
 Circular Letter to the Native Teachers of the Bechuanaland Protectorate

Dear Teachers,

When I was asked by Mr Dumbrell if I might write one of the circular letters which he is expecting to send on to you during the current year, I readily consented to do so for two reasons, Firstly because I belong to the teaching profession and know from personal experience how much profit is to be derived from an exchange of views by those engaged in the same type of work.

Secondly because, being a mochuana myself, I naturally take interest in the welfare of those who are having a hand in the education of the rising generation of the people from whom I have myself sprung, and if anything I might say in the course of this letter should benefit any of you I should feel that I had had in a small way repaid Bechuanaland for the debt I owe to her.

I found, however, that while I agree to write one of the circular letters was a simple matter, to find some profitable subject on which to address you was by no means such a simple task. Finally I thought that you might be interested in the experience which I had quite recently. About two ~~xxx~~ months ago I attended in Johannesburg a meeting of the Inter University Committee in African Studies, a body which as its name indicates has as its main object the promotion of the study of things African. At this meeting an attempt was made to answer the question "What is being done in the various Bantu Languages in South Africa by both white people interested ~~Vedriary~~ those languages and by the Africans who speak those languages?

Were any additions being made to the existing literature in the different languages? What was the nature and the value of those contributions? Were the Africans showing any signs of an awakening to the importance of those languages and to the part they could play in their development?

In the discussion that followed the different languages were taken one by one and statements were made about what was being done in them, what books had been published, which were under consideration, who were the promising writers, and ~~xxx~~ so on. It was very gratifying to note what promising developments were on foot in the different languages.

But the reason why I mention this subject to you is because in that meeting it was made clear that the language which was showing the least signs of development was Sechuana. It was pointed out that no agreement had been reached yet in the matter of a uniform orthography for Sechuana; there were no notable additions being made to Sechuana Literature; Sechuana could not boast of such excellent readers as have recently been completed in the Xosa Language, and what is even more serious no Bechuana seem to be coming forward to play a part in the study and development of their language and its literature in the same way as men like the late Mr Solomon Plaatje had done. Among them was an organisation such as has been recently established by the Natal Teachers for the study of Zulu Language and literature. In every way Sechuana was shown to be in a very backward position. This is a serious matter for ~~you~~ you and for me who lay claim to Chuana ancestry, and the question I want you to ask yourselves is whether we individually or collectively or both ought not to do something to put our language and its literature on the map, and if so, what can we do about this state of affairs which is our plain duty to correct. I think the first thing we ought to do is to be more diligent in the study of Sechuana Language and Literature. No language can ever develop to any great extent unless those who take a pride in it study it.

It is only where one begins to study a language that one gets to know the ~~xxxxx~~ necessity for improving its orthography, increasing its literature, whether it be of dictionaries, grammars, story books, and other reading matter. Those of you who have tried to study ~~ix~~ Sechuana, and who do not labour under the popular delusion that they ~~xxx~~ know Sechuana because they were born Bechuana, know how the facilities for its proper study are very deficient. Try to study the language previously and you will find out what I am driving at. Our second ~~xxxxx~~ ~~xxxxx~~ ~~xx~~ duty seems to me to be to find out if we cannot do something to improve the existing literature in Sechuana. Some of us have a better knowledge available for all the Bechuana. Could we not write down Secwana stories, riddles, proverbs, idioms, and popular sayings, praises of chiefs as we know, thus discover the state of our knowledge (or ignorance) and then proceed to add to our knowledge by inquiring from others- our fellow teachers, our parents and our neighbours. If a number of teachers engaged in such a task they could in a short time get together quite a considerable body of Sechuana texts and all that could be left would be to get that material published.

There is such a scarcity of Sechuana material for use by students and others that I have no doubt that there would be no difficulty to get such a material published.

For Summary of History of Barolong see Appeal Court Judgment in Montshiwa vs Matlaba and others, Montshiwa and Aria Kgosi 1917

Jurisdiction of Native Chiefs in British Bechuanaland and
British Bechuanaland Protectorate Proclamation 2 of 1885

Section 31.

Native Chiefs in British Bechuanaland shall have original and exclusive jurisdiction in all civil cases between natives of their own tribes respectively; but in all civil cases between Europeans or between Europeans and Natives or between natives of different tribes, the Resident Magistrate of the district shall alone have jurisdiction subject always to the right of appeal as herein after ~~may~~, provided, and provided always that the Resident Magistrate may, if he thinks it proper ascertain, but shall in no case be bound by, the opinion of the chief or the headman as to any case wherein any native shall be a party or shall be directly or indirectly instructed.

The British Bechuanaland Land Settlement Commission of 1885 in its Report in 1886 found that the Barolong living in British Bechuanaland may be conveniently classified as follows:-

- (1) The Bora Tshidi Barolong who acknowledge Montshiwa as their chief.
- (2) The Bora Pulana Barolong who obey Mothibi (Matlaba) of Lotlhakana and Reitfontein, whose headman at Lotlhakana is Abraham.

Montshiwa's Barolongs were estimated at 8860 and Matiaba's Barolongs at 960.

As the jurisdiction of native chiefs among themselves is almost invariably tribal and not territorial, we have purposely refrained from defining any boundaries between tribes or sections of a tribe, and are of the opinion that it will be found convenient for the Reserve to be made available for all Natives no matter what their nationality (i.e. tribal affiliation) may be. Thus Montshiwa's claim and jurisdiction in government throughout the Molopo Reserve cannot be founded on the artificial demarcation of the Reserve made the Commission of 1885.

By section 35 of Proclamation 2 of 1885 ~~is~~ The right to altered land is vested in the Government. As a matter of fact the Government allows the chief to alter land and does not interfere unless complaints are made