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A SHORT HISTORY OF THE TSHIDI BAROLONG*

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The BaRolong belong to the Western cluster of the Sotho group of the Bantu-speaking tribes of South Africa. They are among the best known of the Tswana tribes. As regards their location the BaRolong are scattered over a considerable portion of South Africa. They have important settlements in different parts of the portion of the Cape Province known as British Bechuanaland; in the Bechuanaland Protectorate they are settled not only in the Lobatsi district but as far away as in Ngamiland in the country of the Tawana and in the Ghanzi district;¹ in the Transvaal they are found principally in the district of Lichtenburg at Polfontein (Bodibe) and at Khunwana and in the Orange Free State in the district of Thaba Nchu. As I have pointed out elsewhere,² owing to the geographical distribution of their settlements, prior to the formation of Union in 1910 the BaRolong fell under the jurisdiction of four different European Governments, namely, the governments of Cape Colony, Bechuanaland Protectorate, the Transvaal Republic and the Orange River Colony. The formation of Union reduced the number of European governments to which they are subject to two, namely, the Union Government and the Bechuanaland Protectorate Administration.

The real home of the BaRolong, however, has for many generations been in British Bechuanaland, where apart from having settlements of considerable dimensions at places such as Morokweng and Ganyesa in the district of Vryburg; Mafikeng, Lotlhakane, Phitshane, Tshidilamolomo, Setlagole, Disaneng, Mareetsane and others in the district of Mafeking, they have at various times in their history moved over the greater part

of this territory, leaving their ruins, great and small, in numerous places.

The Rev. John Campbell, of the London Missionary Society, made contact with them during his visit to Lattakoo (Dithakong) in 1813;³ they were also visited by the Rev. Robert Moffat, the L.M.S. missionary of Kuruman fame, in 1824 who "at a place called Mosite received definite information that the Mantatees were in actual possession of the Barolong town".⁴ Hodgson and Broadbent,⁵ the Methodist missionaries, were together with them at Matlwasi, near the present Klerksdorp, just before they were attacked by the Batlokwa under Moletsane. Hodgson and Archbell were with them at Platberg⁶ (Motlhanawapitse) north of Warrenton after they had moved from Matlwasi, and when they moved thence to Thaba Nchu in 1833 they were accompanied by the Methodist missionaries, Archbell and Edwards⁷ who had in the meantime succeeded Hodgson. A few years later the bulk of those who were at Thaba Nchu decided to trek northwards again to return to their traditional home. In the course of this northward migration some of them went as far as Moshaneng in the country of the BaNgwaketse (in the Bechuanaland Protectorate), while others remained in the vicinity of the Mafeking and Vryburg districts and others remained in the Transvaal. They have in the course of their history been driven hither and thither by warfare with different peoples such as the Batlhaping, the Korana, the Batlokwa, the Matebele and the emigrant Boers who founded the Dutch Republics. Internal dissensions among themselves, the search for better grazing grounds for their stock, for better land for cultivation and for water supplies adequate to meet the needs of both man and beast are among other causes which account for their wide dispersal. At the present time they are most numerous in the district of Mafeking where they have been situated for the best part of a century since their return from Thaba Nchu.

The Origin of the Barolong.

It is difficult to say with certainty where the original home of the BaRolong may have been. Like all the Bantu now living in the South they

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must have come from somewhere north of the Zambezi where African tribes speaking languages related to theirs in structure if not in vocabulary, and resembling them in physical features are to be found. According to their own traditions, although they do not know the name of the country from which they came, their old men relate that their forefathers had dim recollections of a land in which rain was plentiful, which was traversed by great rivers and expansive lakes and where the fertility of the soil made things grow relatively easily.⁸ This description seems to point to the region of the Great Lakes of Central Africa as the original home of the BaRolong.

We have no information as to the reasons which led the BaRolong and other Bantu tribes to leave a country such as this which appears to have had all the elements of a land flowing with milk and honey. We can only suppose that they were driven from their desirable home either by internal dissensions, especially in connection with succession to the chieftainship, which were so common in the old tribal days and which would perhaps have been no less common today but for the Pax Britannica, or by the invasion of their land by more powerful peoples under whom they were not prepared to live, or by the dreadful pests dangerous alike to human and animal life which thrive in tropical countries and to this day render vast tracts of the African continent uninhabitable.

Whatever the cause of their southward migration the BaRolong appear to have been preceded by other tribes in their southward march, for when they reached the part of South Africa which they have since made their home, they did not find it uninhabited. They found dwelling in it other tribes, some of them speaking languages not altogether unintelligible to them and with physical features not unlike their own.⁹ In the struggle that ensued for the mastery of the country the BaRolong proved too much for, at least, some of the earlier inhabitants. When they had duly subdued them they pressed them into their service to perform their menial and unpleasant tasks, the men of the conquered tribes taking charge of their cattle posts often at great distances from their central villages, in contact with wild beasts against which the stock had to be protected, while the women did duty as maidservants drawing water, hewing wood, building and keeping in good condition both the interior and exterior of their houses, taking care of the children of their conquerors and generally making themselves useful about the home. The tribes which were subjugated in this way included the Bakgalagadi and the BaLala, and today when these tribes have

largely ceased to be under BaRolong domination to the same extent, their tribal names—Bakgalagadi and BaLala—have passed into ordinary BaRolong speech as terms of abuse or contempt.

Relation to other Tribes.

Nor is it easy to determine the exact relationship of the BaRolong to other Tswana tribes. The BaNgwato and the BaNgwaketse speak of themselves as genealogically related to the BaKwena whom they regard as their seniors, and these three tribes admit relationship to or descent from the BaHurutshe. But the BaRolong claim to be entirely unconnected with the former tribes. As far as they are concerned at no time in their remembered history or tradition did they ever with these tribes form part of one political unit from which they hived off for one reason or another. The BaRolong do, however, recognise the seniority among Tswana tribes of the Hurutshe to whom they give precedence in ritual and ceremony, if they happen to be present.

This would seem to imply that the BaRolong separated from these tribes between whom and themselves there is fairly close affinity in language, customs and culture generally, so long ago that they have lost all knowledge of their exact relationship with them. Stow points out that the early separation of the BaRolong from other Tswana tribes may also be gathered from the fact that the dialect of Tswana which they speak commonly called Se-Rolong is regarded by the Tswana themselves to be sufficiently distinct to merit a special name.¹⁰ This is of course nothing to go by, because every Tswana group speaking a distinctive dialect of Tswana, for example, Se-Tlhwane, Se-Tlhaping, Se-Hurutshe, Se-Ngwato and so forth, considers that it is deserving of a distinctive appellation. At all events the BaRolong consciousness of their lack of genealogical relationship with the tribes referred to above may be due to the fact that a considerable interval of time separated their departure from their original home from that of the others, or if they left together, they must have parted company very early in their migration southwards.

The BaRolong admit, however, that the Ba-Tlhaping who live to the south of them are related to them and once formed together with them a single tribe having as its *sebókó* (totem) the koodoo (*thóló*).¹¹ Here again it is difficult to say when they divided into the two independent tribes which they have since become. It is known, however, that as long ago as in the reign of Tau among the BaRolong, the latter attempted to regain their former hegemony over the Batlha-

ping, but their efforts proved abortive. Since the time of Chief Montshiwa among the Tshidi BaRolong and Chief Mankurwane among the Tlhaping fairly good relations have prevailed between the two tribes, partly because of the united front which these Chiefs endeavoured to maintain against European encroachment on the territory which they claimed as their own in the latter part of the last century, but the BaRolong continue to regard the Batlhaping as their juniors in status (*bo-monna-bôné*).

Period of Traditional History.

The earliest Chief of whom the BaRolong have any recollection is *Morolong* after whom the tribe is named. As one informant put the situation, "When God had created us, the BaRolong, He saw that we needed a Chief, and so He gave us *Morolong*". We do not know by what outstanding achievement in the history of the tribe *Morolong* made such an indelible impression upon them that they decided to regard him as the founder of the tribe.

It is probable that he was the Chief under whose leadership the BaRolong broke away from the parent tribe to which they once belonged; it may be that he introduced certain notable improvements in their social organisation or in their material culture; he may have distinguished himself in some other way in the life of the tribe. The BaRolong are unable at present to provide a clue to the solution of this question. Nor can any reliable information be obtained regarding the probable date of the reign of *Morolong*. The only way in which this can be estimated is by reckoning the number of Chiefs who ruled the tribe after his death up to the time of which we have more or less reliable information. Judging by the number of Chiefs who are reputed to have occupied the BaRolong throne before the death of *Tau* which is generally placed at 1760, it is probable that *Morolong* reigned in the latter part of the 14th or the early part of the 15th century. Some estimates put his reign in the latter part of the 15th or the early part of the 16th century.¹²

Morolong is reputed to have been followed in the chieftainship by *Nôtô*, his son. *Nôtô* (Iron-Hammer) must also have been a remarkable man or his reign must have been marked by outstanding events in the history of the tribe, because the BaRolong often refer to themselves as *Ba-bina-Tshipi* (i.e. those-who-revere-Iron). It is suggested that this subsidiary Barolong *sebókó* (totem) is derived from the name of *Nôtô* (Iron-Hammer).¹³ Very few chiefs in Tswana history have had their names honoured in this way.

The BaKwena are a case in point. Their *sebókó* is supposed to be *Kwena* (the crocodile) derived from the name of *Kwena*, the Chief under whose leadership the tribe hived off from the BaHurutshe. Some historians say that it was during the reign of *Nôtô* that the BaRolong reached the region of the Molopo. This may account for the prominence given to his name in BaRolong tradition. On the other hand some suggest that the tribe reached the region of the Molopo during the reign of *Morara*, the son of *Nôtô*. The popularity of the name *Morara* among the royal lineage groups of the BaRolong seems to suggest that this Chief of whom little is otherwise known also left his mark on the tribe.

Once settled in the region of the Molopo the tribe prospered and grew in numbers and was ruled in succession by a number of Chiefs whose reigns were apparently uneventful. These were *Mabe*, *Mabua*, *Monoto*, *Mabeo* and *Modibowa*. *Stow*¹⁴ records that *Monôtô* is said to have been "skilful in invention and resources", whatever that means, but as regards the others practically nothing is known. *Modibowa* is said to have left two sons, namely, *Mooki* and *Tshêsêbê*, the former being the elder. A quarrel over succession to the chieftainship arose between the two brothers, although according to custom there should have been no doubt about *Mooki* being the rightful heir to the chieftainship. However *Tshêsêbê* seems to have had the support of the bulk of the people in his claim. The reasons for this attitude on the part of the tribe are obscure. It is possible that *Mooki* may have had certain undesirable features in his character which did not commend themselves to the tribe. On the other hand although *Mooki* was older than *Tshêsêbê* as far as age was concerned it may be that his mother was inferior in status to the mother of *Tshêsêbê*. In other words they may have been the sons of *Modibowa* by different wives and therefore different in status. It is common knowledge that among the Bantu the son of the chief wife is the one entitled to the chieftainship and the chief wife is not always the first wife married. The latter custom sometimes results in the rightful heir being younger than some son or sons of his father by a junior wife or wives. Whatever may have been the reason for the support which *Tshêsêbê* obtained, the result of the quarrel was that he broke away from the main body of the tribe with his followers and established himself at a place called *Setlagole*, about 45 miles west of the present town of *Mafeking*. Those loyal to the elder son remained with him. To this day there is a section of the BaRolong

known as the BaRolong of Modibowa (ba-ga-Modibowa) i.e. those did not desert the "rightful heir" (Mooki) of Modibowa.

At Setlagole the bulk of the tribe which had migrated with Tshêsbê lived for several generations. The surrounding country seemed to provide them with good grazing for their stock and with a relatively fertile soil for their crops. The result was that the tribe entered into a period of unprecedented prosperity. The population increased and so did their wealth, especially in stock. During this period of peaceful development they were ruled in turn by Monnyane, Setlare, Masepe, Mokgopha and Thibela. But this period of relative quiet was too good to last and came to an end with the succession to the chieftainship of *Tau I*, the son of Thibela. Not only did *Tau* apparently find living at peace with neighbouring tribes irksome, but he seems to have ruled his own people with an iron hand. Under this BaRolong Chaka, the tribe entered upon a period of marauding expeditions which took them as far south as Taung,¹⁵ (Place of *Tau*) where for a time *Tau* established his headquarters. Here he came into frequent conflict with the BaTlhaping, then under Phuduhutswana, whom he endeavoured to subject to his domination. Whatever their former relationship with the BaRolong, the BaTlhaping had by then enjoyed the blessings of independence so long that they resolutely refused to become vassals of *Tau* and his followers. Soon also the BaRolong encountered more formidable foes in the Korana who were just then migrating north-wards from the south. The Korana possessed weapons superior to those of both the Tlhaping and the Rolong—bows and poisoned arrows made of bone as against assegais, battle axes and arrows tipped with iron¹⁶ and in an attack on Taung by the Tlhaping and the Korana combined, *Tau* was mortally wounded and died about 1760. This neighbourhood proving unsafe for them the BaRolong fled northwards under the leadership of Nthufa, a brother of *Tau*, who owing to the minority of *Ratlou*, the rightful heir to the chieftainship became regent chief. *Tau* apparently had four principal wives, namely (i) Kgamane, his chief wife, the mother of *Ratlou*, (ii) Kabasane, his second wife in status, the mother of *Tshidi*, (iii) Motšwaabangwe, his third wife, the mother of *Maleme* who died without issue and *Makgetla* and (iv) *Moshwaane*, his fourth wife, the mother of *Seleka* and *Rapulana*. *Moshwaane*, although the last wife in order of seniority was apparently married first and was followed by *Motšwaabangwe*. For *Seleka*, *Rapulana* and *Makgetla* were older than *Ratlou* and

Tshidi, although they were junior to them in rank in view of the junior status of their mothers.

On their trek northwards the BaRolong stopped for varying periods of time at different places such as Dithakwaneng, near the present town of Vryburg, Dithakong, further westwards, where *Nthufa* died, thence to *Ganyesa*, about 40 miles west of Vryburg, back to *Mamusa* near the present town of Schweizer Reneke and thence to *Mosite*, all the time endeavouring to put as much distance between themselves and their enemies who continued to harass them with occasional surprise attacks.

After the death of *Nthufa*, *Ratlou* being still too young to succeed his father, *Seleka*, the brother of *Ratlou* acted as regent. *Seleka* acted as regent until *Ratlou* was old enough to assume the chieftainship. When the BaRolong reached *Mosite*, *Ratlou* had already taken over the rule of the tribe.

During their stay there was an outbreak of small-pox in their settlement and *Ratlou* was among those who succumbed to it and was buried at *Mosite*.

Disintegration and Subdivision.

The death of *Ratlou* was followed by a long period marked by disintegration and subdivision of the tribe into warring factions, by migrations hither and thither in search of peace and a safe haven from their enemies which the scattered remnants of the tribe did not find until the end of the 19th century. At first a dispute arose over succession to the chieftainship. A section of the tribe which was not willing to recognise *Seitshirô* the son of *Ratlou*, as the rightful heir hived off under the leadership of *Mokalaka* and *Maribaneng*, younger sons of *Ratlou* and left *Mosite* for *Morokweng* there they have remained to this day. Fortunately this was a comparatively peaceful separation not accompanied by civil war. The rest of the tribe remained loyal to *Seitshiro*. In his administration of the settlement which had grown to extensive proportions during the reign of *Ratlou*, *Seitshirô* was assisted, as usual under the BaRolong custom, by his paternal uncles, *Tshidi*, *Seleka*, *Rapulana* and *Makgetla*—sons of *Tau*—each of whom ruled over a well defined section of the town as his *Kgotla* with wide powers but responsible directly to the chief. Apparently during his reign *Seitshirô* decided to move his headquarters from *Mosite* to *Setlagole* and the tribe thus returned to their original home whence they had departed during the reign of *Tau*. For several years they lived together in peace and contentment until the death of *Seitshirô* who at the end of a fairly long life apparently also fell a

victim to small-pox. After the death of Seitshirô a dispute arose among his sons, not over succession to the chieftainship but over the fate of one of his widows, Tshadinnyê¹⁷ by name, who is reported to have been a very pretty woman. According to BaRolong custom it is permissible for a son to take to wife a widow of his deceased father provided she is not his own mother. A desperate dispute arose over Tshadinnyê. Although this was primarily a matter concerning the Ratlou family "the whole inhabitants of the town and people of the tribe were divided, a great battle was fought in the town itself, much blood was shed in every path between rivals, the place was sacked, the great town was broken to pieces and most of it burned to the ground".¹⁸ The result of this "Woman's War" was that the Ratlou section broke up, some going south in the direction of Tlhaping country, others north in the direction of Phitshane, while a section remained at Setlagole. Further the followers of Tshidi, Makgetla, Seleka and Rapulana decided it was about time they sought pastures new and going in an easterly direction, the Seleka and Rapulana sections settled at Lotlhakane and the Tshidi and Makgetla sections at Dithakong-tsa-ga-Sehuba, the former about 11 miles and the latter about 8 miles west of the present town of Mafeking. About this time Tshidi, Rapulana and Seleka, the sons of Tau died, leaving Makgetla as the oldest and most influential man in the Tshidi-Makgetla centre at Dithakong and in the tribe generally. Makgetla must have been a man who believed in unity and co-operation, for not only did he stand loyally by the Tshidi section, but he endeavoured to re-unite the other elements of the BaRolong and to this end he tried to persuade them to rejoin the Ratlou at Setlagole. But his efforts failed to stem the tide of disintegration and disunion which was sweeping over the BaRolong. The Rapulana-Seleka settlement at Lotlhakane soon broke up, the Seleka section under Koikoi, son of Seleka, (also known as Mpolokang) leaving to set up a separate settlement which became known as Ga-Koikoi (Place of Koikoi), while the Rapulana remained at Lotlhakane. Hopes of reunion were finally dashed to the ground when Makgetla died in a battle against the BaHurutshe towards the end of the 18th century. This remarkable man made an indelible impression on the BaRolong and to this day his descendants and their followers are known for the conspicuous loyalty to the ideal of the unity of the tribe in general and to the rightful Tshidi chief in particular. One is surprised to find Wookey¹⁹ say that Makgetla died without issue when his descendants are so

numerous at Mafikeng and exercise such strong influence in Tshidi affairs.

Tshidi, the son of Tau, had two sons who are of importance in BaRolong history, namely Tlhutlwa and Leshomo, the former being his rightful heir. When Tshidi died, Tlhutlwa was still too young to assume his father's position in the tribe and Makgetla, his uncle, acted in his place. Before he took up the chieftainship Tlhutlwa died in an encounter with the Ratlou of Setlagole. After the death of Makgetla the regency of the Tshidi section was taken over by Leshomo, the brother of Tlhutlwa. The latter had two sons, Tau and Tawana during whose minority Leshomo acted as chief. Leshomo ruled the combined Tshidi and Makgetla sections for many years, for Tau, the rightful heir, died while young, which fact prolonged the regency still further. Although a wise ruler, Leshomo apparently hung on so long to the regency that trouble began to brew between himself and the rightful heir, Tawana. At one time their quarrels led to a civil war; Tawana and his followers were expelled from the town and they fled to a place called Tšwaneng. It appears that it was during this period of the temporary exile of his father that Montshiwa was born about 1812. The word Montshiwa means one-who-has-been-taken out, i.e., an exile. In due course Tawana attacked Leshomo who apparently died in the ensuing battle and Tawana became chief of the Tshidi BaRolong. But his reign was destined to be a troublous one, for then began a series of invasions of all the BaRolong sections by foreign tribes.

Period of Chaos.

At first they were attacked by the Batlokwa tribe under Sebetwane, a horde of marauders emanating apparently from the northwest of the BaRolong from the region which later became known as the Transvaal. A peace-loving people, the BaRolong after a brief resistance, decided to put as much distance as possible between themselves and their foes and so scattered in different directions.

The Tshidi and the Ratlou took refuge in the more inaccessible parts of the Molopo region, while the Rapulana and the Seleka then under Sefunelô, son of Koikoi, made their way southwards. It was during this southward trek that the Seleka met the Wesleyan missionaries, Hodgson and Broadbent, who were travelling northwards from the South. The missionaries give a graphic description of this first contact: how they saw a cloud of dust approaching and with it the

lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep and goats, which were being rapidly driven along by a multitude of men, women and children, whilst a horde of armed warriors brought up the rear. Amid the noise and confusion, the missionaries inquired who they were and who their chief was. The reply given was "We are BaRolong and our chief is Sefunelô and we are fleeing from the Mantatise who have suddenly attacked us. Part of our people have fled with the chief in one direction and we have fled in another with the chief's brother, Tshabadira."²⁰ Among these BaRolong almost decimated by the ravages of war, the methodist missionaries began their Christian work about 1822. At first the wandering habits of the people rendered it impossible to found a mission station. The country was in a state of constant unrest and whole tribes were at times completely destroyed. Agriculture was impossible for the sower never knew whether he would reap the fruits of his toil. Eventually however, Sefunelô who had joined the main body of his people decided to settle at Matlwasi (Maquassi) in a range of mountains north of the Vaal not far from the present town of Klerksdorp. Huts were erected, cattle kraals built and soon a populous town arose and here the missionaries set up their mission station, procured a printing press and started to print the alphabet in Se-Rolong and simple language charts with words of two or three letters for use in school and other small books. Services were held in the open and the Sabbath was observed as a day of rest. The material improvement of the BaRolong was not neglected. They were taught to cultivate the ground, to grow wheat and to find water underground by digging wells, the latter process being regarded by the BaRolong as magical. It seemed as if the BaRolong were going to settle down here for a very long time, but the Mantatise still roamed the country and had met more formidable opponents in the Matebele under Mzilikazi; and so pressed by hunger and by fiercer foes they continued their depredations on weaker tribes wherever they found them. Matlwasi had a narrow escape from them when after their defeat in an attempted raid on Kuruman where Moffat was stationed, they passed quite close to the town without molesting it. The mere report that the Mantatise were in the vicinity threw the Barolong into panic. Broadbent reports regarding this incident that, "We were disturbed before daylight, one morning, by a great noise in the town, of shouting among the people, and lowing of cattle, with barking of dogs. I rose, and, opening the window shutter of our lodging room, saw in the

twilight parties of armed men, driving herds of cattle, and followed by women and children laden with such things as they could carry. I hastily drew on my clothes, and went outside the house to inquire the reason of this commotion; but the noise and hurry were such that I could get no reply for a considerable time. At length I was told that the Mantatees were approaching, and also that they were not many hours distant."²¹ Sefunelô did his best to persuade the missionary to accompany them in their flight, but in spite of the apparently imminent danger in which they stood, Broadbent refused to leave Matlwasi, and for several days he and his wife and children were the sole occupants of this large town over which "a melancholy silence prevailed". The missionary was not, however, left completely in the dark about the situation, for he received daily reports from Sefunelô in his hide-out about the movements of the enemy, until it was clear that the Mantatise had passed on their way without knowing that they were so near to a large town which they might have sacked, and where they might have captured a considerable number of cattle. This incident took place in July, 1823.

For a short time thereafter the missionaries, Hodgson and Broadbent, continued their work at Matlwasi in peace, although the mysterious disappearance from time to time of persons belonging to the town showed that marauders still roamed the country. This interval of relative quiet enabled the missionaries to pursue their primary object of introducing the BaRolong to the elements of western civilisation, and to gain further information about other tribes in the interior of Southern Africa. From time to time members of other tribes visited Matlwasi on peaceful missions such as trading. "Some brought iron, of which were made hoes, axes, spears and knives. Others brought brass rings, and copper beads and wire." "They also traded in the hides and skins of all kinds of animals found in the country; and some brought a dark mineral powder, with which, mixed with fresh butter, they anointed their heads"²² The BaRolong themselves went into the interior on trading expeditions, returning with stock which they had bought with beads and other manufactured goods.

About 1824 the Methodist Church recalled Hodgson and indicated that his place among the BaRolong would be taken by the Rev. J. Archbell.²³ This news was a blow to the Barolong for Hodgson had apparently won their respect and confidence by "his uniform firmness, kindness, and indefatigable efforts to promote their welfare". Their disappointment was further increased by

the continued ill-health of Broadbent, which made it necessary for him also to leave the Station for a time in order to seek medical attention in the centres of civilisation further south. So the two missionaries set out together, leaving behind the dwelling-houses on which they had expended so much hard work, the gardens whose produce they had begun to enjoy, as well as all their furniture, books and other goods.

It was while they were on this southward journey that they received reports that Matlwasi had been attacked by the Bataung under Moletsane.²⁴ The latter took the town by surprise at daybreak, and in spite of the brave stand they put up, the BaRolong were overpowered by superior numbers and forced to flee. The Bataung took possession of the town, and although the BaRolong escaped with a good number of their cattle, the invaders entered the Mission houses, broke open boxes and generally engaged in looting. Books, furniture, clothing, garden produce—nothing escaped their destructive hands. The scene of desolation in Matlwasi is described in the following terms by Hodgson who accompanied a punitive expedition which set out from Griquatown on the receipt of the news of this attack:—"As I rode through the old town, I was grieved to see such marks of desolation. Most of the houses which I had left occupied by inhabitants living together in peace, were burnt down; folds for cattle, gardens, etc. destroyed; here a broken pot, and there a broken spoon, etc. indicated the haste with which the Barolongs had deserted their residence. The remembrance of past events was painful; and the people having burnt all the grass in expectation of rain, the mountain and valley in which we had lived presented a most dismal appearance. Arriving at my former residence, I was pained to see Brother Broadbent's house entirely destroyed, the hedge of our gardens burnt, and a remnant of Dr. Clarke's Commentary with detached parts of other valuable publications, as well as pieces of household furniture, scattered about, and all rendered useless."²⁵ Soon rumours were spread by Griquas that Sefunelô and the BaRolong had been responsible for the destruction of Mission property,²⁶ and a certain Mr. Melville who was the Government Resident and Agent in those parts charged Sefunelô with complicity in the plunder of the Mission property, and compelled him to pay a fine of six hundred cattle, plus thirty head of cattle as compensation for the Mission property. The missionaries concerned did not give any credence to these stories, and later Sefunelô was completely exonerated of this false charge, and the Colonial Government ordered the

restoration of the cattle which had been taken from him by way of fine.²⁷

After they had been forced to abandon Matlwasi the BaRolong under Sefunelô pursued by their enemies trekked northwards towards the country of the BaNgwaketse and made contact with other sections of the BaRolong who had fared no better at the hands of the Mantatisi who were carrying devastation and death in almost every direction, the interior of the country being full of them. It was at this time that Moffat while on a visit to the country of the Bangwaketse came into contact with them. Moffat who was accompanied by Griquas who had gone to that region on a hunting expedition relates how as they proceeded on their return journey they were met by three messengers from Tawana, the Chief of the Tshidi BaRolong, who begged the Griquas to come with all speed to the assistance of the BaRolong who were expecting an attack from the Mantatisi who were within the confines of the town. He goes on to say; "On reaching the town early next morning, such was the scene of confusion which met our eyes, that we were persuaded that it was in the hands of the enemy. Here we found Sebonello (Sefunelô), the Barolong Chief, with whom our Wesleyan brethren, Messrs. Hodgson and Broadbent, had been labouring near the Yellow River, and who had been attacked and driven from his home by the same enemy."²⁸ On their arrival Tawana made this touching appeal to Moffat and his party for assistance in repelling the marauders:—"You see how many human bones lie scattered on the plain, and how many of us are dying from hunger—the result of last year's scourge, when the Mantatisi drove us from Kunuana (Khunwana). If you do not help us, we must all perish. Towards the setting sun is a desert without water: towards the sunrise there is no rest from the Mantatees. On one side is Makaba, my enemy; on the other the Mantatees are approaching who will destroy us all; I still dread Mothibi."²⁹ To this Sefunelô added:—"I have lost my all, and I see no alternative but to fight or die". A suggestion that the BaRolong should accompany Moffat and his party to Kuruman was turned down by them owing to their reluctance to come into contact with the Batlhaping, their old enemies.³⁰ In due course the expected attack was made but "the presence of scarcely twenty armed men was the means of repelling an attack which must otherwise have resulted in the utter destruction of the great BaRolong town, and the flight of its inhabitants into the Kalahari, where thousands who escaped the spears of the ruthless Makari must have perished of thirst and hunger. As it was the BaRolong

gave way and took to flight and it was only the effect of a few shots from Griqua horsemen who stood their ground which turned the tide."³¹ As a result of this victory the BaRolong regained some of the cattle which had been taken from them by the Mantatisi in previous clashes, and on the battlefield various European articles which had once been the property of the missionaries who were with the BaRolong at Matlwasi were picked up. After they had been suitably thanked for their assistance by Tawana, Gontse and Sefunelô, the Chiefs of the Tshidi, Ratlou and Seleka BaRolong respectively, Moffat and the Griquas departed. But the BaRolong had not seen the last of the Mantatisi who continued to harass them, driving them from place to place in the region of the Molopo. Later Moffat visited them again³² and found them scattered along the margin of the Kalahari desert, to which they had been driven by the Mantatisi invasion, and from whence some of them had not seen their way clear to return to the part of the country more suitable for settled residence further south. They were living in a state of utter degradation and wretchedness in mere temporary booths rather than huts, in a dry and thirsty land, depending mainly upon the milk of what cattle they had saved and the meat of such game as they could kill.

Finding the more inaccessible parts of the Molopo no safe haven from their enemies, the Seleka under Sefunelô decided to go south again and it was during this journey that they met Messrs. Hodgson and Archbell who had succeeded Broadbent.³² Hodgson and Archbell had returned to this unsettled region to make another attempt to re-establish the Mission work which had been destroyed at Matlwasi. It was decided to return to Matlwasi to rebuild the town. Early in 1826 a start was actually made at Matlwasi with this work of reconstruction. The missionaries began rebuilding their dwelling houses, gardens, etc. in readiness for their work. They had actually visited the Bataung under Moletsane and got an assurance from that Chief that they would not be disturbed in their work at Matlwasi. During this visit Hodgson also saw various articles of European origin which had formed part of the loot taken from Matlwasi in the attack referred to above. But the BaRolong were unsettled at Matlwasi and apparently did not put much faith in the assurances of Moletsane, and so during the same year they decided to move to another place. Thus they took to the road again and wandered about from place to place in search of a new home. Finally they settled down at Plaatberg, so named from a flat mountain adjoining their town which

the BaRolong themselves called *Motlhanawapitse*, not far from the present township of Warrenton. Here the missionaries built up their work again. The necessary buildings were erected, order was restored, a school begun, and printing press set up. Gradually the number of people in the town increased as BaRolong refugees from other parts flocked to Plaatberg. By 1830 "two hundred scholars were upon the school books, who had made considerable progress in elementary instruction, both in Dutch and Sichuana. Some read the Bible; some the Testament; who also had made some proficiency in writing and arithmetic, especially in Dutch: the Sichuana scholars read small lessons."³⁴ Sefunelô died while the BaRolong were at Plaatberg and was succeeded by his son, Moroka.

The continued prosperity of Plaatberg attracted the notice of the BaRolong further north, and sections of the Tshidi, the Ratlou and the Rapulana made their way thither for mutual protection and other advantages. Soon the population became so large that the water supply was insufficient for man and beast. It was decided that a search must be made for a more suitable place. An expedition was sent out for this purpose, and it would appear that two missionaries, Archbell and Edwards who had succeeded Hodgson, were members of this party. Eventually as a result of their report the BaRolong Chiefs and their people decided to move to Thaba Nchu in the country of the Basotho under Moshoeshoe who ceded a portion of his country to them.³⁵ The missionaries, Archbell and Edwards, were parties to this cession and signed a document of cession which was also signed by the Chiefs who ceded the territory and by representatives of the BaRolong.³⁶ At Thaba Nchu the BaRolong had another opportunity of building up their community life in peace. The number of BaRolong who were together at Thaba Nchu and Basotho in the vicinity was estimated at about forty thousand. In accordance with custom each section of the BaRolong—Ratlou, Tshidi, Seleka and Rapulana—settled in a distinct part of the town and had its own *Kgotla*, but Moroka as the founder of the town naturally claimed the paramount chieftainship, although according to Rolong tradition he ranked after the Ratlou and Tshidi Chiefs in seniority. This arrangement could not have been a happy one, for the BaRolong are very touchy on points of rank and seniority. It is not difficult to imagine that friction over this point was one of the contributory causes of the eventual departure of the non-Seleka sections from Thaba Nchu.

Contact with Voortrekkers.

Another factor which contributed to the separation of the BaRolong at Thaba Nchu was their contact with the emigrant Boers from the Cape. About 1837 a party of the Voortrekkers under Hendrik Potgieter on their way north from the Cape found the BaRolong at Thaba Nchu and were warned by them about the Matebele and other marauding tribes then roaming the country further inland.³⁷ In due course the Voortrekkers met the Matebele of Mzilikazi and in their first encounter the former, although they succeeded in avoiding military defeat by means of their superior weapons and their better methods of defence, lost the bulk of their cattle to the Matebele. When they found themselves in this predicament the Boers returned to Thaba Nchu where Moroka and the BaRolong Chiefs gave them what assistance they could in their preparations for future encounters with the Matebele.³⁸ Thereafter the Voortrekkers with their numbers increased by further arrivals from the Cape and by BaRolong volunteers and with their superior weapons kept the Matebele on the run, destroyed their settlements, killed hundreds of them, captured numbers of their cattle and generally made themselves masters of the territory in which they subsequently established their Republics. Seeing that there was now a better prospect of their former homeland being freed from the depredations of marauding tribes, with the formidable Boers as their "allies," the Tshidi, the Ratlou and the Rapulana decided to return to the region of the Molopo. So they left Thaba Nchu to Moroka and the Seleka BaRolong who have remained there to this day.

When the BaRolong left Thaba Nchu, it appears that they settled for a time at Machaviestad (Matlaba's Stad) near Potchefstroom which they reached about 1839. About 1847 the Tshidi BaRolong under Tawana apparently dissatisfied with the attempts of the emigrant Boers to exercise jurisdiction over them decided to go further north to the region of the Molopo. They journeyed further inland until they reached Lotlhakana (Rietfontein) where they settled. They had left this area many years before and here in the region in which he was born Tawana, the father of Montshiwa died and was buried in 1849. He was succeeded in the chieftainship of the Tshidi by Montshiwa.³⁹

Shortly after the Tshidi left Machaviestad, the Ratlou BaRolong under Gonntse also left and going in a southerly direction they eventually settled at Khunwana where they have remained

ever since. The Rapulana apparently stayed on at Machaviestad until about 1873 when they were moved by the government of the South African Republic to Polfontein (Bodibe) (in the district of Lichtenburg) where they still have their principal settlement to this day.

Disputes with the Emigrant Boers.

Now arose a series of misunderstandings between the BaRolong and the emigrant farmers who had lately come into the territory, and so to speak, had become their neighbours. It would appear that when the BaRolong at Thaba Nchu assisted the Boers in their troubles with the Matebele, they were under the impression that in return for that assistance they would have their former country restored to them if and when the Matebele had been expelled from it and would be allowed to set themselves up again as independent tribes on friendly terms with their new allies, the Boers. The latter, on the other hand, considered that whatever territory they conquered would become theirs by right of conquest, and that any Native tribes allowed to live within such territory would do so on conditions laid down by them and would be subject to their authority in return for protection against their enemies. It is not surprising that such misunderstandings should have arisen between two groups with such different cultural backgrounds, speaking different languages, who had only recently come into contact with one another.

At all events Montshiwa and the Tshidi at Lotlhakane were under the impression that having reached the land of their forefathers they had placed themselves beyond the reach of the emigrant Boers and could live in complete independence of all foreigners. It soon appeared that he was mistaken for in 1852 began a series of misunderstandings between the Tshidi and the Republic.

The first dispute which led to a clash of arms apparently arose out of a demand by the Republic that the BaRolong should participate in a Republican campaign against the Bakwena under Sechele (Setšhele).³⁸ This Montshiwa refused to do on the ground that he was not at war with the Bakwena and that as he was not a subject of the Republic neither he nor any of his people could be commandeered for military service by the Republican authorities. After their expedition against the Bakwena the Republican forces turned upon the Barolong at Lotlhakane. After putting up a brief stand in a battle in which the Barolong relate in one of their praise-songs that they killed one Pretorious, presumably a promi-

nent leader in the campaign against them, Montshiwa and his people decided to take to the road again. They fled northwards and settled at a place called Moshaneng in the country of the Bangwaketse.⁴¹ There the bulk of the Tshidi remained for many years, although they maintained contact with the outside world and with other sections of the BaRolong, especially those at Thaba Nchu, through the Methodist missionaries who visited them at Moshaneng from time to time.

Not all the Tshidi went with Montshiwa to Moshaneng. A fair number remained further south and established a settlement at Mafikeng (Place of Rocks) under the leadership of Molêma, a brother of Montshiwa. Molêma was one of the earliest Rolong converts to Christianity and he went forth with a will to extend the benefits of western civilisation and Christianity to his fellowmen. Nor was he uninterested in the political affairs of the tribe. In every attack on those who infringed BaRolong rights he was in the forefront and he became an acknowledged spokesman of the tribe in negotiations between them and the European. Within the tribe he was the leader and protector of those who had embraced modern ways of life and thought against those who, including Montshiwa himself, did not always see things eye to eye with them.

The protracted sojourn of Montshiwa in Bangwaketse country, while it gave him much desired freedom from interference with his independence, laid BaRolong territory to the south open to infiltration by foreigners. According to Montshiwa these intruders consisted principally of European subjects of the Transvaal Republic.

About 1868 Montshiwa began his long series of protests against the encroachment of the Boer farmers on what he considered to be his territory. European farmers had settled in different parts of Bechuanaland occupying some of the best sites in the country. Through the Rev. J. Ludorf, a Methodist missionary then stationed at Thaba Nchu, Montshiwa wrote to President Pretorius of the Transvaal Republic⁴¹ and to Sir Philip Wodehouse,⁴² then Governor of the Cape Colony, setting forth his claims to the territory occupied by Europeans, basing his claims on an alleged agreement entered into with Hendrik Potgieter in 1837 by Tawana, Moroka and other BaRolong chiefs and asking for protection from the British Government against the Transvaal Republic.

In his petition to Sir Philip Wodehouse, asking for protection, Montshiwa, as Theal puts it, "was made to say",⁴³

"May it please Your Excellency to permit the undersigned chief of the Barolong to take refuge under your protecting wings from the injustice of the Transvaal Republic, whose government has lately, by proclamation, included our country within the possessions of the said republic."

"Upwards of thirty years ago, when Commandant H. Potgieter first left the colony with his party, they found our tribe at Thaba Ntshu with Moroko. We then warned the emigrant Boers not to go near Moselekatse, for he would surely attack them. But they would not listen, and went on for 'Canaan'. After their party was almost destroyed on the banks of the Vaal river, the Barolong fetched the remainder back to Thaba Ntshu, where during two years they received every possible kindness and hospitality. By and by others came from the Colony, and by force of persuasion we at last yielded to enter into an alliance with Commandant Potgieter to assist him in avenging himself on Moselekatse, on condition that if we succeeded to dislodge the Matebele we should have our fathers' country back and live under our own rule. Which was agreed to.

"Leading the Boers on to the lion's den, we warred at our own expense, had our own horses, guns, ammunition, and victuals, and constantly refused to take any of the captured stock. We had one desire only, which was to have our old country where are the graves of our fathers.

"Moselekatse was defeated. Soon after the Boers moved into the newly cleared territory, and the Barolong under the Chief Tawana returned to their old grounds, whilst Moroko remained at Thaba Ntshu.

"When Commandant A. Pretorius had lost the day at Port Natal and immigrated to the Transvaal country, H. Potgieter duly informed the newcomers of the alliance that existed between the republican Boers and the Barolong, and the right of the latter to their own country. Potgieter went to Lydenburg, Pretorius and his party stayed in the south-western parts.

"About 1850 one Boer after another took possession of the fountains and lands of the Barolong: when in 1851 the latter complained to Commandant A. Pretorius, he appointed a commission of some commandants and field-cornets, and a boundary line was agreed on between the republic and the Barolong. This line was to be the Hart river from where it enters the Vaal river up to the eye of Hart river, which is Eland's Fountain, from there with the waggon-road to the head fountain of the river Molopo, thence to a very large fountain called Pogosurmane, from

there to the waggon-drift of the road from Lotlhakana across the Molopo to Klein Mariko”.

“In 1853 by the most crying injustice the Boers attacked us, and after fighting a whole day they found out that there existed no grounds whatever for such bloodshed, calling themselves the blind commando they left. All the farmers of Mariko then fled, fearing we would retaliate. Several seasons passed, till at last the Boers made some overtures for a settlement. On coming to terms with Commandant Jan Viljoen and President M. Pretorius, the old boundary lines were agreed to on both sides. But knowing how little the promises of the Boers could be trusted, we would not go back to our old residence at Lotlhakana, but continued to sojourn with the Bangwaketse tribe, to keep somewhat out of the Boers’ reach”.

“And now without the least provocation on our side (though the Boers have from time to time murdered some of my people and enslaved several small villages of our Balala), the Transvaal Republic deprives us, by the said proclamation, of our lands and liberty, against which we would protest in the strongest terms, and entreat Your Excellency, as Her Britannic Majesty’s high commissioner, to protect us”.

This appeal to the British for protection was naturally not pleasing to the emigrant Boers who had left the Cape a generation before in order to escape from the clutches of a government which was inclined to scrutinise too carefully the relations between its White and Black subjects. The very independence of the Republic so recently recognised seemed at stake unless this question relating to its western boundary and its relation with the Native tribes in that region was satisfactorily settled without the intervention of a third party. An effort was therefore made to settle the questions at issue by means of a round table conference between the representatives of the Transvaal Republic and the Native Chiefs concerned.⁴⁴ This conference which was held in November, 1870 was attended by the principal chiefs of the different sections of the BaRolong such as Moroka representing the Seleka section, Matlaba, the Rapulana section, Phoi, the Ratlou section and Montshiwa, the Tshidi section. Other Chiefs present included Gaseitsiwe of the Ngwaketsi, Moilola of the Bahurutshe, and Moshweu of the Korana. The Rev. J. Ludorf of the Methodist Church who came from Thaba Nchu was the spokesman of the Native delegation. The Transvaal Republic had a delegation of nine representatives including President Pretorius and Commandant-General S. J. Kruger. The con-

ference developed into an argument about past treaties and agreements the terms of which, in the absence of documentary evidence, could not be proved by either side, and having failed to arrive at an agreement the parties decided to refer the matter to a court of arbitration. In 1871 Sir Henry Barkly in response to applications to him for arbitration which were made to him by the parties at Klipdrift (Barkly West) in February of that year, called upon them to submit their claims to an arbitration court which met at Bloemhof in April, 1871. The Republic was represented by President Pretorius and the State Attorney Frederick Klein, and the different African chiefs were also accompanied by legal or other representatives to help them to put their case. The BaRolong spokesman was the Rev. J. Ludorf. The Court sat from April 5th to April 19th during which time it listened to evidence which ran into 392 pages of a blue-book. The judges having failed to arrive at an agreed decision the documents were submitted to Governor Keate of Natal who had adjudicated before in a similar dispute between the Orange Free State and the Republic in 1864. The ultimate result was the famous Keate Award. On the evidence before him the Governor gave the BaRolong most of the territory they claimed, altered the western boundary of the Transvaal and disallowed the claims of Europeans in occupation of territory claimed by the BaRolong. This favourable decision the BaRolong owed to the Rev. J. Ludorf who conducted their case with great skill and devotion, and to the fact, that as Theal puts it “the South African Republic went into court utterly unprepared to conduct its case properly.”⁴⁵ It is not necessary for our purpose to examine the reasons which led the Transvaal Republic to go to arbitration with an indifferently prepared case. Nor need we speculate as to what would have happened if the terms of the Keate Award had been more favourable to the case of the South African Republic and less favourable to that of Montshiwa and the BaRolong. All we need note is the fact that the Transvaal Republic repudiated the Keate Award, thus leaving the boundary dispute to be settled at a later date. Unfortunately for the BaRolong in 1872 the Rev. J. Ludorf who had championed their cause with such success, from their point of view, died at Dikgatlong (Lattakoo). Not only had he served the BaRolong as a missionary and as their spokesman in their disputes with their European neighbours, but he had endeavoured to keep them united and free from inter-tribal disputes which might play into the hands of those who desired to reap an advantage out of their