kgamanyane (the rock of Kgamanyane). By the early 1950s, many other Batswana groups were observing the missionary idea of "an annual Church 'day of prayer for rain.'"

But it should also be noted that the source of cultural influence upon the Bakgatla and other Batswana peoples did not come from Christianity alone. Boer culture had an enormous impact upon the Batswana generally from very early on. By the late 19th century, many Afrikaans words, for instance, had become an integral part of Batswana vocabulary, albeit in a corrupted

---

200 Breutz, *The Tribes*, p. 266.
201 Seboni, *Kgosi Isang Pilane*, p. 50.
204 Breutz, *The Tribes*, p. 275.
205 Schapera, *The Tswana*, p. 22.
form. Examples are "tafole" (table) from "tafel"; "setulo" (chair) from "stoel"; "pere" (horse) from "perd." Boer cultural influence upon the Bakgatla specifically, was also quite considerable. As was the case with colonised peoples elsewhere, the Bakgatla began to emulate the culture of their Boer colonisers. As early as the 1870s, for example, a contemporary traveller, E. Holub, recorded about the Bakgatla, with some exaggeration, that "[n]early all of them speak Dutch." Seboni has stated further that many Bakgatla men "kept beard in the fashion of Boer men."

Christianity, however, did not completely eradicate all Batswana cultural practices. Rain-making as well as superstition in general were some of the resilient ones. In 1910, for example, the SNC for the Pilanesberg reported that that year, corn and maize harvests in the district were very poor, largely because of "'rain-doctors' who foretold drought, and in consequence the natives were warned not to plough." The SNC's further remark was even more pertinent: "The hold of the native doctors over the natives is the more remarkable when the fact is taken into consideration that 75 per cent of the natives in this area are Christians."

Many Bakgatla Christians were involved in rain-making rites, but secretly, in order not to upset the missionaries and other more committed church members. Indeed, in 1914, a Church

---

210 Schapera, "The little rain," p. 212. There was a similar situation in nearby Phokeng: see Simpson, "Peasants and politics," p. 363. About the resilience of superstition among the Bakgatla Christians in Mochudi during the 1920s, see Schapera, "Some notes on cattle (continued...)"
Council meeting complained about witchcraft, superstition and low, superficial standards among their Bakgatla congregations as “problems in the way of a healthy Christian community.” As a solution to these problems, the meeting called for “a deeper understanding of sin, a clear Christian/heathen demarcation” in the lives of their congregations and a more manifest way of Christian living. In times of drought, chief Linchwe (himself a “practising” Christian), “resorted to old rain-making ceremonies,” while his successor, Isang, “persuaded the mission authorities to withdraw their objection to bogadi, which accordingly is now [1958] an essential prerequisite to marriage in church.”

Bogwera was another cultural practice that could not be completely eradicated and its resilience was indicated by the fact that Bakgatla (and also Bangwaketse and Barolong) men, as Schapera recorded in 1938, “sometimes run away to enter bogwera camps that may be held elsewhere [;] so great is the respect still attached to these ceremonies...” Among other Batswana communities, the situation was similar. Among the Batlhaping of Taung during the 1940s, many church members of the LMS were “censured” for participating in initiation ceremonies, over a century after the introduction of Christianity in that community. This clearly shows that Christianity was not entirely pervasive.

(...continued)


211 DRCA S5/15/7/1 "Notulen van de Tweede Zitting," Johannesburg, 6 October 1914.

212 Schapera, "Christianity and the Tswana," p. 6. In the 1920s, an American missionary working among the Basotho, the Rev. K. Spooner, acknowledged that "dowry is something that neither Christianity nor [Western] civilisation has been able to change." Quoted in Simpson, "Peasants and politics," p. 363.

213 Schapera, Tswana Law and Custom, p. 105.

In view of the above Bakgatla lapses into "heathenism," how genuine were the conversions? How genuine was Bakgatla Christianity? At the beginning of the 20th century, the missionary, Gonin, doubted the authenticity of his converts generally, although it is not clear if he held such doubts throughout his life at Saulspoort. Gonin believed that Bakgatla Christianity "was for appearances only" and that baptism and the term "Christian" were accepted merely as the fashion of the day. Yet we have also noted above, for example, another missionary's observation regarding the devoutness of Ramono's wife, Mantlho, which is a fair indication that at least some of the Bakgatla converts were genuine Christians. It should be emphasised that the apparent contradictions of Bakgatla Christianity which we have just recounted were not strange. They were, in fact, quite common in other African Christian societies generally where the combination of traditional and Christian practices co-existed as "a perfectly coherent synthesis." But this complex issue was perhaps best summed up by Schapera in 1958 when he wrote:

Many Tswana are evidently devout and honest Christians, sincere in their profession of faith, and seeking to live according to the gospel... Others maintain their allegiance, but do not always behave as they should. They have illicit love affairs, drink beer, resort to magicians... and are Christians in name only.

On the whole, DRC activity in the Pilanesberg had, by the end of the study period, achieved its intended missionary objectives of a general cultural transformation of the Bakgatla in the ways we have noted above. From this point of view, therefore, DRC work among the Bakgatla

215 Maree, *Uit Duisternis*, p. 64.
was immensely successful. The success was due to a number of explanations. First, a remarkable feature of DRC work in the Pilanesberg was its continuity, which in turn brought stability. The first missionary, Gonin, served at Saulspoort continuously for 46 years, from 1864 until his death there in 1911.\textsuperscript{218} By the end of 1910, Gonin had, in fact, become the longest-serving of all the DRC ministers in South Africa.\textsuperscript{219}

Gonin's assistant, G. Stegman, who joined him in 1906, and took over as head of the mission in 1910, worked at Saulspoort for over 35 years. Thus, Saulspoort had only two head missionaries over a period of 77 years.\textsuperscript{220} On the part of the black teacher-evangelists too, there was a considerable degree of continuity, stability as well as dedication. T. Phiri, for example, served in only two places, Saulspoort and Malolwane, for some 54 years, from 1883 to 1937,\textsuperscript{221} while K. Makgale who was based at Spitskop (Sefikile) from June 1897, worked there for some 65 years.\textsuperscript{222} Second, the Bakgatla practice of self-help in church and school projects greatly contributed to the success of mission work. The chiefs, as noted, were in the forefront in this respect. The practice of self-help, whether to pay a teacher's salary, erect a school, church or hospital, became an integral part of Bakgatla life in the first three decades of the 20th century and even after.\textsuperscript{223}

\textsuperscript{218} Maree, \textit{Uit Duisternis}, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{219} du Plessis, \textit{A History of Christian Missions}, p. 286.
\textsuperscript{220} Maree, \textit{Uit Duisternis}, p. 220.
\textsuperscript{221} Except for brief periods of training at Morija and Wellington, and religious work in the Kimberley locations.
\textsuperscript{222} Maree, \textit{Uit Duisternis}, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{223} Maree, \textit{Uit Duisternis}, p. 221, 228.
Elsewhere in South Africa, this practice of self-help was a very important element of missionary policy and activity. Among the Amazulu of Natal where the American Zulu Mission (AZM) missionaries worked, between 1850 and 1910, the practice of self-support in church projects was "the most important factor" that contributed to the mission's success in spreading both education and the gospel.\(^{224}\) In the Pilanesberg, both self-support and continuity contributed equally to the DRC's success. Furthermore, Africans generally saw the missionaries, especially the pioneering ones, not as agents of religion, but representatives of, as Ranger put it, a "'lifestyle'... offering potentially valuable economic or political alliances."\(^{225}\) Thus, Africans generally did not view Christianity in isolation, but rather "as part of a larger order, comprising Western education, colonial administration, commerce and industry, with which everyone had henceforth to reckon. These changes created a much more favourable climate for conversion."\(^{226}\) There is no reason to think that this perception could not have applied to the Bakgatla situation as well.

\(^{224}\) Keto, "Race relations," p. 610.


CHAPTER THREE

THE BAKGATLA-BOER WAR IN THE PILANESBERG, 1899-1902

This chapter explores and analyses the place of the South African War in the experience of the Bakgatla in the Pilanesberg. As Nasson has shown in his study of the black and coloured experiences of the South African War in parts of the Cape Colony, the locality of circumstances was an important factor in the way the war was perceived and fought by black people in the different regions of South Africa. In his study, Nasson poses and answers a fundamentally important question about the war. In Nasson's own words:

What was the content, and what were the divisions and terms of the South African War? In great measure, the answer depends on whose war one means and in which sector it was located -- the burden of the war effort differed sharply in the way in which it pressed upon regions.¹

By the early 1980s, the old belief that the Second 'Anglo-Boer' War was a 'white man's war' had become a misconception. By that stage, research by a few historians, especially Warwick, revealed the very active participation by black people in a wide range of roles in the war, including armed combat, on both the British and Boer sides.² In particular, Nasson's Cape study

---


has revealed many hitherto unknown intricacies of a regional dimension. Other historians, like Krikler, Mohlamme and Morton have also added to the growing historiography on the war theme in the western Transvaal. All these historians show that blacks were "active shaping agents as well as victims" in the war. This chapter intends to show the role of the Bakgatla in their specific situation of the Pilanesberg.

A number of detailed explanations have been advanced for the outbreak of the South African War between the main combatants, the Boers and the British. According to the latest account by Smith, the British government went to war in order to act against the growing power and influence of the Transvaal during the 1890s. The Transvaal had replaced the Cape Colony as "the new centre of political gravity," which posed a threat to British supremacy in the region. Moreover, Britain intended to use Uitlander grievances, notably the lack of franchise, to replace Kruger's government with "progressive" young Afrikaners and Uitlander leaders. The failed Jameson Raid and the Uitlander uprising in December 1895 which polarised British-Boer

(...continued)


3 See, for example, Krikler, "Revolution from above"; "Agrarian class struggle...," Social History, 14, 2 (May 1989), pp. 151-176; Mohlamme, "The role of black people"; Morton, "Linchwe I."

4 This quotation is from Nasson, "Warriors without spears; Africans in the South African War, 189-1902," Social Dynamics, 9, 1 (1983), p. 91.

5 See, for example, the older explanations by J.S. Marais, The Fall of Kruger's Republic (1961); T. Pakenham, The Boer War (1979); Warwick, The South African War, Chapters One-Two.

relations led directly to the South African War, while the Uitlander grievances were exploited by British officials in South Africa and London to bring about the imposition of British rule. While these explanations apply to the major combatants at national level, in the various regions where Africans got involved, they did so because of their own local, specific reasons.

The Bakgatla fought the Boers because of some historical grudges which they harboured against them. It will be recalled that the Boers' incessant demands for Bakgatla labour over several decades had finally culminated in their chief being publicly humiliated and his people splitting into two in 1870. In both the Pilanesberg and Mochudi, this episode was remembered with bitterness by practically all of the older Bakgatla men and women who still retain graphic accounts of the flogging and the subsequent split. It was because of this that the Bakgatla saw the war as an opportunity to take revenge on the Boers. On the eve of the war, the British colonial officer, J. Ellenberger, was, therefore, correct when he assumed that one of Kgamanyane's sons, Segale, viewed the approaching war as "a chance at last to hit back at those who, years ago, had thrashed his father." Thus, the Bakgatla were, to use a contemporary traveller's words, "eager to wipe out old scores," a reason that was rooted in

---

11 Knight, *South Africa After the War*, p. 270.
the very harsh nature of Boer rule over the Bakgatla, especially with regard to forced labour.\textsuperscript{12}

In addition to the issue of the settling of old scores was the Bakgatla's desire to regain their land in the Pilanesberg which they had lost to the Boers earlier on and to reunite their divided people.\textsuperscript{13} Landlessness among the Bakgatla had become quite acute by the end of the 19th century. Due to inadequate resources, by the turn of the 19th century, the Bakgatla had managed to purchase only portions of the four farms, Saulspoort 269, Modderkuil 565, Kruidfontein 649 and Holfontein 593. Only Saulspoort (3 925 morgen) was a fully residential farm. It must be stressed that the majority of the Bakgatla lived as tenants on various Boer farms “all over the Pilanesberg . . . ,” a clear indication of the seriousness of their landlessness. As Kruidfontein did not have “an abundantly rich soil,” cultivation was done only on a portion of Modderkuil. For grazing their cattle, the Bakgatla rented government farms at the junction of the Madikwe and Odi Rivers for £80 per year.\textsuperscript{14} The acuteness of the Bakgatla's landlessness is further clarified by looking at the population of the Pilanesberg on the eve of the war which was estimated at 20 000.\textsuperscript{15} Morton has estimated that between 5 and 6 000 Bakgatla lived on the 3 925-morgen farm, Saulspoort, another 1 000 or less on Holfontein, while the remainder, some 15 000, lived as tenants on Boer farms.\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] SNA 116 NA 672/03, SNC to NC, 27 April 1903, p. 5-6. Quotations from p. 6. See also SNA 140 NA 1405/03, SNC to NC, 30 July 1903.
\end{footnotes}
The Bakgatla's land situation was exacerbated by the implementation of the Squatters' Law (Plakkerswet) No. 21 of 1895 which restricted the number of Africans living on Boer farms to not more than five families.\textsuperscript{17} The enforcement of this law resulted in many Bakgatla being scattered all over the Pilanesberg, while many others -- "at least two thousand" -- crossed into the Bechuanaland Protectorate where they were resettled into the Kgatleng (land of the Bakgatla) by Linchwe.\textsuperscript{18} Linchwe, however, could not buy his people any more land because the national herd, the resource with which land was bought, had been depleted by the 1896-1897 rinderpest pandemic.\textsuperscript{19} Morton put it succinctly when he wrote that the Bakgatla saw the war as an opportunity "of rebuilding their herds, acquiring additional territory in the Transvaal, and gaining British recognition as a unitary chiefdom."\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{Prelude to war}

The immediate reasons for the Pilanesberg Bakgatla's involvement in the war lay outside their area, in Mochudi. Since 1870, the Pilanesberg Bakgatla's overall chiefly authority and decisions affecting them had always emanated from outside the Transvaal, in Mochudi.\textsuperscript{21} Thus, as we will see shortly, the Pilanesberg Bakgatla entered the war by force of 'outside' circumstances, because their paramount chief Linchwe in Mochudi had made the decision.

\textsuperscript{17} Lington, \textit{Native Administration}, p. 134. This law was finally repealed by the Land Act of 1936.
\textsuperscript{18} For details see Morton, "Babolayeng BagaKgafela!," pp. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{21} This issue is fully dealt with in Chapter Four.
Most of what has been recorded about the Bakgatla's involvement in the war, in the actual combat, looting or destruction of Boer property, or in their roles as wagoners, labourers, horsemen, messengers and scouts, has given the distinct impression that it was the Bakgatla of the Protectorate who participated much more than those of the Pilanesberg. Relatively very little has been written about the participation of the Bakgatla's Pilanesberg regiments and, therefore, we do not appreciate or, indeed, even know the precise extent of their involvement. But it is certain that they were involved to a very large extent. T.S. Pilane, for example, recounted that just after the Derdepoort episode, the Pilanesberg Bakgatla, perhaps anticipating Boer reprisals, contributed at least one regiment, while another informant asserted that “all the regiments in the Pilanesberg were involved in the war.” A.K. Pilane of Mochudi told the historian, Morton, that young men from Saulspoort travelled to Mochudi “to be organised into regiments” that were then sent back into the Transvaal to fight the Boers. Yet another source in the Pilanesberg narrated that, due to Bakgatla unity, “when there was an order to go to war in Mochudi, it automatically affected the Pilanesberg Bakgatla too.” It should be noted too that every regiment in Mochudi had its counterpart (with the same name) in Saulspoort, but the Mochudi one was senior. There were, for example, two Makoba regiments, the Mochudi

22 See, for example, Morton, "Linchwe I"; "Babolayeng BagaKgafela!"; Warwick, "Black people and the war."


26 B.N.O. Pilane, interview, Saulspoort, 8 October 1993.
one under Ramona and the Saulspoort one under Ditlhake. All this information was passed down to these informants by some of the people who had actually participated in the war. If this was the case, why then do the Pilanesberg Bakgatla seem to have participated much less than their counterparts in Mochudi?

The relative paucity of sources about the Pilanesberg Bakgatla's participation in the war has a plausible explanation. In the Pilanesberg, calling up and organising Bakgatla regiments for war, unlike in the Protectorate, would have been a much more difficult and certainly perilous task, at least in the early stages of the war when the Boers were at their strongest. The Boer authorities in Rustenburg would have quickly known about any war preparations in nearby Pilanesberg and retribution would have been swift. Obviously, the Bakgatla on both sides would want to avoid such a compromising situation. It was, therefore, a lot safer to send the Pilanesberg regiments quietly to Mochudi, in the safety of the British Protectorate, from where they were prepared to strike into the Transvaal; hence, the false impression in all the historiography about the war, that the Protectorate Bakgatla participated in the war much more than the Pilanesberg ones.

British policy regarding African participation in the war

As war became imminent, whites generally feared that the fighting between the two white groups might be used by disaffected African groups to advance their own interests and possibly even attempt to overthrow white rule, which explains the elaborate preparations by both sides

---

27 B.N.O. Pilane, interview.
28 B.N.O. Pilane and T.S. Pilane, interviews.
to counter any possible African insurrection.\footnote{Warwick, "Black people and the war," pp. 191-192. In the reserves of the Eastern Cape which were predominantly black, for example, the British feared "a serious danger of general agitation and rising of the natives..." For details, see L.S. Amery, \textit{The Times History of the War in South Africa}, Vol. III (1905), p. 96.} This fear was not totally misplaced because many African groups, including the Bakgatla, did so believing that the British would be victorious and that such support would gain them considerable political and economic benefits after the war.\footnote{Warwick, "Black people and the war," p. 192.} 

As late as June 1899, it was still official British policy not to use blacks in armed combat against the Boers. There were two reasons for this. First, the British were uncertain about black loyalty in the Transvaal generally. The official British thinking was that since their defeat by the Boers in 1881, Africans in South Africa had lost faith in Britain's military might. According to a British "secret" document, \textit{Military Notes}: "Prior to this date [i.e.1881] the natives had a great respect for the power and belief in the justice and faith of Great Britain, while they disliked the Boer. That dislike remains, but their belief in England has gone, and they fear the Boer too much not to consider it the wisest policy to keep on good terms with him."\footnote{War Office, \textit{Military Notes}, p. 42.} Second, the British considered it distasteful, morally indignant and outrageous to use blacks in combat in a war between white sides. To quote \textit{Military Notes} again, "... an alliance with them [blacks] would be impossible, having regard to the profound indignation that would be aroused by such a policy, not only in the Dutch Republics, but in the minds of English and Dutch settlers alike throughout the whole of South Africa."\footnote{War Office, \textit{Military Notes}, p. 42. See also Siwundla, "White ideologies," p. 224.}
But the British had to be pragmatic and contradict their own policy in the face of practical realities because they would need African assistance in the coming war. However, shortly before the war, the British doubted the loyalty of Linchwe and his Protectorate Bakgatla. Half of his people, after all, lived under Boer rule. Thus, if he took sides, it could mean exposing his people to obvious danger. Indeed, the contemporary writer, L.S. Amery, expressed Linchwe's predicament correctly when he wrote that "his [Linchwe's] interests, even in peace time ... pulled him two ways."³³

With the possibility of war becoming more real, this doubt of Bakgatla loyalty worried the British. This doubt and worry were heightened by the British realisation that the Bakgatla were potentially the most dependable war allies. This was indicated by the fact that the British rated the Bakgatla as "good fighters."³⁴ It was for this reason that the British needed Bakgatla military assistance. Another reason why the British needed the Bakgatla on their side was that the railway line which was so essential for the transportation of the (British) Rhodesian troops to the south passed through the centre of Bakgatla territory. That was why the British decided on a psychological show of force to influence Linchwe into supporting them. Thus, just before the outbreak of war, some 500 British South Africa Police (BSAP) and Southern Rhodesian Volunteers were sent to Mochudi specifically for this purpose.³⁵

Linchwe, however, gave a deliberately false impression of either neutrality or uncertainty, while buying time. It was this false impression that worried the British authorities and prompted R.S.

Baden-Powell in Mafeking to report that Linchwe was "wavering." It is also the reason why Morton, perhaps inaccurately, concludes that by as late as 26 October 1899, Linchwe still had not yet made up his mind which side he would support. While biding his time, before openly declaring which side he supported, Linchwe gave the Boers in the Derdepoort laager the false impression that he was on their side by, for example, sending them gifts of slaughter stock. (Derdepoort was situated on the Transvaal side of the border, on a farm owned by P.J. Hans Riekert, Commandant of the Mounted Police, North-Western Border. This was also his work station.) Due to actions like this, the Boers came to have a misplaced confidence in Linchwe. In this regard, an Afrikaner scholar of the 1940s wrote wrongly: "Although not trusted by some people, Linchwe was in fact a friend of the Boers" and for this reason President Paul Kruger had even considered seeking Linchwe's support in some conflict which the Boers had with the Bangwato chief Khama.

At this stage, Bakgatla military assistance was still envisaged by both sides to be limited to non-combatant roles. But both the Boers and the British, nevertheless, considered African assistance to be crucial. First, as noted earlier, the Bakgatla lived under both Boer and British administrations. Both of the white protagonists were familiar with Bakgatla military valour, the

36 Quoted in Morton, "Babolayeng BagaKgafela!," p. 13. For details of Linchwe's actual tactics of delaying his declaration of which side he would support and the reasons why, see Morton, "Linchwe I," pp. 175-176 and, especially his more detailed "Babolayeng BagaKgafela!," pp. 11-13.


Boers much more than the British. The British, for example, knew how the Bakwena, in a bloody and protracted war, had failed to dislodge the Bakgatla from their new home on the western side of the Madikwe, despite the latter's comparatively small numbers and their largely strange and new environment where food resources, for example, must have been relatively meagre. On the other hand, Boer expectation of Bakgatla military assistance was based on a greater familiarity and much longer mutual, historical experience. With the outbreak of Boer-British hostilities, however, the "wavering" Bakgatla had to make a stand, one way or the other.

Following the Transvaal government's declaration of war on 11 October 1899, Boer commandos in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State embarked upon a pre-emptive campaign of military assaults against the comparatively few British troops in South Africa, aiming at an early Afrikaner victory. As part of this campaign, the Afrikaners besieged the town of Mafeking. In order to prevent the Rhodesian troops from coming through to relieve Mafeking, the Boer commandos, numbering some 300, moved into the Protectorate to wreck the railway line which the Rhodesians were going to use and generally to cause havoc, especially in the area between Gaborone and Mafeking, which was closest to SAR territory.

These events must have had a bearing upon the Bakgatla and contributed to their decision to join the war.

---

40 For a very detailed account of the Bakwena-Bakgatla war, see Ramsay, "The rise and fall of the Bakwena dynasty," pp. 147-158.

However, the more immediate factors that confirmed Linchwe's decision to join the war, were Boer acts of aggression in, or close to, Bakgatla territory in the Protectorate. Within the last two weeks of October 1899, for example, the Boer forces under Commandants P.D. Swart and J.P. Snyman captured Lobatse, occupied Gaborone, engaged the British at the Pools on the Transvaal-Bechuanaland border and wrecked a railway culvert north of Mochudi, while Commandant P. Kruger at Derdepoort "occupied his men with...the looting of Linchwe's cattle."42 At the same time, this seizure of Bakgatla cattle also occurred in the Pilanesberg where, for example, the Molope family of Saulspoort had some of their cattle seized by the Boers. Such incidents were reported to Mochudi, with the message that "Linchwe must prepare for war because the Boers are coming to do the same thing there."43 Linchwe, however, was still very cautious and would not show support for either side despite constant prompting by the Boer authorities, for example.44 Meanwhile, the Boer acts of aggression towards the Bakgatla continued.

The incident that finally decided Linchwe and his people was the "insult" which, as Bakgatla traditions widely assert, was publicly hurled at Linchwe by the Boer Commandant, P.J. Hans Riekert. Riekert was riding through Mochudi at the head of a commando en route to cut the railway line when the chief asked them not to disturb the women and children of the town. Riekert then "answered scornfully, picking up a stone from the kgotla [and said:] "Your

42 Amery, The Times History of the War in South Africa, Vol. II (1902), p. 270. See also Knight, South Africa After the War, p. 271.
44 Morton, "Linchwe I," p. 175.
chiefship is no more than a piece of dust."\textsuperscript{45}

However, although this incident must have swung his support more definitely towards the British, Linchwe was militarily too weak to retaliate against the Boers at this stage. Therefore, until the British troop reinforcements arrived from Rhodesia, the Bakgatla, just like the British in the Protectorate, continued to be vulnerable to Boer attacks. As \textit{The Times History} put it: "Until Plumer [Rhodesian troop commander] came up [,] the British were not strong enough do much more than patrol the railway with armoured trains ..."\textsuperscript{46}

**The Bakgatla's decision to enter the war**

With the arrival of the Rhodesian troops at Mahalapye in early November 1899 as well as the news that chief Khama of the Bangwato had just repulsed a Boer commando attack at Selika Kop, Linchwe told W.H. Surman, the Assistant Commissioner for the Southern District, based at Gaborone, that he was ready to fight the Boers and asked for arms. In response, at Mochudi railway station, the commander of the British troops, Lieutenant-Colonel G.L. Holdsworth told Linchwe and Segale (Kgamanyane's son from the second house and Linchwe's half-brother) that the Bakgatla regiments would be part of, and led by, the British forces. In mid-November

\textsuperscript{45} A.K. Pilane, "A note on episodes from the Boer war," \textit{Botswana Notes and Records}, \textit{5} (1973), p. 131. This Pilane, an amateur historian and a member of the Bakgatla royal family, was personally involved in the Bakgatla-Boer war, but has since passed away.

\textsuperscript{46} Amery, \textit{The Times History}, Vol. IV (1906), p. 204. About the comparatively strong military position of the Boers at the beginning of the war, see Amery, \textit{The Times History}, Vol. II (1902), pp. 270-271
1899, the Bakgatla began to prepare for war.  

Linchwe ordered three of his regiments, each under Segale (the overall leader of the Bakgatla troops), Ramono and Modise to join the British troops for an assault on the Boer laager at nearby Derdepoort. Shortly before departure for Derdepoort, Holdsworth had clearly expressed official British policy regarding the Bakgatla's role in the war, when he "impressed on them the necessity of their remaining on their own side of the border and that they were not to fire unless ordered." Holdsworth's brief from the British High Command also stipulated that he was to use Linchwe's men only as guides and carriers, while Assistant Commissioner Surmon further made it clear to Holdsworth that he was "unable to consent to the employment of his [i.e. Linchwe's] men in military operations in the Transvaal, as it might lead to deplorable consequences..." A further stipulation of the official British instructions was that if the Boers invaded any of the British Bechuanaland Reserves, it was then the Reserve inhabitants' duty "as loyal subjects of Her Majesty the Queen, to assist in repelling the invasion."

It is significant, however, to note that the limitation of the Bakgatla's role to only "guides and transport assistants" was omitted from the telegraphic instructions sent to Holdsworth on 22 November 1899 by his superior, Colonel J.S. Nicholson, Commandant-General of Police at

47 Cited in Schapera, A Short History, p. 44.
48 Schapera, A Short History, p. 44
49 Surmon to Holdsworth, 23 November 1899, cited in The Battle of Derdepoort, 25 November 1899, p. 8; Schapera, A Short History, p. 44.
50 Ellenberger, "Notes on the history of the Bakgatla," cited in Schapera, A Short History, p. 46. Ellenberger was Assistant Commissioner for the Southern Protectorate during the war and, later, in 1923-1927, Resident Commissioner for the Protectorate. He was the English-Setswana interpreter between the British and Bakgatla troops during the Derdepoort assault.
Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. This omission meant that, as Botha has put it, Holdsworth could "make his own arrangements." The lack of clarity on such an important aspect of the attack, therefore, left Holdsworth fairly free to use his own discretion whether to commit the Bakgatla troops in armed combat or not. This was a loophole that Holdsworth was to exploit, with serious consequences for both the Boers and the Bakgatla. Moreover, the condition that the Bakgatla "were not to fire unless ordered" in itself presupposed that if circumstances demanded, they could be used in an armed role. Therefore, even though official British policy insisted on the exclusion of blacks from armed combat, it nevertheless left a leeway, inadvertently or not, for a Bakgatla armed role in the impending attack on Derdepoort.

The British-Bakgatla attack on Derdepoort caught its white residents unawares due to the Boer military authorities' ignorance of the military plans of the combined British/Bakgatla troops and the threat they posed, which explains the disastrous results upon the Derdepoort defenders. The Boer miscalculation and lack of preparedness need some explanation. Early in November 1899, the bulk of the Boer commandos in the western Transvaal, some 7,000 strong, were based at Ottoshoop, just east of Mafeking. These were under the Generals P.A. Cronje, J.H. de la Rey and J.P. Snyman, with the objective of capturing Mafeking and Kimberley, while a part of the Rustenburg commando camped near Lobatse was to wreck the railway line there. Derdepoort, meanwhile, had only a "small force" consisting of about 100 men in the laager under Commandant J.F. Kirsten, in addition to another 85 policemen under police

---

52 Amery, The Times History, Vol. II, p. 124. For details of the deployment of both Boer and British troops in the western Transvaal and the rest of South Africa on the eve of the war, see this same source, pp. 98-132, 132-137, 270-271, 298-298.
Commandant H. Riekert. Clearly, the defence of Derdepoort in the event of a British attack was not a priority for the Boer authorities.

Furthermore, about 500 Rustenburgers were sent, not to Derdepoort which badly needed them for the impending attack, but to the southern front on the Modder River. This was done on the advice of General P.A. Cronje who, like the rest of the Boer military hierarchy, was ignorant of Derdepoort's vulnerable security situation. Indeed, Cronje gave "constant and misleading reports" to President Kruger "that Derdepoort was a comparatively safe place...," suggesting that Boer military attention should be directed elsewhere instead. Such ignorance and miscalculation on the part of the Boer authorities is explained by two reasons. First, Linchwe's acts of "friendship" towards the Boers such as his offers of slaughter stock to the laager misled them, while their real intention was, as an old Mokgalta man told Schapera in 1932, "to blind the Dutch." That was why the Boers had the misplaced confidence to expect the Bakgatla to fight with them. Second, the British-Bakgatla military plans and preparations for the Derdepoort assault were made quite late and very quickly, just before the attack itself, thus, making Boer knowledge of them most unlikely.

The Derdepoort attack, 25 November 1899 and the Sidney Engers incident

Once the necessary reconnoitering of the Boer laager's position in Derdepoort had been carried out by Segale, the combined British-Bakgatla force, numbering about 120, left Mochudi on

53 Wulfsohn, *Rustenburg at War*, p. 49.
foot for Derdepoort in the evening of 24 November 1899. During a halt before the Boer laager in the early hours of 25 November, Holdsworth made a momentous decision with far-reaching consequences. He ordered that once the party had got close to the laager, the Bakgatla, instead of the British troops, should climb up the laager because, as Ellenberger recorded, "he [i.e. Holdsworth] feared that our men's heavy ammunition boots would betray us when climbing up to the laager and he decided that the bare-footed natives should do the climbing, Segale guiding us to a place from which we could see the laager and open fire on it..."\(^{56}\) This was an important decision because it meant that the Bakgatla were now very likely to have to fight, contrary to the official British policy. It also clearly shows that Holdsworth was, indeed, using his discretion, following the loophole in the instructions from his superior Nicholson already noted above.

At dawn on 25 November, Holdsworth ordered one Bakgatla regiment under Ramono to climb and secure the ground leading up to the Boer laager across the Madikwe, thus, effectively telling them to cross into SAR territory, contrary to "strict" official instructions.\(^{57}\) Another historian, Mohlamme, asserts that the Bakgatla crossed the border to invade Derdepoort, "according to instructions"\(^{58}\) from the British military authorities. The rest of the Bakgatla were on the Protectorate side, while Holdsworth and his men were just inside the Transvaal, strategically placed with a maxim gun on a ridge on the western bank of the Madikwe, overlooking the Boer laager. All the troops went into action when they saw smoke and shooting began just north of Holdsworth's position, the sign for all to start firing. However,

\(^{56}\) Ellenberger, "The Bechuanaland Protectorate," p. 5


\(^{58}\) Mohlamme, "The role of black people," p. 32.
both the British and Bakgatla troops were dangerously placed because, when either of them fired at the laager, their bullets landed at each other's position. Another logistic problem was that the British troops could not quickly cross the river because there was no accessible drift. Holdsworth later claimed that it was for these reasons and his 'belated realisation' that he and his men were in SAR territory that he decided upon a complete withdrawal of his British troops and their return to Mochudi. With the British troops now completely off the scene, the Bakgatla were obviously on their own and, to them, this seemed to be just the opportunity they had always wanted to begin settling their long-standing grievances against the Boers. In the ensuing fight, the Bakgatla suffered 14 dead and 16 wounded, while the Boers had 20 dead, including J.H. Barnard, a member of the first Volksraad for Rustenburg. The Bakgatla also captured 100 oxen, 30 horses and 18 women and children. In this attack, Bakgatla pressure must have been quite heavy because "15 Burgers deserted the laager" and Commandant Kirsten admitted, just after the war, that "the Kaffirs shot wonderfully well, in the same manner as the Boers, and their aiming was excellent, infinitely better than that of the English ..." At this early stage, the Bakgatla, on their own, began to extend the war far beyond Derdepoort and used it entirely for their own purposes. The murder of the German trader, S. Engers, in Sikwane village close to Derdepoort, is a good illustration of this, and we will go into it in some detail. Shortly after Colonel Holdsworth had fired the maxim gun, a small group of

60 Morton, "Linchwe I," p. 179.
61 Morton, "Linchwe I," p. 179. The captive Boer women and children were all repatriated back to the Transvaal at the end of November 1899. See Wulfsohn, Rustenburg at War, p. 51.
Bakgatla troops under a Mongale, was instructed by Ramono "to go and make a prisoner of Mr Engers at his shop at Tsikoane ... because he was friendly with the Boers ..." 63 It is important to note that Ramono's instruction also stipulated that Engers "was to have been made a prisoner and not killed," 64 a point which clearly stipulated the Bakgatla's intentions. The Bakgatla troops, however, did not take Engers prisoner but killed him. Some eight months after the incident, several prominent Bakgatla from the three regiments that had taken part in the Derdepoort attack, including Ramono and Segale, had to give sworn evidence about Engers' death to J. Ellenberger, and all of them reiterated the instruction not to kill Engers but to take him prisoner to Mochudi. 65

The Bakgatla's decision to kill Engers was made on the spur of the moment, prompted by his panicky reactions to them. When a small group of Bakgatla fighters surrounded Engers' shop in the early hours of 25 November 1899 and asked him to come out because "the chief wanted to see him," he was, understandably, suspicious and incredulous. Realising that his shop was surrounded by some 10 armed Africans, Engers feared for his life, panicked and began to shout for help from, according to the Bakgatla party's leader, Mongale, "his friends [the Boers] across the River [Madikwe]." 66 When the first shots were fired from Holdsworth's maxim gun at dawn, Engers became more alarmed and, in Mongale's words again, "he [Engers] only made for the door ... [and], thinking he was armed as we were [.,] he was shot down." 67 According

---

63 Botswana National Archives (BNA), RC 5/4, Affidavit of R. Pilane to J. Ellenberger, Acting Assistant Commissioner and Magistrate, Gaborone, 2 August 1901.
64 BNA RC 5/4, Affidavit of R. Pilane to Ellenberger, 2 August 1901.
65 BNA RC 5/4, Affidavit of Ramono to Ellenberger, Gaborone, 2 August 1901.
66 BNA RC 5/4, Affidavit of Mongale to Ellenberger, 2 August 1901.
67 BNA RC 5/4, Affidavit of Mongale, 2 August 1901.
to another eye-witness, Engers' Coloured housekeeper, L. De Villiers, who lived with him in
the shop (which also served as a house), when Engers refused to come out of the shop, he was
stabbed twice in the shoulder before he was shot. The Bakgatla, now numbering some fifty,
looted the shop, destroyed Engers' papers, broke up the money safe and stole about £700.68
Thus, looting and stealing may have been one of the Bakgatla's motives.

From all the available evidence on the incident,69 it was quite clear that Engers was not a
danger to the Bakgatla fighters' lives. Moreover, as will be shown shortly, it was not Bakgatla
policy to kill defenceless, unarmed civilians. The Bakgatla killed Engers because, apart from
genuinely suspecting that he was armed and intended to kill them, he was friendly with the
area's Boer community and, according to Linchwe and Ramono, "a personal friend of
Commandant Rickards (sic) of Derdepoort."70 This fact was well known to the Bakgatla border
communities of Derdepoort, Sikwane, Mathubudukwane and even Mochudi. In this regard,
therefore, the Bakgatla considered him guilty by association. This Bakgatla opinion was
reiterated by the Resident Commissioner at Mafeking, R. Williams, when he reported: "That
the Bakhatla killed Engers is true, but he was a sympathiser with the Boers and they regarded
him as an ordinary enemy."71

68 BNA RC 5/4, Affidavit of Lizzie De Villiers to Charles Bell, Resident Magistrate,
Mafeking, 11 July 1900. In the same file, see also the affidavits of Segale, Ramono, Seroke,
Thaperi and Seabatho (all of Mochudi) in which they admitted that they had stolen and
shared the money.

69 See Ellenberger's summary of evidence from all the affidavits in BNA RC 5/4,
Ellenberger to Acting Resident Commissioner, Mafeking, 19 July 1901.

70 BNA RC 5/4, cited in copy of telegram from Harbor, Mochudi, to Col. Nicholson,
Bulawayo, n.d.

71 SNA 59 NA 2111/02, R. Williams to Sir G. Lagden, 23 May 1902.
But even more serious to the Bakgatla was their claim that when war was imminent, Engers was spying on Bakgatla and British troop movements on behalf of the Boers. On the basis of intelligence reports, the British commanders in the area also believed this, and before setting off for the Derdepoort attack, both the Bakgatla and the British agreed that Engers should be taken prisoner. In the words of Segale: "Engers was friendly with the Boers and giving them information of the British Forces' movements. Mr Surmon said he should be made a prisoner and brought to Mochudi..."  

From the above evidence, therefore, it is clear that the killing of Engers was unintended, despite the fact that he was friendly with the Boers.

European reactions of outrage to the killing of Engers were almost immediate. T.H. Focke, the Consul-General for Germany in Cape Town, for example, formally protested to the British High Commissioner and Governor of the Cape Colony, Sir A. Milner, about Engers' murder by the Bakgatla, asserting that it had been instigated by the British and demanded a full investigation of the matter. Despite the investigation, however, none of the Bakgatla involved in the incident seems to have been punished for the deed. How is this to be explained? The British military authorities may have exonerated the Bakgatla simply because they were their war allies. After all, it was because of the Bakgatla's effective fighting role in the Pilanesberg that the British could afford to leave the area entirely to the Bakgatla while they fought Boers elsewhere in South Africa. A way of acknowledging this role, therefore, would have been to

---

72 BNA RC 5/4, Affidavit of Segale to Captain J. Griffith, Gaborone, 3 August 1901. In the same file, see also the affidavit of Ramono to H.J. Ratcliffe and G.H. Phillamore, Mochudi, 3 May 1900; telegram from Harbor to Lt. Col. Nicholson.

73 BNA RC 5/4, T.H. Focke to Sir A. Milner, 12 February 1900.

74 BNA RC 5/4, Affidavit of Ellenberger to Acting Resident Commissioner, Mafeking, 19 July 1901.
find them not guilty. That was the British officials, such as Ellenberger and Williams, continually defended the Bakgatla's role in the Derdepoort episode. 

Among Boer communities throughout the western Transvaal, there were rumours about Bakgatla murders of Boers and the destruction of their property. Highly sensational stories of such 'atrocities' were published both locally and abroad. A contemporary pro-Boer source, for example, recorded that "a German trader was disembowelled and otherwise tortured...", while another reported that, of the women and children taken captive by the Bakgatla, "some were murdered." The British fear (which was the Boers' desire) that the Derdepoort episode might be published abroad was in fact realised when, early in 1900, a German periodical reported that British and Bakgatla soldiers took turns in raping Boer women while being taken to Mochudi.

These standard accounts with their brutal image of Bakgatla and British 'atrocities' at Derdepoort have lingered on among the older generation of Afrikaners of nearby Rustenburg up to recent times. In a popular account of the experiences of white Rustenburgers in the two South African Wars, Wulfsohn, for example, has recorded that at Derdepoort, the Bakgatla

---

75 See, for example, Resident Commissioner R. Williams' defence of the Bakgatla troops' treatment of the Boer women and child captives during their forced walk from Derdepoort to Mochudi in SNA 59 NA 2111/02, R. Williams, Mafeking, to Sir G. Lagden, Johannesburg, 23 May 1902.

76 See, for example, Wulfsohn, Rustenburg at War, pp. 51-52.


78 W. Fouche, Pieter Stofberg: Zyn Leven, Arbeid en Afsierven, cited in Schapera, A Short History, p. 43. The quotation belongs to the Rev. P.B.J. Stofberg, a DRC missionary in Mochudi at the beginning of the war.

79 Cited in Warwick, Black People and the South African War, p. 41.
"attacked civilians, women and children, looting, plundering and burning homes and shops and generally running wild," while the Boer women and children the Bakgatla took to Mochudi "walked the whole of the 25th and 26th without being offered food or water by their escort." 80

The above reports, however, were grossly exaggerated and generally contradicted by a number of sources. The Assistant Commissioner at Gaborone, W.H. Surmon, for example, reported that "not one of them [i.e. the Boer captives] ever mentioned to me that they had in any way been ill-treated by the Bakhatla beyond being required to walk from Sekwani to Mochudi." 81 Engers' house-keeper, De Villiers, who was one the prisoners of war "marched" by the Bakgatla to Mochudi, also refuted the allegations of Bakgatla brutality thus: "We were all together and I saw no outrage or violence of any kind committed on the Dutch women. They were insulted in no way by any one, to my knowledge[,] as we were together the whole time." 82 De Villiers should be considered a credible witness because, with her employer and source of livelihood gone, she had nothing to lose by telling the truth. Moreover, she gave her testimony in Mafeking, which was geographically far removed from Derdepoort and, therefore, from any possible factors that could have influenced her testimony. However, this is not to exonerate the

80 Wulfsohn, *Rustenburg at War*, p. 50. Wulfsohn is a Jew by origin (at least on his father side), but was born in Rustenburg in 1919, his father having come to settle there from Latvia in 1897. Thus, all his life he has lived among Rustenburg's Afrikaners, the overwhelming majority of the town's conservative white population. For a brief autobiography of Wulfsohn, see his *Rustenburg at War*, "Foreword," pp. I-iii. For other highly biased pro-Boer and anti-Bakgatla accounts of the Derdepoort "massacre," see especially Botha, "Die moord," pp. 1-98; Davitt, *The Boer Fight for Freedom*, Chapter Fifteen. See also Wulfsohn, *Rustenburg at War*, Chapter Six; J.H. Breytenbach, "Ongepubliseerde manuskrip," typescript (April 1985), pp. 24-41.

81 SNA 59 NA 2111/02, quoted in R. Williams, Resident Commissioner, Mafeking, to Sir G. Lagden, Johannesburg, 23 May 1902.

82 BNA RC 5/4, affidavit of de Villiers to C. Bell, Resident Magistrate, Mafeking, 11 July 1900.
Bakgatla from all blame. They did, for example, destroy Boer property in Derdepoort by setting fire to a number of buildings, including Commandant Riekert's house.83

The casualty figures for the attack show that out of the dead Boers, 16 had been engaged in the defence and only 6 were civilians.84 Figures for Derdepoort's white population at the time are not known, but for a small turn-of-the-century frontier outpost, the total number killed must have been quite high. It must be pointed out also that, following the Boers' age-old military tradition, all the able-bodied males in such a frontier outpost from the age of about 13 to about 70 would have had some military skills85 and joined the laager. However, given the relative unpreparedness of the Derdepoort Boers already noted, the high level of Boer casualties could be appreciated, as many would have had neither the time nor the opportunity to get to the laager.

**Issues and repercussions arising from the Derdepoort episode**

Some important questions arising from the Derdepoort assault which have hitherto not been considered by any of the historians who have written on the Bakgatla-Boer war in the Pilanesberg86 need some further explanation. Did Lt. Col. Holdsworth, for example, really not know that when he ordered the Bakgatla regiments onto a particular ridge overlooking the

---

83 Ellenberger, quoted in Schapera, *A Short History*, p. 47.
84 Wulfsohn, *Rustenburg at War*, Appendix 7, p. 171.
85 For details of the very wide age-range and composition of a Boer commando during the two South African Wars, see H. Hillegas, *With the Boer Forces* (1900), pp. 64-69.
86 Morton, for example, refers briefly to the issue in a footnote. See Morton, "Linchwe I," p. 178.
Boer laager, he was in effect telling them to cross into the Transvaal, against official instructions? Why did Holdsworth and his British troops withdraw from the battle scene just when the attack began? As already pointed out, the instruction that the Bakgatla were not to cross into the Transvaal was made quite clear to Holdsworth. His possible misunderstanding or ignorance of the physical terrain around Derdepoort as an excuse for sending the Bakgatla into the Transvaal is implausible. Information about Derdepoort, especially "the position of the [Boer] laager and how to get there" was given to Holdsworth by Segale who knew the area and its Bakgatla community quite well, and it was on the basis of Segale's intelligence information that Holdsworth placed his men, both Bakgatla and British. Thus, Ellenberger, who was in the war party, recorded that Segale "gave Colonel Holdsworth all information as to the position of the laager." 

Holdsworth, therefore, must have known that he was sending the Bakgatla into the Transvaal. Moreover, the fact that Holdsworth, in Ellenberger's words, "set aside" Surmon's emphatic instruction not to allow the Bakgatla into the Transvaal meant that he was knowingly flouting instructions. That was why he decided that "our men's heavy ammunition boots would betray us when climbing up the laager" became a mere excuse. But why did Holdsworth act the way he did? It is possible that because the Bakgatla knew the local terrain, while the British did not,

---

87 Morton seems to suggest this when he says: "Only after the Kgatla guns came into action did Holdsworth realise that they were positioned across the river and in the Transvaal." See Morton, "Linchwe I," p. 179. Similarly, Warwick has recorded that "the assault was executed with considerable misunderstanding." See Warwick, Black People and the South African War, p. 40.


Holdsworth decided to use only the Bakgatla, to save his British troops. In other words, Holdsworth used the Bakgatla troops as 'cannon fodder.' According to Wulfsohn, the idea of "using the Bakgatla" was conceived by Col. Nicholson, Holdsworth's superior, long before the Bakgatla-British departure from Mochudi. This explanation is not far-fetched. Both the Assistant and Resident Commissioners "remained convinced throughout the war that Holdsworth had deliberately used the Kgatla to do his fighting..." The Bakgatla, no doubt, felt betrayed by the British action at Derdepoort, and Linchwe himself expressed his disappointment personally to Holdsworth.

While the Bakgatla were disappointed, the Boers too felt aggrieved and alarmed by what had happened at Derdepoort. On 26 November 1899, one of the Boer survivors in the attack cycled to Rustenburg and alerted the Boer military authorities who embarked upon reprisals immediately. There was considerable panic in reaction to an exaggerated estimation of the danger which Derdepoort was perceived to be in, as suggested by the very large number of troops sent there from Rustenburg and Crocodile Pools, while many others were mobilised from the districts of the Heks and Kgetleng Rivers, Waterberg, Mafeking and even Johannesburg. By the beginning of December 1899, the combined number of Boer troops at Derdepoort was well over 400.

The Boer fear and panic in turn generated rumours that spread rapidly throughout these areas.

---

91 Personal communication, 12-4 Cashan Avenue, Rustenburg South, 28 June 1993. See also Wulfsohn's updated 1992 edition of his Rustenburg at War, p. 61.
94 For details, see Breytenbach, "Ongepubliseerde manuskrip," pp. 29-30, 34-35.
The Bakgatla, it was rumoured, were planning a massive invasion of not only the tiny white administrative post at Saulspoort, but even Rustenburg itself. These rumours were so strong that: "Commandant J.F. Kirsten sent an urgent message to the landdrost of Rustenburg Mr. J.C. Brink, requesting him to call out the entire district Commando in defence of the town. The gaol (presently Commando Headquarters) was converted into a fort ... to accommodate all the women and children of the village in case of emergency. Farmers in the district formed themselves into laagers and many moved into Rustenburg with their whole families and herds of cattle, for protection." These rumours, the fears they generated and, of course, the earlier Derdepoort incident itself galvanised the Boers into action.

A major Boer offensive of six commando groups under the general command of Commandant-General J. van Rensburg was carefully planned against the Bakgatla. The Boers were anxious for victory and, as one of the Commandants, P. Joubert, stated, "... there should be no action against Linchwe until the commandos were absolutely certain of success as a setback would be disastrous for the Republic." Thus, for a while, military action between the two sides was limited to only skirmishes. On 21 December 1899, the Bakgatla killed a Boer and wounded three others near the laager. By the early hours of the next day, there was heavy fighting between the two sides. Bakgatla pressure on the position of one of the Commandants made him so "desperate" that another two commando groups had to come to his rescue. By the end of that day, however, the Bakgatla succumbed to the Boers' cannons and maxim guns and "scattered in all directions...," having lost some 150 dead while the Boers reportedly lost only

---

4 killed. 97 In order to punish the Bakgatla and ensure that they would not pose any more danger, the Boer commandos razed the Bakgatla's border villages of Mathubudukwane, Malolwane, Sikwane and even threatened to attack Mochudi itself. 98 Sikwane in particular was "thoroughly ravaged" by the Boers in case it would be used as a base against them as it was closest to Derdepoort. 99

The Boers also took as booty three horses, several wagons, ploughs, pots and other small items and burnt a large quantity of ammunition. 100 As a precaution, Linchwe had moved all his people and their livestock to the safety of Mochudi. After pillaging the three villages, Commandant-General van Rensburg and his commandos were satisfied with the "telling punishment" and generally believed that the Bakgatla would "no longer [dare] to trouble the Boers." 101 The Boers would have continued the offensive, but fear of the vulnerability of their unprotected farms back in the Transvaal, prompted them to discontinue the attack early in 1900. 102 The Boer actions, however, instead of achieving their intended objectives, made the Bakgatla even more determined to fight back.

---


100 Breytenbach, "Ongepubliseerde manuskrip," p. 38.

101 Quoted in Schapera, *A Short History*, pp. 42 and 43, respectively.

The Bakgatla's escalation of the war in the Pilanesberg

After the razing of their border villages, the Bakgatla now considered the war against the Boers to be completely their own and began to escalate it throughout the Pilanesberg. In January 1900, following Segale's complaint to the British authorities that "the Boers were mistreating Transvaal Kgatla loyal to his brother [i.e. Linchwe]," the Bakgatla received 100 more Martini-Henry rifles, in addition to the ones they had got for the Derdepoort attack. With these arms, the British allowed them to enter the Transvaal. The Bakgatla's excuse might or might not have been genuine, but they found it convenient for their own purposes. To those Bakgatla who were most eager to fight the Boers, such as Segale, this must have appeared as the British 'go ahead' signal, and they seized both the opportunity and the initiative.

On 16 February 1900, Linchwe mobilised two Bakgatla regiments, the Makoba and the Mojanko, under Ramono and Motshwane, respectively. At Kayaseput, half-way between Derdepoort and the Dwarsberg mountains (see the map), the regiments waited in an elaborately planned ambush for a large convoy of Boer troop reinforcements and supply wagons from Rustenburg, bound for Derdepoort. In the ensuing attack, "many Boers" were killed, and their wagons and supplies captured. It should be noted that, although the Boers had decided to discontinue the offensive against the Bakgatla at the beginning of 1900 because they believed that their farms in the Transvaal were vulnerable, the reinforcements they attempted to take to

104 Schapera, Ditirafalo, p. 182. For more details of this incident, see, for example, CAD, Van Warmelo Boxes S.292(24) K32/13, J. Masiangoako, "Military system and war," pp. 3-4. Warwick records that there were 42 commandos in this convoy. See Warwick, Black People and the South African War, p. 45.
Derdepoort in February were merely for the defence of the settlement’s Boers. The news of this incident was so unsettling that a Boer commando at nearby Sepitse abandoned their laager when they heard about it.\textsuperscript{105} This famous incident in Bakgatla history has vividly lived on in popular memory, especially among the older generation and is graphically depicted in a praise-poem dedicated to the bravery of one of the Bakgatla commanders in that incident, Ramono.\textsuperscript{106} Soon after the Kayaseput ambush, Commandant P. Steenkamp and some of the Rustenburg commando went to Derdepoort and brought back all of the remaining Boers. As a direct result of that ambush, Derdepoort was abandoned and remained unoccupied for the remainder of the war.\textsuperscript{107}

Both the Derdepoort and Kayaseput episodes were significant for two reasons. First, they boosted Bakgatla morale and gave them the confidence to pursue the war more vigorously, as further military engagements were to show. The Bakgatla also proved to themselves that the Boers who had defeated them in the past were not invincible after all. Indeed, in this regard, the Boer withdrawal from Derdepoort was highly symbolic. Second, as Mohlamme has pointed out, the Boer military threat in the western Transvaal-Bechuanaland border area was reduced considerably as a direct result of Derdepoort, because the Boers "now concentrated their attacks south of Gaborone towards Mafeking," thus, enabling the British to re-occupy Gaborone, which the Boers had earlier forced them to abandon in October 1899.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{105} Schapera, \textit{Ditirafalo}, p. 182.


\textsuperscript{107} Wulfsohn, \textit{Rustenburg at War}, p. 63.

\textsuperscript{108} See Mohlamme, "The role of black people," pp. 40-41.
Soon after the Kayaseput incident, Linchwe sent the Mojanko regiment under Modise to assist the Bakgatla at Saulspoort. In a major engagement at Moreletse in Mabeskraal, the Bakgatla "captured 300 Boer trek oxen, and 2 vehicles [i.e. wagons] and successfully brought them off"; but it was also in this battle that Tlatsi, Linchwe's Ntoma (confidential assistant), was killed in action.\textsuperscript{109} With a new supply of 250 Martini-Henry rifles from the British authorities in the middle of 1900,\textsuperscript{110} the Bakgatla were clearly on the war-path. In July 1901, Linchwe obtained permission from the Assistant Commissioner at Gaborone "to protect his people at Saulspoort who were in danger of attack," but was told "not to attack outside his own country [i.e. Mochudi in Bechuanaland]," although the message further added that "there is no reason why he should not send some of his men to assist Saulspoort."\textsuperscript{111} Following this, Linchwe was twice supplied with an unspecified number of "rifles and ammunition"\textsuperscript{112} by the British military authorities. By this stage of the war, the British had made it quite clear that they needed the Bakgatla's assistance and openly approved of their military role in the Transvaal.

The Bakgatla, with the permission of the British Director of Military Intelligence, operated south of the Kgetleng River, as far as Rustenburg. They were so militarily effective that, in the words of the SNC at Saulspoort, F. Edmeston, "the Military Authorities were relieved of all anxiety as to this district, which was held by these [Bakgatla] people, as far north as Palla."\textsuperscript{113} The triumphant Bakgatla claimed all the lands "stretching from the Crocodile to the Elands

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{109} SNA 116 NA 672/03, SNC to NC, 27 April 1903, p. 2; Schapera, \textit{Ditirafalo}, p. 182; \textit{A Short History}, p. 20.
\item \textsuperscript{110} SNA 116 NA 672/03, Petition by R. Pilane and others to A. Lawley, Lieutenant-Governor, Transvaal, 9 February 1903, p. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{111} SNA 59 NA 211/02, cited in R. Williams to G. Lagden, 23 May 1902.
\item \textsuperscript{112} SNA 59 NA 2111/02, Williams to Lagden, 23 May 1902.
\item \textsuperscript{113} SNA 116 NA 672/03, SNC, the Pilanesberg, to NC, Rustenburg, 27 April 1903, p. 2.
\end{itemize}
River. They were so carried away with this idea that it was generally understood amongst themselves that no Boers would be allowed to cross the Elands River.  

It was for this reason that Krikler has, quite aptly, described the Bakgatla as the "scourge of the western Transvaal." Apart from their fighting role, the Bakgatla also served as scouts, guides, wagon drivers and gave the British forces intelligence reports "on every occasion of Boer movements."

A major feature of the war in the Pilanesberg was the Bakgatla's looting of Boer cattle on a very large scale. Apart from Morton, Krikler and Warwick have written about this aspect in little detail, while Mohlamme's study on the African role in the South African War leaves out this aspect altogether. The Bakgatla, far more than any other black people of the western Transvaal who participated in the war, looted Boer cattle on an enormous scale, for basically the same reasons of vengeance for which they waged the war. As the Native Commissioner (NC) in Rustenburg reported at the end of the war, "99% of the cattle looted from the Boers" was by the Bakgatla and there were "very few instances" of other ethnic groups in the

---

114 SNA 106 NA 491/03, NC to SNA, 18 February 1903, pp. 1-2.
116 SNA 71 NA 2482/02, SNC to NC, 7 November 1903.
117 Mohlamme, "The role of black people." Warwick merely mentions the issue, while Krikler indicates the Bakgatla's looting of Boer cattle as only a part of a wider pattern. See Warwick, Black People and the South African War, p. 45; Krikler, "Agrarian class struggle," pp. 161-163; "Revolution from above," pp. 23-29.
118 Morton has recorded that, because of the Bakgatla's large-scale looting of Boer cattle, the Kgatla Reserve (in Bechuanaland) held "16 091, which was probably as much as ten times the number of cattle the Kgatla possessed after the rinderpest and before the war" and that "[i]n the years after the war, cattle was so plentiful in the Reserve that beasts were slaughtered almost nightly in Mochudi for feasting." See Morton, "Linchwe I," p. 187.
Pilanesberg looting Boer cattle.\textsuperscript{119} But this was to be expected as the Bakgatla were the Boers' only adversaries in this area during the South African War. However, it should also be noted that, aside from the Bakgatla's own reasons, the looting of Boer cattle was, as a senior British official stated, "[in] the majority of the cases...at the instigation and with the cognizance of the [British] military authorities,"\textsuperscript{120} presumably to demoralise the Boers and to 'reward' the Bakgatla. But it is also most likely that this activity was beyond the control of the British authorities. The looted cattle were carted off to the safety of Mochudi because, as one Mokgatla source put it, once they were there, "it was the end of them, whatever the Boers did, they could never get them back."\textsuperscript{121}

During the war, the looted cattle were shared out in two ways. As Morton has recorded, Linchwe distributed some of them "generously" among the heroes of the war, while some were slaughtered to feed his troops. After the war, some were given to the sons of those who had died fighting, the gallant men of the war, ward headmen and the poor. The Saulspoort Bakgatla who had brought looted cattle over to Mochudi also returned with rewards of cattle.\textsuperscript{122} Linchwe did this to ensure loyalty. Yet Linchwe still remained with plenty more cattle for himself, as indicated in June 1904 by the NC for the Western Division, C. Griffith, who recorded that: "The chief, Lintsoe, has a great many herds of cattle running on farms along the Marico and Crocodile Rivers ..."\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{119} SNA 106  NA 491/03, NC to SNA, 18 February 1903, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{120} SNA 106  NA 491/03, NC to SNA, 18 February 1903, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{121} CAD Van Warmelo Boxes K32/13, S.292(24), J. Masiangoako, "Military system and war," p. 2.
\textsuperscript{122} For details, see Morton, "Babolayeng BagaKgafela," p. 27.
\textsuperscript{123} TKP Vol. 239, \textit{Annual Report by the CNA, 30 June 1904}, Annexure "K," p. B.42. (continued...)
The Bakgatla not only looted the Boers' cattle but also those of other Batswana groups in the Pilanesberg. During the war, for example, the Bakgatla had raided stock worth £828 from the Baphalane. In November 1902, the NC reported that the Bakgatla had "looted stock from most of the natives residing within reach of Saulspoort"; he had received "numerous complaints" from "various tribes" in the district (of the Pilanesberg) whose cattle had been "raided or stolen from them by the Bakhatla (Lintsue's people) during the war" and, to ensure the cattle's safe-keeping, "99% of it" was taken away to the Protectorate. Why did the Bakgatla do this to their fellow Batswana and neighbours? The Bakgatla rationalised this as punitive actions against people they considered to be collaborators of the Boers. If chief Linchwe's report of 14 February 1902 to the Resident Commissioner in Mafeking is to be believed, some African groups "on the Marico and thereabouts are helping the Boers and are supplying them with information." Moreover, during the war, as the collective Bakgatla leadership itself countered, Boer forces gave their cattle to some "friendly" Batswana groups in the Pilanesberg for safe-keeping, in particular to the Bafokeng of chief Mokgatle, the Bakwena of chief Lerotoli and the Baphalane of Ramokoka while they (the Boers) were away fighting. These groups, the Bakgatla further alleged, "were in the Boers' favour by feeding

123 (...continued)
For details of how Linchwe used "his own" cattle in order to gain the loyalty of his people in the Pilanesberg after the war, see Chapter Four.
124 SNA 71 NA 2482/02, NC to SNA, 11 December 1902.
125 SNA 71 NA 2482/02, NC to SNA, 6 November 1902. In the same file, see also Telegram, SNA to NC, 23 May 1903; NC to SNA, 10 November 1903.
126 SNA 17 NA 396/02, Cited in R. Williams, RC, Mafeking, to G.Y. Lagden, CNA, 14 February 1902.
them and were principally used as their faithful scouts."127

These Bakgatla allegations were correct. There is some indication that throughout the Transvaal, the Boer guerrillas sometimes commandeered livestock from blacks. But generally, they often bought or obtained food from 'friendly' blacks by mutual consent, especially when Kitchener's scorched earth policy began to destroy the Boers' food resources in the countryside. As one Boer leader at the Vereeniging Peace Conference stated: "We must obtain mealies from the Kaffirs by using nice words."128 Furthermore, as the works of Warwick, Nasson, Mohlamme, Manson and Pretorius have shown, the Boers also extensively used Africans in armed combat.129 These may have been the reasons why the Bakgatla treated their neighbours the way they did.

As already noted above, in the case of the Engers incident at Sikwane, the Bakgatla considered those who aided their enemies as their enemies also, whoever they were. In Saulspoort itself, a few months after the outbreak of war, the shop and household property of a Jewish trader, M. Pieters, were looted by the Bakgatla. (Pieters had been trading in Saulspoort since 1890.) While he was out of Saulspoort, Pieters' property, such as furniture, livestock and various articles, all valued at £3 400, was "completely looted," and he demanded compensation. At the

127 SNA 116 NA 672/03, Petition by R. Pilane and others to Sir A. Lawley, 9 February 1903, pp. 3-4. See also Mohlamme, "The role of black people," pp. 149-150.
end of the war, upon investigation by the Sub-Native Commissioner (SNC), W.H. Driver, the Bakgatla leadership in Saulspoort admitted the looting by "unknown people" from their location. However, their spokesperson, Segale, insisted that Pieters had used his shop "for the purpose of supplying Boers' [Commando] camps at different places during the late war" and alleged further that Pieters "was promised by the Boers that all goods taken away from his shop for supplying their camps will be paid again by their Government (as Compensation) after having conquered British Armies." Citing precise dates and a number of Bakgatla witnesses, Segale enumerated all the occasions when Pieters had supplied a very wide range of foods and other supplies to the various Boer commando camps all over the Pilanesberg, beginning from about 15 October 1899 to about 11 April 1900.

Pieters' representations to the SNC for compensation were, however, rejected for four reasons. First, since Pieters kept scaling down his claim (from £3 400 at first to £1 750, eventually), the SNC became sceptical because, as he claimed, Pieters was not a person who could "forgo any legitimate claim..." Second, the SNC, like the Bakgatla leadership, maintained that Pieters' shop had goods worth only about £50 at the time of the looting. Third, chief Ramono's argument, which the SNC clearly appeared to support, was that the Bakgatla, as a group, were not to blame for the looting because they had been away at war at the time and so "neither the absent tribe, nor its absent authorities can be held to be responsible for the protection of the store from

---

130 SNA 125 NA 966/03, M. Pieters, Rustenburg, to SNA, 20 April 1903.
131 SNA 125 NA 966/03, Segale to SNC, 18 March 1903.
132 For details of how plentiful these supplies were, see SNA 125 NA 966/03, S.K. Pilane to SNC, 18 March 1903.
criminals -- such protection being the duty of the late Government.\textsuperscript{133} Fourth, a suggestion by Pieters' lawyers, Roux and Jacobsz, to the SNC that "the matter is one that had better be settled out of Court by mutual agreement,"\textsuperscript{134} in itself implied admission of a weak legal position and the SNC himself considered it "a very weak case" and rejected it.\textsuperscript{135} Following the failure of his compensation claim, Pieters decided to leave Saulspoort forever and, sometime in May 1903, went to settle in Selukwe, Southern Rhodesia.\textsuperscript{136}

This account needs some analysis. The looting of Pieters' property was not solely the action of irresponsible, criminal elements, as chief Ramono suggested to the SNC and to Pieters,\textsuperscript{137} but rather a well calculated effort and obviously an act of revenge against Pieters' material assistance to the Boers. It was instigated at the highest level of Bakgatla society, as indicated by the fact that some members of the royal family were also involved in the looting. At the end of the war, Ditlhake, for example, was, according to Pieters, in possession of some of his stolen sheep and goats,\textsuperscript{138} while "one of the Chief's brothers" had some of his stolen furniture.\textsuperscript{139} Yet Pieters' pre-war relations with the Bakgatla generally were quite good and in some cases personal and trusting. He had, for example, given his "doors, door-frames and all house furnitures (sic)" to one Headman Bafsyoe (sic) for safe-keeping, while "Headman Mokae kept

\textsuperscript{133} SNA 125 NA 966/03, SNC to NC, 2 May 1903.
\textsuperscript{134} SNA 125 NA 966/03, Roux and Jacobsz to SNC, 16 April 1903.
\textsuperscript{135} SNA 125 NA 966/03, SNC to NC, 2 May 1903. SNC Edmeston's decision was endorsed by the SNA. See the same file, SNA to M. Pieters, 20 May 1903.
\textsuperscript{136} SNA 125 NA 966/03, SNC to NC, 16 May 1903; NC to SNA, 28 May 1903.
\textsuperscript{137} SNA 125 NA 966/03, cited in SNC to NC, 2 May 1903.
\textsuperscript{138} SNA 125 NA 966/03, Pieters to SNA, 20 April 1903.
\textsuperscript{139} SNA 125 NA 966/03, Pieters to SNC, 9 March 1903.
clothes and other goods for him"; Pieters also "gave the other goods to his native friends," apparently free of charge. This, clearly, is evidence of Pieters’ goodwill towards the Bakgatla generally. However, it should be pointed out that the friendly relationship between Pieters and the Bakgatla existed before the war. In view of such an amicable pre-war relationship, it is, therefore, plausible to conclude that the Bakgatla looted Pieters' property, not because he was white or unpopular, but simply because of the enormous material assistance he gave to the Boers from the beginning of the war, while the obvious and open manner in which he did it may have worsened matters and prompted the looting.

The Bakgatla's looting of the properties of the Boers and their collaborators was accompanied by general lawlessness and the wanton destruction of whatever they could not take away. In the western Transvaal, "the breakdown of military and civil authority" had become "very worrying" to the British authorities. While British military operations tended to be confined to the major settlements, along the railway lines and the main roads, the Bakgatla kept to the countryside, looting and destroying Boer property, harassing and generally causing mayhem. As a result of the violent Bakgatla campaign, practically all the Boers in the Pilanesberg fled to Rustenburg for safety. A contemporary traveller to the Pilanesberg conveyed the situation graphically: "The Dutch population had to fly, and not a Boer, man, woman or child was left in the land."  

---

140 SNA 125 NA 966/03, S.K. Pilane to SNC, 18 March 1903.
141 Quoted in Warwick, Black People, p. 46.
142 By the beginning of July 1900, for example, the road from Rustenburg to Ottoshoop "was seriously menaced" by the Boers. See L. Creswicke, South Africa and the Transvaal War, Vol. IV (1900), p. 70.
143 Knight, South Africa After the War, p. 272.
The extent of the Bakgatla destruction of Boer property in the Pilanesberg was, in fact, much greater than has hitherto been acknowledged in any of the current historiography on the war in the western Transvaal. Instead, these works have tended to dwell only on Boer atrocities and/or the Bakgatla's looting of Boer cattle. Travelling through the Pilanesberg just after the war, the British journalist, E.F. Knight, came across numerous cases of the destruction of Boer property, "not by our [i.e. British] troops -- for the British columns never operated in this region, though they occasionally skirted it -- but by the Kaffirs of the Bakgatla tribe, whose work of destruction was far more complete than that effected by our own soldiery." This kind of violence and destruction, it should be noted, was not confined to the Pilanesberg alone but to other parts of the Transvaal as well.

Virtually all the destruction of Boer property in the Pilanesberg, as both Morton and Krikler have alluded, should be attributed solely to the Bakgatla. On the first day of their travel from

144 Krikler, Morton, Warwick and Mohlamme say extremely little about this issue. Krikler, for example, although he acknowledges the Bakgatla as the "scourge of the western Transvaal," hardly discusses this aspect. See, for example, Krikler, "Agrarian class struggle," pp. 151-176; "Social neurosis and hysterical pre-cognition in South Africa: a case study and reflections," South African Historical Journal, 28 (1993), pp. 63-97; See also Morton, "Linchwe I," pp. 169-191; "Chiefs and ethnic unity," pp. 127-153; Warwick, Black People and the South African War, pp. 186-209; Mohlamme, "The role of black people."

145 Knight, South Africa After the War, p. 264. My emphasis.

146 For details of this kind of violence in the Ohrigstad area of the northern Transvaal, see, for example, Viljoen, My Reminiscences, pp. 533-534. But it should be noted too that the African destruction of Boer farms during the war was not completely universal. In the northern Orange Free State, for example, an African tenant took care of his Boer landlord's property, wife and children following his capture and incarceration in a prisoner-of-war camp on St. Helena Island. See Motsuenyane, "A Tswana growing up with Afrikaners," Munger Africana Library Notes, 47 (February), p. 5.

147 See, for example, Morton, "Linchwe I," pp. 179-191; Krikler, "Agrarian struggle," pp. (continued...)
Rustenburg to the Pilanesberg in the middle of 1903, Knight and his party continually came across the Boers' "roofless, gutted homesteads." At Zand Drift on the Kgetleng River, the party saw "two Boer homesteads, both in ruins and deserted." Throughout the area north of the Kgetleng River, "every [Boer] homestead had been razed to the ground," and close to Saulspoort itself, there were "a few scattered, ruined, and abandoned Boer homesteads [which] told the tale of the Bakgatla raids." The Bakgatla also felled down fruit trees and removed corrugated iron sheets and bricks from the abandoned Boer homes to build their own homes with.

The Bakgatla's looting and destruction of Boer property was, however, only a part of their much bigger war objective of taking over Boer farms and, therefore, re-occupying their ancestral lands. As Krikler has shown, this was a very common feature of the war among Africans in the Transvaal generally. As soon as the Boers had abandoned their farms, the Bakgatla took them over, "as theirs by right of conquest," and they were convinced that this would be a permanent feature of their lives because, after all, the British had promised to give them "the territory ... they had controlled during the war."

(continued)

148 Knight, South Africa After the War, p. 259.
149 Knight, South Africa After the War, p. 260.
150 Knight, South Africa After the War, p. 264.
151 Knight, South Africa After the War, p. 274.
152 Knight, South Africa After the War, p. 264.
154 Knight, South Africa After the War, p. 272.
But the above account of the Bakgatla's role should not give the impression that there was no reaction from the Boers. The period from August to December 1901, which saw an escalation of Bakgatla activity, was also the period when Boer retaliatory raids were at their highest. But, of course, they were likely to have begun soon after the first Bakgatla raids into the Transvaal. The Boers too did go on the offensive and achieved some military successes while the Bakgatla sometimes also sustained heavy losses. In a major battle on 12 December 1901, for example, a Boer commando under Commandant J.C.G. Kemp attacked Saulspoort itself and continued raiding northwards up to Bierkraal River. In the process, some 30 cattle herdsmen under a Kgaboesele attacked the commando "on its retirement" until they (the herdsmen) ran out of ammunition. Kgaboesele and five others were killed, while the rest were wounded. Apart from the dead and wounded, this engagement was very significant because it "cost the tribe some 6 000 to 7 000 head of cattle, without mentioning small stock..." This Bakgatla claim does seem exaggerated but, nevertheless, points to the severity of the Boer assault. This incident clearly shows that although the Bakgatla were militarily more successful, they could not take the Boer forces for granted.

The Boers too, just like the British elsewhere in South Africa during the war, committed considerable excesses. Even African communities that were neutral still bore the brunt of both Boer and Briton. In the south-western Transvaal, for example, "Africans faced immense losses and hardships," as their crops were destroyed, livestock stolen and they themselves were displaced. In the Pilanesberg, however, Boer retaliation was to be expected, in view of the

156 SNA 116 NA 672/03, SNC to NC, 27 April 1903, p. 3.
much wider level and extent of Bakgatla violence against them. At the end of the war, the SNC reported that there had been “summary executions” as well as “numberless cases of cruelty by Boers [which] took place in public at Saulspoort, amongst which the flogging to death of an invalid, Mogasoe Segogoane is the worst case.”\(^{158}\) The Boers also flogged anyone they suspected of giving information to the British, while “men and women were wantonly shot down when ploughing their lands in the Pilandsberg (sic).”\(^{159}\) In contrast, as the SNC claimed, the Bakgatla “never mutilated the bodies of the enemy, nor injured a Boer female or child.”\(^{160}\)

These actions strike some resonance with the gist of Nasson’s study of the South African War in parts of the Cape, about which he wrote that “... a war between British imperialism and Boer republicanism turned with abrupt and explosive force into a desperate, undeclared civil war between rural whites and rural blacks.”\(^{161}\) But, unlike in the Cape where blacks and coloureds were more on the receiving end of the Boer forces’ "generalised repressive determination,”\(^{162}\) in the Pilanesberg, the Bakgatla waged the war against the Boers much more effectively, resulting in the kind of conditions we have noted above. Soon after Commandant Kemp's attack, the scales were tipped in favour of the Bakgatla when they received a new batch of rifles from Kitchener. This was followed by two pitched battles with the Boers at Draaiberg and Janskop, after which the Bakgatla were in effective control over most of the

\(^{158}\) SNA 116 NA 672/03, SNC to NC, 27 April 1903, p. 2.

\(^{159}\) Knight, \emph{South Africa After the War}, p. 270.

\(^{160}\) SNA 116 NA 672/03, SNC to NC, 27 April 1903, p. 3.

\(^{161}\) Nasson, \emph{Abraham Esau’s War}, p. 120.

\(^{162}\) For Boer commando activity and counter-activity, see Nasson, \emph{Abraham Esau’s War}, especially Chapter Seven.
western Transvaal until the Boer surrender on 31 May 1902.  

From the above, it is clear that by that stage, the Bakgatla had considerable success in achieving some of their objectives of the war. First, they had driven practically all the Boers off their Pilanesberg farms and occupied them themselves. Although this turned out to be only short-term, it was, nevertheless symbolic of the Bakgatla's strong desire to re-own their lost ancestral lands. Second, they had succeeded in looting numerous herds of Boer cattle which, unlike the temporary occupation of Boer farms, became a much more permanent and useful community resource.

A number of factors contributed to the Bakgatla's success. First, up to at least March 1900, the bulk of the Boer forces were preoccupied with the sieges of major towns, such as Mafeking, and engaging in fierce, resource-sapping battles with British forces, while those in the extreme western Transvaal and the northern Cape concentrated on wrecking the railway line, thus, leaving very large areas like the Pilanesberg undefended and, therefore, open to Bakgatla attacks.  

Second, the Bakgatla's high fighting morale was sustained by the strong belief that they would forever re-possess their ancestral lands from the Boers. This belief was so strong that, as the Pilanesberg SNC, F. Edmeston, wrote, it "served to keep every available man in the [battle] field..." Third, Bakgatla success is also explained by the unity of purpose and resoluteness with which they fought against the Boers. This basic factor, which was

---

163 SNA 116 NA 672/03, Petition by R. Pilane and others to A. Lawley, 9 February 1903, p. 4.
165 SNA 116 NA 672/03, SNC to NC, 27 April 1903, p. 3.
strengthened by access to British arms, was built over very many decades, necessitated by external threats from both the Bakwena and the Boers. Fourth, Grundlingh, has recorded that the Boer commandos were poorly motivated and "would not have hesitated to surrender their arms at the earliest opportunity." The Boer lack of rigid discipline while on commando meant that they could go home to check on their family and property whenever they wished to. Boer defeatism and low morale worsened from February 1900 when General P. Cronje surrendered to Roberts and worsened further with the British occupation of Bloemfontein in March 1900 and, later, the invasion of the Transvaal. All this, no doubt, facilitated Bakgatla war activity and success in the Pilanesberg.

The results of the war

As noted above, the Bakgatla gained enormously from the looted Boer cattle which far more than compensated for what they themselves had lost to the Boers. Cattle were the all-important resource that the Bakgatla chief, Linchwe, used not only to boost his status and prestige, but also to buy his people in the Pilanesberg much-needed additional land. With the Boer defeat, Africans in the Transvaal generally believed that the Boer farms they had occupied during the war "would be confiscated and given to the natives," but the British authorities "lost no time in dispelling this delusion their minds..." In June 1903, the Commissioner for Native Affairs (CNA) labelled the very idea of Africans possessing Boer farms as "misguided" and called for a reversion to the pre-war status quo. Race relations could be "healthy," he stated in bluntly

---


racist terms, "if the higher race recognises its obligations to the lower, and the lower race realises its true position and ... owns towards the higher race a becoming respect." Since one of the Bakgatla's war objectives was to regain possession of their lost ancestral lands, they were greatly disappointed that, following British victory, they were ordered to vacate the Boer farms. The CNA was aware of this Bakgatla despair when he wrote that:

... the Natives are greatly disappointed at not being made grants of land in consideration of the services they rendered to our troops during the late war; they fully expected that the farms would be taken from the Boers and given to them. They anticipated the [Boer] farmers being dispossessed of all title to land.

The Bakgatla, however, experienced a greater loss than the temporary occupation of Boer farms. Although there are no statistics of Bakgatla war losses, there is some indication that they lost heavily in human resources, and Morton suggests, quite correctly, that the Bakgatla "probably suffered a higher casualty rate, because the Boer was more experienced with the rifle and therefore a better shot." On one occasion, for example, the Bakgatla "lost 52 men in action," while "44" others had "summary executions' by Boers ..." But there were, of course, many more casualties from the many battles between the two sides. Morton has estimated the number of Bakgatla men killed in action at some 200, not to mention the very

170 Morton, "Linchwe I," p. 188.
171 SNA 116 NA 672/03, SNC to NC, 27 April 1903.
many men who survived the war permanently disfigured in one way or another. The general insecurity caused by the war and fear of getting killed by Boer commandos would have prevented the Bakgatla from going out to cultivate their fields. As food-production got disrupted by the war, the impact of famine was considerable. In the late 1920s, a survivor put it starkly when he said: "All that they [Bakgatla in the Pilanesberg] knew was famine. It was famine that scattered them hither and thither and not war." This was compounded by the fact that "every available man" was sent to the battle field, instead of the crop field.

As a direct result of the war, relations between the Boers and Africans were transformed. Krikler, for example, has recounted how many farm workers all over the Transvaal deserted their Boer masters during the war, never to return to "their exploiters." Even more striking was the changed nature of the Africans' attitudes to the Boers and whites in general. Due to the war, the Africans had become, as the Boers and the British administrators put it, "disrespectful" to white people. The new African attitudes were unmistakable and were reflected in the CNA's report for June 1903 in which he recorded that due to the war, black people had developed "a spirit of independence and apparent aggressiveness which was a new and regrettable feature in relations between black and white." In September 1903, C. Griffith,

---

174 SNA 116 NA 672/03, SNC to NC, 27 April 1903, p. 3.
176 Krikler, "Revolution from above," pp. 40, 42.
177 TKP Vol.239, Annual Report by the Commissioner for Native Affairs, Transvaal, for the Year Ended 30 June 1903, p. A.1.
the NC for the western Transvaal reported that "all" the Africans who had fought with the British in the war "were disposed to be very disrespectful to the farmers and were disinclined to go out and work for them." 178

These attitudes were even more pronounced among the Bakgatla than any other people in the western Transvaal, and this was to be expected. The Bakgatla had played a major role in the Boer defeat and, as Krikler has correctly stated, their struggles "were probably the most effective and militant of all those waged by rural working people during the South African War." 179 The Bakgatla clearly saw their war role as having placed them on a different, special level and, therefore, expected to be treated as such. In September 1902, the SNC quite aptly made this observation: "They look upon themselves as having been very necessary allies of the British Government during the late war and that they are entitled to be treated on a different footing to the other tribes." 180 Their military role had, no doubt, brought them a considerable measure of courage, confidence and even arrogance. The journalist, E.F. Knight, who visited the Pilanesberg just after the war, made this observation in 1903 when he said: "The recent successes of the Bakgatla have given these already sufficiently conceited people very swollen heads. They are waxing insolent and may become dangerous." 181

178 SNA 169 NA 2059/03, NC to SNA, 18 September 1903, p. 35.
179 Krikler, "Revolution from above," p. 53.
180 SNA 62 NA 2160/02, SNC to NC, 26 September 1902. My emphasis. See especially the Bakgatla's lengthy petition to the Lieutenant-Governor which clearly reveals the self-perception regarding their role in the war: SNA 116 NA 672/03, Chief S.K. Pilane and others to Sir A. Lawley, Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of the Transvaal, 9 February 1903, especially pp. 3-5.
181 Knight, South Africa After the War, p. 273.
In 1902, when the NC instructed the SNC at Saulspoort to obtain "100 boys" to do "Government work" on a public road, acting chief Ditlhake who was to find the labour, regretted that he could not. The reason, he explained to the NC, was that because of the recent war, "we can't compel anybody to go to work [...] Only I will try to tell them all about your sayings [sic]. So I say anybody will do his will."\textsuperscript{182} Such attitudes by blacks just after the war were common in other parts of South Africa. About the general African "insolence" and "insubordination" towards whites after the war, Knight's eye-witness account regarding the Orange Free State, for example, recorded the following:

\begin{quote}
The Kaffir seems to have lost his former respect for the white man, even for his once firm master the Boer. Thus, the transport riders with whom I was travelling had generally to repeat an order twice or thrice before it was unwillingly obeyed by their independent and insolent black followers. These boys sometimes flatly refused to do what they were told, and laughed in the faces of their employers, who dared not punish them...\textsuperscript{183}
\end{quote}

The general African refusal to work for their former masters had also to do with the very meagre wages they used to get before the war, which the Boer farmers wanted to continue. During the war, however, they had got used to very high wages from the British military authorities for the various jobs they performed for them. This had, as Knight put it, "spoiled them," which was why the Boer farmers had "considerable difficulty in obtaining labour."\textsuperscript{184}

Moreover, after the war, unlike before, farm labourers had the choice to return to their pre-war

\textsuperscript{182} SNA 62 NA 2160/02, Ditlhake to SNC, n.d., 1902, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{183} Knight, \textit{South Africa After the War}, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{184} Knight, \textit{South Africa After the War}, p. 88.
landlord, work for another one, or negotiate favourable terms of tenancy.\textsuperscript{185}

The British authorities, however, would not brook any "insolence" or possible danger from Africans who had to "recognise that due respect must be paid to both Boer and Briton alike."\textsuperscript{186} The new British administration was keen to restore the pre-war master/servant relations. This was further pronounced by the NC in 1903 when he recorded that "not a stone was left unturned to establish fit and proper relations between the white population and the natives settled on the land."\textsuperscript{187} Therefore, in public meetings by government officials throughout the Transvaal, Africans were emphatically told that the farms they had taken over and which they thought were now theirs still belonged to their pre-war owners. Similarly, therefore, blacks were told, the pre-war master/servant relations on the farms were restored.\textsuperscript{188}

The most effective means of ensuring a speedy and safe return to the pre-war status quo was by using the newly-created South African Constabulary (SAC). Following the annexation of the Boer Republics as British colonies in June 1910, the British authorities created the SAC, initially a military force of 7500 men, mostly from Canada, Australia and Britain.\textsuperscript{189} After the declaration of peace in May 1902, the SAC was designated as "a rural police force,"

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{185} For details, see Krikler, "Revolution from above," pp. 96-101.
\item \textsuperscript{186} TKP Vol.239, \textit{Annual Report by the Commissioner for Native Affairs, 30 June 1904, Annexure "K,"} p. B.41.
\item \textsuperscript{187} SNA 106 NA 491/03, NC to SNA, 18 February 1903, p. 4. See also TKP Vol.239, \textit{Annual Report by the Commissioner for Native Affairs, Transvaal, 30 June 1903, Annexure "D,"} p. B.27.
\item \textsuperscript{188} For details, see Krikler, "Revolution from above," pp. 66-72.
\item \textsuperscript{189} For details of the origins and work of the SAC, see Grundlingh, "Protectors and friends of the people? ...", D.M. Anderson and D. Killingray (eds), \textit{Policing the Empire} (1991), Chapter Ten.
\end{itemize}
commanded by Major-General R.S. Baden-Powell, with a network of police posts throughout the Transvaal (including the Pilanesberg) and the Orange Free State and, thus, replaced the army personnel that had now been withdrawn. As Grundlingh has shown, the SAC's major purpose was to deal with the threat of African rebellion and insubordination in the two Boer colonies. It was used to round up and coerce black workers to return them to their pre-war employers, protect the Boers and their property and, as Grundlingh has recorded, to “promote their [i.e. Boer] material interest in the immediate post-war period.”

In the Pilanesberg, the SAC played a crucial role in providing physical and psychological security to the very few courageous Boer farmers who did return at the end of the war. Close to a year after the war had ended, most Boer farmers would not dare return to their Boer farms for fear of Bakgatla attacks. In September 1902, the SNC for the Pilanesberg reported: "Not one family of farmers has returned to the Pilanesberg." The courageous few who did return by the end of 1903 did so only because of the presence of the SAC in the area. In fact, a Boer farmer's settling back in the Pilanesberg soon after the war was undertaken only if he was assured that there was an SAC post on, or very close to, his farm. When Knight travelled through the Pilanesberg at this time, he noted that each of the few Boer homesteads was "under the shadow of a Constabulary station," obviously for protection against a possible Bakgatla attack. However, Boer fear of the Bakgatla at this time, although understandable, was misplaced. In response to a rumour that Linchwe might be trying to cause disturbances in the

190 Grundlingh, "Protectors and friends?," p. 175.
191 SNA 62 NA 2160/02, SNC to NC, 26 September 1902.
192 Knight, South Africa After the War, p. 273.
193 See Knight, South Africa After the War, pp. 263, 273, 274-275.
Transvaal, he was at pains to assure the British authorities of his and all his people’s loyalty. In October 1902, he assured the Assistant Commissioner in Gaborone in the following terms: “It is the desire of my heart as a chief of the Bakhatla, that my people in the Transvaal and in the Protectorate should obey the Government and to [sic] be regarded as loyal subjects of His Majesty the King.”

Apart from using the SAC, another important means of restoring the pre-war race relations was to disarm the African population. The Bakgatla, like other Africans throughout the western Transvaal, were made to surrender their firearms soon after the end of the war, as demanded by the British authorities. But before handing in some of their weapons, many Bakgatla secretly retained and “probably sent the best of their firearms across the border to Mochudi...” Martini-Henry rifles became a common sight in Mochudi after the war, a feature corroborated by Knight who, with some exaggeration, remarked that “every man” he met in Mochudi in 1903 “carried a Martini-Henry carbine.” These were the guns which the Protectorate Bakgatla so frequently used for poaching game in the Transvaal Game Reserve during the 1910s. The Bakgatla were not disarmed by the British authorities. It is not clear why the Bakgatla were not disarmed, but it was probably because of their military assistance

---

194 BNA RC 8/8, L.K. Pilane, Mochudi, to Assistant Commissioner, Gaborone, 16 October 1902.

195 SNA 106 NA 491/03, NC to SNA, 18 February 1903, p. 7. For details of the mechanics of how blacks all over the Transvaal were systematically disarmed by the new British administration at the end of the war, see Krikler, "Revolution from above," pp. 76-87.


197 Knight, South Africa After the War, p. 269.

198 BNA S.44/3, Sworn affidavits of S. Petu of Mochudi and Constable E. Holmes of Olifants Drift Police Post, 30 August and 27 September, respectively, 1912.
during the war and the fact that they did not pose any security threat. In 1903, the High Commissioner, for example, remarked about the Bakgatla’s “loyal attitude” during the war, for which reason he had decided not to force them to return the Boer cattle they had looted during the war. 199

The major preoccupation of SNCs throughout Rustenburg and the Pilanesberg immediately after the war was the handling of African claims of compensation for war losses. 200 Linchwe claimed compensation as early as 26 November 1901, well before the formal end of the war, when he wrote to the Assistant Commissioner in Gaborone, asking for £10 248 13s for "my people in the Transvaal, whose cattle, sheep, goats and horses were taken by the Boers during the present war." 201 Linchwe was told, however, that the Transvaal Bakgatla “cannot be treated more favourably than loyal British Refugees who have also suffered loss there,” but that “if similar claims are considered at the end of the war[,] his will be considered among them.” 202 In view of the Bakgatla's military role and the favourable treatment which Linchwe expected in return, he must have been disappointed by this rebuff. This was yet another indication of the British administration's determination to revert to the pre-war social scenario in which all Africans were treated in the same way.

199 SNA 71 NA 2482/02, High Commissioner to Lieutenant-Governor, n.d., January 1903.
200 SNA 106 NA 491/03, NC to SNA, 18 February 1903, p. 7.
201 BNA RC 6/13, L.K. Pilane, Mochudi, to Acting Assistant Commissioner, Gaborone, 26 November 1901. Most of the war losses, according to Linchwe, occurred around Saulspoort and Lesetlheng. In this source, see the "List of property taken from the Bakhatla in the Transvaal ..."
202 BNA RC 6/13, High Commissioner, Johannesburg, to Resident Commissioner, Mafeking, 3 January 1902.
On 21 July 1902, the government decided to compensate blacks for war losses. Accordingly, NC's were to investigate and determine African claims in their respective districts. It was also decided that only the loss of livestock, grain, seed and agricultural implements would be compensated for. Any other losses could be considered only on the recommendation of the NC or magistrate. According to the Executive Council resolutions of 10 and 21 July 1902, £140 000 was to be spent on compensation for war losses incurred by Africans in the Transvaal. But in the circumstances, the method of assessing African claims was, inevitably, quite subjective. Commissioners and magistrates would assess "and estimate to the best of their ability the losses of each individual." Claimants had to substantiate their claims in affidavits backed by evidence, "if obtainable," while the commissioners and magistrates were warned by the Executive Council to be careful because "natives are very clever at putting up claims ..."

The most contentious issue regarding compensation, however, was the Boer demand that blacks generally must return the looted Boer cattle after the war. The NC pointed out, with some justification, that "the [British] Military who [had] armed and employed the Bakhatla..."
against the Boers” should compensate them. The British authorities feared that, if carried out, it might provoke armed conflict among the Bakgatla and, therefore, left the matter in abeyance. In practice, this issue was quite difficult to unravel and, as the NC admitted in February 1903, “an intricate one to deal with ...” At the time, for example, the NC managed to return “to the Boers over 100 Head” but failed to get the Boers to return African cattle. This issue was about relations of power. It was much easier to compel the Africans to give up Boer cattle. It would have been much more difficult and risky to force the Boers to give up African cattle because they were officially allowed to retain their arms, and many of them had become embittered by the war.

Following further complaints from the Boers, the British authorities arranged for them to go to the Protectorate “for the purpose of identifying any of their cattle...” But what deterred them was the condition that each farmer “should give Linchwe's people access to his farm for the same purpose and under a similar arrangement...” The Boer farmers rejected this condition and refused to give up cattle claimed by the Bakgatla. The matter was finally put to rest by the High Commissioner's decision that, because of the Bakgatla’s “loyal attitude” during the war and not having been rewarded by the British, it would be “an ungenerous act to take from them the comparatively small share of plunder with which they have recouped themselves for

205 SNA 231 NA 2038/04, NC to SNA, 8 September 1904.
206 For details of the restitution of Boer cattle, see Krikler, "Revolution from above," pp. 60-65.
207 SNA 106 NA 491/03, NC to SNA, 18 February 1903, p. 5.
208 SNA 169 NA 2059/03, NC to SNA, 18 September 1903, p. 6.
209 SNA 71 NA 2482/02, Circular No.15 of 1903, Secretary to the Law Department, to all Resident Magistrates, 17 April 1903.
210 Knight, South Africa After the War, p. 273.
losses sustained at the hands of the Boers.\footnote{SNA 71 NA 2482/02, High Commissioner to Lieutenant-Governor, n.d., January 1903.}

Although neither the Boers nor the Bakgatla returned the other's looted cattle, they and other Pilanesberg peoples that had suffered and claimed war losses were compensated by the British authorities. The Bakgatla's losses, for example, were assessed at 5 179 livestock valued at £11 313,\footnote{SNA 116 NA 672/03, NC to SNA, 5 April 1903.} while chiefs Magato, Mamogale and Ramokoka received a combined total of £2 000 for the losses of their wagons and oxen during the war.\footnote{SNA 71 NA 2482/02, NC to SNA, 1 December 1902.} The Boers' compensation claims, however, were massive, compared to those of all the Pilanesberg blacks put together. In the entire Western Division, the Pilanesberg's Boer compensation claims amounted to some £23 127 15s. This was much more than the combined Boer claims from Lichtenburg, Rustenburg and Marico and was the second highest after Potchefstroom's £32 701 19s.\footnote{TKP Vol. 239, Annual Report by the Commissioner for Native Affairs, 30 June 1904, p. B.31.} This clearly points to the enormously heavy losses sustained by the Boer farmers of the Pilanesberg during the war. In addition to this, as Krikler has shown, the Boer farmers were supplied with livestock, rations, building materials and agricultural implements.\footnote{Krikler, "Revolution from above," pp. 93-94.} This was an important aspect of the process of reconstruction embarked upon by A. Milner's administration from the end of the South African War.\footnote{For details of Milner's reconstruction programme in the Transvaal, see D.J.N. Denoon, Grand Illusion (1973).}
In conclusion, to the Bakgatla, the war was important in shaping their future. Economically, the war was significant because they had looted an enormous number of cattle which more than compensated for their earlier loss of cattle through the pre-war rinderpest. Thus, the Bakgatla achieved one of their war objectives. After the war, this cattle became extremely important as a capital resource for buying the badly needed additional land for the Bakgatla in the Pilanesberg. This, in turn, boosted Linchwe's chiefly authority among his people. Politically, Linchwe gained enormous prestige and authority among the Bakgatla on both sides of the border. This was why Linchwe was able to install his brother Ramono as chief in 1902, despite British official resistance to the move. The same looted cattle also contributed to a general Bakgatla prosperity that lasted for almost two decades, from the end of the war. The journalist, Knight, who visited the area in 1903 observed the following about the Bakgatla heartland, Saulspoort: "Many of the leading men live in well-built houses of red brick. Signs of considerable prosperity and a relatively civilised condition are everywhere apparent."\(^{217}\)

The Bakgatla failed to attain the important objective of repossessing their ancestral land in the Pilanesberg. Of course, they did 'possess' Boer farms for the short duration of the war, while their owners had had to abandon them. The new British administration, however, ensured that the pre-war status quo prevailed once again, and the Bakgatla became greatly disillusioned. In terms of legal land occupation, therefore, the Bakgatla still had the same four farms as before the war. However, although after the war the Bakgatla were forced to vacate the Boer farms, many Boers never reoccupied them, until after the First World War,\(^{218}\) as most Boer farmers generally kept out of the area. Such was the degree of terror the Bakgatla had struck into the

\(^{217}\) Knight, *South Africa After the War*, p. 267.

\(^{218}\) Morton, "Babolayeng BagaKgafela!," p. 28.
hearts of the Pilanesberg Boers. Consequently, for some 11 years from the end of the Bakgatla-Boer war, there was ample grazing land for Bakgatla cattle,\textsuperscript{219} as most Boer farmers generally kept out of the area. The Bakgatla's objective of reuniting their divided people failed, but immediately after the war, their efforts to achieve unity in the face of border's restrictions and the government's attempts to thwart them became one of their major preoccupations. This is the subject of the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{219} Morton, "Linchwe I," p. 188.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE SAULSPOORT CHIEFTAINSHIP AND BAKGATLA CROSS-BORDER UNITY, 1902-1931.

Since 1870, the Bakgatla's paramount chief has always lived outside South Africa. The emigration of chief Kgamanyane with at least half of his people to Mochudi in 1870 and the subsequent establishment of the international border between the Transvaal and the British colony of Bechuanaland Protectorate at the turn of the 19th century had two serious, lingering consequences for the Bakgatla. First, they became physically divided into two segments, in two different countries. Second, due to this separation, the question of who was to become deputy chief at Saulspoort became a constant problem for the Bakgatla as the government in South Africa was continually meddling in the matter. Closely related to this issue was the question of the jurisdiction of the Bakgatla paramount chief at Mochudi over his people in the Pilanesberg which became anathema to, and was strongly contested by, the government of South Africa.

This chapter attempts to analyse these issues and explain how they affected the Bakgatla. It demonstrates how the attempts of the Native Affairs Department (NAD) to prevent chief Linchwe from exercising his influence upon his people in the Pilanesberg failed completely, precisely because of the enormous prestige and authority he enjoyed among them, which he effectively exercised from outside South African territory. Without Linchwe's co-operation and
consent, the NAD could not effectively rule the Bakgatla of the Pilanesberg, a situation that made colonial administration there problematic.

The chapter also recounts and explains the problems the Pilanesberg Bakgatla came to face because of their separation, with their chief located in a different country, and how these problems were tackled by the Bakgatla themselves as well as the Union government of South Africa. It demonstrates the strength and resilience of Bakgatla links and unity across the border and, especially, the loyalty of the Pilanesberg Bakgatla to Mochudi, despite the persistent, albeit unsuccessful, Union government efforts to sever these links.

**The chieftainship interregnum: April 1870-January 1903**

Some of the literature on this period of Bakgatla history suggests that Kgamanyane’s departure from Saulspoort in 1870 left a complete vacuum in the chieftainship until the accession of Mokae around 1892.¹ This is certainly incorrect. Following Kgamanyane’s departure, the leadership vacuum was briefly filled by the DRC under Gonin's leadership, but this was soon rejected by the Bakgatla as “they did not want to be ruled by white people.”² The popular opinion among the four wards of Saulspoort, namely, Morema, Tshukudu, Mabodisa and Manamakote was that Moselekatse, a son of Pilane in the 10th house, should be chief. This was duly reported to, and approved by, the Native Superintendent for Rustenburg, H. P. Malan.

---

¹ See, for example, Morton, “Linchwe I,” p. 173. Breutz incorrectly records that Kgamanyane “nominated Mokae to be a Kgosana [sub-chief] at Moruleng [Saulspoort].” Breutz, *The Tribes*, p. 267. It should be noted that published work on the ‘interregnum period’ of Bakgatla history is virtually non-existent.

² T.S. Pilane, interview, Ramoselekatse, Saulspoort, 8 October 1993.
However, as Moselekatse was getting too old, he passed the chieftainship on to his son Mokae.\(^3\)

According to chief Pilane, Mokae "made himself chief, he wasn't appointed but just took over."\(^4\) Mokae's succession brought into open conflict the long-simmering discontent among some Bakgatla sections, such as those of Lesetlha and Bopitiko, who strongly disputed the legitimacy of the leadership of both Moselekatse and Mokae.\(^5\) These sections asserted, quite correctly, that according to Bakgatla tradition, Moselekatse, who was from Pilane's 10th house, was too far removed from the succession line to become chief; instead, they believed, either Tau, Tshomankane or Mantirisi (in that order) should have become chief because their mothers were all married before Moselekatse's.\(^6\)

The illegitimacy of Mokae's position was compounded by the perception of his pro-Boer attitude which made him more unpopular. According to chief Pilane, Mokae "was more inclined to the whites than to his own people\(^7\)" and, in 1895, with Boer encouragement, he and his followers, in fact, "tried to make the Bakgatla section at Saulspoort independent from the Bechuanaland section," following which the sub-chief Dikeme of northern Pilanesberg and chief Linchwe went to Kruger to complain. Kruger, perhaps taking advantage of the leadership

---

\(^3\) B.N.O. Pilane, interview, the kgotla, Saulspoort, 8 October 1993; Chief T.S.R. Pilane, interview, Saulspoort, 16 September 1994.

\(^4\) Chief Pilane, interview, 16 September 1994.

\(^5\) T.S. Pilane, interview, 29 May 1993.

\(^6\) T.S. Pilane, interview, 29 May 1993.

\(^7\) Chief Pilane, interview, 16 September 1994.
vacuum, responded that there should be "two separate tribes at Saulspoort and Mochudi." This clearly suggests that Mokae was using the SAR government to strengthen his own shaky position in order to effect a complete separation of the two Bakgatla groups. This is supported by the fact that during his rule, intra-Bakgatla contact across the border was at its minimum.

The weakness of Mokae's position is further revealed by the fact that the Boer authorities used him in their wars of subjugating the various African groups in the SAR that were still resisting Boer suzerainty, a matter in which he had no choice. During the Boer campaign against the Bagananwa in the Zoutpansberg in 1894, for example, Mokae had to contribute three Bakgatla surrogate regiments to support the Boer troops. For all the above reasons, many sections of the Bakgatla became disenchanted with Mokae's leadership. Consequently, a delegation led by sub-chief Ditlhake was sent to Linchwe to call upon him to intervene and, in chief Pilane's words, "rescue the tribe." However, because of Mokae's government backing, Linchwe, whose authority over his people in the Transvaal was, at that time, not recognised and at best tenuous, could do nothing against Mokae. Even if he could, Linchwe was still preoccupied with the war between his people and the Bakwena, which lasted from 1874 to the 1880s, followed afterwards by the Bakgatla's war with the Boers in the South African War. Thus, neither time nor opportunity would have allowed Linchwe to deal with the Mokae issue.

---

8 Breutz, *The Tribes*, p. 267. Chief Pilane has also asserted that it was with "Boer encouragement" that Mokae tried to make himself independent of Linchwe. Interview, Saulspoort, 16 September 1994.

9 Chief Pilane, interview, Saulspoort, 16 September 1994.

10 Breutz, *The Tribes*, p. 267. For details of the Boer campaign against the Bagananwa of chief Malebogo in 1894, see a detailed account in Makhura, "The Bagananwa polity...", Chapter Four.

But as the conflict and dissatisfaction over Mokae's position grew, Linchwe became sensitive to popular opinion and his opportunity to act unfolded just before or at the beginning of the South African War. Linchwe summoned Mokae to Mochudi where he was “accused of treachery because of consorting with the Boers” and was banished there as punishment. In Mokae's place, Linchwe nominated Ditlhake, the son of Tshomankane, Pilane's son in the 4th house, who took over as acting chief in Saulspoort. Unlike Mokae, Ditlhake proved much more loyal to Mochudi. During the Bakgatla-Boer war, for example, Ditlhake was continually sending captured Boer cattle to Mochudi. Linchwe then waited for the situation to stabilise after the war, before he could appoint a new chief from Mochudi.

The controversy about the installation of chief Ramono: November 1902-February 1903

British government policy regarding the thorny question of chief Linchwe's jurisdiction and authority over his people in the Pilanesberg was spelt out in some detail by the Transvaal High Commissioner in November 1902. Contrary to Linchwe's expectations, he was rebuffed, ostensibly because he lived outside the Transvaal and the jurisdiction of its government; therefore, according to the High Commissioner, “he cannot be officially recognised as having any authority in the Transvaal,” but if his people in the Pilanesberg sent him tribute or brought “their private disputes to him for settlement, the Transvaal authorities will make no objection.” This policy statement further stipulated that Linchwe could deal personally with the NC at Rustenburg or he could nominate “a deputy to act for him in respect of his Transvaal interests,

12 Schapera, Ditirafalo, p. 183.
13 Schapera, Ditirafalo, p. 183.
14 Schapera, Ditirafalo, p. 183.
[and] the Transvaal authorities will listen to him as speaking on behalf of his people in the Transvaal," as long as they voluntarily recognised his authority there.\textsuperscript{15}

For this reason, and in order to resolve the chieftainship issue, Linchwe nominated his young brother, Ramono, for the Saulspoort position. The nomination, however, was fraught with controversy from the beginning, due to the local NAD officials' opposition to Ramono being chief. By October 1902, well before Ramono had officially assumed his position, the NC at Rustenburg was already opposed to the idea,\textsuperscript{16} while the Assistant Native Commissioner in the Pilanesberg, W.H. Driver, who assumed duty in August or September 1902 under the new British administration, “refused absolutely to recognise Ramono,” insisted on dealing with “the resident Chief Litlake (sic)” and informed both Ramono and Ditlhake (a sub-chief who was preferred by the NAD officials) that “the government could not recognise Lintsue's authority in any way in this district...”\textsuperscript{17}

Ramono's response, however, was as logical as it was witty. During the war, he reminded the Assistant Native Commissioner, the British government had given a \textit{de facto} recognition of Linchwe's authority over the Pilanesberg Bakgatla because of their enormous assistance in it.

\textsuperscript{15} SNA 62 NA 2160/02, High Commissioner (HC) to Commissioner for Native Affairs (CNA), n.d., November 1902. Emphasis in text. For a reiteration of the same policy, see also SNA 116 NA 672/03, SNA to chief S.K. Pilane, 2 June 1903; BNA, RC 8/8, Acting Government Secretary, Mafeking, to SNA, Pretoria, 11 May 1917; Breutz, \textit{The Tribes}, p. 267.

\textsuperscript{16} BNA RC 8/8, L. K. Pilane, Mochudi, to Assistant Commissioner, Gaborone, 16 October 1902.

\textsuperscript{17} SNA 62 NA 2160/02, W.H. Driver to NC, n.d., 1902, p. 1.
Now that the war was over, Ramona asked, why would the same recognition be withheld?  

In the NC's mistaken opinion, “Litlhake was the recognised head at Saulspoort” and, therefore, “all Government matters and requirements concerning them [i.e. the Bakgatla] would be worked through him...” He, therefore, strongly recommended Ramono’s dismissal from Saulspoort in the following terms: “...Ramona is hampering my work, his presence at Saulspoort is undesirable and he must go.”

The NAD officials did not understand that since the Bakgatla's departure for Mochudi about three decades earlier, for reasons we have already discussed, Saulspoort had had only temporary, stand-in “chiefs,” none of whom was Linchwe's choice. While it was important and logical to Linchwe and the Bakgatla that the chief in Saulspoort be a man of their choice, following their tradition, it did not matter to the NAD officials, who insisted on anyone of their choice irrespective of his birth vis-`a-vis the Bakgatla chiefly line of succession. Linchwe, however, stood his ground and, in October 1902, politely but firmly insisted upon his choice of Ramono and challenged the authorities to prove his disobedience or wrong-doing for which he might be faulted and, therefore, denied the chieftainship. Linchwe explained thus, to the Assistant Commissioner in Gaborone: “According to our native rule, Ramono my brother or one of my sons can be put as a chief over the Bakhatla there [in Saulspoort]. Does this way of native rule trouble or annoy his Majesty's Government in any way?”

---

18 SNA 62 NA 2160/02, cited in W.H. Driver to NC, n.d., 1902, pp. 2-3. During the Bakgatla-Boer War, Ramono played a leading role as a commander of one of the Bakgatla regiments that fought against the Boers.

19 SNA 62 NA 2160/02, NC to SNA, 30 September 1902.

20 BNA RC 8/8, L.K. Pilane, Mochudi, to Assistant Commissioner (AC), Gaborone, 16 October 1902. Emphasis in text.
Although Ramo no was by nature a “very patient” man,\(^{21}\) he was becoming increasingly indignant and even defiant over the NAD officials’ attempts at imposing Ditlhake, who was far removed from the chieftainship, over the Bakgatla. In September 1902, Ramona, who was by now “feeling very sore”\(^{22}\) because of not being recognised as chief, wrote the following challenge to the SNC and dared him to send it to his superiors “anywhere, either [in] Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town [or] Rustenburg”: “… you cannot make him [Ditlhake] chief here in the Bakhatlas tribe. You can make him chief in other places[,] not in Bakhatlas. And now I want you to calle (sic) Litlake and aske (sic) him that, who is over him [?]”\(^{23}\)

Following Ramono’s defiant letter to the SNC, the NC urgently recommended to the CNA that he be expelled from South Africa,\(^{24}\) in order for Ditlhake to rule alone, without Ramono’s “interference.” The government, however, failed to have its way as nothing could be done and no decision taken in Saulspoort, without reference to, and the approval of, chief Linchwe at Mochudi, who did not recognise Ditlhake but Ramono. Ditlhake, who was completely loyal to Linchwe and recognised Ramono’s jurisdiction over the Pilanesberg Bakgatla, simply refused to co-operate with the SNC at Saulspoort. The SNC explained this in his own words:

\(^{21}\) Moeder, *Levensbeschrijving*, p. 83

\(^{22}\) SNA 62 NA 2160/02, SNC to NC, 26 September 1902, p. 6.


\(^{24}\) SNA 62 NA 2160/02, Telegram, NC to CNA, 30 September 1902.
I have had great difficulty in getting Litlake to appear at this office. The Bakatla all recognise Ramono as the superior chief while he is here, and as far as I can see[,] Ramono openly claims and is inclined to presume upon the [ chiefly] position.25

On two occasions when Driver sent for Ditlhake, he “failed” to turn up until the third time when he instructed an SAC policeman “to order him to come over at once...” Driver used the occasion to try once again to set him up as an independent chief at Saulspoort but failed as Ditlhake was too loyal to Mochudi to do that. Ditlhake made it clear to the SNC that he could not make any major administrative decision without "specific instructions from Lintsue..." Consequently, Driver gave up, as he realised that "it will be a difficult matter to elect one who would in any way act independently (sic) of Lintsue."26

By September 1902, written requests to the SNC for passes were now being endorsed and signed, not by Ditlhake as before, but by Ramono,27 a deliberate signal intended to show the SNC who, between Ramono and Ditlhake, was recognised as chief by the Bakgatla. As the year ended, the NC conceded defeat and admitted that Ditlhake was "a weak man and does not command the respect of the people, whereas Ramono, who is Linchwe's brother, commands very great respect."28 By the beginning of February 1903, the NC was reporting quite favourably on Ramono and said that he had "been much pleased lately with his general tone and behaviour and his expressions of being prepared to work with the Government." At the

26 SNA 62 NA 2160/02, Driver to NC, n.d., 1902, pp. 3-5.
27 SNA 62 NA 2160/02, SNC to NC, 26 September 1902, p. 5.
28 BNA RC 8/8, NC to SNA, 6 February 1903.
same time, Ramona was officially recognised as chief at Saulspoort. Indeed, by 1905, only two years after being installed as chief, Ramona was officially described by the British administration as "the most important chief in the Pilandsberg (sic)."

Why did the NAD officials take so long to recognise Ramona as the legitimate chief in Saulspoort? There is no hard evidence for this. However, it was due to the fact that Ramona was from outside the Transvaal and a nominee of Linchwe, whose authority was not officially recognised within the territory. Recognising Ramona's chieftaincy, therefore, implied recognising Linchwe's authority, an issue which was anathema to the NAD for a long time. Nevertheless, the NAD had to recognise the legitimacy of Ramona's position because governing the Bakgatla through anyone else became completely impossible due to the non-co-operation of both the NAD's nominee and the Bakgatla public. Breutz rightly noted that "[a] tribe cannot be ruled against internal resistance. It is thus extremely difficult to rule a Tswana tribe without [a legitimate] chieftainship." The government was, in fact, attempting to use a strategy of colonial administration that was common in South Africa generally in the 1920s. As Beinart has observed: "The administration did not want men with legitimacy for quite the same reason as the people; indeed sometimes it backed members of chiefly lineages who were not particularly popular." 

---

29 BNA RC 8/8, NC to SNA, 6 February 1903.
The Ramono case reveals how the state was intent upon re-arranging the Bakgatla's traditional administrative structures to suit their own purposes. Equally revealing were both the state's weakness and inability to subvert the chieftainship as well as the strength of the Bakgatla's rejection of state intervention. This case is similar to another revealed by Manson for the Bahurutshe in the Marico district at the beginning of the 20th century in which NAD officials insisted that a particular candidate, A. Pogiso, must succeed as chief, and yet the majority of the people did not consider him to be the legitimate heir and wanted, instead, I. Moiloa. When Moiloa resisted, the government used strong-arm tactics and banished him from Dinokana. But eventually, after a legal tussle and other representations, Moiloa succeeded in rejoining his people as chief.33

**Ramono's rule: February 1903-January 1917**

Linchwe's appointment of his only full brother, Ramono, to the Saulspoort chieftainship was, in fact, by default. Furthermore, it was an anomaly because in Setswana tradition, "the eldest son of the principal wife of a chief (kgosi) is his rightful heir."34 Following this rule, therefore, Linchwe should have appointed his eldest surviving son, Isang,35 but he was too young and still in school. The situation was complicated by another factor. If the vacancy had been in Mochudi, Bakgatla rules of chiefly succession would have applied normally. But now there was

---

33 For details, see Manson, “The Hurutshe in the Marico,” pp. 246-250.


35 Linchwe's first-born son, Kgafela, died in 1914, aged 34, leaving a baby son, Mofeli, the heir to Linchwe's throne. See Morton, “The modernists,” p. 25.
another Bakgatla branch, albeit a junior one, that needed a chief; and yet the usual rules of succession did not provide for a situation in which the people were split into two geographically separate sections. Thus, Linchwe was in a predicament. In the absence of rules for a scenario like this one, as well as the lack of a precedent in Bakgatla history, the solution had to be a contrived one.

Linchwe's appointment of Ramono appears to have been a personal decision rather than a result of advice from either his lekgotla or the public assembly, the pitso, the two most important advisory institutions central to Batswana chieftainship. He certainly did not follow Batswana customary rules of succession. But, as already alluded to, among the Batswana generally, not every succession to the chieftainship was legitimate in the sense of following customary rules of succession. In his study of the Barolong-bo-Ratshidi of Mafeking, Comaroff has stated that "80 per cent of all cases of accession to the chiefship represent 'anomalies'... [and] stated prescriptions do not, in general, decide who is to succeed."\(^{36}\) For the Bakgatla at that stage, Ramono's appointment, in fact, signalled a new policy and departure from established Batswana rules of succession. Linchwe's nomination of Ramono has to be understood in terms of the material and psychological benefits he gave his people and for which they, in return, gave him tremendous respect and loyalty. In this regard, Comaroff recorded that a Motswana chief could establish new policy if he had "legitimacy," which was judged by the public "in terms of his material and governmental achievements..."\(^{37}\)


On these terms, Linchwe's record among his people was, certainly, outstanding. He had led them through a war in which they were not only militarily successful but had also looted large numbers of Boer cattle, the sale of which subsequently bought many farms for his people in the Pilanesberg. It was in this sense that Comaroff stated that "the chief and his subjects are thought to be involved in a perpetual transactional process in which the former discharges obligations and, in return, receives the accepted right to influence policy and command people."\(^{38}\) This explains Linchwe's enormous prestige and loyalty among all his people, especially from the end of the war until his death in 1924. As the newly appointed Assistant Native Commissioner for the Pilanesberg, W.H. Driver, reported in 1902: "It is easy to see that since the war the Bakhatla look upon Lintsue as a very important personage indeed and consider his authority here almost supreme."\(^{39}\)

It should also be emphasised that Ramono's appointment was not a succession because Lentswe was the chief of the Pilanesberg Bakgatla. Linchwe had no plans to relocate his capital to Saulspoort and, therefore, wanted a trusted and competent close relative to run his people's affairs there. Since Ramono was being appointed and not succeeding to the Saulspoort chieftainship, Linchwe saw no need to follow rules of succession. These then were the reasons why Linchwe's appointment of his brother Ramono, although improper according to Bakgatla custom, was not questioned or opposed by the Bakgatla public.\(^{40}\)

---


39 SNA 62 NA 2160/02, Driver to NC, n.d., 1902, p. 5.

40 For details of how customary rules of chiefly succession could be manipulated and waived, see Comaroff, "Rules and rulers," especially pp. 6-18.
As soon as he had been accepted by the NAD, Ramono quickly asserted his authority and control over Bakgatla affairs, a personal feature that earned him popularity and praise from the NAD, the local DRC and the Pilanesberg populace. Indeed, general Bakgatla opinion in the Pilanesberg today is unanimous not only about the popularity, good character and personality of Ramono, but also the efficiency of his administration. Moreover, he was the most generous and kind-hearted of all the Bakgatla chiefs this century. The fact that he is the only 20th-century Mokgatla chief in the Pilanesberg to have a praise-poem dedicated to him, is further testimony to the nature of his popular rule. Ramono helped to bring about considerable development for his people by, for example, spearheading the building of dams, schools and the buying of farms. It is significant that it was during Ramono's rule when, through his and his brother's direction, the Bakgatla were, for the first time, in a position to buy a number of farms all at once. This obviously bolstered Ramono's public standing.

The NAD must have been pleasantly surprised about Ramono, who turned out to be pliable and fully supportive of the government and was not the ogre they had feared all along, which, in turn, earned him government praise and support. This was, in fact, a "strategy of bolstering chiefly authority whilst maintaining tight control over the rule of 'acceptable' or 'well-behaved' chiefs," which was characteristic of the NAD during the 1920s and 1930s in the region as a

---


42 See the praise-poem dedicated to Ramono in Schapera, Praise-Poems of Tswana Chiefs, pp. 96-102.

43 The subject of buying farms is dealt with in the next chapter.
whole. Ramono's image of good co-operation with the NAD continued up to his death in 1917. When the First World War broke out, three Bakgatla regiments consisting of men from both Mochudi and the Pilanesberg served on the British side in German South-West Africa. Another regiment from the Pilanesberg was part of the South African Native Labour Contingent (SANLC) in France, under Ramatlari, Dialwa's half-brother and Kganya's son in the 25th house. It is quite obvious that, as chief, Ramono must have played an important role in committing his men in the Pilanesberg for the War.

This positive vision of Ramono's rule, however, should be attributed to much more than personality and good government. It was also brought about by the specific material conditions that existed in the Pilanesberg from the end of the South African War up to Ramono's death in 1917. Just after the war, the Bakgatla began to enjoy unprecedented material prosperity, especially in cattle, some of which they used to buy more land. The British journalist, E. F. Knight, recorded his impressions of Bakgatla prosperity on his visit to Saulspoort immediately after the war: "Many of the leading men live in well-built houses of red brick. Signs of considerable prosperity and a relatively civilised condition are everywhere apparent." Thus, unlike some of the Batswana groups in the region that were comparatively economically impoverished and, therefore, continually experienced conflict with their chiefs from the

---

44 For details of how the NAD used this strategy among the Bapo, Bakwena-ba-Mogopa and Bafokeng in the 1920s and 1930s, see Simpson, "Peasants and politics," pp. 158-168.

45 See Schapera, *Ditirafalo*, pp. 183-184; BNA RC 8/8, SNC to SNA, 21 November 1917. Dialwa was Ramono's successor. For details of how South African blacks were recruited into the SANLC as well as the nature of their service in the First World War, see Grundlingh, *Fighting Their Own War* (1987), especially Chapters Three-Four.

46 Knight, *South Africa After the War*, p. 267. My emphasis. The theme of material prosperity among the Bakgatla just after the South African War is dealt with in more detail in Chapter Five.
beginning of the 20th century, the Bakgatla's socio-economic conditions were conducive to
good chiefly rule, such as Ramono's. In terms of Ramono’s record, it is ironic, therefore, that
when he died on 23 January 1917, the government treated his estate in an ungenerous
manner.

The controversy over Ramono's estate

Just after Ramono's death, the government was, once again, intent upon interfering in two
Bakgatla issues, namely, the settlement of the late chief's estate and his succession. Regarding
the first issue, the NC appointed W.A.J. van Velden of the Rustenburg legal firm, van Velden
and Lategan, as the administrator of Ramono's estate (valued at £3271 12s 0d), totally
disregarding the role of his widow, and without consulting Mochudi. By the beginning of May
1917, the NC was already selling some of Ramono's cattle, allegedly to pay off the estate's
debts, but without reference to Linchwe. This act of deliberate omission made Linchwe feel,
as the acting magistrate at Gaborone aptly reported, "slighted and ignored by the Transvaal

47 The Bakwena-ba-Modimosana-ba-Matau are a good example. Their very small population
("the second smallest in the Rustenburg District...") made it very difficult for them to
generate the resources with which to buy land. Apart from being densely populated, they
were completely surrounded by white-owned farms, while their entire land lay outside the
area scheduled for blacks by the 1913 Land Act: for more details of how such factors
compounded each other and brought about intra-Bakwena conflict, see Simpson, "Peasants

48 NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, telegram, SNA to Native Labour Contingent, Saforce, London,
19 February 1917. Ramono died of pneumonia in Mafeking hospital, northern Cape: same
source.

49 NTS 333 61/65 Part 1, NC to SNA, 13 August 1917; “Death Notice, Administration
of Estates Proclamation, 1902.”
Linchwe felt aggrieved that he had not been "informed or consulted as he should have been[,] according to Native custom and courtesy," whilst he had appointed Ramono as chief at Saulspoort. The unsatisfactory manner in which the Transvaal authorities wanted to settle Ramono's estate contravened Bakgatla custom and, as Williams, the acting resident magistrate in Gaborone noted, this matter caused "a very acute feeling" both in Mochudi and Saulspoort. Linchwe's protests to the authorities both in Gaborone and Pretoria were, therefore, an indication of not only the Bakgatla's strong desire to avert a wrongdoing, but also to demonstrate firmly, and yet politely, their dissatisfaction with what they perceived as the uncalled for interference in Bakgatla affairs.

Linchwe moved to resist the government's intrusion into what he believed to be his family and people's affairs and wrote to the Resident Commissioner in Gaborone, asking him to "humbly request the NAD, Pretoria, to look into the matter, knowing and thinking that they are dealing with Natives who are not versed in European laws." Linchwe was officially told that the estate was being settled "in accordance with the [white] law of the Transvaal..." However, despite its eloquence about "the law of the Transvaal," the government, in this case, did not

---

50 BNA RC 8/8, Memo, Acting Resident Magistrate, Gaborone, to Acting Government Secretary, Mafeking, 5 May 1917.
51 NTS 333 61/65 Part 1, Acting Government Secretary, Mafeking, to SNA, 10 July 1917.
52 BNA RC 1/28, Acting Resident Magistrate, Gaborone, to Acting Government Secretary, Mafeking, 20 October 1917.
53 Phuthadikobo Museum Collection (unsorted, unclassified), Mochudi, Botswana, Linchwe K. Pilane, Mochudi, to Assistant Commissioner, Gaborone, 26 July and 7 August 1917.
54 BNA RC 8/8, Acting Government Secretary, Mafeking, to Acting Resident Magistrate, Gaborone, 9 July 1917.
follow the law regarding the administration of the estates of deceased Africans. The more relevant Section 70 of Proclamation 28 of 1902, according to which the government wanted the estate administered, actually stated the following:

If any native who shall not during his lifetime have contracted a lawful marriage or who being unmarried shall not be the offspring of parents lawfully married shall die intestate, his estate shall be administered and distributed according to the customs and usages of the tribe or people to which he belonged.

Since Ramono's father, Kgamanyane, had a large number of wives, he would have been officially considered to be unlawfully married. Moreover, Ramono is not known to have left a will. His estate, following the legal clause quoted above would, therefore, have been settled according to Batswana custom. Why then did the government not follow this law but, instead, want to interfere in the settlement of the estate? The government insisted that because Ramono had married "according to Christian rites," it would, therefore, see to the administration of the estate. Yet the real reason for leaving out Linchwe in this issue was that the Union government "does not recognise Linchwe as wielding any authority in the Rustenburg district..." But, as already noted, Linchwe's authority among his people in the Pilanesberg was quite enormous. Nothing of importance, for example, could be done or decided in Saulspoort without reference to him, and this was Linchwe's major trump card, which the authorities were

55 NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, SNC to SNA, 29 August 1917.
56 TNAD, The Laws and Regulations specially Relating to the Native Population of the Transvaal, (February 1907), p. 209. A subsequent Administration of Estates Act No. 24 of 1913 reiterated further that if an African died without leaving a will, his/her entire estate, except for non-devisable property, was administered according to "native law and custom." See Linington, Native Administration, pp. 226-227.
57 NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, SNA to SNC, 14 September 1917.
58 BNA RC 8/8, SNA to Government Secretary, Mafeking, 6 July 1917.
also aware of.

Realising the futility of ignoring Linchwe's enormous prestige and authority among his Pilanesberg Bakgatla, the government eventually heeded his plea to settle Ramono's estate according to Batswana custom, and the SNA finally requested the Master of the Supreme Court, Pretoria, to "agree to certain modifications to meet the views and customs of the natives concerned." Consequently, some time in December 1917, Isang was nominated as executor of Ramono's estate, and early in the new year, he proceeded to Saulspoort to administer the estate and to oversee the appointment of Ramono's successor. But, yet again, the NAD wanted to select a successor. Soon after Ramono's death, the SNC wrote to the SNA, proposing that he was "appointing a date and proceeding personally with the object of making a definite recommendation regarding the proposed successor." The SNC would have done this immediately, but for Isang's request to him to leave the matter "in abeyance for a period of two or three weeks."

The acting chieftainships of Dialwa and Ofentse, 1917-1931.

The SNC's choice of Ramono's 'successor' was Dikeme, a headman over the Bakgatla who resided on the two northern farms of Witfontein and Holfontein, some 48 kilometres from

59 NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, SNA to Master of the Supreme Court, Pretoria, 28 January 1918.
60 NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, SNC to SNA, 2 January 1918. For details of how Ramono's estate was shared out, see the rest of this file.
61 NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, SNC to SNA, 30 June 1917.
62 Ofentse acted from 1922 until his death in 1942. But the year 1931 is in this sub-title only because the study ends in that year.
Saulspoort. But, according to Bakgatla custom, he was obviously a wrong candidate because his father, Mantirisi, was Pilane's son in the fifth house. The SNC himself was fully aware of his own powerlessness over this issue, despite his position of government authority in the NAD. Realising the futility of his personal choice of Ramono's successor, he complained bitterly to the NC thus:

Unless such appointment is approved of by Lintchwe, it would be so much waste of time. You cannot get anyone to accept the Chieftainship without his approval and secondly anyone accepting without this approval would be useless, as he would not be obeyed by the people.  

Thus, the SNC implicitly admitted that the NAD could not have its way over the matter. But what he did not understand was that the choice of who took Ramono's position as regent belonged entirely to the Bakgatla. If that was not done, the administrative machinery over such people ground to a halt because they simply refused to co-operate. Instead, chief Isang wanted Dialwa and bluntly told the SNC that Dikeme was unacceptable because "he was Dialoa's inferior by birth." Dialwa being a son of Kgamanyane from the fourth house and, therefore, Linchwe's half-brother, was more entitled to the position than Dikeme.

---

63 NTS 333 61/65 Part 1, SNC to NC, 3 April 1917. According to B.N.O. Pilane, Dikeme was always loyal to both the Saulspoort chief as well as the Mochudi one. Pilane, interview, Saulspoort, 8 October 1993; M. Monametsi and M. Mabudisa, interviews, the kgotla, Mochudi, 13 March 1993.

64 BNA RC 8/8, SNC to SNA, 21 November 1917.

But even more deserving than Dialwa were his two elder brothers from the same house as well as other sons from the second house. Indeed, Isang, who was much closer to the chiefly line of succession should, in theory, have assumed the Saulspoort position. However, he did not, as Linchwe needed him at Mochudi to carry out his chiefly duties for him because, as noted above, by the time of Ramono's death, he had become increasingly dependent upon Isang for the administration of Bakgatla affairs. That was why he insisted upon Isang remaining at Mochudi.

By the mid-1910s, Linchwe (1875-1920) was getting quite old and infirm. He suffered a stroke in 1920 and died in 1924. His eldest son from the first house, Kgafula, who, by Bakgatla tradition, was to have succeeded him, died in 1914 aged 34, leaving a son. (Another son Mmusi was born shortly after Kgafula's death.) Isang, who was next in line after Kgafula, was ready for leadership. Indeed, like the other two sons of Linchwe, Isang had been groomed from a very early age to become a future leader of the Bakgatla, with a fair grounding both in Bakgatla affairs and Western education at Zonnebloem College near Cape Town. Thus, as early as 1917, Isang, Linchwe's oldest surviving son, was already effectively carrying out his father's chiefly duties on his behalf, while his father was still the chief, because of his infirmity. Early in 1921, he was officially sworn in as regent, on behalf of the minor Molefi, the heir and son of the late

---

66 Both Schapera and Breutz omit Kgamanyane's third house (see Schapera, *A Short History*, p. 29 and Breutz, *The Tribes*, p. 260), apparently because Bakgatla traditions are, for reasons that are not clear, completely silent about it.

67 For Isang's position in the Bakgatla-baga-Kgafula chiefly genealogy see Figure 2, "Genealogy" at the end of Chapter Two.

68 BNA RC 8/8, SNC to SNA, 21 November 1917.
Why was Dialwa chosen over more deserving candidates? As he was now at the helm of administering Bakgatla affairs, Isang, who had a strong and often domineering character had, according to T.S. Pilane, personally chosen Dialwa, a "weak" character, in order to be able to manipulate him for the purpose of accumulating the spoils of chieftainship. This is a plausible assertion because Isang did acquire at least two farms for himself during Dialwa's rule. In 1903, Dialwa had accompanied his half-brother, Ramono, to Saulspoort specifically to "assist" him with administration when the latter came to assume the chieftainship there. Thus, Dialwa, in theory had 14 years (1903-1917) administrative experience before he assumed the acting chieftainship for five years, on behalf of Pilane, Ramono's son who was still a minor. Yet, despite his long experience, Dialwa's administration was found wanting by many.

According to two Saulspoort informants, B.N.O. Pilane and T.S. Pilane, many Bakgatla considered Dialwa's administration as "poor." In November 1917, shortly after Dialwa had become acting chief, the SNC reported that he had "not been at all satisfied with him," he was "a weak man" who was "addicted to excessive beer drinking" and, therefore, refused to recommend him for a permanent appointment to the chieftainship and suggested, instead, putting him on a 12-month probation to see how he would acquit himself, before making a final

---

70 For details of the nature of Isang's personality and character, see Morton, "The modernists," pp. 23-26.
71 T.S. Pilane, interview, Ramoselekatse, Saulspoort, 8 October 1993.
72 T.S. Pilane, interview, 8 October 1993.
decision. Two years later, Dialwa was still doing poorly and the SNC continued to report negatively about him: "He appears to have no control over his following. He is afraid to do anything on his own initiative and refers the most trivial things to Linchwe at Mochudi." The nature of Dialwa's incompetent administration is explained by a number of factors. First, unlike his predecessor, Ramono, Dialwa had "little education." According to T.S. Pilane, "Dialwa was afraid of white people," a problem which could be explained by his relative lack of formal education. Second, he frequently drank too much. Third, while he was Ramono's assistant, he had become rather too familiar and overly free with too many commoners despite his chiefly position, a trait that may be explained by his heavy drinking.

On 1 March 1919, the acting Under Secretary for Native Affairs gave Dialwa more opportunity to improve, hoping that "the matter is one which time will put right," but by the end of that year, the SNC could still report that Dialwa was "utterly incompetent as a Chief" and added further that "he suffers from bad health and is almost blind." By the beginning of 1922, Dialwa's position had become increasingly untenable. On 17 February 1919, the SNA

73 BNA RC 8/8, SNC to SNA, 21 November 1917; SNA to Government Secretary, Mafeking, 22 December 1917.
74 NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, SNC to SNA, 11 February 1919.
75 Chief Pilane, interview, Saulspoort, 16 September 1994. It is not clear what level of education Dialwa had attained, but he probably did not go beyond elementary school.
76 T.S. Pilane, interview, 8 October 1993.
78 B.N.O. Pilane, interview, 8 October 1993.
79 NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, Acting Under Secretary for Native Affairs, Cape Town, to SNC, 1 March 1919.
80 NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, Memo, SNC to SNA, 4 November 1921.
instructed the SNC "to call a meeting of the Saulspoort Bakhatla with a view to their nominating another Acting Chief." In November 1921, the SNC persuaded Dialwa to resign, a move supported by the lekgotla, and he did at the end of that year. Elsewhere in the Pilanesberg, chiefs that were considered incompetent were dealt with in the same way.

Immediately after Dialwa's resignation, Isang, in his capacity as the acting paramount chief at Mochudi, personally recommended his young brother Ofentse to the NAD as acting chief, on behalf of the heir, Tidimane (Samuel) who was still at school in Tigerkloof. Ofentse, Linchwe's third son from the first house, assumed duty at Saulspoort on 1 January 1922. Unlike his predecessor, Ofentse was a very competent and efficient chief who enjoyed the support and appreciation of the NAD officials. For this reason, in June 1923, when Dialwa asked for his annual stipend of £18 to be raised on the basis that he had some 7,000 people to oversee who were sparsely populated and for which reason he had to do a lot of travelling, the SNC strongly recommended the request to the SNA, stating that:

---

81 NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, SNA to Acting Secretary for Native Affairs, 17 February 1919.
82 NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, Memo, SNC to SNA, 16 November 1921.
83 Among the Baphalane in 1925, for example, the regent E. Ramokoka was in a similar situation as Dialwa. For details, see File No. 54/1528/3, Part 1, Ref. 102/55, Detached Clerk (L.M. Shepstone), the Pilanesberg, to SNC, 3 December 1925.
84 Same file, SNC to SNA, 15 October 1921; N2/10/3(62), Isang to SNC, 26 November, 1921. B.N.O. Pilane, interview, 8 October 1993.
...Ofentse is the only really capable Chief in the District [of Rustenburg] with complete control over his Tribe. He is thus always able and ready to assist the Government. He is head and shoulders above such Chiefs as Sekukuni and Kgolokoe who draw £30 a year, or August Mokhatle [,] a very broken reed who draws £24. I certainly think that Chief Ofentse's stipend should be raised from £18 a year to £24 at least. 85

Ofentse's stipend was, accordingly, increased to £24 per annum from 1 July 1923. 86 We have already noted how loyal and obedient African chiefs were bolstered by the NAD. However, there is a contradiction in this because the 1920s was also the period when chiefs' and headmen's powers were, as Bradford put it, "being whittled away..." 87 The Native Affairs Act, No. 23 of 1920, for example, allocated to "local councils" most of the powers that could have been exercised by chiefs while it authorised the Governor-General to make regulations applicable generally or to particular areas. Soon afterwards, the Native Administration Act of 1927 empowered the Governor-General to appoint or depose anybody as a chief or headman and to define their duties, powers and privileges, 88 thus, reducing African chiefs to mere government functionaries. The issue of chiefs' powers (or lack of them) within their localities, however, did not concern the Bakgatla chiefs as much as the question of the affinity of relations across the Transvaal-Bechuanaland border as well as its bureaucratic restrictions. This was one of the most central aspects of Bakgatla affairs throughout the study period and it needs some discussion.

85 NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, SNC to SNA, 29 June 1923.
86 NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, Acting SNA to SNC, 9 July 1923.
88 For details, see Lington, *Native Administration*, pp. 12-13, 63-70.
The problem of the South Africa-Bechuanaland border

The extremely long border, which was created by the London Convention in July 1881, was easily passable most of the year. By 1912, two police posts, 160 kilometres apart, had been built along it at Sekwani and Olifant's Drift and a fence erected on the Protectorate side. Opposite these posts were another "two weak posts" of the Transvaal police. The border was hardly patrolled. But, as with any other international border, the Bakgatla on both sides had to obtain a travel permit to cross to the other side. Travel restrictions were quite tough, considering that virtually every family had close relations on the other side. From the beginning of this century, for example, people from the Pilanesberg wishing to visit Mochudi were given a pass valid for 10 days only, a period that was considered too inadequate. The Bakgatla chiefs were not exempt from pass requirements. The chief in Mochudi, for example, had to obtain written permission from the resident magistrate in Gaborone to visit the Transvaal. (Even as late as April 1930, chief Isang had to have written permission to take his sick wife for medical treatment in Johannesburg, "provided he reports to the responsible officer of the District to which he proceeds and exhibits this [travel] permit.")

In February 1903, the Bakgatla made a spirited plea to the British government to "join" their two population segments "together into one section by abolishing between us the laws relating

89 E.W. Smith, Great Lion of Bechuanaland (1957), p. 298.
90 BNA S.44/3, Resident Commissioner, Mafeking, to High Commissioner, Cape Town, 21 May 1912.
91 BNA S.33/2, Acting Assistant Commissioner (AAC), Gaborone, to chief Linchwe, 3 August 1906; Acting Resident Commissioner (ARC), Mafeking, to High Commissioner (HC), Johannesburg, 9 August 1906.
92 Phuthadikobo Museum, Mochudi, note by Resident Magistrate, Gaborone, 30 April, 1932.
to passes, simply because we are just of the same blood, bone and flesh."\(^ {93}\) It was in this sense that the Bakgatla on both sides did not recognise the legality of the border. This feeling was quite strong among many Bakgatla. Indeed, during the South African War, the Bakgatla's destruction of the beacons that marked the international border\(^ {94}\) was an expression of the non-recognition of their division.

Given such a porous border, however, the temptation for the Bakgatla to cross it in either direction without official permission must have been strong because, apart from the need to visit relatives, the Bakgatla maintained cattle posts on both sides of the border, some of which were within the Transvaal Game Reserve. It was, therefore, not surprising that the incidence of illegal crossing of the border was extremely high.\(^ {95}\) Some of this crossing by the Protectorate Bakgatla was specifically for poaching game in the Transvaal Game Reserve, a regular activity that often resulted in poachers being shot dead by members of the Transvaal police who regularly patrolled the game reserve. On 7 August 1912, for example, R. Sioketse, a 27 year old male Mokatla of Mochudi was shot dead in the Reserve by Constable D.H.J. van Zyl of the Olifants Drift Police Post. Beside his corpse were the carcass of a wild pig, a loaded Martini Rifle and a spent cartridge. Sioketse had been part of a small group of Protectorate Bakgatla poachers that apparently regularly poached in the Reserve.\(^ {96}\)

\(^ {93}\) SNA 116 NA 672/03, Petition by R.K. Pilane and others to A. Lawley, Lt-Gov., Transvaal, 9 February 1903, p. 5. The government, however, rejected the request and, instead, arranged for the passes to be issued on the border rather than "having to go great distances to obtain them." See SNA 116 NA 672/03, SNA to Chief S.K. Pilane, 2 June 1903.

\(^ {94}\) SNA 231 NA 2038/04, E. Muhl to Surveyor-General, 2 September 1904.

\(^ {95}\) M. Monametsi, interview, the kgotla, Mochudi, Botswana, 13 March 1993.

\(^ {96}\) Incidents of Bakgatla poachers being shot dead by the police were common. See BNA (continued...)
The Bakgatla's need for frequent contact across the border had been recognised and viewed sympathetically at the highest level of government early this century. The Colonial Secretary's office expressed this need succinctly thus:

...we ought not to impose too drastic restrictions upon the Natives going backwards and forwards between the Transvaal and the Bechuanaland Protectorate provided they have proper passes, seeing that they are so closely related to each other and require to hold family communication between villages on both sides of the Border. 97

In 1912, another official, the Resident Commissioner in Mafeking, rightly reported that "there is no excuse whatever for forbidding the crossing of natives to reciprocally visit their [cattle] posts and their relatives." 98 Following this realism, the government opened an additional port of entry, Derdepoort, as it was considered "impracticable" to force all the Bakgatla to use only two crossing points on such a long border. 99 However, there was no fundamental easing of the restrictions regarding the duration of travel passes but, at a public meeting at Crocodile Pools on 14 April 1906, Linchwe succeeded in persuading the High Commissioner to extend the validity of the travel pass to at least 3 months. 100 This action by Linchwe was significant in three ways. First, it alleviated the obvious inconvenience and hardship that was caused by the brief visiting period of only 10 days. Second, it demonstrated Linchwe's desire to maintain the

(...continued)
S.44/3, "Inquest holden at Rustenburg on 30 August 1912...into the circumstances touching the death of Rankoane Sioketse, Male, Bakhatla native of Mochudi...," p. 2; sworn affidavits of D.H.J. van Zyl, F.J. Goodreds, G.O. Moorhead, S. Petu and Mapasandile.

97 LTG 122 File No. 110/18, Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Office, Pretoria, to Private Secretary to Lt-Gov., 19 June 1903.
98 BNA S.44/3, Resident Commissioner (RC), Mafeking, to HC, 21 May 1912.
99 BNA S.44/3, Resident Commissioner (RC), Mafeking, to HC, 21 May 1912.
100 BNA S.33/2 AAC to Linchwe, 3 August 1906; ARC to HC, 9 August 1906.
unity of his artificially divided people. Third, it helped to boost further his chiefly prestige and status as well as the loyalty of his people on both sides of the border. The border question was closely bound with two other issues. First, the government would still not recognise Linchwe's chiefly authority in the Pilanesberg and, second, the NAD persistently interfered in the internal affairs of the Bakgatla.

"We are one people with one Chief": Bakgatla unity and oneness across the border

The question of Linchwe's authority among the Pilanesberg Bakgatla was intimately bound with pan-Bakgatla relations and unity across the South Africa-Bechuanaland border. Although this issue has been well recorded by Morton,\textsuperscript{101} he has not discussed the intricacies of the NAD authorities' machinations against the Pilanesberg Bakgatla and how they affected their relations with the other Bakgatla across the border.

The Pilanesberg Bakgatla fully acknowledged not only the Mochudi chieftainship's seniority but also its complete jurisdiction over them. Their obedience and loyalty to Mochudi was in fact unquestionable, while Linchwe's decisions were sacrosanct. The contemporary traveller and journalist, E.F. Knight, was quite accurate about Linchwe's authority in the Pilanesberg when he recorded that "...in [the] Transvaal territory, there is no doubt that all the [Bakgatla] people regard him as their lord and would implicitly obey his orders."\textsuperscript{102} According to one

\textsuperscript{101} See Morton, "Chiefs and ethnic unity," pp. 127-153. The few regional histories of the western Transvaal neither deal with this issue nor the implications of the historical fact that the Bakgatla straddled an international border. See, for example, Simpson, "Peasants and politics"; Relly, "Social and economic change"; Krikler, "Revolution from above..."

\textsuperscript{102} Knight, \textit{South Africa After the War}, p. 270. My emphasis.
informant, the chief at Saulspoort had "to run things in a way that pleased Linchwe." In particular, no major decision or action, especially one with legal implications, could be carried out by the Saulspoort chief or kgotla without the approval of the paramount chief at Mochudi, particularly on serious matters such as land, or succession.

At the end of February 1917, when the SNC instructed the kgotla in Saulspoort to prepare an inventory of the late Ramona's estate "as soon as possible," with a view to settling it, the kgotla "asked me [i.e. the SNC] to give them time to consult with the Chief Linchwe and to collect the information and they would notify me when this had been done." After further prompting by the SNC, the Bakgatla prepared the inventory, but only a month later. Even then, the Bakgatla pleaded for more time to make corrections to the inventory, which would still have to be seen by Linchwe first, before it was submitted to the SNC. This clearly revealed who, between the two authorities, Linchwe and the British, the Bakgatla had more regard for.

The Pilanesberg Bakgatla's loyalty to Mochudi was, in fact, so strong that on many occasions they risked censure from NAD officials when they could not immediately carry out official instructions or make decisions because of having to consult Mochudi first, no matter how long it took to get a reply, before they could do anything about it. In 1919, the SNC complained that his orders to the chief at Saulspoort "will only be carried out if they are approved of by

---

103 B.N.O. Pilane, interview, Saulspoort, 8 October 1993.
104 N2/7/3(14), SNA to SNC, 3 September 1925; SNC to chief Isang, Mochudi, 7 September 1925.
105 NTS 333 61/65 Part 1, SNC to NC, 3 April 1917.
106 NTS 333 61/65 Part 1, SNC to NC, 3 April 1917.
In the process of the Bakgatla purchasing the farm Koedoesfontein early in 1919, for example, acting chief Dialwa in Saulspoort was required to sign certain forms but refused to do so because authorisation to sign had not yet been received from Mochudi. Meanwhile, because of the ensuing delay, Dialwa was "given 14 days in which to sign those forms," otherwise he "will be in trouble."108

But delays were not just due to the necessity of having to obtain approval from Mochudi, which was several hundred kilometres away from Saulspoort and in another country, but also to Linchwe's overcautiousness. Thus, while the Transvaal authorities were anxious for a successor to Ramono and urged him to choose one, he took his time, indicating that he did not wish to make a hasty decision but added, however, that he would make a choice "as early as I can."109 This behaviour by Linchwe reflected the fact that although the NAD officials and the British colonial authorities were his superiors, he also had his own dignity and superior status among his own people and, therefore, would probably not want to be hurried or seen to be coerced into making an important decision, which would have been demeaning of his status.

The Pilanesberg Bakgatla's loyalty to Mochudi was, of course, not a one-way process. It was fully reciprocated by Mochudi in a number of ways. Both Linchwe and Isang took every precaution to ensure that the interests of their people in the Pilanesberg were looked after and not harmed in any way. This was demonstrated, for example, between 1920 and 1922 when

107 NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, SNC to SNA, 11 February 1919.
109 NTS 333 61/65 Part 1, Linchwe to Assistant Commissioner, Gaborone, 26 July 1917.
the Bakgatla had a dispute with T.C. du Plessis and N.J. Theunissen over "a servitude of storage of water" on the farm Doornpoort 251, which the Bakgatla co-owned with the two Boer men.\(^{110}\)

Acting chief Isang in Mochudi reacted cautiously. He wrote to the SNC, asking "to be fully informed" about the intended "servitude" and at the same time wrote to the Bakgatla's Rustenburg attorneys, van Velden and Lategan, in order, "to guard my interest and if necessary to let me know if I should come to Rustenburg."\(^{111}\) Furthermore, in 1929, when there was no medical doctor at Saulspoort, Isang requested the DRC missionary doctor at Mochudi "to give the other half of the tribe medical attention," and he agreed to do so for two days each month.\(^{112}\) Elsewhere in rural South Africa, it was common practice for chiefs to look after their people's interests. Regarding the crucial role of chiefs articulating the material aspirations of their people, Beinart, for example, has put it very well for Pondoland in the period up to 1930:

Moreover, in an area where pre-capitalist society was only partially transformed, where communal tenure remained intact, there was a significant degree of coincidence between chiefly interests and popular demands to protect rural resources. The chiefs could, on some issues, serve as a spearhead of popular opinion.\(^{113}\)

\(^{110}\) For details, see N2/7/3(14), van Velden and Lategan (Rustenburg attorneys), to Minister of Native Affairs, Pretoria, 30 March 1922.

\(^{111}\) N2/7/3(14), Acting Chieflsang Pilane, Mochudi, to SNC, 29 May 1922.

\(^{112}\) NA 163/400, G.M. Malan (doctor), Mochudi, to SNA, 1 October 1929. Subsequently, however, it was discovered that Malan was not registered as a medical practitioner with the South African Medical Council and he was, therefore, told to register first before he could practise at Saulspoort. See NA 163/400, Secretary for Public Health to SNA, 25 November 1929.

From all the above, it is surprising and incorrect for the historian, Mohlamme, to state in his doctoral study that Ramono's chieftainship at Saulspoort "led directly to the split of the Kgatla royal family into two independent sections, for since then [i.e. 1902] the Transvaal Kgafela-Kgatla have been ruled from Saulspoort independently of Mochudi."\footnote{114} The above evidence and discussion clearly reveal that after the South African War, despite the international border's separation, the Bakgatla on both sides, in fact, became much more united and interdependent than they had been since Kgamanyane's emigration to Mochudi in 1870.

Unable to appreciate the Pilanesberg Bakgatla's position with regard to their chief in Mochudi, the border notwithstanding, the first SNC at Saulspoort, W.H. Driver, labelled the Bakgatla as "arrogant, if not quite disrespectful..."\footnote{115} Thus, the NAD had the distinct impression, rightly or wrongly, that the Bakgatla considered their chief to be more important than an NAD official. It was this appearance of the Bakgatla disregarding government authority that frustrated and upset some NAD officials who were anxious to interfere in Bakgatla affairs. On 3 April 1917, the SNC, H. Griffith, put it succinctly when he wrote the following complaint to the NC about the Bakgatla:

\footnote{114} Mohlamme, "The role of black people," p. 169.
\footnote{115} SNA 62 NA 2160/02, SNC to NC, 26 September 1902.
I would beg to draw your attention to the fact that I am obstructed at every turn in all business of any importance with this tribe, by the fact that they will do nothing without first consulting the Chief Lintchwe, who resides at Mochudi in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. It is most annoying to be practically told at every turn, that your instructions will be carried out if Chief Lintchwe approves.  

Whereas the Pilanesberg Bakgatla considered their Mochudi paramount's regular and active attention to matters affecting them as his legitimate right, the NAD authorities viewed it as, in the SNA's words, "interference" which "cannot be tolerated." The thorny issue of Linchwe's jurisdiction and authority over his people in the Pilanesberg continued to sour relations between the Bakgatla and the NAD authorities. As a "solution" to the problem, in 1919, the SNC suggested the following. First, he proposed that Linchwe must nominate a "competent" man for the Saulspoort chieftainship, but with "full power to act as he thinks fit." Second, Linchwe must sever all control over his people in the Pilanesberg; and, third, that the SNC must deal directly with the Mochudi paramount and ignore the Saulspoort chief. The NC echoed the SNC's opinion of severing links between Linchwe and his Pilanesberg people, warning: "Unless something of this sort is done, the proper and satisfactory administration of Native Affairs cannot be performed." 

---

116 NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, SNC to NC, 3 April 1917.
117 NA 163/400, SNA to Acting Secretary for Native Affairs, Cape Town, 17 February 1919.
118 NTS 333 61/65 Part 1, SNC to SNA, 11 February 1919; SNC to NC, 3 April 1917; NC to SNA, 13 April 1917.
However, none of these "alternatives" was viable for the Bakgatla and it would be useful to look at each of them in turn. First, the Saulspoort chief being a nominee of Mochudi, he could not act independently. That would have been insubordination, which the Bakgatla would not have taken kindly to, in view of their strong loyalty to Mochudi. The second alternative was also impossible as it would have been tantamount to a de jure separation of the Pilanesberg Bakgatla, thus, sealing their already existing geographical separation, and this was an unthinkable scenario to the Bakgatla on both sides of the border. The third option meant that all matters would have had to be dealt with by post, which would have resulted in even longer delays. It would also have rendered the Saulspoort chieftainship practically worthless. The SNC's "alternatives," therefore, failed. This failure may have had to do with the SNA's opinion, which was as realistic as it was practical. He advised his subordinates "not to interfere unduly with the sentimental attachment of the people for their 'blood chief.' Indeed, so strong and unfaltering is this loyalty to their chief that while at times occasioning inconvenience, it commands respect."  

By the late 1920s, the Pilanesberg Bakgatla were becoming increasingly resentful of the Union government's hostile attitude towards the role of their paramount chief, then Isang, in their tribal affairs. They had become frustrated by the NAD's persistent interference in their affairs and, especially, the non-recognition of the legitimacy of the actions and decisions of their paramount over issues that affected them. Out of this frustration and anger arose the decision by then acting chief, Ofentse, and his lekgotla in Saulspoort to hire H. Cranko, a Rustenburg attorney, to write and send a petition to the Minister of Native Affairs in 1929. In the petition, 

119 NTS 333 61/65 Part 1, SNA to NC, 10 May 1917.
the Bakgatla stressed that they and those of the Bechuanaland Protectorate were "one people with one Chief."\textsuperscript{120} They were at pains to explain the Mochudi and Saulspoort chieftainships' positions, relative to one another. The petition read: "OFENTSE PILANE holds authority in our eyes only as the Chief's representative at Saulspoort [], but the Chief himself whether he be at Saulspoort or Mochudi has always his full lawful power over us."\textsuperscript{121}

The Bakgatla resented what they termed the "anomalous position" created by the government which tended to divide them into two distinct sections by recognising only the Saulspoort chief, but not the paramount at Mochudi. For this reason, the Pilanesberg Bakgatla were, to use their lekgotla's own words, "gravely concerned" that as a people, they would be split and divided, while the authority of their Mochudi paramount over them would be weakened. The petition, therefore, pleaded with the Minister of Native Affairs "to make the obtaining and correct position lawful under the European Code."\textsuperscript{122} To put it more precisely, the government of South Africa should officially recognise both the authority and legality of Mochudi over Saulspoort as well as the merely representative\textsuperscript{123} nature of the latter's chieftainship.

The Union government responded that they did not object to the Pilanesberg Bakgatla retaining "nominal allegiance" to their Mochudi paramount and further reiterated that the current situation would continue to exist, "provided the tribe remain law-abiding subjects of the Union

\textsuperscript{120} This and the succeeding paragraphs on the Bakgatla's 1929 petition to the Minister of Native Affairs are, unless otherwise specified, based on NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, "Petition of the Chief and Councillors of the Bakgatla Tribe to the Hon. The Minister for Native Affairs, Pretoria," 8 April 1929.

\textsuperscript{121} Quotation from p. 2 of the petition. Capital letters in text.

\textsuperscript{122} Quotation from p. 2.

\textsuperscript{123} My emphasis.
Government. But even more disquieting for the Bakgatla was the government's adamant position that "it is quite impossible for the Government of the Union to recognise as chief of a tribe within its borders any person resident beyond its jurisdiction."\textsuperscript{124} However, as can be deduced from this, the fact that Mochudi was outside the Union of South Africa was, to the Bakgatla, irrelevant and immaterial. They could not appreciate why the "European law" that created the border could not give allowance for their unique situation. The Bakgatla's petition expressed these differences quite starkly:

Thus,\textit{[\ldots]} although according to our law, OFENTSE PILANE may only speak for his brother and his decisions and actions are all subject to the approval and confirmation of Chief ISANG PILANE, according to European law our Chief ISANG PILANE has no voice at Saulspoort. In our eyes our Chief ISANG PILANE may reverse a judicial decision of Chief OFENTSE PILANE.\textsuperscript{125}

Due to the fundamental differences in perceptions between the two sides outlined above, the question of Linchwe's jurisdiction over his Pilanesberg people was never resolved and the Bakgatla remained dissatisfied and unhappy about it. During the period under study, there were movements of popular protest and resistance in other parts of rural South Africa which centred around local issues and grievances\textsuperscript{126}; this was not the case amongst the Bakgatla and, indeed, the other peoples of the Pilanesberg. Why were such movements absent among the Bakgatla?

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{124} NTS 333 61/55 Part 1, SNA to Additional Native Commissioner, n.d.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Quotation from p. 2. Capital letters in text.
\item \textsuperscript{126} For the Transkei and eastern Cape in the period 1890-1930, see, for example, Beinart and Bundy, \textit{Hidden Struggles}, pp. 106-165, 191-320.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The absence of political organisation and protest is, perhaps, surprising, in view of the strong political and economic objectives of the Bakgatla just before the South African War and the military role they played in it. A characteristic of the 1920s among rural Africans throughout the Union was the unprecedented expression of discontent.\textsuperscript{127} The fifth General Missionary Conference of July 1921 also noted, for example, that "from all the Mission fields" in South Africa came "reports of a growing national consciousness and an intensification of race feeling among the Natives as a consequence of the [First] world war."\textsuperscript{128} Following the end of World War One, some South African blacks entertained false hopes of impending social justice and, when this was not forthcoming, it led to frustration. Grundlingh has recorded, for example, that the war-time service overseas of South African blacks sensitised some of them to their own situation back home and they returned with a sharper awareness of their relative deprivation and became discontented. In the Rustenburg area, for instance, some war veterans addressed African "peasants," telling them that they would soon "gain their freedom."\textsuperscript{129} This frustration, compounded by the many racial injustices suffered by Africans, led to outbreaks of industrial and social unrest in various parts of South Africa.\textsuperscript{130} None of this, however, occurred in the Rustenburg/Pilanesberg areas.

\textsuperscript{127} See, for example, Beinart and Bundy, \textit{Hidden Struggles}, p. 263; D.H. Anthony, "Max Yergan in South Africa: from evangelical pan-Africanist to revolutionary socialist," \textit{African Studies Review} (Atlanta), 34, 2 (September 1991), pp. 27-55.


\textsuperscript{129} Grundlingh, \textit{Fighting Their Own War}, p. 130. For details of the overall impact of World War One on South African black societies generally and black ex-veterans of the war specifically, see this source, especially pp. 122-166.

\textsuperscript{130} For details, see Walshe, \textit{The Rise of African Nationalism}, pp. 70-74
Bradford has discussed in detail the fairly robust activities of the ICU in the eastern Transvaal during the latter half of the 1920s. It was, however, quite different from the rural areas of the northern and western Transvaal (including the Pilanesberg) where the Union's activities were, as Bradford admits, "fairly limited," and she attributes this to problems such as farm workers' lack of interest in politics due to these areas' comparatively greater "backward[ness]" and poverty. In fact, apart from the Lichtenburg diamond diggings and the Pretoria areas where the ICU had some impact in 1927-1928, it hardly had any impact on the rural areas of the western, central or northern Transvaal. 131

In the Pilanesberg especially, it was not just a question of the ICU's "limited impact," but rather a lack of presence altogether. This is explained by two reasons. First, the 'political struggles' of the Bakgatla were, as Simpson has generally explained for all the Batswana groups in the Rustenburg area, "internally focused and localised," rather than directed against "exploitation by white farmers, or national oppression by white government..." 132 Instead, the Bakgatla were preoccupied with issues such as land acquisition, their two divided sections and the lack of recognition of their chief in Mochudi by the South African government. Simpson has further recorded that up to 1940, none of the (embryonic) national political organisations such as the ICU or the African National Congress had any influence in the Rustenburg district because of their "failure to articulate the local material concerns of Tswana peasants in the area..." 133 None of these organisations, for example, assisted the Bakgatla with their problems of the

131 For details of the ICU's poor performance in the northern and western Transvaal, see Bradford, A Taste of Freedom, pp. 161-185, especially p. 163.
controversy over Ramona's succession to the Saulspoort chieftainship, or land acquisition.

As a conclusion to this chapter, we have noted that from Kgamanyane's departure from the Pilanesberg in 1870, up to the end of the South African War late in 1902 when Linchwe nominated his brother Ramono, there had been, strictly speaking, a vacuum in the Saulspoort chieftainship. The two "chiefs," Moselekatse and, later, his son Mokae who occupied the position during this interregnum were neither Kgamanyane's nor Linchwe's nominees. For this reason, more than any other, they lacked legitimacy among the Pilanesberg Bakgatla generally, especially Mokae who was seen as an active functionary of the SAR government. For reasons already noted, there was neither time nor opportunity for either Kgamanyane or his successor Linchwe to deal with the question of filling up the Saulspoort chieftainship, until after the South African War and the advent of British rule in the Transvaal, when it was possible to do so.

Although Linchwe's jurisdiction over his people in the Pilanesberg was not officially recognised and he was, therefore, told to nominate a "deputy" to act for him instead, the NAD still insisted on their own choice rather than Mochudi's. But what is significant is that in this long drawn-out tussle, the government lost in the face of a people determined to defy it simply by refusing to cooperate. Such government interference recurred during the nomination of Ramono's successor, although it was now much less spirited than before, perhaps because of the possibility that the earlier Bakgatla strategy of non-co-operation might be applied again. Thus, since Dialwa's forced resignation in 1922 and the accession of Ofentse, there had not been any government interference in Bakgatla chiefly succession again. The important point to emerge from the Bakgatla-NAD succession wrangles is that the government failed to exercise any
meaningful authority if it insisted on imposing its own "chief."

But even more contentious and long lasting than the problem of government interference in the succession issue was the question of Linchwe exercising jurisdiction over his people in the Pilanesberg. The Pilanesberg chief and populace fully acknowledged Linchwe's authority and jurisdiction over them. But the government, on the other hand, persistently refused to acknowledge this situation which was already in existence and, for its own convenience, initially wanted to sever all links between Mochudi and Saulspoort, a scenario that would have been both unacceptable to the Bakgatla as well as difficult to enforce.

It is important to note, therefore, that because no effective local government administration of Bakgatla affairs could take place without the co-operation of the chief in Saulspoort, who got his approval and instructions from outside the country, the government had no choice but to give a grudging de facto recognition of what the Bakgatla chiefs and people desired. The truth was that the Bakgatla were able to defy the NAD so successfully, precisely because of their split into two segments. Closely linked to the question of whether or not to recognise Linchwe's jurisdiction over the Pilanesberg was the international border between the two Bakgatla segments who did not recognise it, considered it inconvenient and an obstacle. Since the border was extremely long, with only three official crossing points and travel permits allowed only limited time, the incidence of illegal crossing was, understandably, extremely high.

We have noted how the Bakgatla of the Pilanesberg looked to Mochudi for assistance and leadership. Perhaps the most important assistance they received from their paramount chief was
his crucial role in spearheading land-purchasing for his landless people in the Pilanesberg. This was an important aspect of Bakgatla unity and is the topic of the next chapter.
Figure 2  Genealogy

BAKGATLA LINE OF CHIEFS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KGAFLA</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TEBELE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASELLANE (PHETO I)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mare</td>
<td>*Modimohwane  *Tékè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KGWEFANE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOLEFÈ</td>
<td>Mmabgotsé (1770-90) Molefè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Mololte (1821-5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHETO II</td>
<td>*Pilane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1795-1810)</td>
<td>Senwèlè (1810-15, 1821)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LETSÈBÈ</td>
<td>*Kgotlasmaswe (1833)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1815-20)</td>
<td>(1825-53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KGAMANYANE</td>
<td>*Tshomankane  *Letsebè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1853-74)</td>
<td>(1874-5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LENTSWE</td>
<td>Ramono</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1875-1924)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kgafela</td>
<td>Isang  Offtse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d. 1914)</td>
<td>(1921-9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOLEFI</td>
<td>Mmusi Ramono Thari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1929-36  1936-42  1945-)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Begotten by Tékè after Mare's death in early manhood.
2 Regent for Pheto; afterwards quarrelled with him, and moved to the Kwena, where his descendants still are.
3 Killed by Letsebè's brothers.
4 Killed many of his senior brothers and nephews.
5 Looked after the tribe while Pilane was living among the Laka as a refugee from Moselekaete's Tebele.
6 Killed by Senwelè.
7 Fought Pilane for the chieftainship, and was driven away.
8 Seceded with portions of the tribe, but returned after Kgamanyane's death.
9 Chief of the Transvaal section, 1904-17.
10 Chief of the Transvaal section, 1922-42.
11 Joint regent with two junior members of the royal family.
12 Present chief of the Transvaal section.
13 Chief of the Transvaal section, 1943-9.

Adapted from: Schapera, Tswana Law and Custom, p.308
CHAPTER FIVE

LAND-PURCHASING AMONG THE BAKGATLA, 1903-1931

Before examining the processes of land-purchasing among the Bakgatla, this chapter first looks at the Voortrekkers' land policy towards blacks in the Transvaal during the 19th century, as well as the Bakgatla's relative landlessness. The chapter focuses on the Bakgatla's formidable problems in buying Saulspoort, their largest and most important farm, from S.J.P. Kruger, during the last 30 years of the 19th century. It demonstrates the important role played by the DRC missionary, H.L. Gonin, in the Bakgatla's purchasing of Saulspoort, especially in view of Kruger's prevarications in the matter. It also shows that for Africans in the Rustenburg/Pilanesberg areas generally, and the Bakgatla specifically, the first two decades of this century were their 'golden years' in terms of the resources with which to buy land. The Bakgatla's major resource of cattle was then relatively plentiful due to their large-scale looting of Boer cattle during the South African War. Consequently, the Bakgatla, who had far more cattle than any other group in the Pilanesberg region, were better able to buy more land than anyone else.

The problem of the need for additional land was not peculiar to the Bakgatla alone but general to other Africans in the region as a whole. For the western Transvaal generally, the Native Commissioner (NC), Western Division, for example, alluded to the necessity for land-purchasing in his report of June 1904 when he reported that Africans were unhappy about "the
refusal of Government to allow them to purchase more land." The writer is aware that land as an economic resource is intricately tied up with the issues of labour and land utilisation, for example. These are, however, excluded from this chapter and dealt with in Chapter Six, simply for convenience.

**Early African acquisition of land**

Following the defeat and expulsion of the Amandebele of Mzilikazi from the western Transvaal at the end of 1837, the Voortrekkers under the leadership of A. Potgieter proclaimed the Transvaal as Boer territory, by right of conquest. The Voortrekkers considered the Africans to be under their jurisdiction as the new authorities and "owners" of the land in the Transvaal. By the early 1840s, some Voortrekkers were already settling in the Rustenburg and Pilanesberg areas. If the Boers considered African-occupied land suitable for their occupation, "the natives were obliged to either regain possession by purchase or to become farm servitors." Land in the Transvaal was given to the original Voortrekkers "on a very generous basis" and, up to 1870, two 6000-acre farms were given to each one "as of right." In about 1841, for example, when P. Kruger was 16 years old, he was entitled to choose two farms for himself, one for grazing and another for growing crops. From the 1850s, title-holders such as veldkornets and commandants in particular, were able to acquire "substantial land holdings" easily. This process

---

4 S. Trapido, "Aspects in the transition," p. 27
contributed to landlessness among some untitled Boers and, especially, blacks. Another contributing factor to this landlessness was that from the 1860s, some individuals and companies were given huge tracts of land as payment for service of one kind or another to the government of the Transvaal.\(^6\) This landlessness affected the Bakgatla as well as many other black communities in the SAR.

Africans could acquire land they could call their own only as a "grant" or through purchase from the Boers. In the western Transvaal, the earliest cases of land "grants" to Africans by the Boer emigrants date back to November 1837 when the commandants A. H. Potgieter, G. Maritz and P.L. Uys "rewarded" the Barolong chiefs Moroka, Montshiwa and Gontse, and the Bahurutshe chief Moiloa, with grants of land for having assisted the Voortrekkers in expelling Mzilikazi out of the Transvaal. The lands the Boers gave them were the same ones they had occupied prior to their invasion and dispersal by Mzilikazi. Following Mzilikazi's expulsion by the Boers, these groups were allowed back only with the permission of the Boers.\(^7\)

Throughout the Transvaal, the Voortrekker commandants gave land grants to black groups "for services rendered" or loyalty.\(^8\) However, the condition underlining all these land grants was that the Africans had to "behave in accordance with the law and obediently" because, as a Volksraad Resolution of 17 September 1858 stipulated, the land was not the Africans' property but for their use only.\(^9\) Up to that point, the idea of Africans buying land was never

---


\(^7\) For details, see *Report by the Commissioner for Native Affairs, relative to the Acquisition and Tenure of Land by Natives in the Transvaal* (July 1904), pp. 15-16.

\(^8\) *Acquisition and Tenure*, pp. 18-20.

\(^9\) *Acquisition and Tenure*, p. 20.
even officially considered. Due to repeated African requests to buy land, especially from the Rustenburg area, the government of President T.F. Burgers did consider the issue in 1874, but rejected it because of Article 9 of the Grondwet which stated that: "The [Boer] people will not permit any equalisation of coloured persons with white inhabitants."  

In the Transvaal, there were four categories of land occupation by blacks, namely, land owned by blacks themselves, Crown Lands, government locations and white-owned private farms. Regarding the Bakgatla specifically, virtually all the land they inhabited up to the end of the 19th century was white-owned and private. Between 1884 and 1899, their chief, Linchwe, was able to buy for them only parts of four farms: Saulspoort (Moruleng), Modderkuil (Manamakgote), Kruidfontein (Lesetla) and Holfontein (Mokgalwana). According to the contemporary legal requirement, these farms were registered in the name of the Superintendent of Natives. The rest of the lands the Bakgatla used were rented from the surrounding Boer farms. These farms, as already noted in Chapter Three, were inadequate for the Bakgatla's needs. As the local missionary, H. L. Gonin, reported in April 1885, for example, the 4567-morgen farm Saulspoort alone had about 300 families with an estimated 1200-1500 people living on it. By the turn of the 19th century, the Bakgatla's land situation had hardly improved. Moreover, as the NC stated in April 1903, the Bakgatla properties of Saulspoort, Modderkuil and Kruidfontein were, "more or less useless for arable purposes and will carry

---

10 For details, see Acquisition and Tenure, pp. 21-22.
11 TKP Vol. 239, Annual Report by the Commissioner for Native Affairs for the Year ended 30 June 1903; Acquisition and Tenure, pp. 4-5.
12 GOV/756/PS 50, "Purchase of Land by Natives," p. 84; "Enclosure 8 (a)," p. 1.
13 GOV/756/PS 50, "Purchase of Land by Natives after Retrocession, 1884 to 1899," p. 84; "Enclosure 8 (a)," p. 1.
14 DRCA, Cape Town, S5/15/7/1 "Memorandum en Voorstel...," 18 April, 1885.
only a limited number of cattle in consequence of the lack of water."

Missionary assistance in land-purchasing: the Rev. H. Gonin's role

Due to the legal inability of black people to buy land in their own name, they turned to the missionaries who worked among them for assistance. The Bakgatla's neighbours, the Bafokeng at Phokeng near Rustenburg, for example, were assisted by the Rev. E. Penzhorn, while the Bakwena-ba-Mogopa at Bethanie were assisted by the Rev. G. Behrens. The Bakgatla were assisted by the Rev. Gonin whose diplomatic and economic value soon became obvious to the Bakgatla as their need for additional land became more pressing. At the time of Gonin's arrival in 1864, none of the land the Bakgatla occupied was their own and security of tenure was, therefore, completely lacking. It was for this reason that Kgamanyane, in the quest to buy more land for his people, constantly sought Gonin's advice and assistance.

As the local veldkornet, Kruger must have been aware of the Bakgatla's acute need for more land and, some time between August and November 1868, he "advised" Kgamanyane to purchase his farm Saulspoort for £900, a price which Gonin thought to be highly inflated and twice the farm's actual value. If what the SNC was told by the Bakgatla in 1903 is to be believed, Kgamanyane was "instructed" by Kruger that "he must purchase" Saulspoort. Kruger, fearing that the price might have to come down because of Gonin's influence, warned

15 SNA 116 NA 672/03, NC to SNA, 3 April 1903.
17 Maree, Uit Duisternis, p. 54.
18 SNA 116 NA 672/03, SNC to NC, 27 April 1903, p. 4.
Kgamanyane not to tell Gonin about the impending transaction because if he did, Kruger threatened, Gonin himself would buy Saulspoort and chase away all the Bakgatla who refused to become church members. As the Afrikaner DRC missionary writer, Maree, recorded, Kruger is reported to have told Kgamanyane: "Watch out. Don't speak to the missionaries about this. Otherwise they will buy the farm for themselves and will drive all the Kaffirs who don't want to learn away." 19

Kruger set the condition that if the Bakgatla did not pay the full purchase price within three months, they would forfeit not only their payment, but also their residence on Saulspoort. The Bakgatla, therefore, immediately began to sell sorghum, livestock, rieme, lion skins and gave a down payment of £360 to Kruger. But, after the agreed number of cattle had been delivered to Kruger, he reneged on the deal and claimed that "the first mob of cattle was only for half of the required area. A second mob was then got together and given to Mr. Kruger." 20

However, in September 1868, the Volksraad rejected the transaction as they feared the possibility of the Bakgatla refusing to pay tax once they had a stake in their own land. Consequently, Kruger changed the deed of sale to one of rent, with new conditions, and, in a manner that symbolically emphasised the relations of power between them, he "tore up the [Bakgatla's] purchase document and receipts." According to a new "contract" which Kruger made at his farm, Waterkloof, on 3 November 1868, what the Bakgatla had paid was now considered as lapsed and they would have to pay a further £19 17s per year as rent for the

19 Quoted in Maree, Uit Duisternis, p. 54.
20 GOV/756/PS 50, "Purchase of Land," p. 82; Acquisition and Tenure, p. 27; Schapera, A Short History, p. 10; Maree, Uit Duisternis, p. 54.
next 20 years. These problems prompted the Bakgatla to seek Gonin's help urgently. On 18 November 1868, the Bakgatla's lekgotla appointed Gonin as their semi-official diplomatic agent and the position was confirmed in a written note to him the following day. Clearly, Gonin had arrived when the Bakgatla were in need of the important resource of land and his role became quite significant during the purchase of the Bakgatla's first farm, Saulspoort, from Kruger. It should be noted here that this was precisely when Kruger was heavily in debt, experiencing a variety of personal hardships and definitely needed money, which may explain why he was making such demands.

The above episode clearly reveals, in a local context, the highly disproportionate relations of power between Africans and big Boer land owners in the Transvaal generally during the 19th century. The Bakgatla had not been consulted about the "contract," for example. On a more individual level, it reveals the capricious nature of Kruger as a person. This aspect of Kruger has not been revealed in any of the current historical literature on the man. It was in this situation of helplessness that Kgamanyane, once again, sought the assistance and advice of Gonin, now the Bakgatla's semi-official diplomatic agent, regarding the Saulspoort sale saga. At a general assembly by the Bakgatla on 18 November 1868, the rental arrangement decreed by Kruger was unanimously repudiated.

21 DRCA S5/15/7/1, Memorandum en Voorstel, Saulspoort, 18 April 1885.
22 Maree, Uit Duisternis, p. 55.
25 It is not clear, however, whether this decision was influenced by Gonin or not.
Kruger was unhappy about this as well as Gonin's increasing role and influence among the Bakgatla because it suggested that he (Kruger) might not be able to deal with the Bakgatla as he would want to. Consequently, when Gonin told Kruger of his new role as the Bakgatla's representative, Kruger called Kgamanyane privately and coerced him into signing two important documents. The first was to rescind Gonin's appointment as the Bakgatla representative and, the second, to accept Kruger's earlier rental decree. Furthermore, Kruger warned Kgamanyane not to disclose any of this information to Gonin. The lack of reaction by the Bakgatla to Kruger's behaviour could be explained by the real possibility that as their landlord, he could have threatened to evict them if they did not comply with his instructions.

Before the end of 1868, the SAR government referred to the Volksraad cases from the Rustenburg district in which some Africans wanted to buy land from whites. The Volksraad, however, refused to deal with the matter and decided to leave it in abeyance. Thus, the Bakgatla were legally unable to buy Saulspoort. Instead, therefore, on 17 December 1868, at another of Kruger's Pilanesberg farms, Boekenhoutfontein, he sold Saulspoort to Gonin for £900, but subtracted the £360 already paid by the Bakgatla. Thus, Gonin paid to Kruger only £540 and "became the owner of Saulspoort." For the Bakgatla, the original tenancy payment of £19 17s per annum lapsed, presumably because of their down-payment of £360, which they never got back. On 4 August 1869, the farm was registered in Gonin's name. It is unclear whether Gonin had consulted Kgamanyane over the matter, but in a document about the sale written by Gonin, dated 18 April 1885, he indicates that the transaction had "the approval of

---

27 For details, see *Acquisition and Tenure*, pp. 21-22.
But why did Gonin buy Saulspoort? In many parts of South Africa, it was common practice for missionaries to own land. During the 1870s in the eastern Transvaal, the Berlin Mission Society (BMS) missionary, A. Merensky, for example, owned many thousands of acres of land, while the Hermannsburg missionaries in the Rustenburg district also owned land and farmed. In Zululand too, the American Zulu Mission and the Norwegian Mission both owned large tracts of land. There were various reasons for missionaries owning land. Before the Second World War, the Hermannsburg missionaries, for example, were paid extremely small salaries which were “only a third of what Reformed and Methodist missionaries were paid” and, therefore, resorted to owning land, farming and livestock production to survive as some of them “lived in great poverty.”

Gonin, however, does not seem to have bought Saulspoort because he needed to. Although he was not wealthy, he was, nevertheless, financially secure. Some indication of this was the fact that by July 1866, his salary was £250 per annum. Moreover, the fact that towards the end of 1871 the Gonins could afford to engage the services of a "well educated" Dutch

---

28 DRCA S5/15/7/1, “Memorandum en Voorstel . . .”, Saulspoort, 18 April 1885.
30 Hasselhorn, Mission, Land Ownership and Ideology, pp. 18-20.
31 DRCA S5/15/7/2, H. Gonin to W.J. Neethling, 1 July 1866.
governess and “first-class teacher” for their younger children, paid from their own pockets,\(^{32}\) indicates the Gonins’ good financial situation. In 1868, for example, Gonin paid £540 for the farm, Saulspoort, in one cash payment. In addition, the Gonins spent £250 on building a church and their house, almost £200 on a school boarding house and £30 on surveyor’s fees. All of this money was from their own resources,\(^{33}\) a clear indication of the Gonins’ comfortable economic position.

Gouin’s motive for buying Saulspoort does seem to have been a disinterested one as he wanted to secure the property for DRC work. This is indicated by his desire that at the end of the Bakgatla’s 20-year “lease” period, the Church should take over the ownership of Saulspoort. In Gouin's words, he bought Saulspoort “not for speculation but only to assure the existence of missionary work and to have this place as a mission station for which it is well situated for our Church.”\(^{34}\) Many years after Gouin's death, his son reiterated the point that his father had bought the property in order to do “unobstructed missionary work” and “to avoid depending on the whims of the Kgotla Chief for missionary work.”\(^{35}\)

In return, Gouin said he wanted back only what he had spent on Saulspoort as well as the retention of his house and garden, in case he wanted to retire there.\(^{36}\) This was the main reason for Gouin's purchase of Saulspoort as he seems to have been obsessed with the idea of a secure

---

\(^{32}\) DRCA S/15/7/2, Gouin to Neethling, 27 November 1871; 6 March 1873.

\(^{33}\) DRCA S5/15/7/1, "Memorandum en Voorstel...," Saulspoort, 18 April 1885.

\(^{34}\) DRCA S5/15/7/1, “Memorandum en Voorstel,” Saulspoort, 18 April 1885.

\(^{35}\) DRCA S5/15/7/4, H. Gouin (Junior), Wellington, to A.C. Murray, Stellenbosch, 28 July 1928.

\(^{36}\) DRCA S5/15/7/1, "Memorandum en Voorstel...," Saulspoort, 18 April 1885. My emphasis.
and permanent home for retirement for himself and his wife.\textsuperscript{37} Thus, although he wanted to give the property away to the Church, at the same time, he wanted to hold on to it until their deaths.\textsuperscript{38} (On 19 October 1912, two years after Gonin's death, the property was formally transferred to the Sub-Committee of the DRC.\textsuperscript{39})

Apart from Saulspoort, Gonin bought three other farms, the 2408-morgen Welgeval from D. Putter on 10 October 1864, the 2676-morgen Schaapkraal from J.P. Joubert on 29 December 1867, and half of the 2743-morgen Koedoesfontein on 5 June 1891.\textsuperscript{40} It is not clear why Gonin bought these farms, but it could also have been for better security in old age, or simply for sale at a profit in future. Gonin sold most of Saulspoort to the Bakgatla in 1898, Koedoesfontein to chief Ramono in 1913, while Welgeval was sold by his heirs to the Bakgatla in 1933. Schaapkraal was inherited by his children in 1915,\textsuperscript{41} five years after his death.

Chief Linchwe was so keen to buy Saulspoort that he offered Gonin £10 000 for the whole of it, but he refused and offered to sell him only 3 925 morgen for £600, while he retained the rest

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Maree, \textit{Uit Duisternis}, p. 153; DRCA S5/15/7/1 "\textit{Memorandum en Voorstel...}," Saulspoort, 18 April 1885.}
\footnote{DRCA S5/15/7/4, Findlay, MacRobert and Niemeyer (attorneys), Pretoria, to J.H. Conradie (public notary), Cape Town, 12 March 1909.}
\footnote{DRCA S5/15/7/4, W. van Velden, Rustenburg, to A.C. Murray, 2 August 1921.}
\footnote{See Surveyor-General's office, Mmabatho, Land Transfer Records, Welgeval, No.171 JP Folio 171/1; Schaapkraal, No. 170 JP Folio 170/1; Koedoesfontein, No. 42 JQ Folio 42/1.}
\footnote{Surveyor-General's office, Mmabatho, Land Transfer Records, Saulspoort, No. 38 JQ Folio 38/1; Welgeval, No.171 JP Folio 171/1; Schaapkraal, No. 170 JP Folio 170/1; Koedoesfontein, No. 42 JQ Folio 42/1.}
\end{footnotes}
for missionary work. Accordingly, on 11 November 1898, the Bakgatla bought the much larger portion of Saulspoort (3 925 morgen) from Gonin for £600. But Gonin made three important sale conditions. First, the 642-morgen, mission part of Saulspoort would continue to be used for missionary work forever, never to be sold. Second, no other Christian denomination, other than the DRC, would be allowed to work on the property. Third, no alcohol consuming facility would be erected there. The farm was registered in the name of the Superintendent for Native Affairs “in trust for the BaKgatla” on 18 November 1898. It had taken the Bakgatla almost 30 years of struggling to buy Saulspoort.

The attempts of the Bakgatla to acquire the remaining (Gonin’s) portion of Saulspoort led to a bitter and protracted wrangle between the Bakgatla on the one hand, and the DRC and Gonin’s son, Henri, on the other. On 4 July 1921, the Bakgatla leadership wrote to the General Secretary of the DRC in Cape Town, disputing the Church’s ownership of the mission part of Saulspoort and insisting that the property “should now be transferred to the Tribe in like manner as the other portion” because, the petition continued, “the whole tribe is now practically Christian.” In this petition, the Bakgatla disputed the legality of Gonin’s and, later, the DRC’s ownership of the Saulspoort property. They claimed, for example, that during Kruger’s time, Gonin had bought the property “for the special benefit of those members of the

42 DRCA S5/15/7/4, W. van Velden, Rustenburg, to A.C. Murray, Cape Town, 2 August 1921.
43 DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 7 September 1895.
44 Surveyor-General’s Office, Mmabatho, Land Transfer Records, Portion 1, Saulspoort, No.38 JQ Folio 38/1/1.
45 DRCA S5/15/7/4, Paramount Chief Isang and Others, Mochudi, to General Secretary, General Mission Committee, DRC, Cape Town, 4 July 1921, pp. 1-2.
Tribe who were Christians. But this was factually incorrect because, as noted above, he had bought it for himself. Equally incorrect was the Bakgatla's claim that the larger portion of Saulspoort was “bought on behalf of the Kgatla by the Rev. Gonin.” Initially, “the Chief and Tribe subscribed the full purchase price of the Farm,” as the petition correctly asserted, but payment was given direct to Kruger by the Bakgatla.

What did this wrangle mean? The Bakgatla made this claim, clearly ignorant of the fact that the whole of the Saulspoort property legally belonged to Gonin. As Gonin's son correctly replied to the Bakgatla's petition, his father had refused to sell the whole of Saulspoort to the Bakgatla, “but only a part of it.” For these reasons, the Bakgatla's petition was rejected by Gonin's son and his lawyers, who called the claim “[an] afterthought, now that Gonin had long since passed away.” It is not clear, however, whether Gonin had told the Bakgatla about any of the transactions he was making about Saulspoort. But the occurrence of this dispute, some 60 years later, indicates that the Bakgatla were not fully aware of Gonin's dealings. The Bakgatla also seem to have been upset that Gonin had given the mission property to the Church.

The wrangle, however, was not as straightforward as it may seem. The Bakgatla's original payment to Kruger was for the entire farm of Saulspoort, including the 642-morgen part that

46 DRCA S5/15/7/4, Chief Isang and Others to General Secretary, 4 July 1921.
47 DRCA S5/15/7/4, Isang and Others to General Secretary, 4 July 1921, p. 1.
48 DRCA S5/15/7/4, Isang and Others to General Secretary, 4 July 1921, p. 1.
49 DRCA S5/15/7/4, H. Gonin (Junior), Wellington, to A.C. Murray, Cape Town, 28 July 1928.
50 DRCA S5/15/7/4, Gonin to Murray, 28 July 1921; van Velden and Lategan to Murray, 2 August 1921.
51 DRCA S5/15/7/4, Isang and Others to General Secretary, 4 July 1921.
Gonin later demarcated for himself. On that basis, therefore, the farm was, rightly, Bakgatla property. Kruger, however, repudiated the sale, without refunding the Bakgatla and then decreed that the payment was now to become the rent for living on his property. Gonin was, of course, fully aware of that new development, and yet decided to buy the entire property instead. He was, therefore, buying property which the Bakgatla had already fully paid to Kruger for, and Gonin knew that.

Instead of continuing to exercise his role of custodian of Bakgatla interests and interceding for their benefit, Gonin bought the farm himself. The weakness of the Bakgatla case, however, lay in the fact that they had no legal or documentary proof that they had fully paid for the whole of Saulspoort, since Kruger had torn up the purchase agreement papers and receipts, as noted earlier. On the other hand, Gonin legally bought Saulspoort from Kruger since he had fully paid for it and obtained the legal papers to prove it, notwithstanding the fact that the Bakgatla had already fully paid for it.

As the turn of the 19th century drew closer, the Bakgatla became more determined to buy Saulspoort. Following the Pretoria Convention of 1881, a Location Commission was formed in order to demarcate African locations, take transfer of, and hold it in trust, land privately bought by Africans. This responsibility was transferred to the SNA in 1880, to the Superintendent of Natives in 1886, the CNA (during the Crown colony government) and, in 1907, to the Minister of Native Affairs. In 1895, Chief Linchwe personally met (the then President) P. Kruger about the Bakgatla's intended purchase of Saulspoort. Following the

---

passing of the Squatters' Law in 1895, Gonin confirmed with P. Joubert, the Superintendent of Natives in the SAR, that Saulspoort was considered an African location and not a private farm, which meant that legally, more than five families could live on it. 53

In this long process, Gonin undoubtedly played a crucial role as the Bakgatla's intermediary in their efforts to buy land. In dealing with Gonin, the Bakgatla were relatively fortunate because, in land transactions elsewhere in the region, some missionaries did cheat the African people among whom they worked. They acknowledged having proprietary rights over tribal farms that had been registered in their name, as if they were theirs. There were often no written agreements to define the African purchasers' rights and ensure that the missionary honoured his side of the agreement, thus, leaving open the loophole that the missionary could deny his part in it. 54 During the SAR period, the Bakwena-ba-Mogopa registered most of the land they had bought in the name of the Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS), as the law then required. Early in the 20th century, however, when they tried to transfer their properties to the CNA in trust for them, they experienced "considerable difficulty" because some of the HMS missionaries claimed that "certain portions of the farms in question are their property." 55

Between 1904 and 1908 in the Hamanskraal area near Pretoria, the Berlin Mission Society (BMS) claimed the Bakgatla-ba-Mosha's "most densely settled portion of their location" and

53 DRCA S5/15/7/4, W. van Velden, Rustenburg, to A.C. Murray, Cape Town, 2 August 1921.
54 Acquisition and Tenure, p. 23. For disputes between Africans and missionaries over landownership, see TPP Vol. 6/1 Ref. 3, Blue Book on Native Affairs, 1910, p. 48.
then resold it to them "at a grossly inflated price and only after the missionaries had attempted to corner water and mineral rights." That was why, once the Africans knew that they could now buy land in the name of the CNA and, subsequently, the SNA, without having to go through a missionary, they began to forego the latter's service. Consequently, "numerous farms" belonging to Africans, but held in trust for them by missionaries were transferred to the CNA during the Crown colony government. Unlike using a missionary, their rights were much more secure through the SNA, whose office was a permanent one. Using the SNA also saved them the likely inconvenience, loss and/or expense on the death of the (missionary) trustee.

**Bakgatla land-purchasing in the 20th century**

With the acquisition of Saulspoort, the Bakgatla had made some success, but only technically, because their land situation before the war had altered little. However, since Saulspoort was the Bakgatla's biggest farm and their seat of traditional authority in the Transvaal, its acquisition was not only symbolically but also psychologically significant. At the end of the South African War, a number of NAD officers noted with concern the Bakgatla's need for additional land. In April 1903, F. Edmeston, the SNC for the Pilanesberg, for example, stressed the Bakgatla's need for more land as theirs was "quite insufficient for their actual needs...," while in May 1903, G.Y. Lagden, the CNA admitted that the Bakgatla were "very much

---

58 SNA 116 NA 672/03, SNC to NC, 27 April 1903, p. 6; NC to SNA, 5 April 1903.
crowded." This, of course, highlighted the general African need for more land in the Pilanesberg.

As no government assistance was forthcoming towards their quest for more land, the Bakgatla had to use their own initiative. As with the other African peoples in the region, a number of resources were necessary to buy land. One of these was human resources. The more people a chiefdom had, the greater its ability to generate the economic resources with which to buy additional land. Thus, smaller chiefdoms were, as Simpson stated for the region generally, less able to buy land, "and this severely constrained their ability to expand their productive base and extend their access to land." In terms of numbers, the Bakgatla were in the most advantageous position regarding land purchasing as they were, by far, the largest group in the Pilanesberg.

While the link between a chiefdom's population and its ability to buy land was an important one, the availability of economic resources was even more crucial. Following the war, the Bakgatla began to enjoy an unprecedented economic prosperity mainly due to their large-scale looting of Boer cattle during the war. In June 1904, C. Griffith, the NC for the Western Division reported that Bakgatla stock "is increasing rapidly," while chief Linchwe had "a great

---

59 LTG 122 File No. 110/17, G. Y. Lagden to chief S.K. Pilane and others, 13 May 1903.
60 For the Batlako case, for example, see N2/10/3(69), SNC to SNA, 3 June 1916. In the same file, see also C.E. Cornwall, Rustenburg, to SNC, 1 November 1915.
62 See, for example, Union of South Africa, Report of the Department of Native Affairs for the Years 1913 to 1918 (1919), Annexure "A" (1), p. 70.
many of his cattle running on farms along the Marico and Crocodile Rivers..."\(^63\) Two years later, the Pilanesberg was officially reported to have had more cattle (estimated at 14 500) than any other district in the entire Western Division of the Transvaal.\(^64\) That report shows that the Pilanesberg alone had 33% of all African-owned cattle in the Western Division. From what we have already noted about the Bakgatla in Chapter Three, we can safely assume that most of this percentage belonged to them. But even more revealing about Bakgatla prosperity in cattle was the Pilanesberg SNC's report for 1910 which stated the following:

This area is inhabited by a very wealthy class of native. The herds of cattle owned by the Bagatla (sic) are immense; over £1000 was paid to natives for cattle in Saulspoort during one month. The natives have no difficulty in paying their taxes.\(^65\)

That was why the first two decades of the 20th century, when their cattle were still plentiful, were the Bakgatla's 'golden age.' With so much cattle, not only were the Bakgatla able to buy a number of farms concurrently, but they paid for them relatively promptly too. For many groups in the Pilanesberg and Rustenburg, paying for a farm often took several years.\(^66\) For the Bakgatla, it was different, and a few examples will suffice. In 1910, they began the process of buying a portion of the farm Spitzkop 298 from a Cyferbult trading company, Hirschowitz and Romm, for £400. The first payment of £180 was made on 30 November 1910 and by 13 December 1911, they had paid most of the remainder, leaving a balance of only £92.\(^67\)

---


\(^66\) For chief A. Mogale's people in the Rustenburg area, for example, see *Acquisition and Tenure...*, p. 24.

\(^67\) N2/10/3 (67), Hirschowitz and Romm to SNC, 4 December 1911; SNC to NC, 13 (continued...)
portion of the farm Legkraal which the Bakgatla bought for £1 400 in January 1910 was fully paid for by the beginning of 1912.\textsuperscript{68} Even more impressive was the Bakgatla’s quick payment of £1 400 for a ¼ portion of the farm Doornpoort 251. The first payment, a combination of cash and cattle amounting to £434, was made in March 1917 and the balance was paid off by the end of the same year.\textsuperscript{69}

**Land-purchasing procedures**

As with other Batswana groups in the region, the Bakgatla paid for farms partly in cattle and cash, and sometimes goats as well.\textsuperscript{70} Each able-bodied adult male was required to contribute at least one cow towards the purchase of a farm. However, those who could not afford were not compelled to, nor were they denied a share of the land.\textsuperscript{71} The procedure of land-purchasing by Africans was costly, lengthy and quite involved. Once the chief and his *lekgotla* had identified a farm for sale, they sought the permission of the Minister of Native Affairs, but through the SNC, NC and SNA, in that order. Through this channel, recommendations were made, with supporting reasons. But before the SNA could recommend the purchase, the chief

\textsuperscript{68} N2/10/3(71), "Koopbrief (Contract)" between C.G. Erasmus and R.K. Pilane, Legkraal, the Pilanesberg, 8 January 1910; SNC to Chief R.K. Pilane, 16 January 1912.

\textsuperscript{69} N2/7/3(14) SNC to Lekhutla (sic), Bakhatla Tribe, Saulspoort, 4 April 1917; SNC to SNA, 5 March 1917. For details of the payment for another farm, Rhenosterkraal 563, in 1910-1913, see N2/10/3(64), SNC to NC, 5 January 1910; Reitz and Pienaar (Attorneys), Pretoria, to SNA, 8 August 1913.

\textsuperscript{70} See, for example, N2/10/3(67), Hirschowitz and Romm, Cyferbult, to chief R. Pilane, 23 January 1911.

\textsuperscript{71} S.D. Matshego and B.N.O. Pilane, joint interview, Koedoesfontein, the Pilanesberg, 7 February 1993.
and his *lekgotla* first had to send a signed resolution to the Minister of Native Affairs, requesting the passing of transfer to him in trust for the people concerned. The *lekgotla*'s resolution, bearing each member's signature or mark, was an important aspect of the process as it made the final agreement authentic and binding on every person in the particular community. 72

A farm's purchase price, however, was negotiated between its white seller and African buyer. But it was common practice for the African buyers to engage attorneys to see to the process of the purchase. If the Minister of Native Affairs approved the application, a Transfer Deed was obtained through attorneys and sent to the SNA for custody. The transfer and survey costs of a property were usually the responsibility of the (African) purchasers. 73 For the Bakgatla, the crowning moment came after the purchase price had been fully paid up and the Deed of Transfer received by the SNC's office in Rustenburg. The document was then shown by the Assistant Native Commissioner or Detached Clerk for the Pilanesberg to a gathering of the chief, *lekgotla* and the interested public in Saulspoort, presumably to prove that the "new" farm now truly belonged to the Bakgatla. The chief signed a "covering certificate" acknowledging the exhibit, after which it was returned to the NAD in Rustenburg for custody. 74

Apart from the above procedures, a number of conditions had to be satisfied. The SNC, for example, had to certify that the people requesting ministerial approval of the land purchase

---

72 N2/10/3(60), SNA to NC, 19 May 1916.
73 These general procedures are based on the SNA files dealing with African land-purchasing up to the 1920s.
74 N2/10/3(62), SNC to Detached Clerk, the Pilanesberg, 9 June 1924.
were recognised as a “tribal entity,” according to Law 3 of 1898. From the mid-1910s, if the land the Africans wanted to buy fell within the proposed area for blacks and adjoined land already owned by that people, it made the SNC's recommendation to the SNA even stronger and approval more likely, while a period of continuous residence on the farm intended for purchase also counted in favour of the application, although, of course, the group's capacity to pay was considered too.

The Bakgatla, like other groups in the region, generally bought farms, often adjoining ones or close by, which they had rented for a few years or more, usually for ploughing and/or grazing purposes due to the inadequacy of their own lands. Thus, when the Bakgatla bought half of the 900-morgen farm Spitzkop 298 from a white family, the Breets, in 1911, they had been renting it for three years at £2 per person per annum for ploughing and grazing because on their own farm Cyferkuil, there was "no land to plough or grazing for cattle..." while Doornpoort 251 and Wilgespruit 631 had been rented for several years, entirely for stock-

---

75 For brief details of this law, see TNAD, *The Laws and Regulations, specially Relating to the Native Population of the Transvaal* (February 1907), pp. 33-34.
76 NTS 3456 NA 107/308, SNC to SNA, 30 June 1927; SNA to Secretary for Lands, 6 September 1927.
77 For the Baphalane of chief Ramokoka, for example, see N2/10/3(1), "Agreement between S.J. Cronje and R. Moloane and L. Moloane," Rustenburg, 8 May 1916, p. 1; Pienaar and Niemeyer (attorneys), Pretoria, to SNA, 20 July 1916, p. 1; SNC to SNA, 11 October 1921.
78 See, for example, N2/10/3(69), Cornwall to SNC, 1 November 1915.
79 N2/10/3(67), Hirschowitz and Romm to Chief R.K. Pilane, 9 September 1910; SNC to NC, 29 October 1910. When a group of nine Africans bought the farm Welgeval 749 in 1912, they had been renting it from the missionary Gonin "for over thirty five years." See N2/10/3(49), SNC to SNA, 6 November 1912.
grazing before they bought them. The Bakgatla bought certain farms specifically for ploughing and stock-grazing only. The 2094-morgen farm Legkraal 275, bought in 1910, is an example of this.

Sometimes the Bakgatla bought land simply by default, as they did, for example, the remaining half of Spitzkop 298 whose white owners decided to sell for three reasons. First, there was continual squabbling between the Bakgatla and their white neighbours over the “only one watering place on the property...,” which caused “friction between the natives and the Europeans.” Second, according to the white family, the Bakgatla were “ploughing every available piece of ground -- in total disregard of the rights of the Europeans.” Third, following the age-old Boer tradition of sons sub-dividing land among themselves, the Breets found it had become “impossible” to sub-divide further their portion, presumably due to disagreement. For all these reasons, when the new acting Chief Dialwa applied to buy the half-portion of the Breets in 1917, the SNC and the NC strongly recommended the application.

If the agricultural value of the land the Africans wanted to buy was particularly low, it greatly counted in their favour. In fact, farms that were sold to Africans usually had infertile soil

---

80 See N2/7/3(14), SNC to SNA, 19 January 1917; N2/10/3(68), SNC to SNA, 30 August 1916.
81 N2/10/3(71), SNC to NC, 14 February 1910.
82 N2/10/3 (67), Olivier and Coetsee (Attorneys), Rustenburg, 12 September 1917, p. 1; SNC to Olivier and Coetsee, 19 September 1917; NC to SNA, 25 October 1917; SNA to NC, 6 November 1917.
83 N2/10/3 (67), Olivier and Coetsee to SNC, 23 March 1918.
84 N2/10/3 (67), SNA to NC, 6 November 1917; SNA to SNC, 10 August 1918. The Bakgatla did buy this farm.
unsuitable for agriculture, and fit only for stock-grazing. In one instance, for example, when the Bakgatla applied to buy Legkraal 725 in January 1910, the SNC could not have made a more persuasive argument for them to the NC when he reported that the farm "is useless for white habitation, being practically covered with hills and waterless." Needless to say the purchase was approved and the Bakgatla bought the farm. But at other times they were lucky to buy a good farm with a well-developed infrastructure. When they bought Rhenosterkop 1048 in 1927, for example, it already had a borehole, a windmill pump, and the whole farm was fenced; hence, the farm was sold for £3 400, a price which the SNC considered to be "fair and reasonable."

While most of the land in the Pilanesberg belonged to private families and individuals, some belonged to land companies. The farm Wildebeestkuil, for example, was owned by the Transvaal Consolidated Land and Exploration Company. The prices of both categories of land were generally considered by Africans to be exorbitant. The price of the farm Wilgespruit 631 (c. 3467 morgen) is only one of many examples. In 1913 or shortly before, the farm's owners, N. Gluckman and I.E. Judes, had bought it for £1560 and its Deed of Transfer was dated 26 June 1914 Yet even before the sellers had received the Deed of Transfer, they sold

---

85 NTS 3456 File No.105/308 Ref. 487/308, SNC to SNA, 26 July 1921.
86 N2/10/3(71), SNC to NC, 4 January 1910.
87 NTS 3456 NA 107/308, SNC to SNA, 30 June 1927.
88 N2/10/3(62), "Memorandum of an Agreement...," 19 September 1921. It is not clear precisely how many and which farms were owned by land companies and private persons in the Pilanesberg.
89 N2/10/3(68), SNC to SNA, 7 September 1916. The SNC, however, was "unable to ascertain the date of sale to them..." See the same source.
the farm to the Bakgatla in 1913 for £2600, making a profit of 60%. Desperate for more land as the Bakgatla were, they had little choice but to buy.

The Bakgatla generally bought land privately, but sometimes they were fortunate to buy through a public auction, as they did the farms Tusschenkomst 448, Rhenosterkop 1048 and Applikasie 984 in the 1920s. Although buying land in this manner meant facing competition from whites intent upon getting the same land, it was the best method as it was generally the cheapest. In 1920, for example, some white farm owners in the Pilanesberg were so interested in Rhenosterkop 1048 (which the Bakgatla were also keen to get) that they tried “to prevent its acquisition by Natives...” and the Bakgatla were able to buy it only because at the public auction sale, as the SNA recorded, “no European was prepared to offer a higher price.”

Yet another hurdle was the white farmers and their associations who, sometimes, objected to blacks purchasing farms next to theirs. In November 1927, for example, when the Baphalane applied to buy Pylkop 1006 and Rhenosterspruit 700, the local Northam Farmers' Association registered their “strong protest” to the SNC at Saulspoort against “two more farms bordering the Northam area passing into the hands of Natives.” The white farmers, who had the support of the SNC, “unanimously opposed the idea” and insisted that the two farms “should be reserved for European development.”

90 N2/10/3(68), SNC to SNA, 25 July 1916.
91 NTS 3456 NA 107/308, SNA to Secretary for Lands, 14 October 1920.
92 NTS 3456 NA 107/308, SNA to NC, 9 August 1927.
93 N2/7/3(61), SNA to NC, 26 November 1927; J.F.K. Dobbs, Honorary Secretary, Northam Farmers' Association, to SNC, 3 December 1927.
94 N2/7/3(61), Detached Clerk, the Pilanesberg, to SNC, 7 December 1927.
While land-purchasing on a community basis was the commonest method, it was also done by families, small groups, and even individuals, particularly when the right of Africans to buy land individually in their own name was conceded by the government in April 1905, when a Supreme Court decision compelled the Registrar of Deeds to pass transfer to Tsewu, an African who had bought land in the Kliprivierssoog township near Johannesburg, thus, ushering in a new era of security of tenure for Africans in the Transvaal.95 From that date, Africans in the Transvaal, usually collectively, began to buy land on a greater scale than before, a practice that came to alarm many whites, especially since, as one veldkornet from the Hex River Ward of the Pilanesberg testified to the Beaumont Commission, it was "so much easier for natives to acquire land than for Europeans."94 For Africans in this region, the early years of the 20th century were, thus, a period when, as Relly has recorded, "the notion of private ownership of land came to be variously manipulated, and to play an increasingly important role as a basis of social stratification."95 Simpson has also suggested that in the region, "access to land became an increasingly dominant feature of economic and social stratification within these Tswana chiefdoms."96

In 1912, a group of 9 individuals bought the 2408-morgen farm Welgeval 749 for £2408 from Henri, the son of the late missionary Gonin, and took collective transfer. Among this group of buyers, most of whom had been living on this farm "for over thirty five years," were chief

------
94 Quoted in Davenport and Hunt, The Right to the Land, pp. 40-41.
Ramo and C. Sefara. These two were relatively rich, the former because of his chiefly position and the latter because of his relative wealth in cattle and sheep due to his ex-Oorlam background. The rest of the group must have been rich too as it is unlikely that Ramono and Sefara would have combined with individuals who could not afford the required average annual payment of £268 for the farm.

In the region as a whole, family ownership of land was not uncommon. Towards the end of 1921 in the Pilanesberg, for example, the Raborifes, a Baphalane family of 9, described by the SNC as "well to do and able to pay the price...", bought a 755-morgen portion of Tweelaagte 180 from L. Snijman at £2 per morgen. It is interesting to note that apart from this purchase, the Raborife family already owned "approximately 750 morgen of land in the farms Vogelstruisnek and Ruighoek which adjoin this farm in question [i.e. Tweelaagte 180]." During the 1930s in the Marico district, a part of portion "A" of the farm Uitkyk was owned by the Ngakane family, while the rest was communally owned.

Group purchase, however, had its own problems. First, since the transfer of group-purchased land had to be made in the names of all the members, if one died or sold his/her portion, the

---

97 N2/10/3(49), "Acte van Koop en Verkoop...," n.d., 1912.
98 J.M. Sefara, interview, Magong, the Pilanesberg, 17 September 1994.
99 N2/10/3(49), "Acte van Koop en Verkoop...," n.d., 1912.
100 N2/10/3(6), SNC to SNA, 3 November 1921.
101 N2/10/3(6), "Minute of Approval," by Governor-General, 12 December 1921.
102 N2/10/3(6), SNC to SNA, 3 November 1921. See also Surveyor-General's office, Mmabatho, Land Transfer Records, Vogelstruisnek, No.173 JP Folio 173/1/1; Ruighoek, No.169 JP Folio 169/1.
names of the new owners had to be inserted into the title deed. Second, if some member(s) of
the group failed to pay their part of the instalments, the rest had to make additional payments,
otherwise they lost their rights "under the foreclosure of the mortgage bond."104 Third, an
originally small group of, for example, only several people could eventually become much
bigger, with outsiders joining through purchase or succession, thus, making transfer more
difficult. For this reason, by the late 1920s, the NAD limited group purchase to a maximum of
six people.105 These were the reasons why the Native Economic Commission recommended
that where land was not tribally-owned, "undivided ownership" by blacks be discontinued and
individual title encouraged instead.106

While group purchase was less common due to the expense involved, individual purchase was
even more rare. It was a tough option which the majority of Africans could not afford. But a
few could. In March 1910, for example, a certain K. Mokoka, who had some 50 head of cattle,
1 000 sheep and described by the NC as "a man of means," bought half of the farm
Hakdoornbult 734 for £750 easily.107 Prior to the passing of the 1913 Land Act, one W.
Mkuzangwe had bought a 270-morgen portion of the farm Rhenosterfontein 887 for £405 from
the United Agency and Trust Company and, by 29 May 1917, had fully paid up.108 But even

105 Report of the Native Economic Commission, p. 28. See also Linnington, Native Administration, p. 128.
106 J.D. Rheinart-Jones and A.L. Saffery, "Social and economic conditions of native life,"
Bantu Studies, 7, 3 (September 1933), p. 252.
107 N2/10/3(48), NC to SNA, 16 August 1910.
108 NTS 3456 NA 307/308, SNC to SNA, 29 May 1917. It was officially registered in his
name on 13 November 1919: same file, De Villiers and Boshoff, Pretoria, to SNA, 30
March 1920. It is not clear what the personal and financial circumstances of Mkuzangwe
(continued...)
more unique for his time was a certain B. Piliso who, alone, bought a portion of the same Rhenosterfontein 887 in 1924 and about whom we know a little more than Mkuzangwe. He apparently originated from the Pilanesberg and, by 29 November 1930, had worked for the Modder Mine on the Rand for 21 years, during which time he had come to be regarded as a "trusty (sic) servant of the Company." A pointer to Piliso's socio-economic standing was his attorneys' description of him as a "well paid" and "extraordinarily intelligent..." man.

Another unique aspect of Piliso was that, at the time, his son Clarence had been studying medicine on a scholarship in New Zealand but, for some reason, was intending to transfer to the University of Glasgow, in Scotland, for further studies. However, the obstacle to this was finance, which Piliso could not afford. He, therefore, embarked on two courses of action. First, he sold his portion of the farm Rhenosterfontein 887 and, second, he borrowed £115 from the National Building Society (NBS) in Johannesburg. It would not have been easy for an African to borrow such an amount of money from a 'European' institution such as the NBS because of the economic depression and the resulting slump on the property market at the time. Apart from these relatively rich individuals who could afford to buy land alone, another category of

(...continued)

were, but it is clear that he was a relatively rich man.

109 NTS 3456 NA 307/308, Minute by J.B.M. Hertzog, dated 18 October 1924, no minute number, n.p.

110 NTS 3456 NA 307/308, Falwasser to SNA, 28 November 1930.

111 NTS 3456 NA 307/308, "Notes," by SNA on E.C. Barrett's telephone reply dated 29 November 1930. Barrett was Piliso's attorney.

112 NTS 3456 NA 307/308, Schlosberg and Liebson to De Beer and Liebson, Johannesburg, 19 November 1934.

113 NTS 3456 NA 307/308, "Notes," by SNA on Falwasser's and E.C. Barrett's replies dated 29 November 1930; Secretary, NBS, to Schlosberg and Liebson, 19 November 1934.
individual land owners were the chiefs.

Chiefly accumulation: land-ownership by chiefs

Bakgatla chiefs, in their privileged position of access to resources, were able to buy land and register it in their own names. Following the British occupation of the SAR in 1877, the law was changed to enable Africans to buy land, but in the name of the office of the SNA.\textsuperscript{114} The first Mokgatla chief to take advantage of this opportunity was Linchwe who, with the assistance of the missionary H.L. Gonin, bought the farm Holfontein 593 in 1877, using both his own and his people's resources. It should be pointed out, however, that although this purchase had been negotiated by Gonin for Linchwe personally, a clause in the SNA's letter of 12 November 1878 concerning a trust deed for this property is very revealing. The letter stated: “The transfer to me [SNA] in trust must in some way or other recognise the Tribe as part-owners of the farm, they having joined in the purchase.”\textsuperscript{115}

Thus, despite his people's contributions towards the purchase, it is significant that Linchwe, nevertheless, excluded them from its ownership and got the farm registered “in trust for and on behalf of the Native Chief Linchwe Kgamanyane Pilane.”\textsuperscript{116} It was on this basis that the SNA, despite what he termed “an element of doubt as to the true ownership,” passed the property's ownership to Linchwe's son, Isang, because he was “anxious to divide his Estate

\textsuperscript{114} Acquisition and Tenure, p. 23.

\textsuperscript{115} N2/10/3(46), SNA to SNC, 20 July 1922. My emphasis. This source shows neither Linchwe's nor the Bakgatla's contribution towards the purchase.

\textsuperscript{116} N2/10/3(46), SNA to SNC, 20 July 1922.
between the Heirs before his death." Furthermore, Linchwe, in his personal capacity, subsequently bought and registered in his own name, parts of the farms Modderkuil, Cyferkuil, Legkraal and Holfontein. It should be noted that the Bakgatla, like other Africans in the Transvaal, had the legal right to own land in their tribal name (although, of course, registered in the office of the SNA). In the Rustenburg district, for example, some of the farms which the Bafokeng under chief A.T. Mokhatle bought from 1871 were "held in trust for them" together and not just for the chief. The common practice of chiefs in the region registering farms in their own names was not confined to the Bakgatla alone. Among the Bahurutshe, for example, the farm Vinkrivier 132 was "registered in trust for [their] chief Shuping (sic)." The important point to be noted here is that there was a choice regarding the manner in which the farms could be registered, and Linchwe chose to register some of the farms in his own name.

Linchwe had set a precedent for his younger brother Ramono who became the biggest landowner of all the Bakgatla chiefs. In 1911, chief Ramono at Saulspoort bought a ⅙ portion of the farm Doornpoort 251 from a C. J. du Plessis. He then used the Bakgatla's attorneys, van Velden and Lategan, to pass transfer to himself in his private capacity on 10 November 1917. In June 1913, Ramono bought half of the 2743-morgen farm Koedoesfontein 818 and shortly before he died, a ⅙ portion of the 3 431-morgen Doornpoort 251 which, at the time

---

117 N2/10/3(46), SNC to SNA, 7 July 1922; SNA to SNC, 20 July 1922; SNA to SNC, 22 August 1922.
118 Chief Pilane, interview, Saulspoort, 16 September 1994.
120 Acquisition and Tenure, p. 29. My emphasis.
121 N2/7/3 (14), SNC to SNA, 5 March 1918. Transfer was passed after Ramono's death towards the end of 1917.
122 B.N.O. Pilane, interview, Koedoesfontein, the Pilanesberg, 7 February 1993.
of his death in 1917, was valued at £700. Both properties were bought with cattle purportedly belonging to the estate of his first wife (Matlhodi) and, therefore, transfers were passed to her two children, Matlhodi (named after her late mother) and Ntshabele, apparently without the knowledge of the Bakgatla public.

In March 1918, the Deed of Sale for a portion of Rooderand 399 revealed that the farm was, as the SNC wrote, “purchased by Ramono K. Pilane and Ditlhake Pilane and does not state that the purchase was for and on behalf of the Tribe.” The SNC had, in fact, unofficially learnt from the Detached Clerk for the Pilanesberg that “this ground [Rooderand 399] was being purchased individually by Ramono and Ditlhake as no application was made for permission to purchase as a Tribe.” The property was, indeed, registered in the name of the Minister of Native Affairs on 1 December 1916, “in Trust for Ramono Kgamanyane Pilane...”; and yet, two years earlier, a public assembly at Saulspoort had been told that the property would be for all the Bakgatla.

Shortly after Ramono’s death, it was revealed by acting chief Isang at Mochudi that the Bakgatla had also "paid a certain number of cattle towards purchasing of the above-mentioned [½] portion of Doornpoort." Isang further revealed that: "The Tribe has paid 17 head of cattle

---


124 N2/10/3(60), SNC to SNA, 29 March 1918.

125 Surveyor-General's office, Mmabatho, Land Transfer Records, Rooderand, Portion 1 No.46 JQ Folio 46/1/1.

126 N2/10/3(60), "Resolution passed by the Bakhatla Tribe, under Chief Ramono K. Pilane at Saulspoort; on the 13 Day (sic) of July, 1916."
and £5 in cash. The Tribe has further paid the sum of £14 6s as Transfer duty..." In view of this, Isang rightly pointed out, the Bakgatla had a right to that portion of Doornpoort. At the same time, Isang also acknowledged the children of Ramono's late wife as the "rightful heirs of the property," but who, according to him, were "prepared to pay out the Tribe provided the farm be transferred to them." In the late 1910s, because of his father Linchwe's growing infirmity due to old age, Isang may already have been eyeing the regency, and what he said about Ramono’s children and their inherited property was, perhaps, a way of stamping his authority on Bakgatla affairs generally and the chieftaincy in particular. Isang’s statement is questionable because he himself accumulated considerable property during his regency in the 1920s. He, for instance, bought the farm Applikasie near Magong in his own name, but with resources contributed by the Bakgatla.

Generally, the NAD authorities seem to have ignored this practice by the chiefs, or were unaware of it, except in one instance. In the process of buying Spitzkop 298 in the early 1910s, both chief Ramono and the Bakgatla's lawyers, Theron and Olivier, attempted to have the farm registered in the chief's name, “in trust for the Bakhatla,” but this was rejected by the Deeds Office in Pretoria, not only because “Linchwe is not recognised by our Government as a Chief...,” but, more importantly, because the action would have needed the lekgotla's approval, which would have been “extremely difficult to obtain...” Since the farm had been paid for by the Bakgatla's contributions, the lekgotla would, most likely, have found the chief's intention suspicious and rejected it. The SNC, therefore, recommended to the NC that the farm be

---

127 N2/7/3(14), Isang Pilane, Saulspoort, to SNC, 27 October 1917.
129 N2/10/3(67), SNC to NC, 15 January 1912, p. 1.
registered in the office of the Minister of Native Affairs.\textsuperscript{130}

It is, therefore, quite possible that the Bakgatla chiefs may have improperly registered farms in their own names, without the knowledge of the Bakgatla public. But, once the public knew, they objected quite strongly. Following chief Linchwe's death in 1920, his children claimed "his" four farms, which provoked a strong public outcry that the farms were Bakgatla properties. The government, therefore, instituted a commission of enquiry on which some national public figures like H. Rogers of the NAD as well as the Saulspoort missionary, G. Stegman, served to resolve the issue. The commission ruled that only two of the four farms legally belonged to Linchwe's estate.\textsuperscript{131} This finding, however, does not exonerate any of the Bakgatla chiefs from this malpractice during the study period. In fact, it was the public outcry that helped to put a stop to this 'chiefly practice' because after Isang (1921-1929), no other Mokgatla chief registered a farm in his own name.\textsuperscript{132}

\textbf{Black-white wrangles and the African resort to attorneys}

Apart from the above practice of Bakgatla chiefs registering their people's farms in their own names, the Bakgatla were, sometimes, deliberately sold land that already had a bond over it. Examples are many, but one classic one will suffice. In May 1922, L. Kgaboesele, M. Mogothoane and 14 others, all of Putfontein, in the Pilanesberg, bought a portion of Brakkul

\textsuperscript{130} N2/10/3(67), SNC to NC, 15 January 1912, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{131} Chief T.S.R. Pilane, interview, Saulspoort, 16 September 1994.
\textsuperscript{132} B.N.O. Pilane, interview, Saulspoort, 8 October 1993.
893 from a Mrs P. M. Duminy for £2250. However, by January 1924, after the Africans had "fully paid for the land...", and, before transfer was effected, the property’s bond problem came to light. Yet, throughout the transactions, both the seller and her attorney had been completely silent about the existing bond over the property. The African buyers were, as the SNC reported, "aggrieved to think that they were not informed of the encumbrance." As the SNA took up the matter, he discovered that Mrs Duminy “was very much involved financially and no good purpose would be served by taking proceedings against her.” Indeed, by March 1925, Mrs Duminy’s estate had become legally insolvent. The African purchasers completely lost out on the deal because: “Only the secured creditors will receive a dividend and concurrent creditors, including the natives, will receive no dividend ...”

In land transactions, although Africans generally were legally disadvantaged, attorneys were available to all who could afford them, irrespective of colour. But, as alluded to by the SNA, Kgaboesele and his group dealt with Mrs Duminy directly and not through attorneys, who could have ascertained the property's legal position and, thus, avoided the financial loss. It is not clear why an attorney was not engaged, but affordability was perhaps not an issue because,

133 N2/10/3(58), "Deed of Sale," Putfontein, 16 May 1922.
134 N2/10/3(58), SNA to SNC, 4 February 1924, p. 1.
135 N2/10/3(58), SNA to SNC, 4 February 1924, p. 1; SNC to SNA, 30 January 1924.
136 N2/10/3(58), SNC to SNA, 30 January 1924.
137 N2/10/3(58), SNA to SNC, 4 February 1924.
138 N2/10/3(58), SNC to Detached Clerk, 2 March 1925.
139 N2/10/3(58), unsigned letter to SNC, 1 July 1925. My emphasis. See also SNC to Detached Clerk, 4 July 1925. For another example of such cheating, see N2/10/3(1), De Beer and Slade (attorneys), Pretoria, to SNA, 6 February 1920.
140 NTS 3456 Ref.487/308 File No. 105/308, SNA to SNC, 4 February 1924, p. 1.
as already noted above, Kgaboelele was a well-to-do person. Moreover, if the group of only 16 could afford to pay off the property's price of £2 250 between May 1922 and February 1924, they would, most likely, have afforded an attorney. Even more important is the fact that the Africans' loss points to the necessity and significance of their dealing through the free channel of the NAD when buying land. When the SNA began to investigate the matter, it was too late as the estate's insolvency had already been established. Furthermore, in their desperation for land, it was common for African groups in the Pilanesberg to hand over money and/or cattle, well in advance, to a prospective white seller of land before any formal, written agreements were entered into or deeds of sale signed. The Baphalane, for example, did this in 1925, and when no farm was forthcoming from a Mr Hugo for quite some time, they sought the assistance of the NAD and lawyers, who eventually extracted the £400 the Baphalane had earlier paid him.

The practice of using attorneys in the event of failing to resolve disputes between African buyers and white sellers was common to all peoples of the Pilanesberg/Rustenburg areas especially when, as noted above, the transaction was made without reference to the NAD.

In 1920, after the Bakgatla had bought a portion of the farm Doornpoort 251, the owners of the remaining portion, T. C. du Plessis and N.J. Theunissen, verbally requested the Bakgatla for “a servitude of storage of water on a specific part of their [i.e. the Bakgatla's] land.”

141 NTS 3456 Ref. 487/308 File No. 105/308, SNA to SNC, 4 February 1924.
142 NTS 3456 Ref. 487/308 File No. 105/308, Detached Clerk to SNC, 29 July 1925; SNA to SNC, 8 August 1925; SNC to SNA, 24 October 1925.
143 The Rustenburg legal firm of van Velden and Lategan transacted most of chief Ramono's business during his 14-year rule in the Pilanesberg. See NTS 333 61/65 Part 1, NC to SNA, 13 August 1917.
Plessis and Theunissen also requested to exchange that piece of land for a similar piece on their portion of the farm, and the Bakgatla agreed. Both parties took possession of their respective pieces of land, but transfer was not passed. Subsequently, when the Bakgatla asked to exchange transfer of their respective pieces of land, Theunissen and du Plessis refused and set new, previously unagreed, conditions.\textsuperscript{144} By the middle of 1924, as the matter still dragged on without resolution, the Bakgatla and their chiefs, Isang at Mochudi and Ofentse at Saulspoort, decided upon legal action through the Pretoria lawyers, Findlay and Niemeyer.\textsuperscript{145} Du Plessis was alarmed by this action and, through the SNC, requested “to try and settle the matter with Chief Isang without going into Court”, but the Bakgatla rejected the request, preferring “to force the case through the High Court.”\textsuperscript{146} The Bakgatla won the case and the Minister of Native Affairs passed unconditionally the transfers of the two pieces of land under dispute.\textsuperscript{147}

Disputes of this kind demonstrate the Africans' belief and trust in the law of the time. The frequency with which Batswana groups in the area resorted to the use of attorneys is proof of such confidence,\textsuperscript{148} while the fact that they invariably won their cases further reinforced this trust. To the Bakgatla and others in the area, the rule of law must have seemed genuinely

\textsuperscript{144} N2/7/3(14), SNC to SNA, 19 January and 10 September 1923; chief Ofentse, Saulspoort, to SNC, 22 August 1923.

\textsuperscript{145} See N2/7/3(14), “Chief Isang and Others Vs du Plessis and Theunissen,” typescript, by J. M. Murray, Advocates' Chambers, Pretoria, 10 May 1924; SNA to SNC, 11 June 1924.

\textsuperscript{146} N2/7/3(14), SNC to chief Ofentse, 12 September 1924; Ofentse Pilane to SNC, 15 September 1924.

\textsuperscript{147} N2/7/3(14), “Executive Council Minute,” by J.B.M. Hertzog, 3 July 1925.

\textsuperscript{148} This paragraph is based on N2/10/3(70), Findlay, MacRoberts and Niemeyer to chief S. Ramokoka, Ramokokastad, 17 October 1912; “Salatiel Ramokoka (Plaintiff) against Gluckman and Hertzberg (Defendants),” 12 December 1912; SNC to NC, 13 February 1913.
neutral, while the fact that both the NAD authorities that enforced the law and the attorneys that took up their cases were white does not seem to have mattered. Such disputes further reveal the custodial role of the NAD towards ‘their’ African ‘wards.’ Thus, in the Baphalane case, for example, the NAD’s intervention ensured that they were not cheated. Regarding the duties of the NAD, the NC, C. Griffith, stated in September 1903 that his Department “...does not leave a stone unturned to secure them [i.e. Africans] justice and equity where due and that it [the NAD] does not further the interests of Europeans, to the detriment of the Black-man, merely because they are white.”

While this may not have been entirely true in practice, it was nevertheless carried out to a large degree, particularly in the period under study. Both the SNC and NC usually gave genuine advice to groups purchasing land, alerting them to certain pitfalls and possible financial loss and, at times, they in fact acted in time to avoid such risks for their wards. In the process of the Bakgatla buying the farm Legkraal 275 in 1910, for example, the SNC requested the NC to ascertain whether the farm was in any way bonded, "for the protection of the said natives..." The SNA also warned chief Ramono about the possibility of a complete financial loss for the Bakgatla if he failed to meet his obligations according to the sale contract or if the vendor became insolvent. If an NAD official felt that the purchase price of a piece of land was too high, they always said so and made efforts to have it reduced. In 1917, for example, when the white owners of Spitzkop 298 wanted to sell half of it to the Bakgatla at £2 per morgen, both the SNC and the NC insisted the price was "excessive" (sic) and finally succeeded in having

---

149 SNA 169 NA 2059/03, NC to SNA, 18 September 1903, p. 6.
150 N2/10/3(71), SNC to NC, 4 January 1910.
151 N2/10/3(71), SNA to NC, 28 February 1910.
it reduced to £1, which the two considered to be “fair and reasonable.” 152

The NAD was always concerned that African groups purchasing land did not go into excessive financial commitment. In 1916, when chief Mabe of the Batllako proposed to borrow heavily from a Rustenburg solicitor and mortgage his people's three farms, "in order to raise a sum sufficient to cover the first instalment" on each of the two extra farms he wanted his people to buy, the SNC objected on the grounds that such a debt would be too heavy for the Batllako. Instead, the SNC suggested, the Batllako should "raise the larger part of the first instalments by a levy." 153 It should be noted that the Batllako were one of the smaller and poorer groups in the Pilanesberg. This official intervention was a reflection of what Dubow has termed the NAD's "benevolent paternalism" in which "the [white] administrator was portrayed as combining the qualities of a Victorian patriarch and a 'traditional' chief." 154

The 1913 Land Act and land-purchasing

The problem of land shortage was not the only reason why the African groups appeared to be buying land in a hurry. Africans in the Transvaal generally were aware that the impending land legislation that was to become the Native Land Act No.27 of 1913 would enormously restrict

152 N2/10/3(67), NC to SNA, 25 October 1917; SNC to Olivier and Coetsee (Attorneys), Rustenburg, 8 November 1917; SNC to SNA, 23 March 1918. For another example of the NAD's intervention, because the terms of a property's sale to an African group were too "stringent," see N2/10/3(69), SNC to SNA, 21 July 1916; C.E. Cornwall to SNA, 5 August 1916.

153 N2/10/3(69), SNC to SNA, 3 June 1916; SNA to SNC, 8 June 1916.

land-purchasing and this awareness served to “stimulate the purchase of land communally by Transvaal natives.” In particular, what seems to have alarmed many whites was, as Wickins recorded, the Africans’ “formation of syndicates able to pay higher prices than many individual whites could afford...” This Act was, as Wickins further pointed out, part of a single “native policy” of the Union government designed to assure the plentiful supply of cheap black labour and “to hamper the economic competition and social integration of Africans by restricting their access to skills, labour organization and land.” However, the Act's major provision regarding land specifically, was that, except with the Governor-General's approval, Africans would not buy or hire land from Europeans and vice-versa.

For a clear understanding of the context in which Africans in the Transvaal, including the Bakgatla, bought land, it is necessary to discuss the legal developments immediately following the passing of the Act and how they affected the people concerned. Arising from the Act's provisions was the formation of the Beaumont Commission appointed on 27 August 1913 which was to enquire into and report upon specific areas to be set apart in which neither Africans nor Europeans would be allowed “to acquire or hire land or interests in land.” It should be noted that in the Transvaal generally, the amount of land made available for African

---


158 For details of the provisions of the Act, see, for example, Linington, *Native Administration*, pp. 144-154.

159 Linington, *Native Administration*, p. 144.
occupation by this Act, compared to the other four provinces, was “quite inadequate,” a fact recognised by the Beaumont Commission which, therefore, recommended almost five times more land for African occupation there than in any other province.\textsuperscript{160}

The African areas recommended by the Beaumont Commission, whose report came out on 2 March 1916, became part of the Native Affairs Administration Bill introduced in parliament in 1914 and subsequently known as the Select Committee on Native Affairs. Strongly influenced by white opinion, this Committee decided instead to appoint “Local Committees” to revise the recommendations of the Beaumont Commission. Accordingly, Local Committees were appointed for five regions covering the whole of South Africa.\textsuperscript{161} While the government was awaiting the report of the Western Transvaal Local Committee, blacks were, in theory, not allowed to purchase land from whites, “except in very special circumstances when considerable hardship would be involved by refusal or delay...”\textsuperscript{162} This ruling was to be in place until parliament and the government had finally decided upon the areas to be set aside for African occupation.\textsuperscript{163} For the purposes of the Natives Land Committee, the Pilanesberg fell under the districts of Marico and Rustenburg, which were called “Area No. 9.” The Committee’s report excluded certain white-owned farms from the recommended areas because they were considered “much too valuable, and far too highly improved to be included in a Native


\textsuperscript{161} These were (1), the Cape Province, excluding Griqualand West and British Bechuanaland, (2), the Orange Free State, excluding the districts of Hoopstad and Boshof, (3), Natal, (4), the Eastern Transvaal, and (5) the Western Transvaal, including Griqualand West, British Bechuanaland and the districts of Hoopstad and Boshof in the Orange Free State. See Linington, \textit{Native Administration}, p. 45.

\textsuperscript{162} N2/10/3(14), SNC to SNA, 18 February 1918; SNA to SNC, 22 February 1918.

\textsuperscript{163} N2/10/3(1), SNA to SNC, 1 May 1917; SNA to Pienaar and Niemeyer (attorneys), Pretoria, 10 May 1917.
This decision seems to have been influenced by the very strong opposition from the majority of white farmers in the Pilanesberg who insisted that the recommended area was sufficient for African occupation.165

For these reasons, the Bakgatla's application to buy a portion of the farm Doornpoort 251, for example, was rejected by the NAD in January 1914.166 Yet, some four years later, the Bakgatla's land problem, like many others in the region,167 was still far from being resolved. As a government officer in Bechuanaland heard from some Bakgatla who were visiting Mochudi at the time, "several of the Salspoort (sic) Headmen spoke about the Land question in the Transvaal, and said they were very dissatisfied."168 All the African witnesses who gave evidence to the Western Transvaal's Land Committee bitterly complained about the inadequacy of their land and pleaded to be allowed to buy more land wherever it was on sale, especially adjoining properties. The area recommended by the Committee was considered by the Africans to be not only too small, but also waterless, a point strongly emphasised by chief Isang. Similarly, the Bakwena chief, J. Mamogale, of Bethanie spoke eloquently for all Africans in the Pilanesberg/Rustenburg areas when he pleaded with the Committee to allow them to buy land wherever they wanted.169

---

166 N2/7/3(14), NC to SNA, 13 January 1914.
167 See, for example, the Baphalane's case in NTS 3456 Ref.487/308 File No.105/308, Stegman, Oosthuizen and Jackson (attorneys), Pretoria, to SNA, 7 July 1922.
168 Botswana National Archives (BNA), R.C. 1/28, Lieutenant Officer Commanding, Gaborone, to Staff Officer, Mafeking, 27 October 1917.
169 For the evidence of both chiefs, see Report of the Natives Land Committee, Western (continued...
The reports of all the Local Committees, which were submitted in 1918, were received with considerable hostility by both whites and blacks, just like the Beaumont Commission report before. Leaving in abeyance the segregationist aspects of the Native Affairs Administration Bill, the government first decided upon the appointment of a permanent Native Affairs Commission "to deal with Native policy" and local government in African areas. From 1918, therefore, the government could, with the Governor-General's approval, permit the acquisition or lease of land by Africans in areas recommended for African occupation by a Local Committee or the Beaumont Commission. Thus, from 1922, Local Committee areas were to be considered as areas where Africans could buy or lease land. For all the above practical reasons, therefore, although the market in land was legally restricted by the 1913 Land Act, land purchasing and leasing by Africans in the western Transvaal continued throughout this study's period.

**Economic constraints and the end of land-purchasing, 1920-1931**

While the 1910s were a period of prosperity for the region, the 1920s steadily became one of economic decline up to the general, world-wide depression in the late 1920s and early 1930s. For the region generally, as Simpson has rightly pointed out, "by the mid 1920s virtually every chiefdom in the district was heavily in debt and owed large sums of money on mortgaged lands." From 1922, the Bakgatla's debts were beginning to mount and, by September that

(Cont.)

---

Note 170: Llinington, *Native Administration*, p. 145; hence, the passing of the Native Affairs Act No. 23 of 1920. For details of this Act, see Llinington, *Native Administration*, pp. 63-70.

Note 171: For details, see Llinington, *Native Administration*, pp. 146-147.

year, they were owing the land company, Lewis and Marks, £180 in fencing debts alone and still anticipated further debts "in the near future." 173

As a possible solution to their increasingly pressing financial problems, the Bakgatla persuaded their local Detached Clerk at Saulspoort to request the SNA to permit them to impose an annual levy of 10s on each tax-paying member to meet their fencing debts and "any other contingency that may arise." In the same request, chief Ofentse and his lekgotla "especially requested" the government to assist them in tracing all Bakgatla men "in Labour Centres who seldom or [n]ever return home, or support their people or tribe in any respect, but at the same time reap benefits at the expense of others." 174 The financial constraints affected not just land-purchasing but all facets of Bakgatla public life. In 1930, for example, the Bakgatla failed to pay a bill of £68 10s to a certain M. Gouoe who had done some work on their new school building on the farm, Modderkuil. They managed to pay him back only some seven years later, at the end of 1937, when they had a meagre bank balance of only £324. 175

Another major economic constraint was the rise in land value and prices throughout the Transvaal. There is no evidence of this from the Pilanesberg directly, but developments from

173 JUS 142 NA 20/213, Detached Clerk to Secretary, NAD, Pretoria, 20 September 1922.
174 Detached Clerk to Secretary, NAD, 20 September 1922. The necessity of fencing the Bakgatla's farms was caused by "the continual impounding of their stock by adjoining [white] owners," both the Detached Clerk who, obviously, knew this problem as well as the SNC, strongly supported the Bakgatla's "tribal" resolution and application for the authorisation to impose a general levy, which was duly granted by the government on 20 November 1922. See JUS 142 NA 20/213, SNA to Detached Clerk, 11 October 1922; SNA to SNC, 23 October 1922; "Resolution" by "Chief and Councillors of the Bakhatla Tribe...," 31 October 1922; SNA to SNC, 20 November 1922.
175 NTS 2815 NA 180/302, Assistant Native Commissioner to Additional Native Commissioner, 1 November 1937; "Bakgatla Tribal Resolution," 27 November 1937.
elsewhere in the Transvaal are just as indicative. One property near Duiwelskloof in Letaba, for example, was sold for £400 in 1910 and £5 000 in 1928, “without any great improvements having been made” on it. At Standerton, land sold for 9s per morgen in 1882, 25s in 1899 and £6 10s in 1929.\(^{176}\) Obviously, it was now much more difficult for Africans to buy land.

In order to counter the rising general economic threat, the NAD, according to Act No. 41 of 1925, established a system of Tribal Trust Funds in districts throughout the Transvaal. Their purpose was to pay up tribal debts, but they were also used to buy land, a venture that was becoming increasingly difficult in the late 1920s. The funds were built up through what was termed “a purely voluntary levy,” but which it was not, because it was imposed by the chief and his lekgotla upon every able-bodied male in their community. The account was managed by a board made up of a local NAD official, the chief and his lekgotla and kept in a bank in that people's name. In 1931, the 1925 Act was amended to make the levy payment compulsory for every African in a ‘tribal’ area.\(^{177}\) As South Africa was then deep into the recession, this measure was meant mainly to assist towards the repayment of land debts.

By the end of 1928, the Bakgatla began to default in the payment of their instalments. From June 1928, for example, they failed to pay their instalments for six months and were £1 200 in arrears, plus £42 in interest charges.\(^{178}\) It took some prompting by the Additional Native Commissioner and lawyers' intervention before the Bakgatla managed to pay £300 by 29 May


\(^{177}\) Linington, *Native Administration*, pp. 85-86.

\(^{178}\) NTS 3456 NA 107/308, Additional Native Commissioner to SNA, 12 March 1929.
1929. At the same time, they still owed £900 on the purchase price of three farms, plus interest at 7%. It is quite clear that, by the late 1920s, unlike earlier in the century, the Bakgatla were economically struggling and needed support urgently. For this reason, in 1930, chief Ofentse re-applied to the Minister of Native Affairs for a levy of £1 to be paid annually by “every adult male member” of the Bakgatla, “for the purpose of liquidating certain liabilities incurred in connection with the purchase of the farms Rhenosterkop No. 1048 and Vogelstruisnek No. 602...” as well as Kraalhoek 516. The application was granted, and the levy payment effected in 1930. It was “to continue in operation until such time as the liabilities of the said [Bakgatla] tribe in respect of the purchase of the said farms shall have been liquidated.”

Despite this levy strategy, however, the Bakgatla still found it extremely difficult to settle their debts. They were able to pay off the remaining debt of £1000 on the farm Kraalhoek, for example, only in August 1935. Of course, the Bakgatla were not the only ones who imposed this levy. At various times from the early 1930s, other groups in the Pilanesberg/Rustenburg region also did it for the same purposes. But it must have been much harder for the smaller, poorer groups which had become more impoverished than others. This is well illustrated by the Batlokwa of chief M. Matlapeng who, in December 1930, for example, had in their coffers a

179 NTS 3456 NA 107/308, Additional Native Commissioner to SNA, 12 March 1929; Pernzhorn, Olivier and Coetsee (Rustenburg attorneys), to Additional Native Commissioner, 29 May 1929.

180 NTS 3456 NA 107/308, "Proclamation" No. 75 of 1930, "Levy of Special Rate on the Bakgatla Tribe of Natives under Chief Ofentse Pilane." See also N4/3/3(3), Assistant Native Commissioner to Additional Native Commissioner, 17 February 1930; "Tribal Resolution," Saulspoort, 13 February 1930.

181 NTS 2815 NA 180/302, "Vote of Thanks" speech by chief Ofentse, Saulspoort, 28 July 1937.

182 See for example, NA 53/213, Proclamation No. 145 of 30 July 1937 by Governor-General P. Duncan.
bank balance of only £179 1s 7d. which, by 23 January 1932, had dwindled to a mere £10 11s 0d.\(^{183}\)

Just after the South African War, the Bakgatla had started the 20th century with so much in terms of economic resources and many of them were, as noted, relatively prosperous. Thus, throughout the 1910s and 1920s, they were able to pay for their farms quite quickly and easily too. Why then did the Bakgatla begin to experience these financial problems? A number of reasons explain this. First, as already alluded to, the Bakgatla tended to overstretch their resources by buying too many farms all at once. The farms Tussenkomst 448, Rhenosterkop 1048 and Applikasie 984, for example, were all bought at once in the late 1920s and, thus, must have strained economic resources, resulting in the Bakgatla defaulting in their payments by the end of 1928.\(^{184}\) Second, such concurrent payments were being made in addition to previous extremely expensive land deals still being paid for. In September 1921, for example, in addition to their existing heavy financial commitments, the Bakgatla got into a legal contract to buy the 2775-morgen farm, Wildebeestkuil 733, from G.B. Fothergill and T.H.R. Junior for £4 509 15s 6d. In the same month, they paid approximately £3 009 15s 6d in cash, as the contract demanded, while £1500 would buy a bond, with an interest of 7% per annum. The Bakgatla were to pay transfer costs as well.\(^{185}\) Third, in 1924, there were locusts all over the

---

\(^{183}\) See NA 53/213, "Batlhokoa Tribe" and "Chief Mphuloe," bank balance statements, 31 December 1930 and 23 January 1932; Chief Native Commissioner, Northern Areas, Pretoria, to SNA, 10 July 1937.

\(^{184}\) NTS 3456 NA 107/308, Assistant Native Commissioner to Additional Native Commissioner, 14 January 1929; Additional Native Commissioner to SNA, 12 March 1929.

\(^{185}\) N2/10/3(62), "Memorandum of an Agreement," 19 September 1921; memo, SNC to SNA, 21 September 1921; SNC to SNA, 10 March 1922.
Pilanesberg which ate grazing grass, resulting in poor cattle sales.\textsuperscript{186} This must have depleted the major resource for buying land. Fourth, cattle sales in the Bakgatla Reserve of British Bechuanaland, where much of the cattle used by the Bakgatla to buy farms in the Pilanesberg came from, fell from an average price of 68\textshy{s} per ox in 1929 down to 32\textshy{s} in 1932, which was less than half the 1929 price.\textsuperscript{187} This situation, as chief Ramono's son, Bogope, recounted to the writer, was caused by a foot-and-mouth epidemic that had affected the whole of Bechuanaland at the time and which also resulted in the sale and movement of cattle being severely restricted by the authorities.\textsuperscript{188} All these factors severely curtailed the Bakgatla's ability to buy more land. (Bogope, who was training as a teacher at Tigerkloof from 1928 to 1929, further narrated that because of this restriction, the enrolment of Batswana students at the institution at the time fell drastically because the payment of their school-fees depended on the sale of cattle, which had become very difficult due to the government restrictions.)\textsuperscript{189}

However, it should be noted that by early November 1930, while the region's resources had become quite depleted, the Bakgatla, nevertheless, still had comparatively far more money in their coffers than any other group in the Pilanesberg, as the following breakdown reveals: \textsuperscript{190}

\textsuperscript{186} Phuthadikobo Museum, Mochudi, Botswana, unclassified letter, D. Pilane, Witfontein, the Pilanesberg, to I. Pilane, Mochudi, 12 June 1924.


\textsuperscript{188} B.N.O. Pilane, interview, Saulspoort, 8 October 1993.

\textsuperscript{189} B.N.O. Pilane, interview, 8 October 1993.

\textsuperscript{190} These statistics are from BAO 6875 NA 144/337 Ref. 10/340, Assistant Native Commissioner to Additional Native Commissioner, 5 November 1930.
Table showing comparative bank-balances of the Pilanesberg chiefdoms, November 1930

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Chief</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bakgatla</td>
<td>O. Pilane</td>
<td>£ 2762 10s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batllako</td>
<td>S.M. Mabe</td>
<td>£ 1056 10s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baphalane</td>
<td>B. Ramokoka</td>
<td>£ 840 10s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bapo</td>
<td>F. Mogale</td>
<td>£ 144 10s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalhubi</td>
<td>S. Zibi</td>
<td>£ 139 0s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batlokwa-baga-Sedumedi</td>
<td>K. Sedumedi</td>
<td>£ 126 0s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batllako-ba-Leema</td>
<td>B. Ntwane</td>
<td>£ 67 10s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batlashalerwa</td>
<td>J. Shongwane</td>
<td>£ 78 0s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batlokwa-ba-Kgosi</td>
<td>M. Matlapeng</td>
<td>£ 130 0s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batsang-ba-Sefanyetso</td>
<td>S. Sefanyetso</td>
<td>£ 14 0s 0d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While many other groups were also imposing these "tribal levies," the Bakgatla's bigger fund is explained by their much bigger population as well as bigger herds of cattle. In the middle of the recession in 1930, the Bakgatla heartland, Saulspoort, alone still had some 21,785 cattle, by far the largest number in both Rustenburg and the Pilanesberg put together. The Bakgatla's closest 'competitors,' the Bafokeng, near Rustenburg town, had a much smaller number of only 9,105.191 By the early 1930s, therefore, a general impoverishment had set in and put a halt to land-purchasing in the region and, in February 1931, the Bakgatla bought their last two farms, a portion of Zandfontein 729192 and Kraalhoek 516.193 A Government Gazette of December

---

191 See BAO 6875 NA 144/337 Ref. 10/340, Director of Native Agriculture to SNA, 28 November 1930.
192 Surveyor-General's Office, Mmabatho, Land Transfer Records, Zandfontein No.37 JQ Folio 37/1/1.
1936 recorded that the Bakgatla had a total of 23 farms by that time. Consequently, as Morton has recorded, it became “possible for all those [Bakgatla] still squatting on Afrikaner farms to move on to Kgatla land.”

For this chapter, we can conclude that during the first two decades of this century, the Bakgatla, because they had a bigger population and had far more resources in cattle than any other Batswana group in the Pilanesberg, were able to buy the additional land they badly needed and by the early 1930s, they had largely succeeded in satisfying most of their land needs. One of the reasons why the Bakgatla fought the Boers during the South African War, was to regain their land. While this was not achieved through the war, it was now peacefully accomplished through purchase. This achievement was, thus, a form of Bakgatla self-assertion. But, as noted above, a number of factors, internal and external, put a halt to the land-purchasing process in the region as a whole.

The processes of land-purchasing were lengthy, quite involved and full of legal pitfalls. Land-purchasing was, therefore, risky business for the Africans, especially since the great majority of them were illiterate. This led to the general African dependence on, and trust in, attorneys as well as the NAD. In these processes, all Bakgatla chiefs during this study period chose to register a number of farms, bought with their peoples’ contributions, in their own names. But, as shown, this could not go on forever. When the Bakgatla discovered that chief Ramono’s children were about to perpetuate the practice, there was a public outcry and it was halted.

---

never to be repeated.

In the Pilanesberg, as elsewhere in South Africa during the period under study, the major provisions of the 1913 Land Act which prohibited the sale of land between Africans and Europeans were frequently disregarded by both parties, with the sanction of the Governor-General or the Minister of Native Affairs. Thus, for both buyers and sellers, self-interest rather than the law became the norm as well as the over-riding concern. That is why, as late as 1934, some 21 years after the passing of the 1913 Land Act, H.M. Robertson wrote that “the [1913 Land] Act has not yet had its full effect.”196 Once land had been purchased, the next step was its utilisation. This is dealt with in the next and final chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

TENANCY AND CROP PRODUCTION AMONG THE BAKGATLA, 1900-1931

This chapter looks firstly at the administrative framework that governed Africans in the Transvaal from the end of the South African War, in which the lack of policy resulted in uncertainty by chiefs, the Native Affairs Department (NAD) and Ministry of Justice officials about their precise roles in the administration of African affairs. It then explains the chronic labour shortage in the Pilanesberg. This is followed by a discussion of Bakgatla production and prosperity during the 1910s and early to mid-1920s. The chapter also discusses conditions of tenancy in the Transvaal generally and shows that in the Pilanesberg in particular, it was labour tenancy that dominated. A related feature of this labour tenancy in the Pilanesberg was the area's high degree of absentee landownership which allowed tenants to maximise production and profits.

As Boer defeat in the South African War appeared imminent, the British authorities, as if to show who was now in charge in South Africa, replaced the local Rustenburg administration with their own nominees. The Boer landdrost was replaced first with a military magistrate and then with a civilian, H. Kemball Cook, who was later assisted by an assistant magistrate, J. H. Herald, and a Justice of the Peace and Public Prosecutor, H.L. de Burgh Whyte. Following the conclusion of peace agreements between the Boers and the British at Vereeniging in April

---

1902, both sides tacitly agreed to leave the "native question" in abeyance and "keep it out of party politics" altogether. Instead, one of the priorities of the Milner administration, which took over the government of the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony from the British military authorities in June 1902, was to tackle the "Boer question." Thus, some of Milner's major concerns were the repatriation of Boer war prisoners and a large-scale settlement of English-speaking whites in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal intended to swamp the Afrikaners. For a number of reasons, however, Milner's envisaged scheme of settling large numbers of English speakers was a failure. By the beginning of 1912, the white population in the Transvaal as a whole was still so small that the Transvaal Landowners' Association pleaded with the government for "an energetic immigration policy" to attract white men with capital.

Regarding the much larger numbers of Africans in the Transvaal, however, there was need for an administrative framework for them. It is necessary to discuss briefly both this administrative framework as well as the policy that governed Africans as this would enable us to appreciate the sort of context within which the Bakgatla and other groups in the Pilanesberg operated. The NAD was formed just after the annexation of the Transvaal in 1900 and its head, the Commissioner for Native Affairs (CNA) was appointed in August 1901. Below him was the Secretary for Native Affairs (SNA), a permanent head of the department. However, because of the war, the NAD could not function properly and its work was, therefore, carried out by

---


the British military. In 1902, for the purpose of ruling Africans more systematically, the
Transvaal was divided into five divisions, each headed by a Native Commissioner (NC). Under
the NC were the Sub-Native Commissioners (SNCs) in charge of the sub-districts of the
division. The Pilanesberg was initially part of the district called Rustenburg/Marico. On 1 July
1904, an administrative rearrangement resulted in the creation of the Western Division, headed
by the NC, based at Rustenburg, under whom were the districts of Rustenburg, the Pilanesberg
and Marico, each with an SNC in charge.

From 1910, the new Union government sought to have a uniform "Native policy" towards
Africans throughout the Union. Such policy, spearheaded by the Minister of Justice in the first
Union cabinet, General Hertzog, was to be based on separate administrative development and
white dominance in all spheres. The basis of such a policy was the Land Act 1913 which
established both the principle and the practice of territorial segregation. Out of this policy of
segregation came the introduction of the Native Affairs Act of 1920 to cater for separate
political institutions for Africans. This law was, therefore, seen as part of the answer to the
"African question." The Native Affairs Act, however, was a failure in a number of ways. Its
provision for local councils which would have meant, for example, African participation and
articulation of local grievances never materialised due to "various difficulties," as the NAD

---

5 LTG 122 110/30, CNA (G.Y. Lagden) to Colonial Secretary, 11 September 1902.
6 War Office, The Native Tribes of the Transvaal, pp. 94-95. For details of the duties of
NCs and SNCs, see TKP Vol. 239, Annual Report by the Commissioner Native Affairs,
30 June 1903, pp. A.2-A.4. See also the more detailed Lillington, Native Administration,
pp. 6-12.
7 See Smurthwaite, "The policy," Chapter One.
8 Smurthwaite, "The policy," p. 57.
reported in 1926.  

Smurthwaite has further suggested that during the Botha and Smuts governments, the administration of Africans in the Union as a whole took a liberal bent bordering on a *laissez-faire* attitude due to the preponderance of Cape officials in the NAD and, after 1914, the lack of a full-time Ministry of Native Affairs. These were the reasons why up to at least the 1920s, there was considerable uncertainty and confusion amongst both NAD and Department of Justice officials over how, for example, African chiefs should interpret the law. Their precise jurisdiction, for example, over the kind of cases they could try and those they could not, was also uncertain. In March 1914, the Secretary for Justice, who was expected to clarify such issues, was himself ignorant of what to say and, therefore, “advised” the SNC for Rustenburg, “to deal with difficulties as they occur and not to anticipate the happening of untoward events.” What compounded the situation was the fact that the NAD, as one of its senior officials stated, “took no active part in the internal administration of the tribe.” The NAD had, for example, no practical control upon the administration of residential or agricultural occupation, which gave the chief and his *lekgotla* considerable leverage regarding the powers they could exercise and the way they exercised them over such tasks as the allocation of land,

---

9 Smurthwaite, "The policy," p. 72. For reasons of the failure of this Act, see pp. 73-74. The council system which was meant to usher in a new form of local tribal rule did not take root in Rustenburg/ Pilanesberg until the late 1930s. See Simpson, "Peasants and politics," p. 395.

10 For details, see Smurthwaite, "The policy," pp. 19-22.

11 JUS 116 3/647/11, Secretary for Justice, Pretoria, to SNA, n.d., March 1914. See also SNA to Secretary for Justice, 29 September 1914; Secretary for Justice to SNA, 7 October 1914; SNA to Secretary for Justice, 11 January 1922.

the regulation of water usage and wood-cutting. In practice, the village headmen carried out these tasks.\(^{13}\) Having looked at the administrative context within which Africans functioned, we now turn to some pertinent developments among the Bakgatla.

Soon after the end of the South African War, the Bakgatla were faced with a prolonged spell of drought that had considerable impact upon them. In February 1903, the NC reported an “exceptionally dry weather” in Rustenburg/Pilanesberg.\(^{14}\) The journalist Knight, who visited the Bakgatla village of Bierkraal (Motlhabe) in 1903, also recorded that the drought had caused an “almost complete failure of the mealie crop” in the whole region.\(^{15}\) The 1903 drought resulted in the emigration of “a large proportion of [Bakgatla] young men” who were “compelled” by chief Linchwe to seek work outside the Pilanesberg.\(^{16}\) The young men's compulsion into wage labour was a demonstration of chiefly control, a feature that seems to have been in practice elsewhere in the region.\(^{17}\) However, unlike, for example, in Pondoland where, at the beginning of this century, coercive methods were used by Mpondo chiefs and European traders to recruit labour,\(^{18}\) in the Pilanesberg, the severity of the drought largely did the ‘coercion.’

The same year, Knight recorded further that, as a direct result of this prolonged drought and the resulting crop failure, some 200 Bakgatla males "had recently left for the mines," resulting

\(^{13}\) Kommisaris Pilanesberg, N1/15/6, “Native Administration Report,” p. 9.

\(^{14}\) SNA 106 NA 491/03, NC to SNA, 18 February, 1903, p. 6.

\(^{15}\) Knight, *South Africa After the War*, p. 260.

\(^{16}\) Knight, *South Africa After the War*, p. 261.

\(^{17}\) For Rustenburg, see, for example, Simpson, "Peasants and politics," p. 361.

\(^{18}\) See Beinart, *The Political Economy of Pondoland*, pp. 63-64.
in poor attendance in schools. After a two-year respite, in 1906, the Pilanesberg experienced another severe drought as well as locusts. The scale of emigration was quite high. The CNA's report for June 1903 showed that some 3,405 men were given travelling passes to travel outside the Pilanesberg (presumably for wage labour), while only 1,825 travelled within the district. Three years later, the same trend was continuing. This exodus of able-bodied Bakgatla men was only one of the reasons that led to a critical shortage of labour in the area.

The shortage of labour

Throughout the period under review, the shortage of labour in the Pilanesberg, especially for the surrounding white farms, was a recurrent problem that concerned and prompted the local government officials to ensure the availability of African labour. Indeed, one of the “special grievances” which white farmers presented to Governor-General Gladstone during his tour of the Pilanesberg and Rustenburg in 1910 was the scarcity of black labour. The shortage is explained by a number of factors. First, during the South African War, Africans who worked

19 Knight, *South Africa After the War*, p. 268; DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 4 March and 12 April 1906; 10 January 1907.

20 DRCA S5/15/7/2, Gonin to Murray, 4 March and 12 April 1906; 10 January 1907.


for the British forces used to get relatively high wages, certainly much more than on the farms. As the SNA recorded, such people were “in possession of so much cash earned during the war” that they found it pointless to work locally and earn much less. Second, following the reopening of the mines on the Rand, which had “almost entirely” stopped due to the war from late 1899 to early 1900, there was a great need for mine labour. As the NC’s report for the area for 1910 stated, the “majority of Natives” who left the region in search of employment went to the Witwatersrand mines where wages were double the maximum of 40s which they used to get on the Rustenburg/Pilanesberg farms; hence, the “great scarcity of labourers for farms” in the region. The Bakgatla were, like many other Africans elsewhere in southern Africa, responding to wage labour demands. Third, as Governor Gladstone recorded about the Pilanesberg in 1910, the Africans had their own agricultural holdings, could provide all their needs and, therefore, had no necessity to work for white farmers who, after all, offered “meagre remuneration” for farm labour. Fourth, the “growing landlessness” in the region, as Simpson has recorded, was partly responsible for driving young men into wage-labour, thus, contributing to the labour shortage. Fifth, going into wage labour was also a way of the young men escaping some onerous “tribal” and family obligations such as levies and labour, which


27 TPP Vol. 6/1 Ref.3, Blue Book on Native Affairs, 1910, p. 247. But it should be added too, that some were employed locally. That year, 1910, for example, about 200 were employed within the urban area of Rustenburg, while "a great number" worked on Boer farms in the district. TPP Vol. 6/1 Ref.3, Blue Book on Native Affairs, 1910, p. 247.


they perceived to be burdensome. In the Pilanesberg, those Bakgatla who went away on migrant labour were, nevertheless, generally mindful of their responsibilities back home. As the NC for Rustenburg, C. Griffith, reported in May 1910: “Most of the men capable of working are away at work but the majority of them are sure to return to their homes shortly to harvest their crops.”

The problem of the persistence of labour shortage was never satisfactorily resolved by either the government or the farmers during the study period. By the late 1920s, the problem had become so serious that in October 1930, the Rustenburg Farmers’ Association resolved to ask the Minister of Justice to extend to their district the Cape’s ‘tot system’ of paying farm workers partly in liquor, in order to attract labour. The same request was made to the Native Affairs Commission of 1927-1931, but it was unanimously rejected. It was in response to the persistent demands of small-time, undercapitalised white farmers that the government enacted the Masters and Servants (Transvaal and Natal) Amendment Act of 1926 and the Native Service Contract Act of 1932. What must have worsened the farmers’ labour situation was the fact that by the 1920s, the Rustenburg/Pilanesberg areas had become a major recruiting and transit point run by the Native Recruiting Corporation for Batswana labourers, both local

31 GOV/756/PS 50, “Extracts from Report...,” by C. Griffith, NC, Rustenburg, 10 May 1904.
32 Rustenburg Herald, 24 October 1930.
and from Bechuanaland, for work on the mines. By the late 1930s, the Pilanesberg specifically had become such an important source of labour for the mines that in 1937, the corporation entered into a three-year lease agreement with the Bakgatla lekgotla to erect “two huts” in Saulspoort for the accommodation of labour recruits awaiting transportation to the mines.

Closely connected with the problem of scarce African labour was the issue of tax, whose main purpose was to coerce blacks into wage-labour, especially for the mines. By February 1903, NAD officials in the Rustenburg/Pilanesberg areas had undertaken a population census and the registration of all males eligible to pay tax. From 1 April 1903, the SNCs began collecting hut tax and dog tax from all able-bodied males throughout the western Transvaal, often using forceful methods, such as arresting defaulters or seizing their cattle, especially during the Crown Colony period, 1902-1907.

Despite the spells of drought, the Pilanesberg societies were, nevertheless, some of the most agriculturally productive communities in the western Transvaal. Adopting some of the then current methods of agriculture, African peasant farmers in the area did very well. The Pilanesberg SNC’s report on agriculture for 1910 gives some indication of this situation: “An enormous amount of cultivation is carried on by the Natives who have adopted the European

35 Rustenburg Herald, 21 February 1930.
36 NTS 339/280 351/280, Bakgatla "Tribal Resolution," dated 28 May 1937; Chief Native Commissioner, Northern Areas, to SNA, 29 July 1937.
37 SNA 106 NA 491/03, NC to SNA, 18 February 1903, p. 3.
38 SNA 169 NA 2059/03, NC to SNA, 18 September 1903, p. 5; TKP Vol.239, Annual Report by the Commissioner for Native Affairs, Transvaal, 30 June 1903, p. A.10.
methods, ploughing being carried out with the latest species (sic) of plough obtainable." 40 This was a period of both productivity and prosperity in the Pilanesberg. In July 1910, when Governor-General Gladstone passed through Saulspoort and Bethanie, he observed that Africans in the two settlements “appear to be both prosperous and contented” and that their houses were, “for the most part, rectangular in shape, substantially built of sun-baked brick or mud, and roofed with thatch or corrugated iron.” 41 The same year, the SNC for the Pilanesberg recorded that “[a] large number of European dresses are made by the Native women, sewing-machines being in general use.” 42 But even more revealing was the SNC’s assertion that “the Natives [in the Pilanesberg] are wealthier than the majority of whites.” 43

The African producers grew sorghum, mealies, beans and sweet potatoes mainly for consumption. The surplus was sold to Jewish traders based in Saulspoort. The money was then used to buy goods from the same traders. 44 Thus, as the SNC noted in 1910, "very few" of the African farmers in the Pilanesberg took their produce to the market. 45 This feature was common elsewhere in South Africa during the same period, such as the Cape where most rural Africans sold their produce to and bought commodities from the local European traders. 46 Moreover, transport services between Rustenburg and the Pilanesberg that would have been necessary for the marketing of produce were still non-existent. A lorry transport service on this

40 TPP Vol. 6/1 Ref. 3, Blue Book on Native Affairs, 1910, p. 152.
41 GG/953/19/16, Governor-General to Earl of Crewe, 25 July 1910.
42 TPP 6/1 Ref. 3, Blue Book on Native Affairs, p. 191.
44 L. Phaladi and M. Phaladi, interview, Lerome, the Pilanesberg, 6 February 1993.
45 TPP Vol.6/1 Ref.3, Blue Book on Native Affairs, 1910, p. 152.
46 Beinart and Bundy, Hidden Struggles, p. 233.
route began only in November 1931, run by Hoffman and Ferguson Ltd,\(^{47}\) while a bi-weekly train service from Johannesburg to Rustenburg began only in January 1930.\(^{48}\)

As suggested above, the period from the 1910s to the mid-1920s was one of material prosperity among Africans in the Pilanesberg generally, and not the Bakgatla alone. The smaller groups also had some very successful producers. In October 1909, for example, a group of eight Batlokwa tenants on the white-owned farm, Putfontein, refused to move to another farm, Elandsdoorns, which their chief, Sedumedi, proposed buying because they were economically much better off where they were. Instead, they offered to "give the Chief money, merely as a donation, but would not associate themselves with the purchase." The acting SNC for the Pilanesberg described this group as "amongst the wealthiest" of the Batlokwa.\(^{49}\)

From the early 1920s, a few Bakgatla peasant farmers became quite rich. One such example from the Saulspoort area was Serote Pilane, a distant member of the Bakgatla royal family. A polygamist with three wives, Serote ploughed "a very large area" and owned "a lot of cattle, sheep, goats and horses" on his land. Serote practised the *mafisa* system in which he loaned some of his cattle to other Bakgatla and to poor whites in the area who used them for ploughing and milking. When the cattle became old, he took them back to sell and re-loaned younger ones. Serote was so well to do that every Christmas, he gave presents to poor whites.\(^{50}\)

Another well-to-do Mokgatla peasant farmer in the Pilanesberg who used to loan cattle to poor whites and gave them sheep as presents at Christmas, was Dithebe Pilane. Dithebe had such a lot of

\(^{47}\) *Rustenburg Herald*, 13 December 1929.

\(^{48}\) *Rustenburg Herald*, 24 January 1930.

\(^{49}\) N2/10/3(66), Acting SNC to NC, 27 October 1909, pp. 1-2.

\(^{50}\) T. S. Pilane, interview, Saulspoort, 30 May 1993.
cattle that at his death in 1928, "a lot of people" had to be sent to go and round them up. Ditebe, according to my informant, owned "an expensive wagon, like King George's, which nobody else in the Pilanesberg, black or white, possessed."\(^51\) Pilane stated further that these individuals grew rich, not because of their royal links, which, after all, were far-fetched, but due to "hard work and luck."\(^52\)

There is very little evidence of cash crop production among Africans in the area for the duration of the study period. However, according to the SNC, during the mid-1920s, "a few" African peasant producers in the area realised "substantial incomes from tobacco growing" and, by 1926, it had become "compulsory" for them to sell this tobacco to the Co-operative Society at Rustenburg. These African producers seem to have been doing so well that they asked to be represented on the Board of the Co-operative Society, "to look after their interests." But their request was rejected because, according to the SNC, "native growers are very few at present, compared with Europeans" and the majority of Africans produced "only for their own consumption."\(^53\)

From the above evidence, it is clear that there were ample opportunities for production (discussed later in this chapter), particularly on absentee-owned land, during the first two decades of the 20th century, which enabled the more industrious individuals to become prosperous. However, during the same period, the region's rural economy was going through a steady decline due to problems of overstocking, overpopulation, soil erosion, inadequate rain

\(^{51}\) Pilane, interview, 30 May 1993.

\(^{52}\) Pilane, interview, 30 May 1993.

and increased rates of labour migrancy. This suggests that the indications of prosperity in the Pilanesberg which we have noted above were, perhaps, an exception rather than the general rule.

The Bakgatla and poor whites

As alluded to above, the Pilanesberg had its share of poor whites. The phenomenon of white poverty had been in South Africa at least since the closing decades of the 19th century, but got exacerbated by the rinderpest epidemic of 1896-1897, the scorched-earth campaign by the British army during the South African War and the prolonged drought of the years 1903-1908. These problems led to the eviction of large numbers of white bywoners from farms in the countryside and many of them drifted to the towns in search of a better living; but because they lacked skills, they became unemployable and destitute. Many other poor-whites remained in the rural areas. These were among what the Transvaal Indigency Commission Report described as "Kaffirised whites" who were, in the words of the NC for Rustenburg, "absolutely doing nothing" to earn a living. In March 1928, the Rustenburg/Pilanesberg magistrate recorded what he described as a "lamentable state of affairs" regarding "the extreme poverty of a large

56 Bywoners were generally synonymous with poor whites. See W.M. Macmillan, Complex South Africa (1930), p. 89. For the origins of the poor-white phenomenon in South Africa, see Grosskopf, The Poor White Problem, pp. 4-9; Union of South Africa, Report of the Unemployment Investigation Committee, (1932). See also Wilson, "Farming, 1866-1966," pp. 126-127.
proportion of European rural inhabitants accentuated by the prolonged drought of three years now.  

In the Pilanesberg, some of the poor whites worked on white farms, usually as foremen supervising black labourers, while others milked cattle and transported firewood to Rustenburg for sale. Many others worked for blacks such as the well-to-do peasants noted above. In 1932, the Carnegie Commission reported that in the Rustenburg/Pilanesberg areas, some whites were so poor that their staple food was maize porridge and they paid for their shop purchases "with fowls and eggs," while others "often went ploughing [for blacks] in a neighbouring Kaffir reserve to get slaughter animals." This clearly suggests a large degree of close socio-economic cooperation and interdependence between blacks and poor whites in the area. Relations between the Bakgatla and poor whites, whom elderly Bakgatla informants described as "simple and submissive," were "cordial." Many poor whites were offered food and ate in Bakgatla households. An example was a certain G. Rex in the Saulspoort area during the 1920s. Another informant stated: "Some of them [poor whites] ate with us." Such a situation, as the Carnegie Commission observed, tended to bring about "social equality" between whites and blacks. This was similar to what happened in other parts of rural Transvaal. Van Onselen, for example, has convincingly shown that in the south-western

58 JUS 443 3/304/28, Magistrate, Rustenburg, to Provincial Secretary, Pretoria, 30 March 1928.
59 L. Phaladi and M. Phaladi, interview, 6 February 1993.
61 Phaladi and Phaladi, interview, 6 February 1993.
Transvaal during the 1920s, black farm tenants and *bywoners* to a very large extent generally ate, partied and socialised together. Poor whites there "lived like most other blacks" in the area and "habitually addressed those [black] men with whom [they were] on more intimate terms as 'my brother' (ngwaneso)."

**Forms of tenancy**

After the South African War, the kind of relations of production that had characterised the agrarian economy of the Transvaal since the 19th century were beginning to change, with large numbers of Africans being integrated into the European-dominated economy as tenants and squatters on European farms and through increased migrant labour to the urban areas. Throughout South Africa, different areas had different forms of tenancy. In the economically more advanced areas of the Cape's western province, for example, tenants worked almost entirely for wages, with a tiny proportion in rations. For the Transvaal, Krikler has analysed in great detail the very diverse conditions of labour tenancy all over the territory. Situations were so different that even in a small area, such as the south-easternmost part of the Transvaal, for example, tenancy conditions might have been based on labour in one district and, in another, on cash.

---

64 For details, see C. van Onselen, "Race and class in the South African countryside...," *The American Historical Review*, 95, 1 (February 1990), pp. 108-112. Quotation from p. 109. For details of the limits to the relationships between these poor whites and black tenants, see pp. 110-112.


67 For details of the variety of these conditions in the different districts of the Transvaal by 1932, see Union of South Africa, *Report of the Native Economic Commission, 1930-1932* (continued...
On the highveld, a common form of tenancy, especially "on the farms of less prosperous and undercapitalised white land-owners,"68 was sharecropping ('half-shares' or 'farming-on-the-half') in which Africans used their own ploughs and oxen to work the land of a white landowner, sowed their own seed, and then gave half of the harvest to the landowner in return for the right to cultivate, graze stock and live on his land. In this manner, the landowner who did little or nothing to develop his land had much to gain, while the African sharecropper also benefited from his labour much more than if he was only a labour tenant.69 Whereas in many places in the Transvaal, such as the arable highveld, the common form of tenancy was sharecropping,70 in the Pilanesberg, labour tenancy was the norm. Here, it was common for African tenants to do three months' work per year in return for the right to squat, cultivate a portion of the land (usually 1-3 morgen) and graze their stock. The tenants' families were frequently required to work as well. While working, the family received food and accommodation. During times of drought and poor harvest, farmers often assisted their tenants with food, even though they had finished their labour obligations. The tenants' stock were allowed to graze with their master's. Generally, they were also allowed to plough and cultivate their own land with their oxen and plough(s).71 But, it should be stressed that there were "innumerable differences in detail from district to district and even in the same district..."72

Indeed, within the Pilanesberg itself, some tenants paid rent in cash rather through labour. In

(---continued---)


68 Keegan, Facing the Storm, pp. 15, 51-56.
70 See, for example, Keegan, Rural Transformations, pp. 64-65.
1910, for example, the annual cash rent varied from £2 to £5.73

The labour tenancy contract between the white farmer and the head of the African tenant family, just like the sharecropping one, was necessarily a verbal one, precisely because it was illegal.74 But even written tenancy agreements (which were rare) were not sacrosanct just because they were written. Regarding one instance in early 20th century Rustenburg, Krikler makes the error that, because a written sharecropping agreement between a Boer landlord and several African tenants had specifically limited the provision of labour to "the said natives," namely, the heads of the tenant families, therefore, only they worked, but "not their families..."75 This is incorrect. The white farmer usually insisted on the use of almost all the tenant family's labour, including children, and this was a characteristic feature of tenant agreements. As an African tenant testified on 20 May 1925: "Yes, the farmer says he wants the children to look after his cattle, and the father has no option but must agree...[and] they would have to go into service with their father."76 In September 1926, the SNC for Rustenburg reported that teenagers between the ages of 12 and 16 were employed "to a considerable extent," not only for domestic work in white households but also on farms, "chiefly in cotton-picking and maize cultivation and picking."77 The children worked "for living on the farm," the

73 TPP Vol.6 Ref.3, Blue Book on Native Affairs, 1910, p. 265.
75 See Krikler, "Revolution from above," pp. 205-206.
77 See Kommisaris Pilanesberg, N1/15/6, "Native Administration Report," pp. 4-5.
farmers argued, and so they were not paid. This also refutes Trapido's claim that in the Transvaal after the South African War, both the British and Boer forces "ensured that labour-tenant peasants were put down." In fact, in the period 1918-1930 in the Transvaal, as Bradford has recorded, it was common for white farmers to "force" entire African households into farm labour service. However, in response, the tenants' older children frequently ran away from this forced labour and went to the urban areas to seek wage employment. It was this landlord inability to tie down their tenants' children to the farms and control their labour which resulted in a labour shortage and which, in turn, partly led to an extensive government enquiry into landlord-tenant relations in May-June 1925.

Tenant grievances were numerous. Tenants complained of generally "bad treatment" from their landlords. Specific complaints were that cash remuneration, where it applied, was too little; they had to limit the number of stock they could keep on the farm; rations were too inadequate and the quality of land for their own ploughing was "poor." But the tenants had little choice in the matter. As the Grosskopf enquiry revealed in 1932, tenants had to endure hardships and maltreatment from their landlords "for the sake of keeping their livestock and having a home.

---

78 Report of the Select Committee on Subject-Matter of Masters and Servants, p. 105.
82 For details, see Report of the Select Committee on Subject-Matter of Masters and Servants, pp. 100-101.
for their families. The testimony of two African informants to a government commission of enquiry in May 1925 also showed that the tenants had to stay on the farms because they had nowhere else to live and the reserves were "so crowded."

What has been recounted so far regarding farm labour conditions reflected the fact that state policy towards farm labour during the period under study and even after, was inconsistent, uncertain and contradictory. While the NAD, for example, insisted upon the improvement of farm working conditions for Africans as well as the right to sell their labour to whoever paid the most, the Justice Department on the other hand supported white farmers and constantly persuaded the government to effect stronger measures to ensure the supply and retention of African farm labour. It was for all the above reasons that the Bakgatla tenants, like many other Africans, preferred absentee-owned land.

**The Bakgatla on absentee-owned land**

An undetermined but very large number of farms in the Pilanesberg were absentee-owned, for two reasons. First, due to the ferocity of the fighting between the Bakgatla and the Boers during the South African War and its destructive impact on Boer property which we noted in Chapter Three, most farmers began to return to their farms only after World War One. For this

---

85 *Report of the Select Committee on Subject-Matter of Masters and Servants*, pp. 92, 99, 102-103. Quotation from p. 102. For details of the working conditions of black tenant families on white-owned farms on the Highveld in the period up to 1914, see Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, pp. 74-86.
86 For details, see Duncan, "The state divided," pp. 68-75.
reason, as Krikler has rightly put it, the Pilanesberg "boasted the largest black population on the farms of absentee landlords..." For the highveld, Keegan has also shown that tenants had more independence on absentee-owned land and, generally, the greater the landlord's financial strength, the more independence the tenants had. That was why on such farms, tenant producers could maximise their output and profit. It was for this reason that black tenants, as the Grosskopf enquiry established, became "the real producers" and were "often far more prosperous than most of the poor white farm population..." In the Pilanesberg, apart from the lands of individual absentee-landowners, a few of the farms belonged to land companies, such as the Henderson Consolidated Corporation Ltd and the New Transvaal Gold Farms which, for example, owned

89 B.N.O. Pilane, interview, 8 October 1993.
90 Krikler, "Revolution from above," p. 129.
91 Keegan, Rural Transformations, p. 68
Tambotiesrandt 186 and Klippan 311, respectively. These two land companies, through their umbrella Transvaal Landowners' Association, had their own agent, a C.E. Cornwall, resident in the Pilanesberg, whom prospective African purchasers of land dealt with. But it should also be pointed out that labour tenancy did not have a complete security of tenure, especially if, as the SNC stated, the land's ownership changed and the new owner required the squatters to do work which they had already done for their previous landlord in the same year.

The most preferred type of land was Crown or government land because tenants' obligations were, by far, less onerous than on any other type of absentee-owned land. From 1903, for 21 years, adult African males on Crown lands were charged £1 per annum by the Crown colony government. This charge covered rights to residence, cultivation, wood and water for domestic use and an unlimited number of grazing stock. These conditions were much more favourable than those on other kinds of absentee-owned land, let alone farms with resident landlords. (During the 1920s, the Pilanesberg had seven government farms.)

In 1924, however, the government increased the rent to 30s, arguing that the previous charge "was entirely disproportionate to the benefits enjoyed..." The new conditions limited grazing to "10 head of great stock or 20 head of small stock" and charged another 10s "for each five additional head of great stock and two shillings and sixpence (2s 6d) for each additional head

93 N2/10/3(69), C.E. Cornwall, Rustenburg, to SNC, 1 November 1915.
94 N2/10/3(69), C.E. Cornwall, the Pilanesberg, to SNC, 11 October 1916.
96 Lillington, Native Administration, p. 130.
97 N2/7/3(28), SNC to SNA, 29 January 1925.
of great stock. Conditions had become stringent, but still not as bad as on the other types of land, which was why Crown lands were still the most preferable.

Some absentee-landowners were so keen to make capital out of their properties that they often contravened the 1913 Land Act which prohibited them from leasing their land to Africans. But Africans were sometimes desperate for land. Thus, the needs of both sides complemented each other. A case in point was that of S. Benjamin of Pretoria who, with his sister who lived in London, jointly owned the Pilanesberg farm, Sweet Home No. 166, along the Odi River. In 1922, Benjamin allowed six Africans from the Bakgatla location of Holfontein to graze their cattle on his farm on a lease arrangement according to which they paid him money annually, in contravention of the 1913 Land Act. Towards the end of 1923, the tenants withdrew from the arrangement and returned to Holfontein because they were frequently in trouble with the neighbouring white farmer who continually impounded their cattle which strayed on to his farm. In 1924, Benjamin requested the tenants to return and assured them that their original rent of £12 10s would not change, even if they brought more cattle. When one of the tenants, T. Matlou, refused to come back, Benjamin literally “begged” him to return, which he did. Benjamin obviously needed the money.

98 Linington, Native Administration, p. 130.
99 This account and analysis are based on various correspondence between NAD officials and S. Benjamin from the file NTS 7114 349/323. The two Benjamins had inherited the farm from their late father who had acquired it in 1888. See S. Benjamin to SNA, 21 February 1925.
100 See the affidavits of S. Lesatsi and E. Dimpani, Olfantshoek, 29 December 1924 in NTS 7114 349/323.
101 NTS 7114 349/323, testimony of "Native Thapedi Matlou" to Special Justice of the Peace, the Pilanesberg, 12 May 1925.
When NAD officials discovered this early in 1925, the tenants were removed from the farm because it was "in the middle of a European area..."102 This was in spite of Benjamin's pleas that he did not know the 1913 Land Act's provisions and that these Africans had been cattle-grazing tenants on the farm since 1888.103 This case is an example of the fact that some landowners were in such financial need that they frequently contravened the 1913 Land Act to get some money out of their properties. The fact that the landlord had to beg a person to be his tenant was ample evidence of this. It also suggests that this property was Benjamin's major source of income, if not the only one. Moreover, the landlord's weak position suggests the strong possibility that the tenants could negotiate favourable terms for themselves. However, the important point is that both parties benefited from this type of arrangement. That was why white-black tenancy arrangements continued to exist for many decades after the passing of the 1913 Land Act.104 In the Pilanesberg, while the hiring of land by blacks from whites was the norm, sometimes blacks hired land from fellow blacks whose land had richer or more adequate grazing. During the 1920s, for example, the Batleng at Ruighoek (on the south-western outskirts of today's Sun City), hired land from chief Mabe in Mabeskraal for grazing their cattle.105

However, it would be misleading if the above accounts portray a picture of static conditions on the farms. From at least the beginning of the 20th century, farm economic conditions for

102 NTS 7114 349/323, SNA to Benjamin, Pretoria, 30 March 1925.
103 NTS 7114 349/323, Benjamin to SNA, 4 March and 4 June 1925.
105 Report of the Natives Land Committee, Western Transvaal, p. 22.
labour tenants under the half-share system in the Transvaal were initially favourable, but they began to deteriorate over time, particularly from the passing of the 1913 Land Act. There is very little available evidence of such change from the Pilanesberg itself. However, “typical” evidence given by “a certain Archdeacon Hill” of the Anglican Diocese of Johannesburg to the Native Economic Commission of 1930-1932 about African tenancy on a farm in the Springs area of the Transvaal is quite revealing about such change. It spans a period of over 25 years, from 1907, and is a good indication of what happened elsewhere in the Transvaal generally, including the Pilanesberg during this period, as the following analysis will show.

In the Springs area before the South African War, “about 20 Bakgatla Native families” rented the farm of a land company and each paid £10 per year as rent. Using their own ploughs and oxen, they were permitted to plough and graze their stock on a part of the farm. In a good harvest, “an industrious tenant” could reap 200 bags of maize, which sold for from 15s to 18s per bag. In a good year, on average, he/she would have realised £3 300 per year. Between 1903 and 1913, the company rented the land to white ‘farmers’ and the Bakgatla tenants were still retained on the half-share basis. It should be noted that, as Keegan has recorded, it was common practice for speculative absentee-landlords to lease their land to white ‘farmers’ who were often propertyless and who in turn leased it to black tenants, a practice that became more widespread in the years just before 1913. Under the new white farmers, the tenants now had

---

107 These may not have been the Bakgatla-baga-Kgafela, the subject of this study, but one of the other three Bakgatla branches of the Pretoria district noted in Chapter One.
109 Some white lessees involved in this practice were certainly not poor, but merely wanted to accumulate capital quickly. For details, see Keegan, Rural Transformations, pp. 68-72.
to pay more of their half-shares, resulting in the annual rent going up steeply from the previous £10 to between £70 and £80. Following the passing of the 1913 Land Act, the tenants were formally informed about the end of the half-share system and told that “if they wished to remain on the farm[,] they would be given a few morgen to plough for themselves, but that they must now plough the rest of the lands for the farmers with their own oxen and ploughs and that for the pasturage of their cattle[,] they must be prepared to do the transport of produce to the market.”

Half of the tenants rejected these new conditions and left the farm to seek better terms on other farms. Archdeacon Hill traced the subsequent history of "one of the most prosperous of them." In eight years, this tenant worked "as a squatter" on three different farms. It is not clear under what conditions, but they seem to have been unconducive to work under for a long period. Indeed, in 1931, he was a labour tenant again, on a fourth farm, still on the half-share basis, giving three months labour service spread over half the year. Conditions were now much worse. He did not receive a wage, his own ploughing had to be done after his landlord's ("often too late to secure a decent harvest") and was not allowed to keep stock of any kind, except "only such oxen as are useful to the farmer." The other half of the tenants remained on the farm "to see how the new arrangement would work." Most of these, however, eventually left and, by 1932, there were "very few" left of the original group. Their economic conditions, observed Archdeacon Hill, showed "a steady decline in the last 25 years..." In a year of poor harvest, food was so scarce that these tenants "have to borrow food from the farmer and pay

---


for it by extra labour the following year.\textsuperscript{112}

From this graphic account, it is clear that (African) labour tenants under the half-share system had been doing very well economically up to about the time of the 1913 Land Act. During that period, they still had some "freedom" and ample land (albeit on their landlords' farms) for their own production. Therefore, it paid to be industrious and productive, even when their rent of half-share was pushed up by their new sub-landlords. For this reason, they tended to stay on the same farm for a long period. This explains why the most industrious tenants, such as, for example, the Kgaboesele family of the Pilanesberg noted earlier, could accumulate enough capital to buy large amounts of land for themselves, and with relative ease, especially during the 1910s and the early 1920s. The imposition of the 1913 Land Act, as seen from its impact on "one of the most prosperous" tenants above, was economically ruinous. The Act also ended an era of relative stability for tenants, as indicated by the tenants' brief stints of labour on several farms within a short period of 8 years after the passing of the Act vbc. As we can see from the steep rent increase from £10 to between £70 and £80, this account also illustrates the disadvantage of renting a farm with a resident landlord on it.

The period of the decline of the African rural economies was also the time of the transition of white agriculture from a state of backwardness to a capitalist-oriented one. By the beginning of the 20th century, the general economy of the Transvaal could be termed as "primitive" in a number of ways. Krikler, for example, has stated that at that time, "very few landowners

\textsuperscript{112} Report of the Native Economic Commission, p. 200.
produce[d] for profit," while "few even primarily produced for any significant market at all."\(^{113}\) This was one of the reasons why South African governments took measures to boost white agriculture.\(^{114}\) (Keegan has termed the 1920s, a period of "boom and expansion" for white agriculture.\(^{115}\) )

By the early 1920s, developments at national level came to bear upon Africans on the land in the Transvaal, and the Pilanesberg was not impervious to them. The Pact government period (1924-1933), for example, saw increased state intervention in the economy (partly to combat the increasing incidence of white poverty). Thus, white agriculture was given "special forms of protection" through various subsidies and grants. From the beginning of 1931, the government instituted a number of measures to alleviate the economic plight of white farmers. The Farmers' Special Relief Act of 1931, for example, was passed to provide loans to meet "pressing liabilities and for matters incidental thereto"\(^{116}\) and white farmers of the western Transvaal were among the recipients of capital subsidies from the state.\(^{117}\) In rural Transvaal, except for the 1920-1922 depression period, the 1920s was a period of rapid development, or "transition," for white capitalist agriculture. This transition was assisted by a number of factors. The landlords, for example, had legal and political backing from the state to enforce their

\(^{113}\) Krikler, "Revolution from above," p. 137. For the features of "backwardness" which the Milner administration inherited from the SAR, see this source, pp. 106-138. See also Wilson and Thompson, \textit{The Oxford History of South Africa}, Vol. II, pp. 136-141; Bradford, \textit{A Taste of Freedom}, p. 21-27.

\(^{114}\) For details of measures taken by the state to uplift white rural agriculture, see Wilson and Thompson, \textit{The Oxford History}, II, pp. 136-141.

\(^{115}\) Keegan, \textit{Facing the Storm}, p. 19.

\(^{116}\) Ravenscroft, "The course of the depression in South Africa," p. 30. For more details of government assistance to white farmers as a result of the depression, see Chapter Three of this source.

domination and extraction of labour.\textsuperscript{118} Another significant factor in this transition was, as Morris has stated, the African tenants' dependence upon and strong attachment to the land which "was critical in the transformation of existing labour service into capitalist labour tenancy."\textsuperscript{119}

This development necessitated large amounts of farm labour, which in turn resulted in various pressures on Africans that saw increasing numbers go into wage labour, increased labour and rent obligations on farms and controlled the movement of labour away from the farms. As white agriculture became more capitalistic, with more and better use of land, "large numbers of 'squatters' and labour tenants were ruthlessly evicted in this period," while those who remained on the farms had their movements severely curtailed to prevent them from going to towns as part of government attempts to prevent the growth of an urban black working class.\textsuperscript{120} Thus, while white agriculture was being transformed into capitalist production, African tenant producers were systematically reduced to wage labour.\textsuperscript{121}

While these developments were, as Bradford has shown, common in the Transvaal generally and the eastern Transvaal particularly, it must be emphasised that the growth of agricultural

\begin{flushright}

\textsuperscript{119} Morris, "The development of capitalism," p. 310. For an explanation of why South African agriculture was dominated by the capitalist mode of production by the 1920s, see pp. 296-302.

\textsuperscript{120} Bradford, " 'A taste of freedom'," p. 129. For details of these developments in the Transvaal countryside during the 1920s, see pp. 128-150.

\textsuperscript{121} O'Meara, \textit{Volkskapitalisme}, pp. 22-23; Bradford, \textit{A Taste of Freedom}, p. 145.
\end{flushright}
capitalism which was accompanied by these developments was extremely uneven. Although in the wider national context there were large-scale evictions and other pressures on tenants, the Pilanesberg tenants experienced such pressures to a much lesser extent, precisely because of the area's very large degree of absentee landownership. It is in this regard that the 'megaview' of national history could easily obscure the unique experience of a locality such as the Pilanesberg.

However, the above picture of government support for white agriculture should not give a false impression. In South Africa as a whole, as Beinart has shown, despite the massive government support for white agriculture through credit, co-operatives, controlled markets and subsidies, many white farmers still remained financially vulnerable due to problems, such as depression, drought and, for many, the lack of mechanisation. Many of those who carried on came to depend on their tenants' output both in crops and livestock. It was for this reason that the various restrictions over tenancy and the movement of Africans could only be partially be enforced. The incidence of sharecropping, therefore, continued until at least the 1950s, the restrictions of the 1913 Land Act notwithstanding.¹²²

By the late 1920s, the above pressures that came to bear upon the Bakgatla were compounded by the world-wide economic depression which hit South Africa as well. The whole country's agriculture was "severely" affected, with the net income falling by 42% between 1927-1928

and 1932-1933.\textsuperscript{123} From January 1929 to December 1932, the price of maize fell by 72.2\%.\textsuperscript{124} As if this was not enough, the depression period also saw a prolonged drought (1931-1932), widespread outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease, locust infestations and floods.\textsuperscript{125} It is obvious that African tenancy production must have been severely affected as well.

To conclude this chapter, for the Bakgatla, the first two decades of the 20th century were years of material prosperity in cattle and crop production, despite an initially poor start due to drought. A characteristic feature of the Pilanesberg, which enabled Bakgatla producers to maximise production, was absentee landownership, for reasons already noted. It was because of this feature that labour tenancy was the most prevalent form of tenancy, rather than, for example, sharecropping which was common in other parts of the Transvaal, such as the highveld. Taking advantage of the opportunities created by absentee-landlordism, the more industrious tenants became quite rich.

\textsuperscript{123} Davies et al., "Class struggle," p. 14.
\textsuperscript{124} For details, see Ravenscroft, "The course of the depression in South Africa," pp. 12-13.
\textsuperscript{125} A. Minaar, "Unemployment and relief measures during the Great Depression (1929)," \textit{Kleio, XXVI} (1994), p. 46.
CONCLUSIONS

The Bakgatla's occupation of the Pilanesberg has been recounted in terms of its antiquity and continuity. From about the middle of the 18th century, the Bakgatla's predominance in numbers and military power in the area enabled them to incorporate their weaker neighbours. However, during the period of the *difaqane*, from the early 1820s to the 1830s, the Bakgatla and other Batswana in the Pilanesberg were faced with external invasions. The Amandebele invasion of the Pilanesberg during the mid-1820s occurred when the Bakgatla were riddled with internal violence and were, therefore, unable to resist the invaders effectively. The study has shown that the *difaqane* was generally less violent in the Pilanesberg than it was among, for example, the southern Batswana. But its impact was, nevertheless, disruptive. When the Voortrekkers arrived in the area during the 1830s, they found the Batswana groups scattered, disunited and too weak to offer any effective resistance to them.

Following the Voortrekkers' expulsion of the Amandebele from the Transvaal and the declaration of the territory as theirs by right of conquest at the end of 1837, they expropriated Batswana land and parcelled it out among themselves. The original owners were then made to pay rent to the new Boer landowners or vacate the land. As explained in Chapter One, the politically skewed relationship suggested by this was, in fact, a contradictory one, at first characterised by mutual co-operation and benefit, but later violence. In this relationship, the Bakgatla and other Pilanesberg peoples were used by Boer commandos to raid other independent African groups to bring them under Boer control, capture their little children and
take them into captivity on Boer farms. In return, the Bakgatla and other Batswana hierarchies in the Pilanesberg were allowed to keep firearms and participate in profitable ivory trading. Consequently, they became wealthy and the Bakgatla in particular grew militarily the most powerful in the Pilanesberg. It was these firearms that enabled the Bakgatla to incorporate weaker groups within the Pilanesberg. This, in turn, gave the Bakgatla a position of prominence and leadership throughout the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century.

The "amicable," but essentially contradictory Boer-Bakgatla relationship, however, began to deteriorate, for reasons such as, for example, the Boers' incessant demand for Bakgatla labour, which was necessitated by the revival of irrigated farming in the Pilanesberg and Rustenburg districts during the 1860s. This demand for labour was so heavy that many Bakgatla, especially young men, fled to the Bakwena in today's Botswana. In April 1870, when chief Kgamanyane failed to provide any more labour because his people refused to, he was flogged in front of a public gathering by Commandant Kruger. This resulted in Kgamanyane and at least half of his people fleeing to the Bakwena. This infamous incident, which resulted in the permanent separation of the Bakgatla into segments has, to this day, lived on in the memories of the older generation on both sides of the border, although now with much less bitterness than earlier. In the existing literature, only one reason is given for the Bakgatla flight to Mochudi following their chief's flogging, namely, the Boers' incessant demand for labour, while the incident itself is mentioned only perfunctorily and, often, in a single sentence. For first time, this important

---

1 See, for example, Morton, "Chiefs and ethnic unity," p. 130; "Slave-raiding and slavery," p. 109; "Captive labor," p. 178; Breutz, The Tribes, p. 260; Schapera, A Short History, p. 10.
episode, which led to the permanent separation of the Bakgatla into two sections, has been recounted and analysed in considerable detail in this thesis.

Regarding the ‘interregnum period,’ from the Bakgatla’s emigration from Saulspoort in April 1870 to Ramono’s accession to the Saulspoort chieftainship in January 1903, a period of Bakgatla history that has had extremely patchy information so far, this study has shown that it was a most critical and delicate time for Bakgatla unity and oneness as there was no properly appointed chief in Saulspoort, while both Mokae and the SAR state attempted to sever links with Mochudi but failed. On both sides of the border, this was a period of considerable anxiety and uncertainty for the Bakgatla. In view of the fact that neither Kgamanyane nor Linchwe had been able to nominate someone as his deputy chief in Saulspoort during that turbulent period, there were continual squabbles over the legitimacy of candidates for the chieftainship there. Such a situation came about for two reasons. First, both Kgamanyane and his successor, Linchwe, were unable to make a choice because the Bakgatla, soon after their arrival in Mochudi, got involved in a long-drawn war with the Bakwena from the mid-1870s to 1883. From 1899 to 1902, they were engaged in another war against the Boers. Thus, there was neither time nor opportunity to nominate a candidate for Saulspoort. Second, the Boer authorities not only supported Mokae, whom they encouraged to secede from Mochudi, but also refused to recognise the Mochudi chieftaincy’s authority and legitimacy over the Pilanesberg Bakgatla, thus, denying both Kgamanyane and Linchwe the opportunity to choose a representative for Saulspoort. The opportunity came only with the Boer defeat towards the end of the South African War and the establishment of British rule, when Linchwe nominated his young brother, Ramono.
The events that led up to the flogging incident, the flogging itself and the subsequent division of the Bakgatla were some of the factors that caused the Bakgatla to fight on the British side against the Boers in the South African War of 1899-1902. Another factor was the issue of the shortage of land for the Bakgatla in the Pilanesberg, a situation caused by the expropriation of their land by the Voortrekkers earlier in the 19th century. By the end of the 19th century, the majority of the Bakgatla lived as tenants on Boer farms all over the Pilanesberg. The Bakgatla, therefore, saw the imminent war between the Boers and the British as a good opportunity to redress their situation of landlessness by retaking their ancestral land. The immediate reasons for the Bakgatla's participation in the war, however, lay in the Boers' acts of aggression on or near Bakgatla territory in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, which prompted chief Linchwe to commit his men into war-service on the British side. While British military policy limited African participation to roles other than combat, the Derdepoort attack on 25 November 1899 determined the decisive combat role which the Bakgatla were to play throughout the war. An important point to draw from the Derdepoort assault, however, is that the British policy of using Africans only in non-combat roles was not inflexible as local commanders could use their discretion and disregard policy, according to the prevailing circumstances.

Another significant conclusion arising from the Derdepoort assault and the subsequent Kayaseput ambush was that these two episodes set the tone for the Bakgatla's aggression and the decisiveness with which they fought throughout the war. From the Derdepoort and Kayaseput episodes onwards, the Bakgatla viewed the war against the Boers as entirely theirs and escalated it throughout the Pilanesberg. Using a regular supply of British arms, they waged the war with such ferocity that practically all the Boers in the Pilanesberg fled to the safety of a laager in the town of Rustenburg. Boer cattle were looted and property destroyed by the
Bakgatla on an enormous scale. The study has shown that, in terms of property loss and damage, the Boer farmers of the Pilanesberg, in fact, came out of the war much worse off than has generally been acknowledged or recorded in the current historiography on the South African War.

While the Bakgatla's hopes and objectives after the war were not fulfilled, because the British ensured a return to the pre-war status quo, they, nevertheless, went some way towards achieving some of them. Following the end of the war, for example, chief Linchwe kept and used the very large number of looted Boer cattle to buy most of the farms the Bakgatla have today. In fact, as Morton has shown recently, the foundation of the authority and power of Bakgatla chiefs rested upon the organisation of, and access to, key economic resources, such as land and cattle, which they used for the benefit of their people and themselves. Indeed, regarding the amount of resources with which the Bakgatla bought land, no other Batswana society in the Pilanesberg could surpass them. In this manner, the Bakgatla indirectly regained some of the land they had lost through their conquest by the Boers. The war, therefore, assisted towards the economic transformation of Bakgatla society. The processes involved in the purchasing of land by Africans in the western Transvaal during the first three decades of this century have, so far, not been researched upon by the historians of the region, such as Simpson, Morton or Krikler. By documenting these procedures for the Pilanesberg, this study has filled in an important void in the region's historiography.


3 Simpson, in a section he calls “Land buying and factionalism amongst the Fokeng” deals with intra-Bafokeng squabbles and conflict over land, but not about how they bought land. See Simpson, “Peasants and politics,” pp. 197-204.
The first few years after the end of the South African War saw a prolonged drought which pushed many Bakgatla young men out of the Pilanesberg to go and seek work on the mines. Although prolonged drought was the major push-factor, it was only one of several others, such as, for example, low wages on the Pilanesberg farms, as well as landlessness. This labour exodus, which chiefs encouraged because it brought in resources that assisted towards the purchasing of, among other things, land, resulted in a labour shortage for Boer farmers in the Pilanesberg.

By 1910, however, the drought had eased considerably, productivity was on the increase and material prosperity was evident throughout the Pilanesberg, especially in and around Saulspoort. A few of the Bakgatla producers became quite rich. These were the people upon whom some of the poor whites in the area often depended for survival. In this regard, the study has shown the close interaction between the Bakgatla and poor whites, a feature that was also common in the south-western part of the Transvaal, for example. Most of the black producers in the Pilanesberg were labour (and, to a lesser extent, cash-paying) tenants on the absentee-owned farms of white landlords. A characteristic feature of the Pilanesberg during the study period was absentee-owned land, a situation which gave black tenants a relatively high degree of freedom and opportunity to maximise production. It was for this reason that, by the early 1920s, some industrious families, such as the Raborifes, were able to prosper so much that they could buy considerable amounts of land. However, a number of pressures, such as large-scale evictions of African tenants by the state, were directed at black producers in order to turn them into wage-labourers. At the same time, the state instituted a number of measures to boost white agriculture. By the late 1920s, state-directed pressures were compounded by the world-wide economic depression which also hit South Africa and led to a major decline in African tenant
production.

Another major factor that brought about significant social impact and change upon Bakgatla society was the work of the DRC missionaries, initiated by the pioneer missionary, H.L. Gonin. By the beginning of the 20th century, Gonin had set up a network of little mission schools, manned by a core-group of trained black teacher-evangelists (almost all ex-inboekelinge), through whom the rudiments of Western education and DRC Christianity spread throughout the Pilanesberg. In spreading Christianity and education, the African teacher-evangelists did much more work than the white missionaries. However, due to the prevailing racist and paternalistic attitudes from their white missionary superiors, the great majority of these teacher-evangelists were unable to advance beyond that position. Church policy towards the converts, however, was fairly diverse, flexible in some areas but rigid in others. By the early 20th century, Christianity had become so widespread that, most homes in the Pilanesberg at least professed Christianity.

In the task of spreading Western education in the Pilanesberg in the period up to 1931, however, the DRC missionaries were not as successful. By the end of the 1910s, the Bakgatla were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the mission education curriculum because of its emphasis upon Bible-teaching, at the expense of subjects such as Arithmetic and Science, which the Bakgatla wanted much more of. Through the work of Morton and Pilane, we do know about the Bechuanaland Bakgatla's early attempts at providing an alternative model of education to the missionary one, but we do not know about the Pilanesberg Bakgatla's efforts

---

4 See, for example, Morton, “The modernists,” pp. 26-27; A.K. Pilane, “Notes on early (continued...
in this regard because no scholar has written about them. This study has shown these efforts through the Bakgatla’s establishment of their singularly successful Ramolope School in Saulspoort, whose graduates were good enough to be accepted by, and succeed in, the prestigious missionary institutions, such as Tigerkloof, Lovedale and Kilnerton. It should be emphasised that, although the Ramolope School began as a family enterprise, it quickly became an institution of the whole Bakgatla community. Clearly, it was not just in Mochudi where there were successful local attempts at providing a better educational model, but in the Pilanesberg as well. This is one of the ways in which this study has added to our knowledge of Bakgatla history as a whole. Another problem it has demonstrated was the very poor physical state of the DRC schools in the Pilanesberg in the first three decades of the 20th century due to the general lack of funding from both the missionaries and the government, a situation which the Bakgatla were unhappy with. The study has shown in detail that, because of the spirit of self-support which the missionaries insisted upon, the Bakgatla chiefs and their people contributed to the mission schools financially and materially. The missionaries, in turn, supported Bakgatla interests, such as land-purchasing, for example. With regard to the provision of medical facilities, however, the DRC did very poorly because missionary policy regarded medical work as relatively unimportant and, therefore, generally neglected it, until well into the 1930s.

Moreover, Bakgatla-missionary relations were not always amicable. There were often quarrels between the missionary G. Stegman and chief Isang as well as squabbles over water rights, as noted. On the whole, however, DRC impact upon all facets of Bakgatla life was significant. By

4 (...)continued) educational efforts,” pp. 120-122.
the beginning of the 20th century, for example, many marriages in the Pilanesberg were being celebrated in the DRC, while cultural practices, such as rain-making, were being replaced by a Church ceremony conducted by the chief and the missionary. But, at the same time, many other Batswana cultural practices remained resilient, even among Christians. The payment of bogadi and the attendance of bogwera camps, for example, were some of the practices which continued long after the study period. This, however, was a common feature of African Christianity generally.

Following the end of the South African War, the new British authorities' initial refusal to accept Ramono as chief Lentswe's deputy in Saulspoort and their insistence upon their own candidate, who was unacceptable to the Bakgatla, was met with their unanimous refusal to cooperate, a situation which threatened to paralyse local administration in the Pilanesberg. The Bakgatla's resistance and the state's capitulation reveal the latter's attempts at subverting traditional structures in order to suit their own purposes. It further reveals the state's weakness and inability to subvert the chieftainship as well as the Bakgatla's resolve and success in rejecting state intervention.

But Linchwe's choice of Ramono as his representative in Saulspoort was also significant for two reasons. First, according to Bakgatla tradition, Linchwe should have chosen for the Saulspoort position his first-born son or his second (if the first was deceased), instead of his brother, Ramono. But, especially after the war, because of Linchwe's enormous popularity and prestige among his people, largely because of buying them so many farms, he was able to get away with this violation of tradition. This, however, was, as already noted, common practice among other Batswana peoples. Second, this precedent suggested that only males from
Ramona's line of succession could accede to the Saulspoort (deputy) chieftainship. In theory, this would help to resolve the legal issue of chiefly supremacy among the Pilanesberg Bakgatla. It also had the added advantage of having the chieftainship follow a single narrow line of succession, namely, Ramona's, especially since he was a monogamist.

Ramona was, arguably, the most popular and competent of all Bakgatla (deputy) chiefs in the Pilanesberg this century. Among other achievements, he spearheaded the Bakgatla's acquisition of farms, the building of dams and schools. In fact, Ramona turned out to be the exact opposite of what the NAD officials had feared prior to his accession. He was pliant, cooperative and efficient. It was, therefore, ironic that when he died in January 1917, his estate should have been treated in an ungenerous manner by the government, which set out to administer it without any reference to, or consultation with, either his widow or chief Linchwe. The government wanted to choose its own appointee to succeed Ramona. But, following almost a year of vehement protest by Linchwe, the government, once again, capitulated and (in December 1917), his son, Isang, came to Saulspoort to administer the estate. This was, yet again, an example of the state trying to subvert traditional Bakgatla practice but eventually yielding to strong and concerted pressure. Indeed, the state could have its way over Bakgatla affairs only with their support and approval. This was demonstrated over the incompetent Dialwa who acted as regent from 1917. In November 1921, the NAD succeeded in forcing him to resign only because both the lekgotla and the Bakgatla public completely supported the decision because they too were against Dialwa's continued chieftainship.

However, a much more significant and serious issue to the Bakgatla was the nagging question of pan-Bakgatla relations across the international border. Following the end of the South
African War and the coming of British rule in the Transvaal, the Bakgatla were certain that the authority and jurisdiction of their chief, Linchwe, would be formally recognised in the Pilanesberg. This, however, was rejected and he was only allowed to nominate his young brother, Ramono, as his “deputy” in Saulspoort, which he did early in 1903. As Ramono was merely a “deputy,” he had to refer all major decisions on Bakgatla affairs in the Pilanesberg to Mochudi for approval, a situation which the government found irritating and unacceptable.

It should be stressed that, from Linchwe's perspective, he was not creating a new chieftainship, as the colonial authorities wrongly thought, but rather restoring his father's (and thus his) chieftainship through his brother, Ramono. This was also the view of the Pilanesberg Bakgatla, who fully acknowledged the Mochudi chieftainship's seniority and complete jurisdiction over them. To the Pilanesberg Bakgatla, therefore, obedience to Mochudi took precedence over obedience to the government. This obedience and loyalty were, of course, part of the fully reciprocal process in which the chief in Mochudi also ensured that the material interests of his people in the Pilanesberg were taken care of. In land transactions, for example, both Linchwe and Isang took every precaution to ensure that the interests of their people were not harmed in any way.

In 1929, as the thorny question of Linchwe's jurisdiction and authority in the Pilanesberg dragged on and the Union government became increasingly hostile towards Mochudi's "interference" in Bakgatla affairs, the Bakgatla leadership in Saulspoort hired a lawyer to emphasise two points to the government, namely, the indivisible unity of the Bakgatla and the merely representative nature of the Saulspoort chieftainship. Central to the issue of unity was the long border dividing the two Bakgatla segments. The border and its travel restrictions were
never liked by the Bakgatla. While they observed the immigration procedures at the few official
crossings, the majority frequently crossed the border at will to visit family members as
virtually everyone had relations on the other side. Another significant point that should also be
noted is that, after the South African War, despite the border’s restrictions, Bakgatla contacts
came much more frequent than during the “interregnum” period.

An important legacy of Linchwe’s nomination of Ramono was the implication that only males
from Ramono’s line of succession could become chiefs at Saulspoort, which meant that
Linchwe’s original ‘mistake’ of choosing his brother rather than his son would be perpetuated
forever. There was an inherent contradiction in this scenario. Since, as we have noted, the
Saulspoort “chief” was, by custom, only a deputy or representative of the Mochudi chief, then
it followed that his successor should always come from his (Linchwe’s) own male line, and not
from Ramono’s. But a precedent had already been set and when Ramono died in 1917, after
two regencies, his first-born son, Tidimane took over. On the other hand, reverting to the
‘correct’ procedure of choosing from Linchwe’s line of succession would, most likely, cause
enormous difficulties of allegiance and perhaps result into splits and factions, as already
suggested above; hence, the Bakgatla have to live with their current situation.

Following the Boers' expropriation of African land during the 1830s/1840s, most of the
Bakgatla, like other Batswana groups in the Pilanesberg, became generally landless. They,
therefore, became tenants on white-owned land. Up to 1905, their landlessness was worsened
by the legal inability to buy land in their own name. That is why Africans sought the assistance
of missionaries, in whose names the land was registered, on behalf of the African people
concerned. In this process, cheating by missionaries was common. There is, however, no
evidence of Gonin cheating the Bakgatla in this regard. Indeed, Gonin assisted the Bakgatla in the purchase of their first farms, such as Holfontein 593. In the late 1860s, he gave the Bakgatla valuable assistance during the protracted struggle to buy their biggest and most valuable property, Saulspoort. The Bakgatla would have bought Saulspoort 30 years earlier than they did (in 1898), if the Volksraad had not decided against it. That was why Gonin, instead, bought Saulspoort in November 1868. Another important point to be concluded from the Bakgatla's failed attempts to buy Saulspoort in 1868 was the deviousness of its owner, Kruger, because of which the Bakgatla lost a great deal of economic resources as Kruger refused to refund the Bakgatla following the Volksraad's decision against the issue of Africans purchasing land.

In the 20th century, however, land-purchasing for the Bakgatla was a comparatively much better and easier procedure. Due to their larger population and greater resources in cattle, the Bakgatla were able to buy far more land than any other Batswana group in the Pilanesberg, especially during the first two decades of the 20th century. In the land transactions, the Bakgatla and other Batswana routinely used the services of lawyers to speed up matters and ensure that they were not cheated. The restrictions of the 1913 Land Act were often disregarded by both government officials and private sellers, as pragmatism seems to have been the watchword. Some of the land the Bakgatla bought, however, was privately registered by their chiefs in their own names, most probably without the knowledge of their followers. All Bakgatla chiefs this century up to, and including, Isang, were involved in this practice. However, when it was about to be perpetuated during the 1920s and the Bakgatla discovered it, a public complaint followed and it was stopped.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Table of Contents

1. ARCHIVAL SOURCES
   (a) Central Archives Depot (CAD), Pretoria
   (b) Botswana National Archives (BNA), Gaborone
   (c) Dutch Reformed Church Archives (DRCA), Cape Town
   (d) Phuthadikobo Museum, Mochudi

2. NEWSPAPERS, Pretoria Library

3. ORAL INFORMANTS

4. OFFICIAL SOURCES
   (a) Government Reports and Records
   (b) Annual Departmental Reports

5. PUBLISHED SECONDARY SOURCES:
   (a) Books and Chapters in Books
   (b) Articles

6. UNPUBLISHED THESES AND PAPERS
1. ARCHIVAL SOURCES

(a) Central Archives Depot (CAD), Pretoria

BAO: Files of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, late 1920s.

GOV: Files of the Governor of the Transvaal Colony, 19th century.

JUS: Files of the Secretary of Justice, 1911-1922.

LTG: Files of the Lieutenant-Governor, 1903.

NTS: Native Affairs Files, 1915-1939.

SNA: Files of the Secretary for Native Affairs, 1911 to early 1930s.


Kommissaris Pilanesberg: “Native Administration Reports” by the SNC for Rustenburg, 1922-1925.

Van Warmelo Box No. K32/13 File Nos. S.276(20); S.189(5); Box No. K32/14 File No. S.171; Box No. K32/1 File No. S.450(2): These are reports by various Batswana teachers and clerks written in Setswana on diverse issues, such as history, marriage, law, agriculture, tribal government, councils and headmen in the Pilanesberg during the 1930s.

(b) Botswana National Archives (BNA), Gaborone

S: Correspondence of the Commissioner of Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1910s.

RC: Correspondence of the Resident Commissioner of Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1899 and the 1910s.

(c) Dutch Reformed Church Archives (DRCA), Cape Town

S5/15/7/2 “Briewe”: correspondence by the Rev. H.L. Gonin, 19th century.

S5/15/7/1 “Notules”: missionary reports on DRC work in the Pilanesberg, 1910s.

S5/15/7/4 “Briewe”: correspondence between the Bakgatla leadership and the DRC about
squabbles over land, 1920s.


(d) **Phuthadikobo Museum, Mochudi**

*The Battle of Derdepoort, 25 November 1899*, a collection of various primary sources in booklet form, compiled by R.F. Morton, n.d. Up to the writing of this thesis, the archival material consulted in the Phuthadikobo Museum was still completely unsorted, unclassified and haphazardly stored.

2. **NEWSPAPERS, Pretoria Library**

The *Rustenburg Herald*, 13 December 1929; 24 January 1930; 21 February 1930 and 24 October 1930.

3. **ORAL INFORMANTS**

Galane, M. (Ms.): central Saulspoort, 10 May 1993.

Komane, M.S. (Mr): the *kgotla*, Mochudi, 12 March 1993.


Monametsi, M., (Mr): the *kgotla*, Mochudi, 13 March 1993.


4. OFFICIAL SOURCES

(a) Government Reports and Records


Land Transfer Records, Surveyor-General's office, Mmabatho: Saulspoort, No. 38 JQ Folio 38/1; Koedoesfontein, No. 94 JQ Folio 1; Schaapkraal, No. 170 JP Folio 170/1; Welgevaal, No. 171 JP Folio 171/1; Vogelstruisnek, No. 173 JP Folio 173/1/2; Doornpoort, No. 57 JQ Folio 57/1; Legkraal, No. 45 JQ Folio 45/1; Roorderand, No. 46 JQ Folio 46/1; Kruidfontein, No. 40 JQ Folio 40/1; Rhenosterspruit, No. 59 JQ Folios 9/1, 59/16/1 and 59/5/1; Boekenhoutfontein, No. 44 JQ Folio 4/1; Kafferskraal, No. 43 JQ Folio 43/6/1; Ledig, No. 93 JQ Folio 1; Ruighoek, No. 169 JP 169/1/1; Palmietfontein, No. 208 JP Folio 208/1; Doornhoek, No. 91 JQ Folio 91/1.

Memorandum by the Commissioner for Native Affairs on the Subject of the Squatters' Law (Pretoria, July 1904).


_Report of the General Committee, the Transvaal Land Owners' Association_ (Pretoria, 1912).

_Report of the Select Committee on Subject-Matter of Masters and Servants Law (Transvaal) Amendment Bill_ (Cape Town, 1925).


Transvaal Native Affairs Department, _Short History of the Native Tribes of the Transvaal_ (Pretoria, 1905).

Transvaal Native Affairs Department, _The Laws and Regulations Specially Relating to the Native Population of the Transvaal_ (Pretoria, 1907).


Union of South Affairs, *Report of the Natives Land Committee, Western Transvaal* (Cape Town, 1918).


War Office, Section B, Intelligence Division, *Military Notes on the Dutch Republics of South Africa* (Revised, June 1899).

**(b) Annual Departmental Reports**

TKP Vol. 207, *Lands Department, Transvaal Administration Reports, 1904.*

TKP Vol. 239 *Annual Reports of the Commissioner for Native Affairs for the Years 1903-1904.*

TKP Vol. 208 *Transvaal Commissioner of Lands' Department, Annual Report for the Year Ended 10 June 1906.*

TPP Vol.6/1 Ref. 3 *Transvaal Native Affairs Department, Annual Report, 1st July 1909-31st May 1910.*

Union of South Africa, *Department of Justice Annual Report for the Calendar Year 1910* (Pretoria, 1911).

Union of South Africa, *Report of the Department of Native Affairs for the Years 1913 to 1918* (Cape Town, 1919).

Union of South Africa, *Report of the Native Affairs Department for the Years 1922 to 1926* (Cape town, 1927).

TPP Vol.6/10 *Transvaal Education Department, Report for the Years 1929 and 1930.*
5. PUBLISHED SECONDARY SOURCES

(a) Books and Chapters in Books


Beinart, W., Delius, P. and Trapido S. (eds), *Putting a Plough to the Ground, Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South 1850-1930* (Ravan Press, Johannesburg 1986).


Brown, J.T., *Among the Bantu Nomads: A Record of Forty Years Spent Among the Bechuana, A Numerous and Famous Branch of the Central South African Bantu, With the First Full Description of the Ancient Customs, Manners and Beliefs* (Seeley, Service and Company, London 1926).


Hillegas, H.C., *With the Boer Forces* (Methuen, London 1900).


Hofmeyr, I., "‘We Spend Our Years as a Tale that is Told’: Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chiefdom* (Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg 1993).

Juta, M., *The Pace of the Ox: A Life of Paul Kruger* (Human and Rousseau, Cape Town


Knight, E.F., *South Africa After the War: A Narrative of Recent Travel* (Longman, London 1903).


Murray, A.C., “Made Exceeding Glad”: *In Loving Memory of William James Neethling, Born at Stellenbosch, May 29th, 1866; Died at Mochuli, February 18th, 1897* (James Nisbet and Company, London 1897).


van Lille, A.J., *The Native Council System* (De Bussy, s.l. 1938).


(b) Articles


Botha, H.I., "Die moord op Derdepoort, 25 November 1899. Nie-Blankes in oorlogsdiens,"


Mason, R.J., "Background to the Transvaal Iron Age -- new discoveries at Olifantspoort and Broederstroom," *Journal of the South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy* (January 1974).


Rheinalt-Jones, J.D. and Saffery, A.L., "Social and economic conditions of native life," *Bantu Studies*, 7, 3 (September 1933).


Schapera, I., "The 'little rain' (Pulanyana) ceremony of the Bechuanaland Bakxatla," *Bantu Studies*, IV (1930).


Schapera, I., "The social structure of the Tswana ward," *Bantu Studies*, 9, 3 (1935).


6. UNPUBLISHED THESES AND PAPERS


Ravenscroft, A. P., "The course of the depression in South Africa," MA dissertation, University of South Africa (1938).


Schapera, I., "The contributions of Western civilisation to modern Kxatla culture," Communications from the School of African Studies, No. 1, University of Cape Town (April 1936).


********************************************************************************