

NOTE ON THE HISTORY OF "THE BAROLONG FARMS"

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the ownership of the region now known as the "Barolong Farms" was disputed by the BaNgwaketse and the BaRolong-booraTshidi tribes; the former bordered upon it from the north and west, and the latter from the south. An Arbitration Commission, which sat at Bloemhof in 1871 to deal with various land disputes between Europeans and Natives in the central parts of Southern Africa, had decided that the eastern boundary of the BaNgwaketse should be conterminous with the present boundary of the Transvaal from Ramatlabama northwards to the junction of the Taung and Ngotwane Rivers. Relying upon this award, the BaNgwaketse maintained that the BaRolong had no right to occupy the land north of Ramatlabama. The BaRolong, basing their case upon the fact that they had cattleposts in the disputed area, contended on the other hand that they were entitled to the country extending as far north as Pitsana Photlokwe and westwards beyond Macheng. The dispute was already in progress when Bechuanaland was proclaimed a British Protectorate in 1885, and it dragged on for several years afterwards. At last, in 1892, a Government inquiry was held, the outcome of which was that the BaRolong were awarded the eastern part of the disputed area, between Ramatlabama and Kgoro.

Immediately after the award, Montshiwa, Chief of the BaRolong, had the area surveyed and divided into farms of approximately 3,000 morgen each. These farms he then allotted to individual members of his tribe....

The idea of creating individually-held farms on tribal land was originally suggested to Montshiwa by the example of the BaRolong-booSeleka on Thaba Nchu. Morôka, chief of those BaRolong, had been advised that the best way to preserve his territory from falling into the hands of Europeans was to mark it out into separate farms, title to which should then be conferred upon individual members of the tribe. After Morôka's death, this policy was carried into effect by his successor Tshipinare in 1880. Montshiwa, who was in close touch with the booSeleka, decided to follow their lead, and began allotting farms to his relatives and other important headmen in the country occupied by his tribe south of the Molopo. The British Bechuanaland Land Commission, which sat in 1886, refused however to recognize these grants, mainly because it considered that the BaRolong were not yet ready for individual tenure, and that there was less chance under the existing "communal" system of the land being alienated to Europeans. Montshiwa protested, but was apparently reconciled to the decision when the reasons underlying it were explained to him. [Cf. Bluebooks C.4839 (1886), pp. 2, 95, 96; C.4889 (1886), p. 12; C.4890 (1886), 37]

The land settlement of 1886 put an end to Montshiwa's idea of introducing individual tenure in his territory south of the Molopo. Apparently, however, he and his people were by no means as convinced of the objections to the system as the Govt. had been led to believe. When, at the end of 1892, the BaRolong were awarded the region between Ramatlabama and Kgoro, Montshiwa again raised the subject, stating that he wished to divide this land into separate farms, which he proposed to allot to individual members of his tribe. However, in order to prevent the farms from subsequently falling into the hands of Europeans the grants were to be subject to the condition that the land could never be alienated except to other BaRolong. This time the High Commissioner agreed in principle, but he ruled that the grants should take the form of leases, and that title to the land should remain vested in the chief and tribe.