

The Ba-Rolong — Location & Subdivisions

The Ba-Rolong belong to the Western cluster of the Sotho group of the Bantu-speaking tribes of South Africa'. The Western Sotho who are commonly called the Tswana, are scattered over a considerable portion of South ^{Africa}, including the whole of Bechuanaland Protectorate, the portion of the Cape Province known as British Bechuanaland, the Western Transvaal and a portion of the ^{Orange} Free State. Although the Ba-Rolong are to be found mainly in British Bechuanaland, they are in the peculiar position of being strongly represented in all the political divisions of Southern Africa. For many generations their real home has been in British Bechuanaland. Here they ^{at present} have important settlements at places such as Morokweng and Ganyesa in the district of Vryburg; at Mafikeng, Lotlhalane, Phitsheane, Tshidlonolomo, Setlagole, Osaneng, Mareetsane and other places in the district of Mafikeng; but in addition their ^{traditions indicate} history shows that at various times in their history they moved over the greater part of this territory leaving their ruins, great and small in numerous places. The works of early missionaries, travellers and explorers also testify to the extensive nature of their ^{early} migrations in search of better grazing, more pure water supplies or a safe haven from their foes within the territory which they regarded as their home. Rev. John Campbell¹ found them at Khamwana in 1812 where they were also visited by Rev. Robert Moffat,² the famous missionary of the London Missionary Society in 1824. Hodgson and Broadbent, the Wesleyan missionaries were together with them at Matlwase, near Mlerksdorp, when they were attacked by the Ba-Tlokwana under Moletsane. Hodgson³ and Archbell found them again at Platberg (Motlhanawoputse), north of the present doop of Warrenton after they had moved from Matlwase, and when they moved thence to Thaba Nchu in 1833 they were accompanied by Revs. Archbell and Edwards, the latter in the meantime having succeeded Hodgson as a missionary among the Ba-Rolong. About nine years later certain sections of them — the Tshidi, the Ropulana and the Ralhar — left Thaba Nchu for the north and in the course of their relations with the emigrant Boers from the Cape who were now seeking to establish themselves in

1. For a classification of the eastern Bantu-speaking tribes of South Africa see "Bantu Studies" Vol. VIII No. 3 Sept. 1934.
2. Campbell, J. "Travels in South Africa." ^{Black, Army} ~~London~~ 1825 in p.
3. Moffat, R. "Missionary Labours & Scenes in Southern Africa" 1842 (New) p.
4. Whiteside "History of the Methodist Church in South Africa"

the territory north of the Vaal, these Bakolong nomads settled in a number of different places. Thus for a time they ~~settled~~ settled at Maklwasi (near Klerksdorp) where the Ratlow ^{under Moshwete} and the Tshidi ^{under Tarama} left parted from the Rapulana, the former going ^{south} to Khunwana and the latter going ^{north} to Lotlakane. The Rapulana were later moved by the ~~Transvaal~~ government of the Transvaal Republic to Polfontein (Bodibe) on the Western boundary of the Republic. The ~~Tshidi~~ ~~found~~ A section of the Tshidi lived for a time at Moshaneng in the country of the Ba-Ngwaketai, where they used to be visited by Methodist missionaries, especially by Rev J. Ludorf who acted as their adviser in their many disputes with the emigrant farmers. The Ratlow also did not all remain together ~~into~~ at Khunwana but split into small sections which established settlements such as Isanyesa, Setlogole, Mositse and Mookwang in different parts of British Bechuanaland. The only section of the Ba-Kolong which has remained in one place for a considerable length of time is that of the Seleka who have been in the Thabo Ntshu Reserve ^{i.e. from} since about 1833 ~~also~~ up to the present day.

Their Present
Distribution

~~According to~~ The Bakolong are divided into four principal sections named after the sons of Tare, one of their former Chiefs. Tare actually had five principal sons (i.e. sons who were heirs of the houses into which they were born), namely Ratlow, Tshidi, Seleka, Rapulana and Makgetla. According to ~~Tare~~ tradition the death of Tare which took place about 1760 was followed by a series of disputes between the sons over succession to the chieftainship which led to wars, migrations and sub-divisions. ~~which~~ This process of disintegration had resulted in the formation of four separate and mutually independent tribes, namely the ~~Ratlow~~ Boo-Ratlow, the Boo-van-Tshidi Boo-Seleka and the Boo-Rapulana headed as their names indicate by the different sons of Tare. Makgetla, however, did not establish a separate section. ~~His~~ Ba-Kolong tradition represents him as having ~~shared~~ ^{shared} no effort to bring about a re-union of the different sections. ^{unsuccessfully in this task} ~~Ultimately~~ he and his followers attached themselves to the Tshidi section in which his descendants are to be found to this day.

Theal "A History of South Africa since 1795." p.

See

The word "Boo" ^{when} which is prefixed to the name of a Chief indicates "the followers of" or ^{Boo-Ratlow means} those the Chief concerned, ~~or~~ those who owe allegiance to Ratlow.

At the present time these different sections of Barolong are settled in different parts of the Union of South Africa and the Bechuanaland Protectorate.

The Rattou, regarded traditionally as the senior section of the Barolong are to be found mainly in the Vryburg district of that part of the Cape known as British Bechuanaland, principally in the Ganyesa and Morokweng Reserves, ^{about 45 and 80 miles respectively from the railway station at Vryburg.} A considerable number of them, however, reside in the Mafeking district in the Setlagole and in the Moleps Reserve. The latter Reserve is inhabited principally by Tshidi Barolong as we shall see later, but the Rattou have fairly important settlements in the Moleps Reserve at Phitsane and at Tshidilamolomo. In the Lichtenburg district of the Transvaal a fair number of Rattou are settled in the small Khunwana Reserve. From the foregoing it will be seen that the Rattou are scattered over a fairly wide area. It would appear that they have not succeeded in maintaining their political unity as well as, say, the Tshidi have done. According to the Chief Disputes over succession to the Chieftainship among them have led to further subdivisions. According to Three different Chiefs lay claim to the position of Paramount Chief among them, namely Chief Thibogang who resides at Ganyesa, who is acknowledged as their senior chief by the Rattou at the Ganyesa, Morokweng, Phitsane, Tshidilamolomo and other minor settlements. This means that although these "stads" have their own chiefs who administer them, & whenever any crisis arises in the life of the settlement they look to Thibogang to settle it. If there is a dispute about the rightful heir to the chieftainship or if a new chief is to be installed in his work ~~it is~~ Thibogang is ~~the~~ recognised as the right person to preside determine the issue or perform the ceremony. Similarly any questions of ^{traditional} customs and law upon which no agreement, ^{or satisfactory decision} can be reached are referred to him or alternatively he is invited to come and settle them. In other words his section of the Rattou are allegiance to him wherever they may have settled in sufficient numbers to justify their forming a separate "stad".

On the other hand a considerable portion of the Rattou acknowledge ^{Chief} Moswete who resides at Khunwana as their senior chief. The Khunwana Reserve is situated within the Transvaal boundary.

Bechuanaland

This means that prior to Union some of the Rattou fell under British rule while others - those at Khunwana - fell under the administration of the Transvaal Republic. The result was that whenever a war broke out between the British and the Dutch, as was the case during the South African War ~~or the~~ ~~Rebellion of 1905~~, the Rattou at Khunwana were placed in a very awkward position. Their compatriots in British territory who were of course loyal to the British ^{were inclined to} looked upon Moshwete and his people as a traitors to the cause of Basotho independence. Today ~~there~~ ^{T.O.} ~~there~~ day there is a still an ~~undocumented~~ all sections of the Rattou fall are subject to Union Native Administration, but the Basotho in British Bechuanaland including the Rattou sections continue to regard those in the Transvaal with a certain amount of suspicion and contempt for their ~~supposed~~ alleged betrayal of the cause of Basotho independence by their surrender to the Transvaal Republic in the latter part of the 19th century.

The other section of the Basotho which has ~~for as far long~~ been settled within the Transvaal boundary is that of the Ropulana. The Ropulana are the smallest section of the Basotho and rank last in the Rolong order of seniority. Under their Chief Matlaba ^{often referred to as Matlaba when in captivity} they left Thaba Nchu in about 1840 they settled for a time in the vicinity of the present town of Klerksdorp within the territory claimed by the emigrant Boers as their own. It would appear that the Ropulana, ~~accepted~~ like the Rattou under Moshwete and unlike the Tshidi under Tawana and later under ~~Tawana~~ ^{Montshiri}, accepted the rule of the Transvaal R. South African (later the Transvaal) Republic). About 1850 they were moved by the government of the Republic to Polfontein (Bodibe) in the present district of Lichtenburg where the majority of them are to be found to this day. About 1874 a small section of them under Mochibi crossed ^{the Transvaal} ~~over~~ ^{into} British boundary and ^{according to Tshidi tradition} with the permission of Montshiri, the then Tshidi Chief, established a settlement at Lotlhakane. To ~~the~~ this day Lotlhakane remains a Ropulana settlement whose chief acknowledges the Ropulana chief at Polfontein as his senior. On more than one occasion the Tshidi Basotho have endeavoured to establish their place the Ropulana at Lotlhakane under their jurisdiction. This ~~is~~ Each time the Rops latter have resisted the attempt and have been supported in their efforts by the Polfontein Ropulana. This dispute led to ~~the~~ ~~burning~~ burning and bloodshed in 1880, during the ~~the~~ South Africa War (1899-1902) and during the Great War, ^{in 1917} but in spite of their numerical ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~first~~ ^{first} in 1880, during the Boer War in 1900 + during the Great War in 1917

inferiority ~~to~~ and of the fact that they recognise the Tshidi as their seniors in the Barolong system of ranking the ^{Lothlakane} Rapolana have sturd their ground. Their claim to independence of the Tshidi was finally determined by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of South Africa which upheld the principle of Barolong law that a Chief secures sovereignty ^{as understood} over people not because they happen to occupy a particular territory but because they ^{voluntarily} acknowledge him ~~to~~ to be their Chief.

The Seleka Barolong separated from the main group in the early part of the 19th century and for over a hundred years have been had their main settlement at Thaba Ncher in the Orange Free State, although a considerable number of them are scattered in different parts of the Province as labourers on European farms and in ~~European~~ ^{European} urban ~~centres~~ ^{centres} such as Bloemfontein and Krustad. The Seleka fled from their ancestral home in British Bechuanaland owing to ~~some~~ repeated invasions by various marauding Bantu tribes such as the Mantatise of Sekhonyela, the Batang under Molestone and the Matabele (Zulu) under Mzilikazi. It was during their trek southwards that ^{in 1823} they first came into contact with the Methodist missionaries - ^{Weyers} Broadbent and Hodgson who introduced ~~before~~ them to Christianity and other aspects of Western civilisation. Ever since that time the Methodist Church has been the principal missionary agency among them. ~~When~~ They established their settlement at Thaba Ncher about 1833 and were found there by the emigrant Boers - the Voortrekkers - who trekked from the Cape to the north in the 1830's. In spite of the fact that they have been settled in one place for such a long time, the Seleka Barolong have not maintained their unity as well as, for instance, the Tshidi Barolong. After the death of Mooka, their Great Chief, disputes over succession to the chieftainship led to bitter strife which culminated in a civil war settled only by the intervention of the Government of the Orange River Republic. The defeated pretender to the Seleka throne was banished and took refuge with his followers among the Rapolana at Polfontein where they ^{has continued to reside} ~~remains to this day~~. To this day that dispute has not yet been settled. Some Seleka Barolong still contend that the rightful heir was banished and every time the

1. Montshira vs Matlaba A.D. 1917.

"the territory lying north of the Cape Colony south of the Ramatlabama Spout
and Kudu River, west of the South African Republic and East of the lower course
of the Mosopo River"

banished Chief makes an attempt to return to Thaba Nchu he is stopped en route for fear that his presence might ~~interfere~~ ^{jeopardise} the position of the recognized Chief recognized by the Government.

The Tshidi Barolong take second place after the Kaban in the tribal order of seniority. They are to be found principally in the Kulofo Reserve in the district of Mafeking and also ^{on} in the Lobatse district of Bechuanaland Protectorate on the Barolong Farms. The Tshidi have probably wandered over different parts of British Bechuanaland to a greater extent than any other section of the Barolong. During the period of the Matabele Wars they fled ^{southwards} from the Kulofo region and for a time lived together with the Seleka at Thaba Nchu. ^{When} After the Matabele were reported to have been expelled from the Kulofo region the Tshidi under Tawana returned to their ancestral home, only to find that they had to deal with a new and more determined enemy - the European - whose ~~land claims~~ territorial claims appeared to have no bounds and who desired all Native tribes within ^{at first} ~~the~~ ^{under Mountbatten} boundaries of his territory to acknowledge his jurisdiction over them. The Tshidi thought they could evade the undesirable attentions of the Dutch by African method of migrating to the more inaccessible parts of the Kulofo region and in pursuance of this policy they squandered for many years in the country of the Basgwalatse in what later became Bechuanaland Protectorate, leaving only a small number of their people further south. Finding that this policy was interpreted by the Dutch as a final ^{wavering} abandonment of their claims to abandoned territory, the Tshidi next resorted to ~~pleading~~ ^{appeals} to the British Government to take them under its wing ^{in order to} protect their territory against the South African Republic. ^{When} ~~Ultimately~~ in 1885 British Bechuanaland ~~so~~ became a Crown Colony ~~and~~ a Land Commission was appointed, among other things, "to mark off inalienable locations for Native chiefs and tribes in British Bechuanaland and adjudicate on all European land claims" within the boundaries of British Bechuanaland. In terms of the report of this Commission land was set aside for the Tshidi in the Kulofo Reserve. British Bechuanaland was annexed to the Cape in terms of Act 41 of 1895 but the territory further north - ~~the~~ Bechuanaland Protectorate - remained outside the jurisdiction of the Cape Government. In the Lobatse district of the Bechuanaland Protectorate which is adjacent to the Kulofo Reserve

As one of my principal informants put it on the very first day I arrived in Tshidi country, "You did ~~right~~ have done well to come here first in your endeavours to study Barolong, ^{Culture} for this is ^(Mafikeng) the capital of the Barolong, although according to our traditions the Rallos are senior to us. We fought to preserve Barolong independence and the fact that there is any Barolong culture left for you to study is due to our efforts rather than those of any other sections of the Barolong."

the Tshidi have an important settlement which goes by the famous name of the "Barolong Farms". ~~This means that the Tshidi today some of the~~ The Tshidi claimed this part of the Protectorate on the ground that many of their fields and cattle posts were situated there. When this strip of land was set aside for them, instead of being given to them in the form of a communal reserve, it was given out in the form of individual farms to the Chief and to important headmen of the tribe. The extent of this territory is about 450 square miles and the individual till holders, about 41 in number, have permitted other Tshidi Barolong to settle on these farms on conditions usually recognised under their tribal rule. With a total population of about 4000 the Barolong Farms remain under the administration of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, while the rest of the tribe is under the administration of the Union Government.

The Tshidi have retained their tribal solidarity much better than the other sections of the Barolong. They all acknowledge Loolamoenq, the grandson of their famous Chief Moutshuwa, as their paramount chief. ^{from} No section has lived off ^{from them} in order to establish itself elsewhere as an independent political unit. Their ^{from} central settlement "stad", Mafeking (Place of Rocks) is the largest Barolong settlement in South Africa, which means that there is a larger number of them concentrated in one place making possible the maintenance of ^{at their} common ideas, beliefs and practices. The long reign of Moutshuwa over them extending from about 1849 to 1896 and the determined stand which ~~they took~~ he and his councillors took up against European encroachments upon their tribal territory and the united front they showed then has not been broken up by subsequent events in their history. The Tshidi look upon themselves as the ablest and the most patriotic section of the Barolong although they acknowledge that they rank second in the Barolong order of rank seniority and readily give precedence to the Ration of ^{present} ~~in their rituals~~ and in their general etiquette. — See opposite page.

In Tswana circles generally the Barolong as a whole are looked upon as a proud lot of people and the shortest stay among them shows that they ^{adopt an attitude of superiority towards} ~~have a decided contempt for~~ other Tswana tribes and

which makes possible the serological study of both past and present Barcelona cultures.